



WORKSHOP PAPERS

Stage 2A – Presentations

*Research Support & Training
for Postgraduate Researchers*
3-Stage Generic Research Skills Training

Anglia Ruskin University

Welcome to the Workshop Session

This programme is designed specifically to provide guidance and support in presenting your research and in preparing for your MPhil / MProf / PhD / DProf / MD(Res) examination.

If you require any of the booklets or other course materials in an alternative format or have any other additional requirements please email research.training@anglia.ac.uk or call Charlotte Neale on 0845 196 4209.

The Main Aims are to:

Identify – the skills needed for giving an effective presentation

Provide – an opportunity to further develop presentation skills.

Workshop Session Format

The programme is organised in a workshop style to maximise participation by those attending. Timings will be flexible. The day will consist of brief presentations, analyses, presentations by research students, and small group activities, allowing maximum time for discussion.

During the day you will be required to give a short presentation that will be recorded on video. You will then have the opportunity, within a small group, to review your and other presentations and discuss them. By participating in such a presentation activity you will gain (more) experience in presenting to an audience, benefit from the feedback by fellow students, perceive how your presentation comes across to an audience and identify aspects of presentation that you can develop further.

We hope you will enjoy these activities.

Research Training and Support Team
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1. Programme Aims and Objectives

Aims

The aims of this session are:

- to help you improve your presentation techniques
- to support and help each other by offering constructive suggestions.

Objectives

By participating in this session you should:

- gain more experience in making a presentation to an audience
- benefit from the feedback from other postgraduate students
- perceive how your presentation comes across to an audience
- identify aspects that you can develop further to improve your presentation skills.

2. Planning your Presentation

Good, careful preparation is the key to a successful presentation. Do remember that oral communication is different from written communication. Listeners only have the one opportunity to hear your presentation – they cannot ‘re-read’ if they become confused. Quite frequently the listener will be hearing several presentations in one session so clarity is essential.

To communicate your points effectively remember to K.I.S.S. (‘keep it simple, stupid’) – focus on a few key points – and repeat key insights. *Tell them what you are about to tell them (outline of presentation), tell them, and tell them what you have told them (summary).*

For a conference you will wish to instil in your audience a desire to read your paper! Your presentation should not replace your paper but aim to whet the audience’s appetite for it.

Think about your audience – some people may be experts, others may have little knowledge in your area. Who are you targeting? Can you address some part of your presentation to everyone? For example, the introduction and summary should be accessible to all but the main part of the talk may be pitched at the experts.

Plan the stages of your talk so that it will be clear, well balanced and keeps within your allotted time limit.

A possible framework

Part

1 - Opening - set the agenda

- (a) Give your **opening remarks** – make contact with the audience, you might refer to the title, the subject area and explain why the topic is important to you.
- (b) State the **purpose** of the presentation – let the audience know your perspective on the topic and why it is significant.
- (c) Outline the structure of your presentation – help your audience to understand the aspects to be covered.

Part 2 - Main Body - Develop the talk

- (a) Plan the content – the detailed points in a suitable sequence.
- (b) Mode of presentation - will you use PowerPoint, other visual aids or none at all?
- (c) Keep the audience's attention – will you invite audience participation? How will you interact with your audience?
- (d) If you are using PowerPoint avoid over-crowded slides with detail that the audience cannot assimilate in the time that the slide is shown.

Part 3 – Concluding your Talk

- (a) State the key points – summarise what has been said. This provides a focus and helps the audience to remember the presentation.
- (b) Make suggestions, offer insights and pose questions – keep your audience reflecting on the topic.
- (c) Have a positive ending – finish whilst the audience still has an appetite for more! This should lead to an interesting and helpful discussion, with the audience keen to read your paper. Remember to clearly indicate when you have reached the end.

Questions

It can be helpful to have some slides/information to refer to in any discussion about your research to back-up or expand an argument. (Likely question areas may be ideas that you have given only in outline, shortcomings of methods or results, and future work.)

3. The Content of your Presentation

(i) The Talk

Identify:

- the objectives of the talk?
- the main points you want to make?

Write out the presentation in draft form and then review it. Check that the 'story' you are telling is consistent and flows smoothly. Make a few good points well. Do not try to include too much material.

Now reduce the presentation to key points and key words and prepare some cue cards (I find this works well – I use cards that can easily be held in one's hand). Remember to mark on the cards points where you will use any visual aids. Write out the opening sentences in full and memorise them. Do not forget to number the cards in case you drop them.

(ii) Visual aids

These can make the presentation more interesting. However, badly designed visual aids can confuse and irritate the audience. Keep any visual aid simple – the audience has very little time in which to assimilate the information. Each slide should refer to only one topic or idea.

Slides should contain the minimum information necessary. Use large size print – a minimum of 18pt and a clear font. Take care if using a diagram directly from your paper – it may be too detailed to read clearly. Use colour with discretion! Orange and yellow do not always project well – check your slides before you deliver the presentation.

(iii) Rehearse

Rehearse - with an audience if possible. Check for planned duration, suitable sequence of contents, relevant slides, pace of voice.

4. Making the Presentation

In advance of the presentation find out as much as possible about the room, seating arrangements and the location of any visual aids. Check how to use the equipment. Can the audience, even those at the back of the room, read your slides?

When delivering your paper:

- take a few slow deep breaths before starting to help you to relax
- greet the audience and tell them who you are
- keep to the time allowed – if you can, finish two minutes before your time allocation
- keep to your plan for the presentation
- remember the audience and the purpose of the presentation
- at the end invite questions.

The Delivery

Visual

- Try to appear calm and confident
- Enter and exit gracefully
- Do not pace up and down
- Dress appropriately for the occasion – your appearance will influence the audience's attitude to you.
- Maintain eye contact with the audience; not with one or two members only. Avoid addressing the floor or ceiling!
- Ensure that you stand in a position where you do not obscure the screen
- Keep an eye on the audience's body language
- Practice using the visual aids
- Look as though you are enjoying yourself and do remember to smile
- Use your hands to emphasise a point but be sparing with your hand movement. Keep your hand in a pocket or by your side – however, do not jangle the money in your pocket.

Vocal

- Speak clearly; project your voice; articulate your words - concentrate on the pronunciation of the vowels, this allows the consonants to be clearly heard at the beginning and end of each word. Judge the acoustics of the room.
- Do not gabble!
- Use a pause occasionally to emphasise a point
- Avoid jokes unless you are expert at telling them!
- Use a variety of rates of speech and vary your pitch
- Indicate the end of a sentence by dropping your voice slightly unless asking a question when the pitch should be raised a little
- Try to avoid um, er and ah.

Verbal

- Sound positive.
- Plan and memorise your opening and closing sentences.
- Do not read out the words on a slide during the presentation.

Finally, remember the 6Ps:

Preface – opening courtesies, the purpose of the presentation.

Position – brief outline of the present position.

Problem – research problem to be addressed.

Possibilities (may well be combined with proposal for academic purposes).

Proposal – analysis / solution you are offering to the identified problem.

Postscript – summary of outcomes; closing courtesies.

5. Presentation Tips

When making a presentation, avoid the following:

- Not engaging the audience
- Avoiding eye contact
- Being unenthusiastic
- Not talking to the audience
- Not speaking clearly
- Speaking too quickly
- Speaking in a monotonous tone or mumbling
- Showing lack of confidence in your abilities – self-deprecating
- Poor preparation
- Not rehearsing
- Not proof reading the script
- Spelling/grammatical errors on your PowerPoint slides
- Not guiding the audience through the talk – poor structure
- Poor quality or over-full slides
- Reading from a script or your slides
- Positioning yourself so that you obscure the screen
- Fiddling with objects when speaking
- Moving about the podium / stage / room too much
- Turning your back on the audience
- Leaving your mobile 'phone on!
- Obscuring your mouth (to avoid anyone being able to lip-read)
- Misjudging the knowledge of the audience
- Over-running time
- Some idiosyncrasies are fine – but don't overdo them!
- Not anticipating obvious questions
- Too much humour
- Using jargon

- Looking cross when asked a question
- Arriving late without having noted the equipment you need to use
- Overuse of laser pointers.

But do remember that:

Your talk is not an isolated event. If appropriate, refer briefly to previous talks.

(Compiled from students' and presenters' notes from several Presentations sessions)

6. Presenting Academic Papers

Many different styles are used in presenting papers at conferences, some more successful in capturing the attention of the conference participants than others. This does not imply that your presentation needs to be flamboyant! Careful preparation of the presentation, however, is required, together with the recognition of the difference between a written paper and its oral presentation. In some conferences there is a tradition where papers are 'read'. The following table gives a helpful reminder of the difference between a paper and a presentation.

Presentations Versus Papers (adapted from Renfrow and Impara)¹

<u><i>Your Presentation</i></u>	<u><i>Your Paper</i></u>
Listeners	Readers
Journalistic (newspaper) style	Scholarly prose
Medium: words, pictures, delivery	Medium: words, pictures
Earn audience attention	Readers are committed
Audience interested? You'll know!	No direct gauge of audience interest
One chance to get message across	Multiple readings are possible
Interactive	Not interactive
You determine audience pace	Reader sets pace
Audience at presenter's mercy for organising content	Reader can scan a paper to prepare a mindset
Audience feedback can be direct	Audience feedback is remote

There is usually time at the end of a conference presentation for questions. Do manage this time to your benefit. There may well be participants who disagree with aspects of your work – manage this in a positive way. You may not be able to answer all the questions directly but you can always suggest a discussion over a cup of coffee. Remember that you do not need to know all the answers – acknowledge a helpful point made by a member of the audience.

¹ **Making Academic Presentations: Effectively!** Donata Renfrow and James C. Impara, *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (March 1989), pp. 20-21. Published by: American Educational Research Association. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1175251>; website accessed 20/08/2012 or available through Anglia Ruskin University library.

7. Your PowerPoint presentation

PowerPoint presentations can be very interesting or they can be very tedious. Here are some suggestions to help you achieve a presentation that engages the audience.

Prepare your slides with:

- no spelling mistakes
- key words rather than long sentences
- a font size that everyone can read
- plenty of space around the text
- limited use of animation (words 'flying in' from the left / right etc.)
- consistency in the style of headings / background but with sufficient variety in the use of colour / background to help maintain interest
- good use of pictures / graphs / video clips where appropriate

Practise your presentation using your slides.