This course supports the assessments for Business Research and Writing. The course covers 2 competencies and represents 2 competency units.

**Introduction**

**Overview**
This course is designed to prepare you to demonstrate your competence in researching, evaluating, interpreting, and presenting information on an important question based on the topic of your choice. You will locate relevant reference material to understand the topic. You will create a business report, and a multimedia presentation. The performance assessment consists of several separate sections, but the corresponding documents will be completed and submitted at one time into Taskstream for final grading.

Watch the following video introduction for this course:

*Note: To download this video, right-click the following link and choose "Save as...": [download video]*

**Competencies**
This course provides guidance to help you demonstrate the following 2 competencies:

- **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research and Presentation**
  The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.

- **Competency 318.2.3: Organizational Communication**
  The graduate can determine appropriate uses for specified types of organizational communication.

**Course Instructor Assistance**
While you prepare to demonstrate competency in this subject, remember that course instructors stand ready to help you reach your educational goals. As subject matter experts, mentors enjoy and take pride in helping students become reflective learners, problem solvers, and critical thinkers. Course instructors are excited to hear from you and eager to work with you.

Successful students report that working with a course instructor is the key to their success. Course instructors are able to share tips on approaches, tools, and skills that can help you apply the content you're studying. They also provide guidance in assessment preparation strategies, troubleshoot areas of deficiency, and guide you through the revision process if necessary. You should expect to work with course instructors for the duration of your coursework, so you are welcome to contact them as soon as you begin. Course instructors are fully committed to your success!

**Preparing for Success**

The information in this section is provided to detail the resources available for you to use as you...
complete this course.

Learning Resources
The learning resources listed in this section are required to complete the activities in this course. For many resources, WGU has provided automatic access through the course. However, you may need to enroll manually or acquire other resources independently. Read the full instructions provided to ensure that you have access to all of your resources in a timely manner.

Automatically Enrolled Learning Resources

You will be automatically enrolled at the activity level for the following learning resources. Simply click on the links provided in the activities to access the learning materials.

Flat World Knowledge E-Texts
The following textbooks are available to you as e-texts within this course. You will be directly linked to the specific readings required within the activities that follow. Customized additional learning resources are integrated with the e-text.


Note: This custom e-text is available to you in multiple online and mobile formats as part of your program tuition and fees, but you may purchase hard copies at your own expense through the publisher.

Other Resources

Business Research Templates
Download and review the following documents. It is to be used in your preparation and creation of the research report.

- Business Research Report Template
- PowerPoint Template

Business Research and Writing Learning Community
You will need to access the Business Research and Writing Learning Community. You can access it through the Course of Study on the right-hand side of the page. There you will find announcements as well as helpful course tips.

Additional Preparations

Getting Started Webinar
View the "Getting Started" webinar located in the "Announcements" section of the Business Writing and Research Learning Community.

Documents and Research Tips
The following video will give you an overview of each section of the business report template and the PowerPoint template.
Pacing Guide
The topics and pacing guide suggests a weekly structure to pace your completion of learning activities. It is provided as a suggestion and does not represent a mandatory schedule. Follow the pacing guide carefully to complete the course in the suggested timeframe.

Week 1
Preparing for Success

Week 2

- Research Scope

Week 3

- Preparing for and Conducting Research

Week 4

- Report Organization

Week 5

- The Business of Writing

Week 6

- Effective Business Presentations
  - Final Steps

Business Research

To begin the process of mastering the competencies of business research and writing, you will first learn about research resources and strategies. Then you will choose a business scenario to research and locate relevant information sources to support the project.

Research Scope
One of the first things you need to do as a researcher in order to find relevant and reliable information is to have a sound understanding of what you are looking for. Otherwise, you may spend a lot of time finding trivial information that even the best JEOPARDY! contestant would not use. Fully comprehending the scope of the research needed enables you to ask the right questions that will lead you to the reliable information you need. This topic covers topic selection for this assessment to help you begin the business research project.

This topic addresses the following competencies:
- **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research and Presentation**
  The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.

- **Competency 318.2.3: Organizational Communication**
  The graduate can determine appropriate uses for specified types of organizational communication.

**Task Instructions**

Read the task instructions for this performance assessment via the "Assessment" tab in this course. You will need to refer to the "Topic Selection" section for the following activity.

**Performance Task Section A: Topic Selection**

1. As a partner in a new business, one of your roles is to review information technology tools available to assist you in a certain aspect of your business (e.g., marketing, accounting, sales, quality assurance, customer service, etc.). Research and analyze three different technologies and consider their potential impact on your business.

   Possible research topics/search terms include (but are not limited to):

   - Video conferencing
   - Social media
   - Cloud computing
   - Tablet PCs
   - Enterprise resource planning (ERP)
   - Accounting software

2. As a partner in a new business, one of your roles is to review information technology tools available to assist you in a certain aspect of your business (e.g., marketing, accounting, sales, quality assurance, customer service, etc.). Research and analyze three different providers of one technology and consider their potential impact on your business.

   Possible research topics/search terms include (but are not limited to):

   - Video/Web conferencing- Skype, Adobe Connect, FaceTime, Cisco WebEx, GoTo Meeting, Microsoft Lync, etc.
   - Social media- Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.
   - Cloud computing- Dropbox, Google Drive, SugarSync, etc.
   - Tablet PCs- HP, Samsung, Apple, Microsoft
   - Enterprise resource planning (ERP)- Oracle, SAP, Sales Force, etc.
   - Accounting software- Peachtree, Quicken, TurboTax, etc.

3. You are a CPA in a public accounting firm. Your firm has been hired by XYZ Corporation, a publicly traded, multinational corporation to assess how the implementation of the International Accounting Standards (IAS)/International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) will affect the financial reporting of XYZ Corporation.
Research and analyze three differences between United States GAAP and IAS/IFRS.

Possible research topics/search terms include (but are not limited to):

- Inventory costing differences
- Intangible assets differences
- Impairment write-downs differences
- Income tax differences
- Asset differences
- Revenue recognition differences
- Expense recognition differences
- Financial reporting and presentation differences

4. As a member of the human resources department, you have been asked to evaluate three different compensation strategies to possibly implement. Assume your organization has over 100 employees at a variety of salary levels. Research and analyze three compensation strategies to understand their possible impact on your organization.

Possible research topics/search terms include (but are not limited to):

- Bonus plan
- Merit plan
- Long-term incentives
- Stock options
- Tuition reimbursement
- Onsite daycare
- Pension plan
- Health insurance
- Wellness programs
- Transportation benefits

5. You are employed by a manufacturing company in a highly competitive industry. Your manager has asked you to research and analyze three quality improvement initiatives in an effort to produce higher profit margins. Prepare a report for your manager that researches/analyzes quality control initiatives that could be used to produce higher profit margins.

Possible research topics/search terms include (but are not limited to):

- Total Quality Management
- Six Sigma
• Lean Manufacturing
• ISO9000
• Design of Improvements (DOE)
• Brecker Process Improvement
• Implementation of quality improvement
• International Organization for Standardization
• Quality management system
• 8 dimensions of quality

6. Your company currently sells its products in retail stores located throughout the United States. It wishes to expand and sell its products on the Internet. Research and analyze three advantages, disadvantages, and/or challenges with online sales or marketing that will impact the business.

Possible research topics/search terms can include (but are not limited to):

• Advantage: Increased customer service opportunities
• Advantage: Increased customer base opportunities
• Disadvantage: Negative publicity due to hacking of personal information and credit card data
• Disadvantage: losing customers who want personal attention face to face
• Challenge: security issues
• Challenge: communication issues
• Challenge: search engine optimization (SEO) ranking
• Challenge: logistics/inventory/shipping/order fulfillment of online sales
• Challenge: funding and staffing required to launch website

Preparing for and Conducting Research
Are you familiar with the adage “garbage in, garbage out”? It is as true with making business decisions based on research as it is for managing computer databases. That is why knowing how to do secondary research is critical to gathering reliable information to base important decisions on. This topic will help you see the importance of effective business research for your business report and presentation as well as enable you to learn efficient ways to gather and evaluate information.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

• **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research and Presentation**
  The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.

• **Competency 318.2.3: Organizational Communication**
  The graduate can determine appropriate uses for specified types of organizational communication.
Business Research Preparation

Read the following chapters and complete the associated activities in *Business Communication for Success*:

- Chapter 4 Effective Business Writing
- Chapter 5 Writing Preparation

Chapter 5 focuses on gathering and evaluating research and provides excellent information to guide the research process.

**Performance Task Section B: Locate and Evaluate Business Research Sources**

Section B of the performance task for this course requires you to locate eight research sources. Using any variety of resources available to you, research your selected business topic. The three sources listed below will provide you with excellent resources; however, you will also want to utilize a basic Internet search for professional resources that may help you complete your research. On the WGU Library home page, you can access the following resources:

- **Federated Database Search**: This database contains business journals that are more research rather than application focused. The search results are displayed according to relevance but search terms can be redefined to display by date.
- **Books 24x7**: This is a database of industry-specific books that are more focused on application and examples from the business world. Again, the search results are displayed according to relevance. In addition to the search engine displaying the top books that match your search criteria, it will also give you the top three chapters from the books that match your search criteria.

In addition to the research options above, you may also consider utilizing the following tips to help simplify the research process.

1. **Eight Required Resources/Citations**: You must have eight unique references or resources and a corresponding citation for each reference. Most of your references will likely be included in the research summary section for each of your main points in the business report.
2. **70/30 Rule**: 70% of your report must be original writing with 30% allowed for paraphrasing or quotations. You can utilize the TurnItIn program in TaskStream to check the originality percentage for your work. As you look for material to utilize as citations, focus on short quotes, theories, or ideas that can be cited without exceeding the 30% allowance.
3. **Credible Resources**: Do not use blogs, editorials, Wikipedia, etc. You must have credible academic or professional resources. If you question the credibility of a resource, send it to the course instructors to review.
4. **Defining Search Terms**
   1. Use quotation marks for specific phrases (more than two words)
   2. Use *and*, *not*, and *or* to separate search terms
   3. Consider all the possible words or phrases that describe your topic
(e.g., teenagers, young people, adolescents, youth).
4. Consider alternative spellings (e.g., color, colour)
5. Think about variations in word endings (e.g., nurse, nurses, nursing)
6. Expand acronyms (e.g., TV, television).
7. Try searching on the author’s name for other related work.
8. Consider alternative terminology (e.g., sidewalk, pavement)

**Writing Business Reports**

The ability to write business documents with accurate, accessible information including an appropriate amount of detail is a highly valued skill. Even when reviewing your resume, employers are looking to see how well you can articulate and present information tailored to a specific audience. These same literary skills are used in writing business reports that follow a standardized format and present information clearly, enabling the reader to quickly view and comprehend the key points.

**Report Organization**

Business reports are a very important form of business communication. They are used for a variety of purposes and objectives and provide the audience with information that can be critical to decision making with the organization. As you start your business report, think about your audience and purpose for writing this report. Is the purpose to inform, to persuade, to investigate, etc? Understanding your purpose and your audience are critical to creating a successful business report.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research Presentation**
  The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.
- **Competency 318.2.3: Organizational Communication**
  The graduate determines appropriate uses for specified types of organizational communications.

**Organization and Outlines**

Read the following chapter and complete the associated activities in *Business Communication for Success*:

- [Chapter 9 Business Writing in Action](#)
  - Focus on Section 9.4 "Reports"

**The Business of Writing**

With the research finished and a plan for how to construct the main ideas in your business report, it is time to begin focusing on the writing of the report itself. In this section, you will study techniques for effective writing and report construction.

This topic addresses the following competencies:

- **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research and Presentation**
The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.

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Effective Writing Techniques

Read the following chapter and complete the associated activities in *Business Communication for Success*:

- **Chapter 6 Writing**

**Performance Task Section C: Creating Your Business Report**

Using the [Business Research Report Template](#), write your business research report.

Not sure where to start? It is recommended to complete sections in the following order. However, you will want to keep the sections in the current order listed in the template for submittal. Refer to the RWT1 Tips Document that is available by contacting the course instructors at RWT1@wgu.edu for additional guidance on each of the sections listed below.

- Task Section C5: Report Body
- Task Section C6: Conclusion
- Task Section C7: Reference Page (APA citations)
- Task Section C4: Introduction
- Task Section C3: Executive Summary
- Task Section C2: Table of Contents
- Task Section C1: Cover Page

**Table of Contents:**
You must include a table of contents for your business report. Microsoft Word has an automatic Table of Contents feature that you can utilize. The Table of Contents will be created once the paper has been written to ensure that the appropriate page numbers are reflected. If you need help entering a table of contents, refer to the blog called, “Inserting a Table of Contents,” available in the Business Writing and Research Learning Community.

**Executive Summary**
The executive summary is intended to be a one page summary of your entire report. It is intended for a different audience than the report itself and will likely be utilized by a busy manager that may not have the time or the need to read the entire report. The executive summary is often considered the most important section of a business plan because in many cases it may be the only section that is reviewed by your audience. The executive summary should highlight the strengths of your overall plan and therefore be the last section you write. However, it usually is the first section in your business report.

For the purposes of your performance task, the executive summary should be no more than one page and should discuss the following topics:
Introduction
The introduction is a separate requirement from the executive summary. You must discuss the subject and purpose of the business report and preview the three research findings. The three research findings will be discussed in the introduction, conclusion and the executive summary. You may consider using the information from the introduction in all three sections. The suggested length of this section is one page, but one full page may not be required to complete this section.

Body of the Report
The body of the business report must contain two separate elements: research findings and recommendations. Each research finding should include a research summary and an analysis section. The first few paragraphs under the finding should include a summary of your research. No opinion should be included in this section; however, you will likely use most, if not all, of your citations in this section. Describe what you learned from your research.

The next paragraph or two should be an analysis of the research. You should include a subheading with the word analysis or bold the first word of the analysis section. The analysis component should include a discussion of your opinion of the research. Consider the following questions:

- What does the research mean in relation to the scenario?
- How is the research relevant?
- Why is the research important to the company?

Once you have completed the research summary and analysis, you will then discuss your recommendations based on this research. Focus on what the company should do with the information that you have provided. You should have three action items or steps that the company can complete to address the problem that you are trying to solve.

Conclusion
The conclusion should include a summary of the three main research findings and should summarize the benefits of your three recommendations. In order to effectively summarize your three main research findings, you should include at least two or three sentences about each finding to ensure that they are appropriately summarized.

Reference Page
The business report must have a reference page formatted according to APA guidelines. For questions on correct formatting, please contact the course instructors in the Business Writing and Research Learning Community.

You will submit this report and the multimedia presentation to Taskstream.
Business Presentations

While written business reports lend themselves to full explanations and compelling details, organizational leaders often prefer the format of a multimedia presentation to communicate information. Not only does the multimedia format provide visual impact, but the verbal or audio component clarifies and reinforces the message.

Effective Business Presentations

There is a noticeable difference between a compelling, persuasive, effective business multimedia presentation and one that simply goes through the motions without having any impact. As you complete the activities associated with this topic, you will learn how to develop effective presentations that meet the needs of your audience while conveying the message that you need to get across.

This topic addresses the following competency:

- **Competency 318.2.2: Business Research and Presentation**
  The graduate conducts business research and develops business-related presentations appropriate to specific tasks.

Presentation Strategies

Read the following chapter and complete the associated activities in *Business Communication for Success*:

- **Chapter 10 Developing Business Presentations**

**Performance Task Section D: Creating Your Business Report**

Using the [PowerPoint Template](#), create a multimedia presentation that summarizes your business report. The presentation should include your three main findings, recommendations, and the justification for your recommendations. The suggested length for the presentation is 8–10 slides, but any number of slides will be accepted for the presentation. If you do not have access to multimedia software, you can utilize an online tool to create your presentation (e.g., LibreOffice, GoogleDrive). If you utilize an online tool, you should include a brief explanation in the "notes" section of the submittal tab to explain that your presentation has been included as a web link rather than an attached file.

**Final Steps**

Congratulations on completing the activities in this course! This course has prepared you to complete the assessments associated with this course. If you have not already been directed to complete the assessments, schedule and complete your assessments now.