

Oral Presentations

PURPOSE

Oral presentations assess your knowledge, understanding and reasoned argument and your ability to communicate them clearly, with sensitivity and rigour, adapting these attributes to specific audiences. They give you an opportunity to develop a skill that you are likely to use in a variety of professional, ministerial or vocational settings. These guidelines refer to individual oral presentations. For presentations given by a group, see the Guidelines for Group Projects.

CONTENT

This form of assessment comprises the presentation itself and sometimes a written reflective commentary on the presentation.

The presentation

An oral presentation could be an oral or multimedia presentation, where both the content and the performance / medium are assessed. It will generally be made to a group, but could on occasion be made to an individual tutor or indeed be recorded without being made to a live audience. Your response to questions and discussion following your presentation may or may not form part of the assessment.

Your tutor will indicate whether the presentation is targeted towards a specialist or non-specialist audience. The content of a presentation will be determined by the nature of the task, but some general pointers to good practice include:

1. Introduce yourself
2. Introduce the task and aim of the presentation
3. Provide a road map of the presentation
4. Follow a clear plan that includes an introduction, key points, a recap
5. End the presentation with a clear conclusion

The commentary / reflection (when asked for)

The commentary / reflection on the presentation is a written piece of work that you hand in: your tutor will indicate whether its focus is to comment on the choices you made about the content and medium of your presentation, or whether it also includes a reflection on your own performance, in which case at least some of it is written and handed in after you have made your presentation.

In either case, the commentary enables you to set your presentation in the wider context of the subject of the module and to show the sources with which you engaged to prepare the presentation. It is therefore less likely a commentary will be asked for when the presentation is, for example, a seminar paper where there is scope within the presentation itself to do these things.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

First and foremost, we are looking to see how your presentation demonstrates that you have met the relevant learning outcomes of the Module Outline. In particular we will be looking to answer the following questions (these may be adapted, depending on the nature of the assessment task):

1. Do you know your subject thoroughly?

The content should show appropriate depth and breadth of knowledge and understanding, including clarity of argument, references to evidence and some of your own evaluation.

2. Have you responded to the task / title of the presentation?

Make sure you have understood the task and maintain the focus of the presentation on it: presentations are generally short, so there is no time to spend on 'irrelevant' material. Do not shy away from creativity, however, or from approaching the task in an unexpected way.

3. Have you tailored your presentation effectively to the audience?

Make sure you adapt the vocabulary, level and style of your presentation appropriately, including how the subject matter is relevant and interesting to the audience.

4. Is your delivery clear and persuasive?

Assuming that you have a clear and engaging road map for your presentation, rehearse it well beforehand. Ensure that you can complete it in the time allotted without rushing and that your delivery is clear, persuasive and engaging. Think about where you will stand (especially in relation to any visuals, if relevant), your posture, movement, voice projection, where you will put your notes and how you will make regular eye contact with your audience.

5. Have you made appropriate use of audiovisual aids?

Think carefully about whether media may enhance your presentation. Do not, for example, use media to reduce immediacy of your communication with the audience. If you do choose to use PowerPoint or some other form of visual aids, find out about the dos and don'ts of their effective use, and make sure you have rehearsed the practicalities ahead of time. You may also consider whether to produce a handout for your audience, and when and how you intend to hand it out

TECHNICAL MATTERS

For the tutor:

- When learning outcomes include oral communication skills, then clearly an oral assessment is likely to be a part of the assessment, but an oral presentation may also appropriately be required in other modules (written communication is not a neutral assessment method!).
- Clarity about the task, its audience (whether specialist or non-specialist), its timing and the relative emphasis in the assessment on subject content versus presentation skills are essential for this method of assessment. Likewise whether a commentary or reflection is required and what the student is expected to show in this should also be carefully considered and made clear to the student.
- If the student's ability to respond to questions and manage discussion is part of this assessment, then this must be indicated at the outset.
- This form of assessment is particularly suitable for introducing elements of self and peer feedback, which can be effective learning tools. However, students need to be equipped for this – with simple assessment criteria, for example.

- Best practice is for the presentation to be recorded in such a way that it can be straightforwardly accessible to the moderator and external examiner. If this is not possible, there will need to be consideration of how to ensure appropriate moderation and external scrutiny can take place. This may include obtaining the student's notes, script or slides and/or having two markers present.

For the student:

- You may be asked to provide your notes, script or slides to the tutor, before or after the presentation. If you did refer to sources, then these should be included in the notes or script using the referencing and bibliographical conventions of your TEI (or you may be asked to provide a bibliography even if scripts or notes are not required).
- If you are notified in advance of the need to submit notes, there may be an expectation that these will be sufficiently full to stand alone as a document to be read by someone who was not present. Since the assessed task is the oral delivery, the quality of the presentation of the notes or transcript is not assessed, but presentational issues (e.g. spelling) may affect how easy it is for a marker to understand them.

MARKING CRITERIA

The questions that your marker will be considering when assessing your work are as follows:

1. Did the presentation answer the question or address the task set for the presentation?
2. How did your presentation demonstrate that you had acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills of the relevant learning outcomes of the module?
3. To what standard have you fulfilled these? These standards – by which your work will be graded – are described in either the **Assessment Criteria for Oral Presentations and Commentaries** or the **Assessment Criteria for Oral Presentations** for the level of your module.

If the **Assessment Criteria for Oral Presentations** are used, the criteria against which your work will be marked fall into three categories:

Knowledge and understanding: Did your presentation demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant subject matter?

Argument and reasoning: Was your response to the question / task well argued and clearly reasoned?

Did you demonstrate the ability to think critically and analytically?

Presentational skills: Was the presentation well designed and clearly structured?

Was the presentation appropriately tailored to the audience and situation?

Were you audible and were the pace and timing good? Were you well organised and prepared? Did you make appropriate eye contact with your audience?

Did you make appropriate and effective use of media?

If the **Assessment Criteria for Oral Presentations and Commentaries** are used, the criteria against which your work will be marked fall into four categories:

Knowledge and understanding: Do the presentation and commentary together demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant subject matter?

Argument and reasoning: Was your response to the question / task in the presentation well argued and clearly reasoned?

Is the rationale / commentary clearly argued?

Across the presentation and rationale / commentary, did you demonstrate the ability to think critically and analytically?

Oral presentation: Was the presentation well designed and clearly structured?

Was the presentation appropriately tailored to the audience and situation?

Were you audible and were the pace and timing good? Were you well organised and prepared? Did you make appropriate eye contact with your audience?

Did you make appropriate and effective use of media?

Written rationale / commentary: Does the commentary show good reflective ability, making good connections between the presentation you gave and knowledge and understanding?

Is your writing clear, using appropriate vocabulary, employing correct grammar and spelling, and following your TEI's referencing conventions?

