

University of North Texas
GEOG 5190: Advanced Quantitative Techniques

Lab and Paper Writing Expectations

Here are a few general guidelines to help you create lab reports and term project papers that you and I can both be proud of.

1. **Read the directions.** I can't emphasize this enough. So many mistakes I see come from simply not following the directions and not completely answering the questions given. I can and will show a lot of mercy for some kinds of mistakes, but not this. For labs, please read the entire lab through carefully, and respond to everything that I ask. If you miss something or provide an incomplete answer, you will be penalized.
2. **Show your work.** Even though this is a graduate-level class, the basics are still important. If calculations are necessary and you need to write something out to get your answer, show your intermediate work as well as the answer. Often the way that you get your answer is as important as the final answer, so don't omit documenting and handing in your work leading up to the answer.
3. **Don't look for the easy way out.** Again, remember this is a graduate-level class. Even if it is technically possible for you to answer a given lab question with a simple "yes", "no", "I agree", "the results are significant", or something similar, don't end there. In addition to the kinds of calculations mentioned in #2 above, there will probably be some logical explanation you need to give so the person reading your lab can understand your answers completely. The rationale behind your answers is important for both labs and term papers. Always assume that some kind of explanation or justification is necessary, even if not explicitly stated. "Go the extra mile" and look for ways to give me insight into your thought process. What evidence is available, what do we know from class, and how do you put that all together?
4. **Remember that grammar is important.** In the course of explaining yourself fully (as in #3 above), do not rely on phrases or sentence fragments. I expect complete sentences and paragraphs because this is the expectation of the workplace you will go to from here. Use of complete and grammatically-correct sentences and paragraphs is an important part of clear communication, and clear communication is invariably a critical element in success for you personally and/or for the group or organization you work within.
5. **What would a future boss think?** What image of yourself are you communicating through the work you do in your labs and report writing for this class? Is it easy to get the idea that you are a hard worker who really thinks things through, and does a good job of bringing together all of the relevant concepts and resources for the task at hand? Or, would a reader think that you're just doing the minimum possible to simply get the task done, and that you don't really care what quality of work you complete? The choice is yours.