

ACCG106
Semester 2, 2012
Accounting Information for Decision Making
Major Written Assignment

Important Information

Word guide: Between 2,000 and 2,500 words for the whole assignment. Word guides will not be given for the individual tasks.

Referencing: It is important that you acknowledge the sources of information you use in your writing. If you do not reference your sources you are plagiarising. Use the Harvard referencing system for this assignment. A guide for the Harvard referencing system is available at http://www.library.uq.edu.au/training/citation/harvard_6.pdf.

Warning: Turnitin is a power tool for detecting academic dishonesty and will be used to screen all assignments. If you are caught, disciplinary action will ensue.

This major assignment targets the following learning outcomes:

- Knowledge of ethics in business and accounting that underlies socially and environmentally responsible behaviour in business.
- Research skills to expand the knowledge base for contextual applications.
- Knowledge application skills for decision making and solving problems in business contexts.
- Written communication skills for effective communication in business contexts.

Introduction

Water is a scarce and critical resource. According to the United Nations (2012) World Water Development Report 4, Vol. 1, p. vi “Fresh water is not being used sustainably according to needs and demands. Accurate information remains disparate, and management is fragmented. In this context the future is increasingly uncertain, and risks are set to deepen. If we fail today to make water an instrument of peace, it might become tomorrow a major source of conflict.” This assignment is concerned with corporate water reporting. Some business organisations are large consumers of water. While there are both external and internal pressures on organisations with high water consumption rates for sustainable practices, and also to account for their consumption and management of water; at the moment corporate water reporting is unregulated and is voluntary.

Students are required to do the following tasks:

Task 1

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) provides a framework of social and environmental matters that organisations may refer to in their voluntary water reporting disclosures (Global Reporting Initiative 2000).

Find the GRI on the Internet. Outline the key GRI indicator protocols that relate to water. From the perspective of a report user, justify, for each protocol, why these aspects relating to water consumption should be reported.

Task 2

The following is a list of eight organisations in the food, beverage and tobacco industry that

have high water consumption rates.

- Australian Food and Grocery Council
 - Campbell Soup Company
 - British American Tobacco Australia Limited
 - Coca-Cola Amatil Limited
 - Goodman Fielder Limited
 - Inghams Enterprises Pty Limited
 - Lion Nathan Limited
 - Unilever Australasia Pty Limited
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- Choose any 3 organisations from the list above.
 - Describe, in brief, the company profile of each chosen organisation.
 - For each chosen organisation, examine its most current water reporting practices.
 - Compare and contrast a) the practices among your chosen organisations and b) these organisation's practices using the GRI protocols.
 - For each of your chosen organisations and from the perspective of a report user, evaluate the adequacy of the company's disclosure and speculate on the motivation(s) for their voluntary reporting practices.

Task 3

This task does not relate to water reporting. It relates to corporate social responsibility more generally.

Good Life Farm is owned by Servelan and was started 5 years ago as a hobby. Servelan is a doctor and she does not work on the farm. She employs a manager, Jenna, to operate the farm-stay business. There are 3 other employees. Basically, the farm-stay is an up-market holiday package where guests take time off from their busy work schedules to enjoy a nature holiday.

Servela's motivation for owning a farm and the business was never to make a profit but one of pursuing the good life. The farm is self-sustaining and guests can virtually live off the land in style. Servelan's idea of sustainability and care of the environment has now gone beyond her farm's operations. She is considering engaging in other socially responsible practices in the community through her business operations. She has asked Jenna to investigate the practices which small businesses can take to become more socially responsible in this particular industry. Servelan would like to know how she can develop her business to suit the requirements of a socially responsible small business and how she and her business can be more involved.

- You will take the role of Jenna.
- The farm does not have Internet access. Therefore, you have to write a business letter to Servelan. In the letter, you should select and justify the practices which *Good Life Farm* can incorporate, in order to make it more socially responsible, and you should conclude with some of the challenges it might face in doing so. The letter should not be more than 900 words.
- The following journal article is a useful resource to help you do this task. You can download the article from the Macquarie University Library website. In the article, you

will be able to find other articles to supplement your knowledge in the topic. You may choose to incorporate some of these ideas into your letter.

Fenwick, A 2010, Learning to practice social responsibility in small business: challenges and conflicts', *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 2010, vol. 1, no.1, pp. 149-169.

- You do not need to provide bibliographic references in the letter itself, but you should provide a list of your references (for the sources of information that you have used for writing the letter) on a separate piece of paper (following the letter). You should use the Harvard Referencing System to achieve this.

Resources for Task 3:

An introduction to writing formal business letters

Learning how to write a formal business letter (& identifying the differences in the degree of formality), means you are learning how to write effectively which is of great importance in the business world.

Formal business letters tend to:

- use lots of polite language (e.g. such as would/might/may/should);
- have longer sentences, i.e. 'would you please contact me at your earliest convenience?' and 'please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions';
- use an impersonal tone (by using a passive verb construction i.e. rather than 'I will deal with the matter upon my return', a passive verb construction looks like: 'the matter will be dealt with upon my return');
- use the full form of pronouns and verbs (i.e. it's been going well (informal) versus it has been going well (formal)).

Degree of formality: Formal and semi-formal business letters require you to make choices on the criteria below. This is based on your relationship with the person(s) to whom you are writing (the recipient of your letter).

Criteria for formal business letter writing:

Vocabulary choices:

Think about the formal version of the verb:

Informal language	Formal language for business communication
sort out	arrange/ deal with
hook up	meet up

Grammar points:

The way you structure your sentences shows the degree of formality you wish to communicate. Look at the differences between informal phrases and the typical formal language used in business communication.

Informal language	Formal language for business communication
You must reply to me as soon as possible	A prompt reply would be appreciated
I want to know if	I am getting in touch to see if

Please call me to fix a time.	Would you mind calling me to arrange a meeting time?
I got your letter. Thanks for that.	Thank you for your letter dated (date) enquiring about the services offered by.....
Let me know when I can call round your office.	I would be happy to come to your office to discuss this at your earliest convenience.
Good to hear from you soon.	I look forward to hearing from you.

Punctuation and spelling: most mistakes tend to be based on using commas incorrectly or not using capital letters for proper nouns i.e. coca cola and internet. Spelling is vital to get right in business communication and it may require you to use a spell-checker software (e.g. PaperRater). Remember to spell check for Australian English spelling, if that is the version of English you are using in your letter.

Format of a formal business letter:

How do I write a business letter?

- Begin your letter by writing your name and address in the top right-hand corner of the page. This will identify you to the recipient and provide them with an address to answer your letter. Your name should be on the first line, your street address on the second line and your suburb / town and your state / territory (all in capital letters) and postcode on the last line.
- Then on the top left-hand side of your letter (but below your details) comes the date. Write the day first, then the month and the year. You can write the date in full, or in abbreviated (shortened) form.
- Now to add the recipient's details. Directly under the date you need to put the person's name / title (if you know it) and the business or company name on separate lines. You must also include the recipient's address which is set out on separate lines, i.e. the street or post office box address on one line and the suburb / town and the state / territory (all in capital letters) and postcode on the next line.
- Next comes the greeting. Remember to be formal and use the correct title and name. "Dear" is an appropriate greeting for a business letter. If you do not know the name of the person to whom you are writing, you could use "Dear Sir", or "Dear Madam", as appropriate.
- Now it is time to start writing the content of your letter. You should start with an introduction to explain why you are writing, followed by the main part of your message, which will contain the detailed information. Finish with a conclusion that

summarises the main points made in your letter.

- Once you have finished writing what you need to say it is time for you to "sign off" the letter. This is the way you end your letter. "Kind regards" and "Yours sincerely" are appropriate sign offs if you have used the recipient's name. If you have used the more formal term: "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam", use "Yours faithfully" instead.
- Once finished, you need to sign your name. It is also a good idea to write your name in full underneath your signature. Remember that postscripts (PS) are not appropriate for business letters.

Reference List:

Australia Post 2012, *Writing a Business Letter*, Letter Link: Let's Write a Letter, viewed 20 August 2012, <http://auspost.com.au/education/letterwriting/students/business-letters.html>.

Global Reporting Initiative 2000 *Sustainability Reporting Guidelines*, version 3.1. Viewed 21 August 2012, <https://www.globalreporting.org/reporting/latest-guidelines/g3-1-guidelines/Pages/default.aspx>.