



HR Report Submission Guidelines

For students enrolled in AMCTO's Diploma in Municipal Administration (DMA)

Updated January 2022

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Introduction

In order to apply the Employment Law & Human Resources (HR) Program toward AMCTO's Diploma in Municipal Administration (DMA), students must submit a 4000-word, analytical, research-based report on a topic relevant to the human resources business area of the municipal corporation. Any topic covered in the nine modules of the program (or seven modules as of June 2021) is acceptable.

You must be enrolled in the DMA prior to submitting an HR report. If you are not sure whether you are enrolled, contact education@amcto.com.

Attendance and Grade Requirements

To gain credit for the HR program toward the DMA, you must:

- Complete all seven modules of the program.
- Submit a report proposal.
- Receive a grade of 60% or higher on the completed report.

A failing grade on the report (59% or lower) will result in failure to gain credit toward the DMA.

Submission Timeline

There are two deadlines you need to meet: one for the report proposal, and one for the completed report.

- The **report proposal** is due approximately two to three weeks after the conclusion of Module 7. Your marker will provide feedback within two weeks of the proposal deadline (timeline may be longer over the December holiday season). The proposal needs to be approved before you can proceed to the report.
- The **report** is due nine weeks after the approval date of the proposal.

Refer to the "HR Report Schedules & Timelines" document on the [HR program web page](#) for the specific deadlines for each cohort.

Submissions are due by 11:59 pm on the due date. Late submissions are subject to late penalties outlined in Section 3 of the Education Programs Policy, provided at the end of this document.

How to Submit the Proposal and Report

As of January 2022, proposals and reports must be submitted through AMCTO's online learning platform, AMCTO Connect. Each HR cohort will have access to an HR course in the platform that provides one drop box for the proposal and another for the report.

For the proposal, use the template provided in AMCTO Connect.

Submit both the proposal and the report as Word documents.

Note: If you took the HR program prior to January 2022 and plan to submit the report in 2022, you must inform the AMCTO at education@amcto.com. You will be added to an HR course in AMCTO Connect where you can submit your proposal and report.

Topic Selection Tips

You are encouraged to look for a topic that helps you achieve a practical goal in your professional work, your municipality, or another municipality you are interested in. For example, you could select a topic that:

- aligns with one of your HR-related projects or performance objectives at work;
- addresses an HR problem or challenge in your municipality;
- fits in with your municipality/organization's strategic plan.

Regardless of what HR topic you choose, it should be connected to the municipal sector. For example, if your topic is succession planning, it is not sufficient to talk about succession planning in general. You need to connect and apply it to a specific municipal context.

The gap analysis approach

The gap analysis approach is a useful way to formulate a topic. Ask the following questions:

- What is the current situation? Why does it need improvement?
- What is the desired situation? How will it help?
- Are there any barriers to achieving the desired situation?
- What might need to be done to overcome these barriers?

This can help you identify a topic that is focused and specific, yet significant enough to

merit attention. Keep in mind that the report needs to present an analysis, not a description.

Examples of Past Reports

A selection of past students' reports from the HR program and the Executive Diploma in Municipal Management are posted on the [Diploma Research Papers web page](#). This page is updated periodically.

Developing the Proposal

Problem Statement and Research Objectives

Background reading and research is essential to putting together your proposal. Other researchers or municipalities may have already published work related to your topic that you can cite, and knowing what has already been done will help you gain clarity on how to focus your own topic. Talk to others in your municipality. Your peers and colleagues may be the best sounding boards for research ideas that you have at this stage.

This background research process will help you narrow down:

- A **problem statement** that describes the specific problem/issue you plan to address with your report, and why it is important in your municipality or the municipal context.
- A set of four to five **research objectives** you plan to achieve with your report. Your objectives should be clear, explicit, and intentional statements, such as:
 - "Analyze case studies in ___ to identify recommended practices for ___"
 - "Evaluate the effectiveness of ___ municipality's ___ plan based on ___"
 - "Compare ___ and ___ policies to determine if ___"
 - "Investigate whether the ___ strategy had a positive impact on ___"
 - "Determine how improved ___ can contribute to higher rates of ___"
 - "Use findings on ___ to make recommendations on how to improve ___"
 - "Interview ___ to understand the impact of ___"

Research objectives are closely tied to the problem statement. For example, if the problem you plan to address is that there are common misunderstandings of the *Occupational*

Health and Safety Act in your municipality, then your objectives may involve investigating the root cause and developing recommendations to improve understanding.

Research Methodology

The purpose of the Research Methodology section is to help you think through how you will achieve the research objectives.

For example, if one of your objectives is to analyze whether a certain HR policy has led to better or worse attendance among a particular group of staff in your municipality, consider the following:

- What information/data will you analyze?
- Does that information/data already exist?
- Do you have access to it?
- If not, are you able to collect the relevant information yourself?

By going through this process, you may start to discover valuable sources of information that will be useful to you well beyond the HR report. It can also help you identify what is and isn't realistic to achieve within the scope of the report or the timeline you have. If it's going to take you three months just to collect information in a certain way or from a certain source, then you may need to go with an alternate plan.

Note: If you plan to conduct interviews, surveys, or use other methods involving human subjects, you should take steps to gain their explicit consent and ensure their anonymity and confidentiality.

Preliminary List of Sources

As you are doing background research and developing your research methodology, remember to document all your sources in detail: the author/organization, title, date, link to the source, etc. It can be very time-consuming to retrace your steps later on. You'll also want this information for the bibliography in your report.

For the proposal, narrow down to a set of 10 preliminary sources. The final sources you use in the report can change as your research progresses.

Make sure to assess your sources for credibility. For example, you'll likely want to look at articles published by vendors of HR solutions with a critical eye. Consider whether the

article is supported by evidence or research, and whether it is marketing material designed to sell a product.

Writing the Report

Report Format

Your report should be structured as follows:

1. Title page. Include a formal title, your name, and AMCTO ID number.
2. Executive Summary. This explains to the reader in a nutshell what your report covers. An Executive Summary should summarize the content of your report, reinforce your findings, and the benefits if your recommendations are implemented.
3. Table of Contents
4. List of tables, charts and/or diagrams, if any
5. Scope and Methodology. Explain the scope of your report—what it covers, what it does not, and why. Explain how you conducted your research, what data you collected, and how.
6. Text of your report, divided into chapters or sections. Chapters/sections make it easier for the reader to grasp the message of your report.
7. Recommendations and Conclusion. A summary of the main findings of your report and your recommendations.
8. Bibliography, Reference List, or Works Cited, depending on the citation style you use.
9. Appendices, if any. Appendices contain reference information that might take away from the readability of the report if included in the main body—for example, questionnaires you used to collect data, or tools that help the reader implement the recommendations in your report. Appendices should be numbered or lettered (for example, Appendix 1 or Appendix A) to help readers locate them, and they should be listed in your table of contents.

The final report should cite at least eight relevant and credible sources.

Submit the report in Word format.

Word Count

Aim for approximately 4,000 words for the entire report, including all of the components listed above. If your report is far below 4,000 words in total, you may not have been thorough enough in your research and analysis and it will likely be reflected in your grade.

If needed, you can use up to 6,000 words in total, but make sure the additional words are there for a good reason. If the report exceeds 6,000 words you should edit it to be more concise. Points will be deducted for excess words, repetitive information, unnecessarily verbose language, or content that goes off track.

Tips

- Identify and understand your audience. While it is obvious that your report is being submitted to a marker for academic purposes, the marker is not your audience. Identify who your audience is (for example, supervisor/council/senior management). Indicate the audience in the introduction of your report. Write your report keeping this audience in mind.
- Start by making an outline of what you want to say, even if the outline is only a list of the key points you want to cover and the order in which you want to cover them. An outline does not have to be detailed; it must, however, provide you with a sense of direction and order.
- Write a rough draft. Drafts should not take a lot of time. They should be written as quickly as possible and should record ideas about the topic. Then you have something you can shape and revise.
- Use a simple font. Don't use fancy or unique fonts—they are usually hard to read. Keep it simple.
- Use simple language where possible. Resist the urge to use complex words.
- Avoid writing in first person. Use third person format.
- Break up the text of your report where feasible with bulleted highlights, textboxes, graphics, etc. Create visual breaks to help the reader maintain interest in your report. These visual representations can also help enhance some of the key points in your report.
- Paginate all your pages and make sure the page numbering is correct in your table of contents.

How to Cite a Source

A citation in a report or essay paper generally has two components. The first component is an in-text citation of the source, as shown in the following two examples:

In spring 2021, the Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health found an increase in the number of Canadian adults who reported symptoms of mental health disorders (Statistics Canada 2021).

In spring 2021, the Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health found that “one in four (25%) Canadians aged 18 and older screened positive for symptoms of depression, anxiety or posttraumatic stress disorder” (Statistics Canada 2021).

In the first example, the writer paraphrased content from a source. In the second example, the writer used a direct quote from the source. In both cases, they included a citation of where the information came from.

The second component provides the full details of the cited source in a bibliography, reference list, or works cited section at the end of the paper, depending on the citation style being followed. For example:

Statistics Canada. 2021. “Survey on COVID-19 and Mental Health, February to May 2021.” Last modified October 4, 2021. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210927/dq210927a-eng.htm>.

When you use a source or reference in any way—whether it’s to support an analysis, example, argument, or recommendation—you should cite it unless it is common knowledge. If you have doubts about whether to cite something, just cite it.

Citation Styles

There are many different citation styles such as American Psychological Association style (APA) and Modern Language Association style (MLA). Some use parenthetical citations like the ones above, while others use footnotes.

For the HR report, we recommend using the guidelines provided by Kate L. Turabian’s *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. The examples above are based on this style. You can find many online resources on Chicago Style, so there is no need to purchase the manual.

A good starting point is to visit chicagomanualofstyle.org/turabian. Go to the “Citation Quick Guide” section. You’ll notice there are two methods for citing sources in Chicago Style:

1. Notes and Bibliography: This style uses **footnotes** within the body the paper, followed by a **bibliography** at the end of the paper that lists all the sources cited.
2. Author-Date: This style uses **parenthetical citations** within the body of the paper, followed by a **reference list** at the end with all the sources cited.

You can use either method. Choose one and use it consistently throughout the report.

To see examples of how footnotes, bibliographies, parenthetical citations, and reference lists are formatted in actual papers, go to the “Tip Sheets” section of the Turabian website provided above.

Academic Integrity: Your Responsibilities as a Student

AMCTO's policy on academic dishonesty is provided under Section 4 of the Education Programs Policy located at the end of this document. Read the policy. It is important to understand that:

- you are responsible for being informed about the definitions and consequences of academic dishonesty;
- if a marker finds academic dishonesty in your report, the entire report will be given a grade of zero;
- ignorance of what academic dishonesty is or what its consequences are is not an adequate defense.

Resources on Academic Integrity

Many Canadian universities and colleges have online help guides and tips for students that are publicly accessible. For example, Ryerson University's [Hints to Avoid Academic Misconduct](#) may be useful if you need help understanding what commonly gets identified as academic dishonesty. Pay attention in particular to the following sections:

- Copying and Pasting
- Paraphrasing vs. Just changing a few words
- Quoting and Paraphrasing

Use Your Own Words

Your report should be in your own words and represent your own analysis, except the parts where you are using a direct quote from a source. If you are using a word-for-word quote, it must be enclosed in quotation marks and directly followed with a citation. (If the quote is longer than five lines it can be formatted as an indented block quote.)

A simple regurgitation of the HR program materials or other source/reference materials will result in a low grade. Copying and pasting or repeating content verbatim (or close to verbatim) from any source material without citation is considered plagiarism, and will result in a grade of zero on the report.

Grading Criteria

The marker will assess your report based on the following grading rubric.

Criteria	Point Levels				Grade
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	
Problem/Issue Identification and Relevance to Municipal Context	Problem/issue is not well identified or relevant to municipal context Minimal or no detail to rationalize topic importance and relevance Minimal reference to municipal context	Partially developed description of the problem/issue Relevance and importance to municipal context is partially developed Vague evidence or rationale for researching the topic	Well-developed description and explanation of the problem/issue Solid discussion and understanding of the relevance and importance of the topic to municipal context Evidence of an argument for researching the topic	Well-developed description and explanation of the problem/issue Sophisticated analysis of the topic with respect to its importance and relevance to municipal context Strong supporting arguments and rationale for researching the topic	/10
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	
Scope and Methodology	Explanation of scope of research and how research was conducted is	Scope of research, how research was conducted, how data was collected, and how it was analyzed is	Satisfactory explanation of scope of research, how research was conducted, how	Well-developed explanation of scope of research, how research was conducted, how	/10

	inadequate or not included in report Minimal or no connection between research methods and objectives of the report	explained but not clearly articulated Unclear connection between research methods and objectives of the report	data was collected, and how it was analyzed Adequate connection between research methods and objectives of the report	data was collected, and how it was analyzed Research methods effectively support the objectives of the report	
	0-10	11-20	21-30	31-40	
Exploration of Problem/Issue and Analysis	Exploration of problem/issue lacks most important details Significant lack of analysis	Exploration of problem/issue lacks important details Analysis does not adequately address the problem/issue or is insufficiently supported by research	Problem/issue well explored, but some important detail missing Analysis is adequate but somewhat lacking in depth or support with research	Problem/issue explored thoroughly with few or no relevant details missing Analysis is sophisticated, thoughtful and well supported by research	/40
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	
Recommendations	Recommendations are absent or misaligned with the problem/issue	Recommendations are provided but are insufficient, unclear, impractical, or not supported by analysis	Recommendations provided based on analysis are adequate but somewhat lacking in clarity, practicality, or insight	Clear, practical, and sound recommendations are provided Recommendations are well supported by analysis	/10
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	

Clarity & Organization	Random or scattered ideas lacking focus Difficult to follow No apparent clarity or organization Ineffective or no use of headings and sub-headings	Some orderly progression of ideas and a general focus Some sections confusing or unrelated to main idea Ineffective use of headings and sub-headings	Clear, logical pattern of development in organization General focus and coherence Logical sequence of ideas Transitions between ideas consistently smooth and effective Some use of headings and sub-headings	Seamless pattern of organization Ideas flow naturally and smoothly, reinforce and support content Headings and sub-headings used effectively	/10
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	
Use of References (including at least 8 sources)	Minimal or no use of references to support assertions	Ineffective use of references to support assertions Fewer than 8 sources used Citations are insufficient or inconsistent	Effective, but inconsistent, use of credible references to explore the problem/issue and support analysis Fewer than 8 sources used Sources are cited but somewhat inconsistently	Effective and consistent use of credible references to explore the problem/issue and support analysis At least 8 sources used Sources are accurately and consistently cited throughout the report and bibliography	/10
	0-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	

Grammar and Sentence Structure	Significant grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation errors	Frequent but minor sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation errors	Some grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation errors	Minor or no grammar, sentence structure, spelling, or punctuation errors	/10
TOTAL					/100

Reminders:

- Follow the [word count guidelines](#). If your report is far below 4,000 words in total, you may not have been thorough enough in your research and analysis, and it will likely be reflected in your grade. If it exceeds 6,000 words you should edit your report to be more concise. You will receive a deduction of 3 points for every 500 words in excess,
- Repeating content verbatim (or close to verbatim) from any source without citation is considered plagiarism and will result in a grade of zero on the entire report. See [How to Cite a Source](#) and [Academic Integrity: Your Responsibilities as a Student](#).

Education Programs Policy

Last updated January 2021

Purpose:

As a Certified Education Institution, AMCTO is a leading provider of education for Ontario's municipal professionals with courses that provide a solid foundation for those pursuing a career in municipal government.

In order to maintain its reputation for offering exceptional quality education and programs which are:

- focused on the learning needs of adults;
- pertinent, current and continuous;
- relevant to demographic, geographic and organizational needs; and
- integrated within a Career Cycle Learning Framework

it is necessary for the Association to establish, implement and enforce an education programs policy that governs the activities of students and others associated with the delivery of these programs.

Policy:

1. Scope

This Policy applies to all students enrolled in any of the Association's individual educational programs or diploma programs and to any instructors, academic mentors, proctors or markers associated with these programs.

2. Interpretation/Enforcement of Policy Provisions

Unless otherwise noted in a specific section of the Policy, the responsibility for interpreting and/or enforcing the provisions of this Policy rests with the Manager – Education Services. The decisions of the Manager – Education Services are final.

The Manager – Education Services may, at their discretion, delegate responsibility for the interpretation/enforcement of Policy provisions to another AMCTO Staff member.

In the event of disagreement, decisions made by these delegated individuals can be appealed to Manager – Education Services.

3. Student Submission of Assignments

- i) All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. on the stated due date. Any assignments received by the course marker after this time will be considered late.
- ii) Assignments submitted late to the course marker will automatically receive a mark deduction of 10%.
- iii) Assignments submitted thereafter will receive a 5% mark deduction for each additional day of lateness.
- iv) Assignments not received by the course marker within 7 calendar days (inclusive) of the due date will receive an automatic mark of zero.
- v) AMCTO does not guarantee the return of late assignments by the course marker to students, in the requisite time stipulated for on-time assignments in the AMCTO Student Handbook.
- vi) AMCTO will not guarantee the return of late assignments by the course marker to students before the writing of the Final Examination.
- vii) Students can request waiver of the above stated consequences by submitting documented proof of exceptional circumstances. AMCTO may waive the consequences of a late submission of an assignment upon review of the student's request for a waiver.

4. Academic Dishonesty

- i) Academic dishonesty is defined as the misrepresentation of any element of academic work, including (but not restricted to):
 - a) plagiarizing or copying from any source;
 - b) unauthorized use of any aids in assignments, and examinations;
 - c) submission of work that is not one's own;
 - d) submission of work for which credit has already been obtained;

- e) aiding and abetting the academic dishonesty of another student;
 - f) absent or inadequate notation of secondary sources. Students are expected to be competent in the treatment and citing of secondary materials or to seek advice from the Association with respect to appropriate citing of materials;
 - g) falsifying information for the purpose of gaining admission or credit to a program;
 - h) forging or falsifying AMCTO transcripts, certificates, diplomas, or documents.
- ii) Students are responsible for being informed about the definitions and consequences of academic dishonesty. Ignorance of what academic dishonesty is or what its consequences will be is not an adequate defense.
 - iii) AMCTO instructors, staff, and markers are obligated to report suspected incidents of academic dishonesty immediately.
 - iv) Academic dishonesty found on a submitted assignment or examination will result in a mark of zero on the entire assignment or examination.
 - v) Academic dishonesty discovered after an assignment or examination has been graded will result in a rescinding of the original mark.
 - vi) Academic dishonesty discovered after a Certificate or Diploma has been awarded will result in the immediate rescinding of the Certificate or Diploma.
 - vii) Repeated instances of academic dishonesty may result in a student being expelled from the course or program.
 - viii) A student may appeal an academic dishonesty finding to the Manager – Education Services.

5. Grade Appeals

- i) Students who wish to raise questions regarding the assessment of their academic performance, and allege error in the academic judgment of their work on the part of a marker, must first speak informally with the marker to clarify the reason for the

assigned grade. In the case of anonymous markers, the Association will solicit clarification from the marker and present it to the student.

- ii) Students must raise concerns regarding grade appeals no more than 30 days after the date of return of the work in question. The date of return is defined as the date on which the student received the material either electronically or by regular mail. After this period, no grade appeal requests will be entertained.
- iii) If dissatisfaction continues, the student may submit an AMCTO Request for Re-Marking Form and the related administrative fee. The Request must include a written, reasoned rationale for the appeal of the grade.
- iv) Upon receipt of a Request for Re-Marking Form, the Association will arrange for a review and remarking of the work in question by someone other than the original marker.
- v) The result of the re-marking will be final.
- vi) If a student alleges injustice on grounds other than academic judgment, such as discrimination, conflict of interest, or harassment, the provisions of the Association's Respect in the Workplace Policy will apply.

6. Requirements for Diploma Program Academic Mentors

- i) Suitable academic mentors are Municipal Managers, Clerks, Treasurers, CAOs or the Deputy of these positions. Retired professionals who once held these positions are also acceptable mentors. In addition, the principals and teachers of recognized post-secondary educational institutions can also be considered as academic mentors. AMCTO approval of the student's selected mentor will be necessary.
- ii) Under no circumstances can a member of a student's family or another student enrolled in the same course act as an academic mentor.
- iii) Despite the provisions of this Section, an individual may not act as an academic mentor for a student, where the student has managerial or supervisory responsibilities that directly affect the individual proposed to serve as academic mentor.
- iv) The academic mentor, as a representative of AMCTO, is responsible for upholding the standards of education and professional development held by AMCTO.

- v) The academic mentor will negotiate his or her fee directly with the requesting student and report the outcome of those negotiations to AMCTO.
- vi) The academic mentor will guide the student to develop their research topic and thesis question in order to submit a successful Research Application that ensures an appropriate and achievable level of difficulty, focus, and relevance.
- vii) The academic mentor will guide the student in creating and adhering to a Progress Schedule for their research.
- viii) The academic mentor will actively guide the student through the course of academic research and study by engaging the student in one-to-one conversation. The frequency of these meetings is to be determined by a consensus between the mentor and the student.
- ix) The academic mentor is responsible for further guiding the student's progress by recommending additional secondary source research materials that would help the student reach his or her goals. All of these additional resources are to be appropriately referenced.
- x) The academic mentor will review all drafts produced by the student, and critique the work on the basis of factual accuracy, clarity of thought, relevancy to stated thesis, grammatical correctness and insight.
- xi) The academic mentor will act as coach, encourager, and academic counsellor to the student throughout the period of their agreement.
- xii) Upon completion of the course, the academic mentor must not keep any of the student's work (in whatever form that work has taken) in his or her possession.
- xiii) Should the need arise, the academic mentor will have recourse to support and advice from AMCTO with regard to the mentor's duties and responsibilities.

7. Requirements for In-Class Course Offerings

- i) The provisions of this Section apply only to courses that are not operated directly through post-secondary institutions.

- ii) Persons who wish to act as an instructor for one of the Association's education programs must be approved by the Manager – Education Services. This approval must be obtained prior to a person offering instruction for any course.

Minimum qualifications:

- Minimum of five years' experience in municipal administration at the management level or equivalent professional expertise.
- Excellent written, verbal, interpersonal and communication skills.
- Demonstrated experience in adult education.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the subject matter.

- iii) The instructor must provide the Association with updates regarding the status/progress of the course on an ongoing basis.
- iv) Course materials used must be those provided by the AMCTO. From time to time, instructors may bring supplementary material such as sample by-laws, for visual examples only.
- v) Course materials for units of a particular program should be acquired Unit by Unit to ensure that the most current material is provided to the students.
- vi) The municipality or organization offering the course will be invoiced for each Unit by AMCTO and AMCTO, at its discretion, may require payment prior to the material being supplied.
- vii) The instructor must provide a copy of the course schedule at the time the request for purchase of materials is submitted.
- viii) At the discretion of the instructor, the exams may be written closed book under supervision of the instructor or they may be written in an open book format subject to a prescribed time constraint.

8. Requirements for Course Markers

- i) AMCTO Course Marker qualifications are as follows:

- Must have a minimum of five years' recent working and/or consulting experience in the municipal sector in an area that relates to the specific materials to be marked.
 - Must have excellent written, verbal, interpersonal and communication skills.
 - Should have familiarity with the grading of adult-learner assignments/exams.
- ii) Preference will be given to individuals who are currently AMCTO members in good standing.
- iii) No individual serving as a Course Marker as of the date on which this Policy is approved by the Board of Directors will be excluded from the opportunity to continue serving as a Course Marker if they do not meet the municipal experience qualifications set out in this Section.