

Guidelines on the use of electronic logbook

Throughout your study here at Imperial College, you will be required to keep a log of your practical work. In many companies, such practice is mandatory. The purposes for keeping the a logbook are:

1. It helps you to plan your work and, even more importantly, reflect on what you have done. While you are learning, there is a tendency just to “hack” the hardware or software until you get the results you are expecting. Keeping a logbook will force you to tidy-up, think about what you have done, ask yourself questions and finally record your conclusions and thoughts.
2. It helps you to remember what you have done and learned in the future. Spending time “now” will save you time in the future. Indeed, any practical assessment you part-take will almost certain require you to look back on your logbook to find the answers.

You must remember that:

1. Logbook is a personal tool for YOU to assist your learning. It is not the vehicle to get marks.
2. Logbook is NOT a report. It does not need to be tidy, use perfect English, or beautifully laid out. However, an unstructured logbook is also not good – it will be difficult for you to find stuff in it in the future.
3. The most effective way to keep a logbook is “contemporaneous”, meaning that you write it as you go along, immediately before or after the practical work. You loose many benefits if you wait until after the lab session to “write it up” because it does not help you in reflection and planning.

In summary a good logbook is much more than a record of what you have done. It is also an effective learning tool that helps your understanding and memory.

Electronic Logbook

While conventional logbook keeping involves pen and paper, modern engineering, particularly with electrical and computer engineering, much of what you do involve programs and electronic information such as screenshots of a scope or computer. Therefore increasingly there is a case for keeping electronic, instead of paper, logbook.

There are various application programmes available to help you to keep an eLogbook. Here we suggest three possible tools in order of skill level required:

Microsoft Word – this is very straight forward, but a Word document only has a sequential or linear structure. It is therefore not as easy as other methods to find the information you need. However, everyone knows how to use Word and therefore there is no overhead in learning this.

Microsoft OneNote – This is a very useful tool from Microsoft designed not only for eLogbook, but for general note taking. It is easy to learn and use, and it is free for all students at Imperial. You may find a good tutorial on OneNote here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WH8U_AhyEJw

Github – This requires the highest level of skills, but has the advantage of combining document formatting, repository and revision control. You need to spend more time and effort to learning and to use Github, but the result is most impressive and satisfying. Here are two helpful tutorials on Github:

<https://guides.github.com/activities/hello-world/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0fKg7e37bQE>