Professional Summary (PS)

**OVERVIEW:**
Your professional summary will be graded in three primary categories:

**(A) Technical**
- is it constructed exactly as requested?

**(B) Aesthetic**
- is it professional in appearance and devoid of distractions and blemishes? It should not have ink smudges, it should not have a heading on one page with the related content on another, it should have a perfectly aligned table of contents, it should be, in every sense, an extremely professional “appearing” document.

**(C) Content**
- does the content address all the relevant areas of the project as outlined in the text? Does it demonstrate the ability to think critically?

**WRITING GUIDE FOR YOUR SEMESTER PROJECT**

Consider your Professional Summary to be an important business report. You need to be accurate and you need to be clear, complete, and concise. While you should not ramble on and on or overload the reader with countless facts and figures, you do need to integrate a sufficient number of these to add credibility to your statements. Consult your Performance Scorecard textbook for additional details.

How long should my PS be? Let the three Cs be your guide (Clear, Complete, and Concise). Your paper should be a minimum of 50 pages.

What should be included in my PS? The PS will be divided into three broad categories (Introduction, Central Content, and Summary) and these will contain several important segments.

Each category and segment should be clearly labeled. Do not forget to devote an appropriate amount of time and attention to THE INTRODUCTION, THE CENTRAL CONTENT, and THE SUMMARY. Each of these generic segments is crucial to a logical and professional summary of your discoveries and conclusions.
Introduction:

This is a very important part of your report and it should stimulate interest and “hook” the reader. In other words, make the reader want to continue.

- Include a brief history of the company
- State the names and positions of top corporate officers
- Identify the members of the board of directors and include:
  - Their ages
  - Their field of experience
  - Are they inside directors or outside directors?
  - Other relevant data
- Indicate why you selected this particular company on which to become an expert.
- How did you select the benchmark?
- Provide some environmental context data (see details about the general and competitive environments in your Corporate Performance textbook for guidance)
- Explain major trends and events in the target’s primary industry or industries.
- Give any general information that you believe will stimulate the interest of the reader of your report for example:
  - For example if the General Electric Company is chosen, the PS would include introductory information such as: NYSE: GE – Headquarters: 3135 Easton Tpke., Fairfield, Conn. – Company founded: 1892 – Activities: One of the largest and most diversified industrial corporations worldwide, GE manufactures products and offers services from appliances to locomotives and financial services. Stock performance: (State what the stock has done over the last five years.)
  - Give any general information that will be particularly interesting, informative, and/or decision useful to the reader.
- Does the introduction appear long enough?
- Does it provide an adequate outline how the data were collected?
- Is there an adequate outline of the order in which the material and analysis will be presented in the document?
- Does the introduction effectively capture interest and attention? Why were these two particular companies selected for study?

Central Content:

This is the heart of your report. It should be objective and interpretative. In other words, you will report what you have observed and then you will interpret what you believe it means for future operations.

The body should be divided into CLEARLY marked sections. The sections should include both a quantitative (financial) analysis and a qualitative analysis.

The primary focus will be the reporting of your findings. What performance characteristics did you notice and what do you believe will be the long-term
implications of those performance characteristics? For example, if you are addressing issues of a financial nature, one of the many issues you might identify could be a significant trend in profitability as compared to the benchmark. If profitability is increasing faster than that of the benchmark it might encourage expansion or diversification (be sure to address ALL elements in the financial four as explained in your text. If you are addressing issues of a qualitative nature, you might comment on how the company treats its employees or what type of corporate culture exists and make a suggestion of how this might affect the company’s performance in the future. Be sure to address the majority of items categorized in Organizational Citizenship and Strategic Planning in your text.

**Do not be wishy-washy.** With respect to the performance of your target company, you should express specific opinions and clear conclusions about what you believe is working well and about what needs to be improved. Be very precise about how you feel and why you feel that way. While you will be talking about two companies (the target and the benchmark), please remember that the **primary focus (interest) of this professional summary is the target company** NOT about the benchmark company. Specifically, address how well your target company is doing when compared to the prior year, **and** Address how well your target is doing when compared to the benchmark.

**Use subheading.** (Clearly label paragraphs.)

- **QUANTITATIVE (Financial)** – There are four major elements and each should be carefully and completely addressed. Each of these should have a subheading as shown in your Corporate Performance textbook.
  1. Profit, Equity, and Share Value management
  2. Debt management
  3. Cash management
  4. Asset Management

- **QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS** – There are two (2) segments to the qualitative analysis and these include: (1) Organizational Citizenship (Corporate Social Responsibility) and (2) Strategic Positioning.
  1. **Organizational Citizenship** This segment summarizes your sense of how well the management is interacting with employees, suppliers, competitors, the general community, and the government. It contains eleven major elements and you should make some comment on each point. If you are unable to find data for an individual point, please indicate UNABLE ABLE TO LOCATE INFORMATION. Please be careful with this however, too many references to the “UNABLE” option might suggest inadequate research. Each of the categories should have a subheading as shown in your Corporate Performance textbook.
(2) Strategic Positioning contains five major elements and each of these should be addressed.

Comment on the each of the following:
1. Vision and Mission
2. Competitive Advantage
3. Environment: External
4. Innovation
5. Plans and Progress

Summary:

Connect all of the parts of your professional summary by providing a cursory summary of your introduction and a cursory summary of your central content section. Then express a series of opinions and an overall conclusion about the target company’s performance. Cite specific details (events, facts, and/or figures) to justify each of your opinions. It is important to include facts and figures in the summary to justify statements and conclusions. In other words, what conclusions have been drawn about the company’s performance and why? It is essential to avoid expressing a series of unsupported opinions or making unsubstantiated statements. The report should be objective and professional with the appropriate embedding of statistics to instill confidence in the reader of your report.

Balance is important – your summary should be approximately as long as your introduction. Conclude with conviction and finality. Remember you are SELLING your point of view because you believe in the accuracy and importance of your report.

Again, do not hesitate to include details (events, facts, and/or figures) in your summary. What have you concluded and why have you drawn that conclusion? Your summary should close with a statement of your overall conclusion about the quality of management performance.

Please remember that no company will perform well in all categories. There will undoubtedly be multiple areas where the target has performed well and others where it has performed poorly. Once all the data are processed and placed in perspective it is easier (not easy) to judge the target company as a whole.

Finally, relax and enjoy this project. The academic objective is not the end product but rather the learning that will occur during the process of researching, collecting, reviewing, analyzing, summarizing, and writing.

Be sure to read checklist below. Pay close attention to the Works Cited section.
Checklist for your Professional Summary:

Length: It should be a minimum of 50 pages and this DOES NOT count the appendix.

The appendix should include **ALL worksheets and bar charts from you PSC analysis template.** Be sure that you **DO NOT HAVE** any unallocated assets, liabilities, or expenses. **You MUST** include the number of outstanding common shares on the appropriate line on the balance sheet. **You MUST** include the balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows from your target AND benchmark companies. You must include data about the Board of Directors.

Page number your report (Professional Summary).

Include a table of contents with the appropriate page numbers.

Do not number your cover or first page.

The report (professional summary) should have a spiral binding, preferably metal or sturdy plastic.

It should have a clear plastic cover on BOTH the front and back of the report. It should have TWO (2) covers: one visible through the clear plastic protective sheet and a second behind that and on top of the table of contents. The first and second covers should not be identical.

Make sure that your table of contents is not wavy.

Be sure to include your security code.
- This is essential to your grade.
- There is one and only one security code per student.
- Reports with no security code will not be accepted and those with duplicates will be investigated for copyright violations and plagiarism. Please be careful.

**Record it in numerous places so that it is not lost.**

Be sure to include a “Works Cited” page.

SEE BELOW FOR MORE ON “WORKS CITED”
Works Cited Page

Every semester project is expected to have a formal Works Cited Page with AT LEAST 10 completely different sources.

No specific style guide is required EXCEPT you are expected to be consistent. In other words, if you start out using an APA method, stay with it and do not change to some other method. If you start with the MLA or the RVN methods, stay consistent.

Completely different examples of citing works are below and you may use these if you wish.

**Example of citing method:**


**Another Example of citing method:**


If you have any questions PLEASE ask your Professor.

UNNECESSARY MISTAKES ON SEMESTER PROJECTS

How to reduce your semester project grade:

1. Your grade will be reduced if you use a minus sign on the PSC Income Statement (except where directed to do so by your professor)

**DO NOT USE MINUS SIGNS ON THE INCOME STATEMENT!**
**IF YOU BELIEVE YOU NEED TO USE A MINUS SIGN ON THE INCOME STATEMENT – SEE YOUR PROFESSOR FIRST**

2. Your grade will be reduced if you use a minus sign on the PSC Balance Sheet (except where directed to do so by your professor)

**DO NOT USE MINUS SIGNS ON THE BALANCE SHEET!**
**IF YOU BELIEVE YOU NEED TO USE A MINUS SIGN ON THE BALANCE SHEET – SEE YOUR PROFESSOR FIRST**


3. Your grade will be reduced if you do not carefully follow the following guidelines. You almost always have to use SOME minus signs in the Cash Flow section of the PSC. If you do not do so where appropriate, your grade will be reduced.

- When cash is "Provided" no minus sign is necessary
- When cash is "Used" a minus sign is a MUST

**IF YOU ARE NOT SURE – SEE YOUR PROFESSOR FOR HELP**

4. Your grade will be reduced if you incorrectly report the number of common shares of stock outstanding on PSC balance sheet (See the very last line.)

5. Your grade will be reduced if you leave the last line of the PSC blank (number of common shares outstanding) [see # 4 above]

6. Your grade will be reduced if you do not report dividends for your target company if they have been paid. To determine if dividends have been paid, go to the Statement of Cash Flows and look under FINANCING ACTIVITIES. If dividends show here, you company has paid dividends and you must report the dividends. **DO NOT REPORT THE AMOUNT SHOWING IN THE STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS.** That is total dividends and you need dividends PER SHARE.

7. Your grade will be reduced if you do not show ANY OPERATING EXPENSES. A company cannot operate without operating expenses.

8. Your grade will be substantially reduced if you do not include the Income Statement, Balance Sheet, and Statement of Cash Flows from your target company AND your benchmark company.

9. Your grade will be significantly reduced if you do not include ALL the tabs from your Performance Scorecard analysis template.

10. Your grade will be significantly reduced if you do not follow EXACTLY all of the guidelines for writing your semester project.
The cover page should be in color.

There is only one security code assigned to each student. It is crucial to your grade. (see below)

Your name: Course section # Pin: Security code:

PSC Performance Scorecard analysis template must be accessed from the course web site.

Include the ticker symbol

Online software Password assigned by professor

Notice binding