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To: MAT116 Students

Date: September 26, 2006

Re: The Structure of Focus Memos

In addition to the guide posted on the H: Drive regarding the Focus Memos, this document serves to try to carefully lay out the structure of each memo. Unless I specify otherwise, assume that EACH memo should have the following structure.

First Paragraph: The first paragraph should have EACH of the following: (A) An introduction (1–3 sentences) stating what the goal of the current memo is, AND (B) A short summary of what you have done or found in previous analyses and reported in previous memos. (Again, 1–3 sentences max) This is a summary, not a complete accounting. In the first paragraph, you want to give the reader a brief sense of WHERE YOU ARE GOING with the memo and WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN before getting here.

Middle Paragraphs: The middle paragraphs should be a description (not a short summary...that's in the last paragraph) of what analysis you undertook for the current memo, what tools you used to do the analysis, and what results you obtained. When there are somewhat calculations to show, you may want to place them in the Summary/Footnote region at the bottom/end of the memo to make the memo easier to read. Just make sure to refer the reader to the bottom/end so they know it's there. You should pretend you are writing to a manager or boss who is relatively unfamiliar with what you are doing at the mathematical level – you'll need to provide enough detail to convince him/her that you know what you are doing with the math but not enough that you totally overwhelm him/her with detail. This is a hard thing to learn to do well, so don't be discouraged if you don't quite get it right at the beginning. Any mathematical notation must be formatted with the Equation Editor...no handwriting of math notation, calculations, or equations is allowed. This is supposed to be a *professional* memo to your boss/manager...it should look great and be free of excessive spelling and grammar errors.

Last Paragraph: The last paragraph should have EACH of the following: (A) A brief summary of what you found in the analysis related to the current memo. You'll essentially be summarizing *very quickly* what you said in the Middle Paragraphs, ALSO (B) A short statement of how your analysis affects your decision on the project, if at all (foreclose or workout, for example), AND (C) A sentence or two that describes what information you think you may need to make a more accurate decision...you may want to read ahead to the next chapter to give you a clue about what is next! In the last paragraph, you want to give the reader a brief sense of WHAT YOU FOUND, HOW IT IMPACTS YOUR PROJECT DECISION, and WHERE YOU THINK YOU'RE HEADED NEXT.

Summary/Footnote of Results

This section of the memo has only the final results of those parts of the problem where a number or simple explanation is required as the final answer. Those parts that ask for explanation or discussion can be included in the main section above. This is also a good section for included complicated calculations that will only clutter up the main text above.

- a.) "Your Result Here and explained above" means you should report your numerical answer to a question in this section so that when the instructor looks at all the memos from your team, he/she can verify that you all have the same data and that it is correct.

***You may have to be creative when reporting your work and results. Sometimes, tables are a good way to do this. If you need help with creating tables, ask me and I'll help out.

Focus on the Project Memo Scoring Guide

In order to try to clarify how you will be scored on your Focus Memos. I make an effort to follow this guide closely and to be as fair and consistent as I know how. Point totals will be converted to a percent when entered into my grade book.

Categories and Descriptions	Points
Beginning Paragraph	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the required components (See "The Structure of Focus Memos" handout discussed in class. • The goal of the memo is clear and is connected to the assignment from the current chapter. • The summary of previous analysis is clear and succinct. 	
Middle Paragraph	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear, accurate, and complete description of your analysis is presented. • All parts of the problem as original problem are addressed as written. • Mathematical (and other) notation is correct and proper units are used throughout. • Calculations and results are accurate. • A sufficient amount of work is shown to demonstrate how you got your results. Not too much and not too little. (Some calculations may be placed in the Summary/Footnote Section) • Variables are clearly defined and are uses consistently and correctly in the memo. • Proper interpretations of your numerical results are provided, where appropriate. • Graphs have appropriate domains and ranges and are labeled correctly. • Length is appropriate. (Short paragraphs are okay as long as they get all the information across. Long paragraphs are not always better...they can be too wordy.) 	
Ending Paragraph	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the required components (See "The Structure of Focus Memos" handout discussed in class. • Your summary of your analysis is short but clear. • Your discussion about how your analysis does or does not affect your project decision is reasonably justified. 	
General Writing Style and Content	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The memo has a professional format and organization. • It does not read like a HW assignment but reads like a memo written for your boss. • Layout of graphs, equations, pictures, etc. is neat and clean. • Math expressions are properly formatted. Equation editor is used where appropriate. • Grammar and spelling is reasonably good. • An appropriate amount of explanation and information is presented, including an introduction and conclusion, as may be necessary. • The writing is organized and clear. • The length is appropriate. 	

At the top of your memo, you will receive a score that looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 B - 9 \\
 M - 15 \\
 E - 8 \\
 \hline
 G - 8 \\
 \hline
 39
 \end{array}$$

The B, M, E, G scores represent the scores for each of the sections.

MAT116/117 Focus Memo Comment Codes

Please use this sheet to decipher some of the codes I put on your Memos.

AWK	Your wording or explanation is a little bit awkward. Try to think of a clearer way to express what you are saying here, or look at the grammar to see if there is something you can do make it read better.
CX	Try to write your memo in a business context. Even though you're handing this in as a school assignment, your audience as a writer is a manager/boss on a job. So references to "school", "homework," "chapter," etc. should be left out.
DV	Define your variables clearly. Make sure the reader knows what every variable represents. The Summary/Footnote section is often a good place to do this.
EE	Use the Equation Editor to format your equations.
EN	Always be sure to briefly explain notation you are using since it may be unfamiliar to your reader (who we presume is a manager or boss on the job). A good place to do this is in the Summary/Footnote section.
ER	Your writing is generally easy to read. See other comment codes for possible improvements in other areas.
EX	You will need to provide more or clearer explanation of your analysis than you have here. While you don't want to drown the reader with every detail, you still need to provide enough information and explanation so that the reader knows what you are doing AND is convinced that you are doing something that is reasonable and makes sense.
GL	In the introductory paragraph, try to be more specific about what your goal is. For example, it might read something like: "In this update, we will be reporting [some specific outcome or result....]" or "In this memo, we will be reporting to you ...[some specific outcome or process]".
GTS	Check your work for Grammar, Typing, and Spelling errors. While a modest amount of them are reasonably expected, your memo should generally be professional and reflect an ability to clearly and accurately communicate in writing.
J	When you make a claim or recommendation, you should generally try to Justify it, especially if it's a decision about your project. While your claims may be preliminary or even wrong, it's still a good thing to explain WHY you think the way you do.
MF	Try not to Move Forward too much in the material. Focus on reporting your work and analysis for the CURRENT chapter and Focus on the Project Problem.
MP	You are Missing Parts of the assignment. Please see the sample memo handout for details on what should be included in each section of the memo.
NM	Your calculations/results do Not Match other team member(s). Please check with them.
NP	This memo or this part of the memo is not as professional as it could be. Think about how to clean it up and make it look better.
RF	Please use the files in the Requested Format. The memo stencils can be found on the H: Drive. Copy them to your flash drive so you have them accessible from home.
RR	Make sure to report all the results from the original problem. Sometimes, to make the main body of the memo easier to read, these can be reported in the Summary/Footnote area.
SF	Use the Summary/Footnote area to report results if you think they might clutter up your main memo or make the memo harder to read or understand. If you do this, make sure to indicate to the reader that they should be looking in that section for more information.
SP	Try to be more specific here. The way you have phrased this does not give me a clear sense of what you mean.
TN	I need to know what your Team Number is so I can compare your results to your teammates'. Please put this information on each Memo.
WN	Watch your use of notation. You have used notation in a way that is not correct, is inconsistent, or that has not been defined. It's an important detail to which you should pay careful attention.