

Example Guidelines for CSS MS Status Report

Overview

The purpose of formal, regular status updates is to provide your advisor or manager just enough information to help them identify where they can help keep your project on track. Regular status reports will assist you in thinking through, articulating, and then entering into a discussion about the decisions you will be making as you work through the various stages of your project.

Section-by-Section Guidelines

Status

- Begin with an overview summary (max 2-3 sentences) of your progress since your last status report (SR).
- Assess (compare) your plans and goals from the last SR to your accomplishments during that time frame. Be sure to use consistent language for goals and accomplishments.
- List the tasks or activities on your current task list. Include items you had planned to accomplish since the prior SR. For each task/activity, indicate its state and how long it has been in that state. Use bullets and limit each item to one line. Use the Status Activity Nomenclature provided at the end of this document.
- Quantify your estimated (planned) and actual time spent on each task. (See “Time Estimates” below.)
- Conclude with a clear summary of what you learned since the last SR. (See “Learnings” below.)

Decisions

- Outline any decisions made since the last SR. For each decision:
 - Explain the criteria for the decision.
 - Explain the alternatives considered.
 - Explain the rationale or reasons for the decision.
 - (Optional) Create a table showing criteria (rows) and alternatives (columns).
- Outline in detail the decisions you expect to make in the next interval.

Current assessment

- Explain whether and where the project is on track.
- Clearly detail successes, surprises, setbacks, or unexpected results.
- Identify emerging issues and problems to be addressed in the near future.
- Detail current risks or red flags.
- Be realistic (don't “sugar-coat”).

Time estimates

- Quantify your estimated (planned) and actual time spent on each task.
- Written interpretation of results, explains reasons for differences between planned/estimated and actual times.

Learnings

- Conduct a self-assessment of what you have learned. Focus on describing your meta-cognitive learnings, such as what you learned about getting better at getting better, what it means to do a project, or what insights you had into your project's value proposition.
- If you haven't learned anything in a week, something is very wrong. Think harder. Do more reflective writing as you work on your project.
- Uncovering the meta-lessons about how to do this type of work will enhance the value you get from this project and help you succeed in future projects.

Format

- Top of document should clearly establish your name, that this is a status report, the date of the status report, and the time frame covered by this report.
- Use readable fonts (12-point) and headings for sections.
- If it is a separate document, include in the document's name the date, your name, and "status report". For instance: "2015-04-20 Fred Flintstone Status report.pdf". Using YYYY-MM-DD for date will sort them correctly in a file system.

Status Activity Nomenclature

In addition to your concise description, indicate the state of completion or incompleteness for each task or activity by one of the following:

- "Done" (indicate with a D)
- "Deferred" (DF)
- "Cancelled" (C)
- "No Progress" (NP)
- "In Progress" (IP)
- "New" (N)

Submission

- May be an email message, or a separate document, e.g., submitted to Canvas.
- Every 1-2 weeks; at least 3 times per quarter.

Example report

John Smith status report: Jan 28 – Feb 3.

1. Next meeting: Feb 4, 2pm
2. Agenda
 - a. What other papers might provide criteria for evaluating algorithm?
 - b. What cloud platform to build upon?
3. Status (Planned Vs. Actual)
 - a. (Done. New) Code: Build existing code locally.
 - b. (First draft completed, need more review and material) Research: Complete X-Ray of at least 3 papers.
 - c. (In progress, working on mind maps) Report: Create files for cover, introduction, method, and results sections. Fill in available material and mind maps for rest.
 - d. Presentation: Create shell presentation and fill in from existing material.
4. Learnings
 - a. Need to spend time in smaller portions over the week. Found too much work over the weekend.
 - b. Need a lot more (3X?) time for non-code work.
 - c. A lot of material is already available, need to organize a lot.
5. Changes to plan
 - a. Daily minimum 1 Pomodoro for project work. Do not depend solely on weekend.
 - b. Allocate time for non-code work in ahead of code.

Next plan review is due on Thursday, February 5. Need to review scope of next iteration.