Workshops for Graduate Research Students

Successful Conference Presentations
2.00-4.00pm, Friday 7th September 2007

Guild Seminar Room 2

Presenter:

Karen Hall
karen.hall@uwa.edu.au
Graduate Education Officer

http://www.postgraduate.uwa.edu.au

http://studysmarter.uwa.edu.au
Objectives

- to identify the characteristics of successful conference presentations
- how to effectively convey message to audience
- to look at planning and preparation as tools to enhance delivery
- integrating audio-visual tools
- to consider elements of performance, and how to get feedback, practice and improve

Timeline

2.00-2.20 – Introduction
2.20-2.40 – Planning
2.40-3.00 – Preparation
3.00-3.15 – Presentation Tools
3.15-3.45 – Presentation Skills
3.45-4.00 – Closing and Evaluation
Introduction: Characteristics of a Successful Conference Presentation

What is the purpose of a conference presentation?

In your experience, what makes a good conference presentation?
Elements of a good presentation:

- Structure
- Self-presentation
- Interaction
- Content

**Principles**

Know the difference between talks that are *about* something and talks that *do* something.

Simple and clear communication is not the same as ‘dumbing down’.

Presentation elements should support what you are doing.
Planning

A presentation that does something:

I am going to talk about

So my audience can

Knowing your audience:

What disciplines?
What place/time/subject are they familiar with?
What institutions do they come from?
How junior or senior/what mix of junior and senior academics?
Other presenters?
Conference theme?
Session theme?
What does your abstract suggest?
Who is your chair?
How familiar will the audience be with your work?

Identifying and prioritising topics:

Brainstorm or mindmap your topic
What elements are
• Crucial
• Supporting
• Relevant
• Irrelevant
## Preparation

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<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Script</td>
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## Structure

- Introduction

- Body

- Conclusion
What devices can you use to keep the audience’s attention and make your presentation memorable?

### Presentation Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whiteboard/Blackboard</td>
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<td>Overhead/Visualiser</td>
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<td>Handout</td>
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<td>PowerPoint</td>
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<td>Other?</td>
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</table>
Some simple rules for visual aids:

- Keep it relevant
- Use clear fonts and appropriate font size
- Consider accessibility when using colour
- Use colour consistently
- Make figures, tables or graphs clear and easy to understand
- Check the lighting in the room
- Minimise text (except when displaying quotes)
- Practice using the equipment in advance
- Have backup options
Presentation Skills

Body language
- Stance
  Good posture with weight evenly balanced (wear shoes you find comfortable)
- Eye contact
  Make eye contact with your audience, looking around the room
- Gestures
  Should suit the size of the room. Use to emphasis information rather than fiddling. Use a variety of gestures over a range of space.
- Smile! And appear confident.
- Keep control of your notes (they shouldn’t block you off from the audience)

Voice
- Pace
  Shouldn’t be too fast (or too slow). Practice in advance and time yourself.
- Pitch
  Vary your pitch. Use vocal colour to convey your story.
- Power
  Volume should be appropriate to the venue. Take microphones into account. Project to the back of the room but don’t shout.
- Pause
  Use pauses the emphasise information, to indicate structure and to allow the audience to consider your ideas. Breathe.

Practicing and Feedback

Practice with a real audience (friends, family, pets…) Don’t use a mirror as it is impossible to focus on being a speaker and an audience member simultaneously.

Ask for feedback on specific areas. Get feedback on what went well as well as what you can improve on!
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What things did the speaker do well?</th>
<th>What could they work on for next time?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What did you like about their presentation?</td>
<td>What skills require some attention?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What skills do they already have?</td>
<td>What did you find distracting?</td>
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</tbody>
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