climateXchange

Scotland's centre of expertise connecting climate change research and policy

Report writing guide

ClimateXChange (CXC) reports respond to policy questions raised by the Scottish Government, highlighting relevant findings.

Our audience is time poor and not science specialists. It is important to keep it short, up to 25 pages, and in plain language.

The reader should be able to skim your text and understand:

- what is the problem/issue/challenge
- why it matters
- what can be done.

Answer the policy questions. This is the most important point in all CXC outputs. We set the science in context, explaining the meaning of the research findings. We are constructive, identify solutions and focus on meaning, not method, in presenting our work.

Use annexes for technical detail and methodology. These aspects of our work should be available and accessible but are not of primary interest to the policy reader. This sets CXC's work apart from traditional academic work, where the method is more prominent.

Reports over eight pages should have an executive summary of no more than two pages. Reports should not go over 25 pages. CXC can advise on the appropriate structure for the executive summary.

Make it visual if a graph/infographic can illustrate your report. Seek inspiration in books or online resources on best data visualisation. However, consider that for accessibility you should not use images of text. Any visual way of conveying data such as a table, chart or image has to be described in the surrounding text.

Highlight benefits of your work. Quantify them if you can. How much public money can be saved, directly or through better value for money? What would it bring to Scotland?

Do not suggest that further research is needed, unless there is a clear reason and it is linked to achieving a policy outcome.

Plain English

Keep sentences short, with 15-20 words. Most commas can be replaced by a full stop.

Use active verbs. These highlight the action and the actors.

✓ Government will review the plan next year
✗ A review of the plan will be undertaken by government next year

Use 'you' and 'we'. Be personal as if you were speaking to your reader.

Use clear wording. Define any terms that may be read differently by different audiences. Everyday language does not make your text less credible. It makes it more accessible for anyone who may want to read it.

Proofread. Check your text beyond relying on Word's squiggly lines.

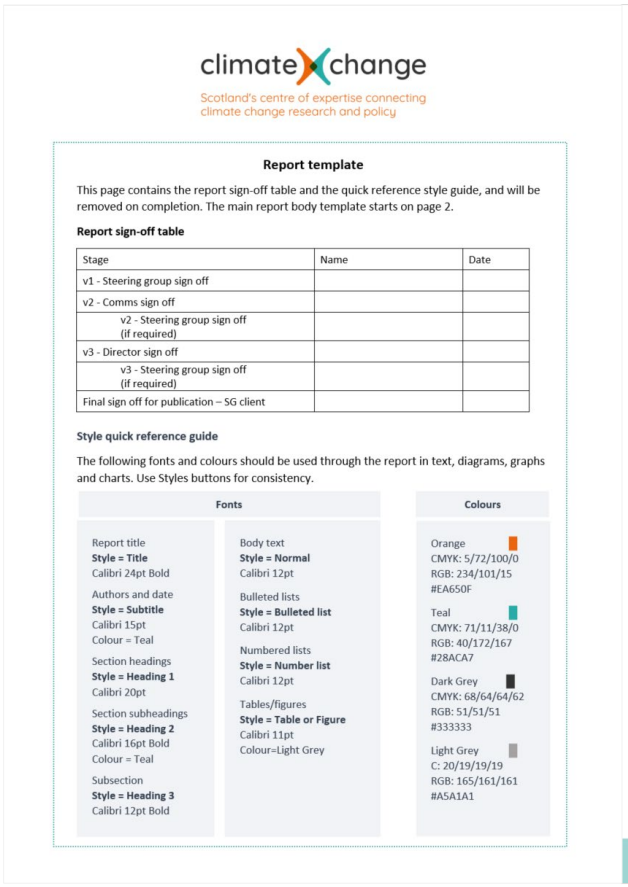
Formatting CXC outputs

Please use the CXC template to format reports. This guide uses this formatting.

CXC works to make all outputs as accessible and user-friendly as possible. The reporting format for your project will be discussed at the project start-up meeting, when you will also receive the template.

We can help with:

> structuring content
> formulating conclusions and recommendations
> developing presentations.



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Report template

This page contains the report sign-off table and the quick reference style guide, and will be removed on completion. The main report body template starts on page 2.

Report sign-off table

Stage	Name	Date
v1 - Steering group sign off		
v2 - Comms sign off		
v2 - Steering group sign off (if required)		
v3 - Director sign off		
v3 - Steering group sign off (if required)		
Final sign off for publication – SG client		

Style quick reference guide

The following fonts and colours should be used through the report in text, diagrams, graphs and charts. Use Styles buttons for consistency.

Fonts

Report title
Style = Title
Calibri 24pt Bold

Authors and date
Style = Subtitle
Calibri 15pt
Colour = Teal

Section headings
Style = Heading 1
Calibri 20pt

Section subheadings
Style = Heading 2
Calibri 16pt Bold
Colour = Teal

Subsection
Style = Heading 3
Calibri 12pt Bold

Body text
Style = Normal
Calibri 12pt

Bulleted lists
Style = Bulleted list
Calibri 12pt

Numbered lists
Style = Number list
Calibri 12pt

Tables/figures
Style = Table or Figure
Calibri 11pt
Colour=Light Grey

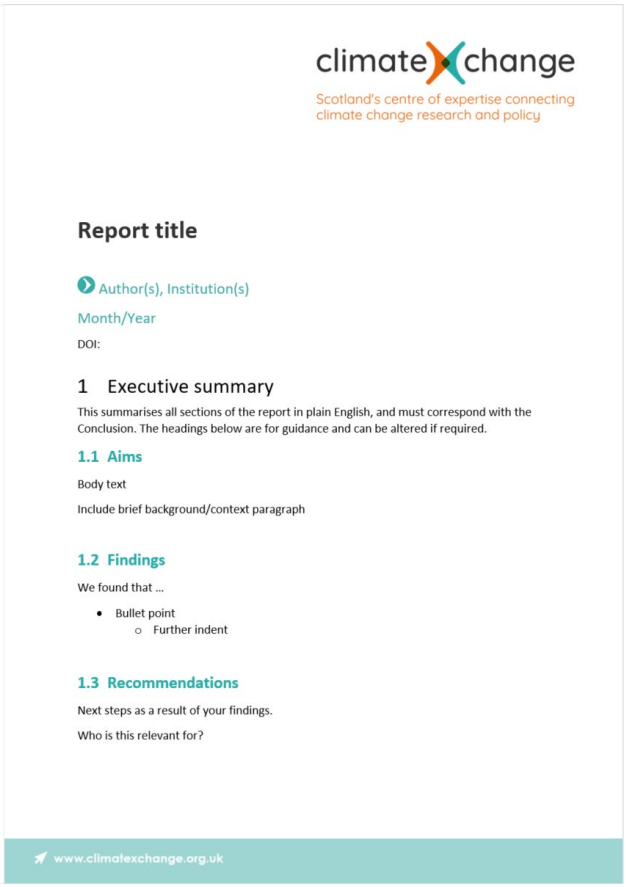
Colours

Orange
CMYK: 5/72/100/0
RGB: 234/101/15
#EA650F

Teal
CMYK: 71/11/38/0
RGB: 40/172/167
#28ACA7

Dark Grey
CMYK: 68/64/64/62
RGB: 51/51/51
#333333

Light Grey
C: 20/19/19/19
RGB: 165/161/161
#A5A1A1



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Report title

Author(s), Institution(s)

Month/Year

DOI:

1 Executive summary

This summarises all sections of the report in plain English, and must correspond with the Conclusion. The headings below are for guidance and can be altered if required.

1.1 Aims

Body text

Include brief background/context paragraph

1.2 Findings

We found that ...

- Bullet point
  - Further indent

1.3 Recommendations

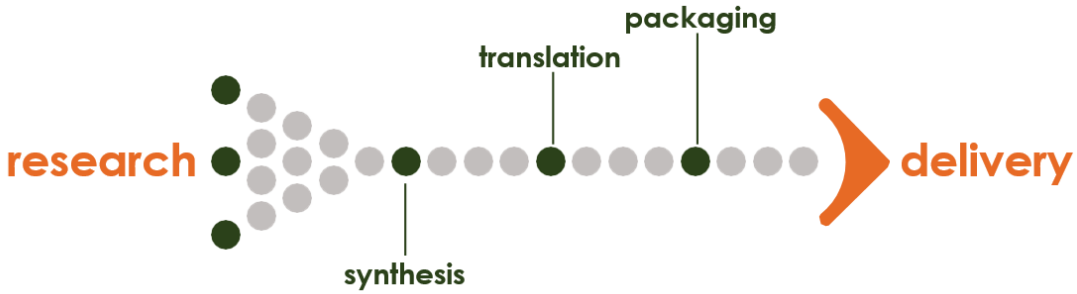
Next steps as a result of your findings.

Who is this relevant for?

www.climatexchange.org.uk

Style: Use the 'Styles' options in the Word menu bar for headings/ text

Formatting: Use the same colour palette for charts and other features



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