Advanced Business Report Writing and Executive Summaries

3 – 7 May 2027
Johannesburg (South Africa)

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MERCURY

Advanced Business Report Writing and Executive Summaries

Ref: 15472_1064145 **Date:** 3 – 7 May 2027 **Location:** Johannesburg (South Africa) **Fees:** 5300 Euro

Advanced Business Report Writing and Executive Summaries is a 1-week advanced course for analysts, specialists and managers whose papers go to senior leaders, boards or committees. You learn to lead with the answer, build the argument with the Pyramid Principle, write executive summaries that state implications and frame clear recommendations, and you take back a Decision Paper Toolkit. Mercury Training Center delivers this advanced business report writing course.

About This Course

Senior readers often skim the first page of a paper and stop, so long documents that bury the conclusion get no decision or the wrong one. To follow the course you should already prepare papers, proposals or status updates for management. You practice by rewriting your own documents and testing them against a decision-maker's questions.

Who It Is For

- Analysts who turn data and research into findings for management.
- Specialists who prepare proposals, business cases and investment requests.
- Project office staff who send progress and status updates upward.
- Managers who brief executives, boards or committees on options and risks.
- Staff who edit or approve documents before they reach senior leaders.

This course is not for readers who mainly document engineering or field work in detail, who are better served by a technical documentation course, nor for those who still need grammar and basic sentence building, who suit a foundation business English course.

Competencies You Will Build

- Answer-First Structuring: you open every paper with the conclusion and the decision you need.
- Pyramid Argument Building: you group supporting points so each level answers the question the level above raises.
- Executive Summary Drafting: you write a one-page summary that states implications, not only facts.
- Recommendation Framing: you set out options, criteria and a recommended choice with its consequences.
- Evidence Selection: you pick the few figures, charts and tables that carry the argument and move the rest to appendices.
- Senior Briefing: you present a paper in minutes and handle challenge from senior readers.

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What You Will Be Able to Do

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Using the SCQA frame, open a paper with situation, complication, question and answer in a few lines.
- From a set of research notes, build a MECE issue tree and turn it into a pyramid storyline.
- Given a long draft, cut it to a one-page executive summary with a clear ask.
- From a dataset, choose the chart or table that answers one question and write its action title.
- Using decision criteria, compare options in an options matrix and write the recommendation.
- Given a reviewer's challenges, revise a paper so each objection is answered in the text.

Course Content

Day 1: Writing for Decision-Makers

- Reader Analysis: What Executives, Boards and Committees Need to Decide
- Bottom Line Up Front Versus Chronological Narrative
- SCQA Openings for Proposals and Briefing Papers
- Purpose Statements and the Single Question a Paper Answers
- Matching Format to Purpose: Investigative, Progress, Periodic, Instructional, Proposal and Financial Papers

Day 2: Building the Argument

- Minto Pyramid Principle for Grouping Supporting Points
- MECE Issue Trees for Research and Analysis
- Evidence-Backed Findings and Unbiased Conclusions
- Storyline Drafting With Headings That Carry the Message
- Templates and Section Order for Recurring Management Papers

Day 3: Executive Summaries

- One-Page Executive Summary Structure: Context, Findings, Implications, Ask
- Stating Implications Instead of Restating Facts
- Summaries for Proposals, Status Updates and Investigations
- Plain Language, Active Voice and Sentence Length Control
- Editing Checklist for Senior-Level Documents

Day 4: Recommendations and Evidence

- Options Matrices With Weighted Decision Criteria
- Recommendation Logic: Choice, Rationale, Consequences and Next Steps
- Chart Selection and Action Titles for Management Exhibits
- Tables, Diagrams and Appendices for Supporting Detail
- Tone, Rapport and Handling Sensitive Findings

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Day 5: Practice Building the Decision Paper Toolkit

- Exercise: Rewriting a Status Update as an Answer-First Brief
- Exercise: Executive Summary for an Investment Proposal
- Exercise: Options Matrix and Recommendation for a Policy Change
- Exercise: Five-Minute Briefing to a Mock Executive Committee
- Completing the Decision Paper Toolkit for Your Own Papers

Case Studies and Exercises

These are suggested activities.

- Case study: a hospital's quality team sends a long incident review to the board and gets no decision; you rebuild it answer-first with a clear ask.
- Case study: a bank's operations team must choose between two system vendors; you write the options matrix and recommendation.
- Exercise: a government agency's quarterly progress paper hides a delay on page nine; you rewrite the executive summary so the issue leads.
- Exercise: a manufacturing plant proposes a capital investment; you select the two exhibits that carry the case and cut the rest.

What You Take Back

The Decision Paper Toolkit is the set of templates and checklists you complete during the course. In your first month back, you use it to rewrite your next management paper, agree a standard summary format with your manager and coach colleagues who send papers upward.

- An answer-first paper template with SCQA opening.
- A one-page executive summary template.
- An options matrix and recommendation framework.
- An editing and exhibit checklist.

Quick Answers FAQ

What should I know before advanced business report writing training?

You should already write papers, proposals or updates for managers and be comfortable writing in English. Bring one or two of your recent documents, since much of the practice uses your own material.

How does advanced business report writing differ from a technical report writing course?

It is written for senior decision-makers: answer-first structure, executive summaries, options and recommendations. Technical report courses focus on presenting detailed engineering, field or process information accurately for specialist readers.

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How long should an executive summary be in a business report?

For most management papers, one page or less. It should state the conclusion, the key findings, what they mean for the organization and the decision required, so a senior reader can act without reading the full document.

What do I take back from Advanced Business Report Writing and Executive Summaries?

You take back the Decision Paper Toolkit: an answer-first template, a one-page executive summary template, an options and recommendation framework and an editing checklist.

For Your Manager

After the course, the team member can structure papers answer-first, write executive summaries that state implications, frame options and recommendations and brief senior readers concisely. They return with a Decision Paper Toolkit, first used on their next paper to management and as a shared format for the team's upward reporting.

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