

Assignment #2: Research Report

Purpose:

This assignment is designed to teach you how to:

1. Collaborate in a small group on a longer/more complex professional document
2. Conduct secondary research on a topic related to the workplace (hiring discrimination)
3. Synthesize sources to inform your audience on the topic and make appropriate recommendations for policies/initiatives/etc. to be implemented in a hypothetical workplace
4. Write a formal report

Audience:

In our first major assignment unit, you learned strategies for how to successfully write a cover letter and résumé when applying for a job or internship. Specifically, you learned both how to format your application materials as well as what content to include to project professionalism and a solid “fit” for the position. Remember, though, that following recommended techniques for cover letter and résumé writing does not guarantee you will be offered an interview. Hiring managers have personal preferences that may shape how they react to your application, and hiring discrimination also is an unfortunate reality.

For this assignment, each of you will collaborate in a team with one other student (there may be a group of three, depending on enrollment), and your team will be writing as employees of a hypothetical company to others in the company (specifically, your supervisor/human resources director and upper management). Imagine that you and your team partner work in the human resources department of the company and that you each represent different levels of experience with the company (i.e., one of you is a recent hire and the other has been an employee for 10+ years). You have been assigned the task of researching hiring discrimination—its causes, consequences, and solutions—as well as making 3-5 recommendations for how the company can avoid hiring discrimination going forward. You are to focus specifically on hiring discrimination, not other forms of discrimination that occur when already employed. Also, note that the recommendations you make must be feasible; do not propose solutions that would be impossible for the company to implement/enforce.

Hiring discrimination is a broad topic, so you and your group member will need to decide what to prioritize for the project. For example, you could focus on a specific type of hiring discrimination (e.g., age-based discrimination), the role of technology in hiring discrimination (i.e., how technology can facilitate and/or deter hiring discrimination), etc. I recommend that you don't limit your focus in the beginning stages of the project; instead, skim research and reporting on the range of issues and then decide what you will concentrate on for the report. The suggested schedule for Week 2 includes beginning preliminary research at the end of the week, and you can continue that preliminary research into the beginning of Week 3. Because of the fast pace of the summer session, you and your partner will need to decide what you want to focus on for the report by approximately the middle of Week 3, since you will need to write a team contract, delve seriously into your research, and submit a progress report.

Format:

This assignment should be written as a formal research report that includes the following sections:

1. Transmittal memo (one page with letterhead for your company)
2. Title page (one page)
3. Descriptive abstract (one to two paragraphs)
4. Table of contents (one to two pages, depending on organization/complexity of report)
5. *List of figures (this section is optional, dependent on the information covered in your report, and if included should not exceed one page)
6. *List of tables (this section is optional, dependent on the information covered in your report, and if included should not exceed one page)
7. *List of abbreviations and symbols (this section is optional, dependent on the information covered in your report, and if included should not exceed one page)
8. Body
 - a. Executive summary (one page)
 - b. Introduction (one to two pages)
 - c. Text/body (four to six pages)
9. Conclusions and Recommendations (we will combine these sections for the assignment, and this content should be one to two pages)
10. References (one to two pages, and use APA style)
11. Back matter
 - a. *Appendix or Appendices (this section is optional, dependent on the information covered in your report, and if included will vary in length)
 - b. *Glossary (this section is optional, dependent on the information covered in your report, and if included should not exceed one to two pages)

The “Writing Formal Reports” reading, found in Week 2 and that is Chapter 11 of *Writing that Works: Communicating Effectively on the Job*, provides a clear, thorough explanation of each of the aforementioned sections as well as examples. You should consult that reading throughout the assignment unit to guide you in the preparation of your project.

Your report should use single space within paragraphs and double space between sections (i.e., between paragraphs, between headings and their subsequent paragraphs, etc.), as well as use 12 point Times New Roman or Arial font.

Because this assignment is a formal research report, you will need to include a **minimum of sixteen credible sources** that your audience would find appropriate and insightful. The sources can be a combination of academic, industry/professional, and popular materials, but **at least eight of the required sixteen sources must be academic** (academic journal articles, academic books or book chapters, and/or academic conference proceedings).

This assignment is not just about the *quantity* of research you discuss, but also the *quality*. Credibility of your sources is important, but so is range and currency. If you have any questions about whether a source is/sources are appropriate for the assignment, please contact me.

Grading:

This assignment counts 25% of your total course grade. You will be graded not only on the report your team produces, but also on your teamwork skills, which will be gauged based on progress reports, feedback you provide in conferences with me, evaluations you provide of your peer, etc.

Process:

To complete this assignment successfully, follow these steps:

1. Discuss with your group member the project, any initial thoughts you have on the topic of hiring discrimination and interests you have related to researching the topic, etc. Also, discuss ideas for what kind of company you want to imagine you work for and what you will call it, since you will refer to the company in the report.
2. Conduct preliminary research to familiarize yourself with the literature and reporting on the topic of hiring discrimination. Remember that in the beginning stages, I recommend you read broadly on the topic before narrowing down your focus. If you encounter any difficulties in your research, please contact me or Ashley Dees, the Research & Instruction Librarian for Business, at aesorey@olemiss.edu or 662-915-7933.
3. When you have decided on the specific issue(s) pertaining to hiring discrimination that you will research and the context surrounding your report, search for the sources you will include in your report as well as others you may use to help you refine your thinking, but that will not necessarily be cited. The topic you are researching will shape what databases you should consult, but some likely options include Business Source Complete, Communication and Mass Media Complete, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar. You may find it helpful to consult our WRIT 310 Library Guide, available at <http://guides.lib.olemiss.edu/writ310>. Do NOT pay for any source material; if there is a resource you want that our library does not provide access to, use Interlibrary Loan: <https://libraries.olemiss.edu/interlibrary-loan/>.
4. As you read and select sources, annotate the materials, identifying their major points, methods, etc. Also, keep track of how you conduct your research since you will discuss your methods in your report.
5. Draft your formal report to include the sections listed under the “Format” portion of this assignment description. The text/body portion of the report, at four to six pages, is the core part of the document and will require you to synthesize your source materials. Remember that this assignment is a report on the research, so your main goals are to 1) inform the audience on the topic using the literature you have selected, 2) draw conclusions from that literature, and 3) make recommendations for what your hypothetical company should do going forward in relation to the topic. **You must draft your report in a Google Doc** created for your team **and share that document with me** so that I can track your progress, consult the document history, etc.

Because of the nature of the assignment, we will not conduct peer review; however, each student will conference with me and that is an opportunity to get feedback on your work in progress. I also can provide feedback on a draft of your report if it is finished in sufficient time before the deadline for me to do so (by 8:00 a.m. Friday, 7/1).

Deadlines:

Final draft – Sunday, 7/3 by 11:59 p.m.