



How to give a paper – from planning to presenting

Oxford University Humanities Division, 4 Feb. or 5 Feb., 11am-1.30pm

Short description:

Develop skills to present research confidently and successfully to a national and international audience, and feel better prepared for the conference or seminar experience. Learn how to be clear, concise and compelling, and discover a greater facility to talk about your research in a simple, accessible way in any context, without oversimplifying the nature of your work. Delivering the content of your talk (i.e. the 'performance'), and shaping the content itself are integrally connected, and are therefore covered together in this workshop. The 2.5 hour workshop is suitable for Masters and DPhil students, and post-doctoral researchers in early career or on short term teaching contracts, and works well with a mixed group, sharing experiences across disciplines.

Learning objectives / outcomes:

1. How to a) choose and refine one core idea for a presentation, b) keep things short and to the point, and c) create a good title
2. How to relate your work to audience priorities and perceptions of your work (dealing with the 'so what?' factor)
3. How to build a well sequenced presentation including: the opening idea/statement including the 'hook' that captures attention and interest; the core message (what is important and why); economical and powerful use of supporting material (data / literature / slides and visual aids); framing the one image, story, piece of data that will make your whole presentation and message persuasive and memorable; potential use of a 'call to action' (i.e. what would you like your audience to *do* as a result of hearing your presentation?); closing idea/statement.
4. How to test what gets included, and what must be discarded
5. How to prepare your delivery / performance – rehearsal techniques
6. How to use Question and Answer sessions (Q&A) confidently to enhance your message, and how to handle difficult questions
7. How to review your own performance, and use this to improve each time

About the trainer - Alexander Massey MA PGCE MSc

Alexander has a background in communication spanning over 25 years and a broad range of settings including the academic world. He has run a number of organisations, departments and businesses, including Tacpac (communication resources for people with sensory and neurological impairment, winner of Times Educational Supplement Special Needs Award 2007). Clients of his training and coaching include universities, and corporate organisations (e.g. Unilever, London Underground, HBOS, Hampton Court Palace, GlaxoSmithKline, Oxfam), and therapist training institutions. As well as being a keynote conference speaker, he has also published books, chapters and papers on learning methods and research methodology. www.AuthenticVoice.co.uk

Rationale:

Part of the professional work of any researcher is to increase the impact of their work through Knowledge Transfer (KT), the dissemination of methodology, findings, and their relevance to decision-making and practice. Researchers must learn to communicate complex topics concisely, compellingly and with academic rigour. Diverse audiences include specialists, non-specialist academics, funders, policy makers, seminars, conferences, and audiences beyond the academic arena.

Through such communication, researchers can stimulate dialogue, and gain feedback that can help the evolution of their own ideas and the work of their research team. When they publicise and promote their work, researchers also become ambassadors for their research unit or university; their dissemination activities have positive impact on any RAE, and can open up new funding possibilities.

In terms of personal impact on the researcher, presenting one's work also plays a key role in developing career, employability and job security: enhancing one's visibility and credibility, extending professional networks, capturing the attention of mentors and future collaborators, and building a track record and reputation.

Speaking about one's research is a skill quite distinct from *writing* about it. A presentation is an auditory and visual – and, arguably, emotional - medium that in the audience impacts centres in the brain different from those reached by the written word. Researchers giving oral presentations must learn to convey a message concisely, convincingly and memorably, citing only a fraction of the supporting evidence or argument they might use in a written piece. This requires the ability to: a) focus the presentation on *one* core idea, b) support that idea with appropriate evidence, 'story', argument, and sequencing, c) understand the needs and agenda of the particular audience, d) capture the imagination and commitment of listeners, and e) deliver the message in person, articulately, confidently and inspiringly.

Many presentation courses fall short because too much emphasis is placed on 'performance skills' while the real substance – the content - is neglected or taken for granted. A fundamental precept of this training is that confidence and fluency in delivery and performance are most likely to happen if (a-d) have been given thorough attention and *only then*, rehearsal. Knowing a topic does not necessarily mean you can reach your audience when speaking, and being confident in front of people does not guarantee that you will make your presentation clear, relevant or interesting.

Format:

- Participants are asked to bring preliminary ideas on some material/ideas they would like to present at a seminar or conference
- Trainer presents short introductions to each part of the workshop
- Practical exercises in pairs and small groups, alternated with plenary sharing of experiences, comments and questions
- Opportunities for a few people to be 'master-classed' in front of the group on crafting their ideas, and practising different parts of a presentation sequence, so that all can learn the generic points – people can choose during the workshop whether they want to volunteer for this.
- Video is not used in the workshop, as it can trigger unskillful, skewed and counter-productive self-criticism, leading to loss of confidence. More productive forms of self-evaluation are taught during the workshop.
- Detailed follow-up course notes (NB copyright retained by Alexander Massey)
- Option of follow-up one-to-one coaching or small group learning sets

For more information: www.AuthenticVoice.co.uk