

Presenting to a Lay Audience

STUDENT HANDOUT

Imagine that you are to present your research topic, purpose and methods to the following three lay audiences. Think about how you can discuss, describe and present your research in a way that will be understood by each audience, and in a way that is interesting, entertaining and relevant to each audience.

- 1 A class of 25 school children aged 12-13. You are to present your research to these children in their class and must keep them interested and motivated for half an hour. The teacher is also present and available to offer help with your presentation, if necessary.
- 2 Five non-university friends at a social gathering. Your friends are interested in finding out more about what you actually do at university, but they themselves have not been to university and have never carried out their own research. You are all at an enjoyable social gathering where the conversation is flowing freely. Friends want to know what you do, but don't want to be overwhelmed or find the conversation boring. They can easily move on if you don't keep them engaged.
- 3 Four members of a funding body who are not experts in your field of study, but who know about the research process. They want a short description of your research so that they can decide whether or not to invite you to apply for funding from their organization. You need to be very persuasive as the funding would be useful for your research project.

Produce a description of how you would present to each of these audiences (or produce an actual presentation for some or all of these audiences, if it works better for your research topic). Be prepared to present your descriptions and/or presentations to fellow students when we next meet. You can decide on the style of description/presentation and on how much detail about research topic, purpose and methods you wish to provide. Think about how you would pitch your presentations at the right level for each audience, and try to be as creative, imaginative and entertaining as possible.

Writing Journal Papers

STUDENT HANDOUT

Consider the following advice when writing and submitting a journal article:

- Follow all journal house style guidelines, making sure that your paper is of the correct style and length and that it is pitched at the right level for the journal readers.
- Produce a good title. This should be clear and concise and include all the essential words in the right order. It should not trivialize your research, nor oversell it. Ambiguous, misleading or unnecessary words should be avoided.
- Pay close attention to the abstract (or lead). Make sure that it grabs attention and points to your methodology and the original contribution to knowledge. Abstracts are copyright free and can be made available online. Journal editors will be keen for other researchers to read your article, based on your abstract. Ensure that it makes sense when read in isolation.
- Ensure that your article is robust, plausible and based on sound and credible methodology.
- Think about why papers are rejected and ensure that you avoid these mistakes. There are various reasons for rejection:
 - The content and/or style of the paper are not suitable for the journal.
 - The author has not followed journal guidelines about house style, length and content.
 - The paper is presented poorly and contains too many errors.
 - The title, abstract and introduction are poorly constructed and uninformative. They do not grab attention.
 - The research does not add to existing knowledge. The study replicates existing work and does not provide anything new.
 - The research question is not specified or is not answered.
 - The conceptual framework is badly developed.
 - The methodology is flawed.
 - There is not enough information about the methodology and/or research methods. It is unclear how the researcher has obtained the results that are being reported. It is impossible for others to check or verify the results.
 - References are out of date, cannot be accessed or are not relevant to the research question.
- Ask a fellow student to peer review your paper. Ask for honest feedback. Take on board all criticism and modify your paper accordingly. You can ask for opinions from other students, if you think it would be helpful.
- Submit your paper when you are happy. Follow all submission guidelines (most journals now accept email submissions). Make sure that all material (such as images, captions, keywords and abstract) is included when you submit. Also, you will need to ensure that you have the necessary permissions (to use images, poetry and prose, for example) before you submit.
- Once you have submitted your paper it will be sent for peer review. After this process there tend to be four outcomes: accept, accept with minor revisions, accept with major revisions or reject. The editor will provide a summary of the comments made by the reviewer(s) and you will need to make changes accordingly, if relevant. If your paper is accepted you will be asked to sign an 'assignment of copyright', a 'licence to publish' or a 'publishing licence'. You should read this carefully to find out what you can and cannot do with your paper when it is published. Your paper will be copyedited and you will be required to proofread the final copy before it is published.

Writing an Impact Statement

STUDENT HANDOUT (1)

Produce an impact summary and an impact statement for your research, following your funding body or institutional guidelines. Ensure that you produce your summary and statement in the required format. Once you have done this, swap your work with a fellow student for peer review and feedback. Modify your impact statement accordingly.

When you review the work of your fellow student, take note of the advice offered below and make sure that they have addressed all the relevant issues (in particular, look for strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement). Offer your peer honest and constructive feedback in a timely manner.

Most funding bodies request that you produce both an impact summary and an impact statement. An 'impact summary' requires you to answer two questions: who benefits from your research and how do they benefit? This does not include other researchers, but could be individuals, groups, specific organizations or the wider public, for example (take care not to include commercially sensitive information in your summary).

An 'impact statement' expands on your impact summary. Funding bodies will require an impact statement that demonstrates clearly the societal and economic benefits to be gained from your research (how your research will be of benefit to people, communities, industry, the economy and/or the environment, for example). Your impact statement should describe the issue or problem, provide an action statement, describe the potential benefits and provide a list of researchers, collaborators and contributors, along with their impact activities, if relevant.

When writing an impact statement, keep your audience in mind and pitch your statement accordingly. Audience members can include funding body panels, external reviewers, peers, government, industry representatives and alumni, for example. Make sure that your impact statement is clear, concise and specific. State obvious impacts and don't waffle or pad your statement with irrelevant material. When requesting resources for impact activities, you must be able to demonstrate that all activities are project-specific and justified.

STUDENT HANDOUT (2)

Produce an impact summary and a 'pathways to impact' attachment for your research, following your institutional or funding body guidelines. Ensure that you produce your summary and attachment in the required format. Once you have done this, swap your work with a fellow student for peer review and feedback. Modify your summary and attachment accordingly.

When you review the work of your fellow student, take note of the advice offered below and make sure that they have addressed all the relevant issues (in particular, look for strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement). Offer your peer honest and constructive feedback in a timely manner.

An 'impact summary' requires you to answer two questions: who benefits from your research and how do they benefit? This does not include other researchers, but could be individuals, groups, specific organizations or the wider public, for example (take care not to include commercially sensitive information in your summary).

A pathways to impact attachment is required by researchers in the UK who are applying for research council funding and describes the potential impact of your research beyond academia. It expands on the two questions answered in your impact summary by addressing the question 'what will be done to ensure that potential beneficiaries have the opportunity to engage with this research?' Your pathways to impact attachment will need to include the following:

- Types of impact activities:
 - potential exploitation (commercial and non-commercial);
 - the shaping of policy and practice;
 - application of intellectual assets and outputs;
 - communication activities (e.g. workshops, publications, websites, media relations);
 - public engagement activities (past, present and future);
 - collaboration relationships, roles and responsibilities in terms of impact activities;
 - members of the research team, involvement, roles and responsibilities in terms of impact activities.
- Impact activity 'deliverables and milestones':
 - time-scales for delivering impact activities;
 - key milestones for impact activities;
 - methods used to measure success of impact activities (i.e. monitoring and evaluation methods).
- A summary of resources for the impact activity (the bulk of this resource listing and justification will be in the 'financial resources' and 'justification of resources' sections of the main application form).

Make sure that your pathways to impact attachment is clear, concise and specific. State obvious impacts and don't waffle or pad your work with irrelevant material. When requesting resources for impact activities, you must be able to demonstrate that all activities are project-specific and justified.