

Guidelines for Progress Reports (Half-yearly)

The objective of this document is to provide a brief set of guidelines to assist students in writing their progress reports. It contains a description of the purpose of progress reports, and the role of the progress reports in student evaluation, followed by suggestions on how the progress report may be structured.

Purpose

In general, progress report serves a variety of important functions, two of which are described herein. First, the practice of research often requires attention to detail, occasionally to the extent that details begin to obscure the broader goal of a research program. A progress report provides an opportunity to step back from the details of day to day research activity, and to describe the conceptual framework into which the said research fits. This exercise often helps to clarify the motivation for a program of research, and can be a catalyst for new research ideas. Second, a critical component of scientific research is the communication of that research to others. One form of communication that will play an important role in your progress as a scientist is that of writing. The progress report provides an opportunity for you to practice writing, receive critical feedback on writing, and therefore to improve writing skill. Although the subject matter of both of these objectives is past research, an important function of the progress report is to chart the course of future research. As such, a progress report should describe the progress made to date in such a way that the DRCC can understand the motivation for the research that the scholar plan to carry out in the near future.

A progress report should aim to achieve the following objectives:

- 1) to provide the background information required to set your research in an appropriate context.
- 2) to provide a precise description of the research issue being addressed.
- 3) to describe the research activities undertaken since beginning the program
- 4) to evaluate the progress made during the year/semester toward the goal of the research.
- 5) to describe the direction that research will take in the coming year.

There are a variety of ways of meeting these objectives, and some students have noted that a research article satisfies some of the same objectives. At the same time, the progress report should not be treated as if it were precisely the same as a manuscript (paper). To appreciate the distinction between a progress report and a manuscript, consider that a manuscript focuses on the rationale for research that has already been conducted, while the progress report should also indicate the general aims and direction of the research program.

The maximum length of a progress report is 20 double-spaced pages. This page limit includes figures, tables and appendices. Of course, your progress report does not have to be 20 pages in length. If you can report (the technical aspects/ your progress effectively in fewer pages (but not less than 6 pages), then we encourage you to do so¹.

¹ *Courtesy Bruce Millike*

In brief, your submission should have

- a) Section A - Primary administrative information
- b) Section B - a purely technical write-up containing the work done, the results obtained, graphs, tables etc., references. Points 4, 5 & 6 should be of conference paper grade writing running to a maximum of 20 pages
- c) A Gantt Chart of work done and the plan of work for the next six months in the end of Section B.
- d) Please follow the format given when preparing your report and include all sections in the order listed. If there is nothing to report in a particular section, include the heading with an indication of nothing to report (i.e., NR or N/A). Everything should be listed in chronological order from new to old. Please save an electronic copy of this report so that in subsequent semesters you will only need to update the report, not redo it from scratch.
- e) Section C – a self evaluation by the candidate
- f) Section D – an evaluation of the status by the research supervisor
- g) Section E – a mutual discussion of the half-yearly report by student & supervisor
- h) Section F - a comment by the Dean of the School or the relevant heads on the concerns of the student & supervisor
- i) Section G – a note on the issues raised by the parties above by the Dean Research / Director (Research)

Section A & B should only be typewritten. It is preferable if Section C to G are typewritten.
Entire report to be printed (preferably back-to-back)

Timeline to follow:

Turn in a hard copy of your completed half-yearly report to your research supervisor by the First week of Feb/First of August. Keep an electronic copy for your records.

Your research supervisor will sign the report and use it to write a summary of your progress for the semester, documenting progress towards degree, strengths and weaknesses. The supervisor will also evaluate whether you have addressed previously reported weaknesses and then: a) recommend continuation of the student; b) recommend continuation with conditions, or c) not recommend continuation.