

## *Progress Report and Draft*

Though you may have a long way to go before you complete your research, it is a bad idea to leave too much work for the end. With this in mind, your task now is to write up a progress report in the format of a rough draft of your final communication. This will serve two important purposes. First, it will help you recognize what steps you still need to complete, and lay out in detail how you will go about completing them. Second, it will allow you to get feedback from your sponsor, Glenn, me and even stakeholders on what you have already done.

How long should your draft be? This depends on your final product, but we offer an anecdote in the way of guidelines. Hemingway (or Mark Twain, or someone famous) reportedly once told a friend “I would have written a shorter letter if I’d had more time.” Quality counts more than quantity, but it is typically much harder to do an adequate job in 5 pages than in 10. Ten great pages is usually better than 20 good ones, but 20 good pages is better than 10 poor ones.

The credibility and value of your final project will depend on the quality and thoroughness of your research, the extent to which you contribute to solving the problem, and the clarity and effectiveness of your product. Feedback from the sponsor also carries considerable weight. This draft is an opportunity to get feedback on how well you’ve accomplished these goals so far.

While it is difficult to provide generic guidelines for writing a communication when the potential range of topics and formats is so large, there are certain elements it should contain, which we describe below.

**1. Introduction.** The statement of the problem you submitted earlier can serve as the first draft of your introduction. This draft however should reflect all that you learned about the problem since then. Your first statement of the problem was primarily based on a fairly standard review of the literature. You should now be able to supplement that introduction with the background information you’ve gathered since then. You should also incorporate what you have learned from the stakeholders in your problem. If you missed any key issues in your first statement of the problem, make sure you include them this time.

**2. Goals and objectives.** In your project contract, you briefly described your research goal and the final report you would provide to your sponsor. By now, you may have fleshed this out or even changed it. State your general goal, then break it down into the specific objectives you will need to complete in order to attain this goal.

**3. Methods.** Explain what you are doing in detail, the methods you are using, and the steps you are taking. If you break down your goal into specific objectives, then your methods should explain how you will accomplish each objective. Provide information on organizations or individuals you are speaking with, and the types of information that you seek from them. Include any interview questions or surveys as an appendix. List any other sources of information for your project.

**4. Results.** This section will obviously be preliminary, but it is worth describing your results so far. At this point, your primary focus will probably be on analysis of the various components of your problem. In your final report, you should probably pay more attention to synthesis – an explanation of how the component parts interact with each other to create the whole.

**5. Discussion and policy recommendations.** This section may be even more preliminary than your results. Describe the significance of your results. How do they contribute to the goals and objectives of your sponsor? What policies do they suggest? What are the obstacles to implementing such policies? Do you have any suggestions for future research?

**6. Next steps.** Provided a detailed summary of what you still need to do. Who is going to do it, how will they do it, and when will they do it? If your group is big enough, you may need to break it down into separate groups for analysis of problem components and specific policies.