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# Skills for Computing

*Topic 4:  
Presentations*

# Learning Outcomes for this Topic

*By the end of this topic, students should be able to:*

- Effectively plan a presentation
- Deliver a presentation to a professional standard

# Structure of this Topic - 1

- Following the lecture for this topic students will complete the following activities:
- Private Study
  - Three exercises involving the preparation of evaluation criteria, an individual presentation and a group presentation
- Seminar – part 1
  - Two activities involving a discussion of evaluation criteria and delivery of individual presentations
- Seminar – part 2
  - Delivering group presentations

# What is a Presentation?

- Encompasses all types of talks, lectures etc.
- Can be formal, informal or somewhere between the two
- May involve 'giving a talk', leading a seminar discussion, etc.
- May be assessed, or not

# Why Give Presentations?

- In an academic context:
  - Stimulate discussions
  - Share ideas with your class
  - Some people express ideas better verbally than on paper
- In the professional world, giving presentations is often a key skill, especially for management roles.

# Presentation Stages

1. Prepare
2. Practice
3. Present

(Race, 2008: 99)

# Preparation - 1

- Gather information:
  1. How long is the presentation?
  2. Will there be a 'question and answer' session afterwards?
  3. Audience details – Who? How many?
  4. What facilities are available?

# Preparation - 2

- Plan the outline of your talk.
  1. This is not unlike planning an essay, as we discussed in the last topic:
    - don't forget your introduction, clear sections and conclusions
  2. Always have a clear structure in mind
  3. Base your plan on what is vital to the subject – don't try to include everything you know
  4. Think about how to involve your audience – don't just 'talk at them'



# Preparation - 3

- Create your presentation; there will be (up to) three elements normally:
  1. Visuals
    - ... Either a PowerPoint (or similar) presentation or overhead slides. Don't forget to check the available equipment well in advance
  2. Notes/Script
    - ... We'll discuss which in a moment
  3. Handouts/Papers
    - ... If practical and/or permitted; don't forget to check in advance.

# Good Visuals

- In PowerPoint:
- Don't use too many slides;
  - One slide for 2-3 minutes of speaking is a good 'rule of thumb', so 7-10 slides for a 20 minute presentation
- Use one slide per key point if possible
- Don't put too much information on the slides
  - Another rule of thumb; if you can't fit it all on using an 18pt font and decent margins, you have too much written on the slide

# Notes or Script?

- Many people feel less nervous if they have scripted their talk rather than speaking freely with notes or cues to guide them.
- **However...** scripted presentations often appear dull to the audience
- If you're nervous about presenting without a script, try it at home in front of a mirror; put a section header and a few key words on a postcard – you might well be better than you thought at delivering the presentation

# Handouts

- Handouts can be very useful in getting information across which would not fit onto slides
- **However...** If your handout is too interesting, the audience may be reading it rather than listening to you!
- As an alternative, why not put some web resources together on a handout or your last slide, so the audience can read further in their own time?

# Practice Makes Perfect

- Practice your presentation thoroughly on your own in advance
- Practice with a stop watch. If you do this three times and you are consistently under/over your time limit, revise the content.
- Practice in front of a mirror; think about how you appear.
- If there is time, get together with a few friends outside class and practice your presentations together.

# Preparing for Questions

1. If you'll take questions, imagine what they might be in advance – prepare answers to some likely ones.
2. Read around the subject.
  - (see 'Speed Reading' in Topic 2 for how to do this efficiently) and prepare some brief backup notes for awkward questions

# Presenting - 1

- Tips for Overcoming Nerves
  1. Arrive in plenty of time – then you won't be worrying about delays on the journey.
  2. Try to find some time to relax, especially during the 2-3 hours before you give the talk. Do something you enjoy.
  3. Try to be in the room before everyone else – then you see each audience member one at a time, rather than walking into a 'sea of faces'.

(Cottrell, 2008: 108)

# Presenting - 2

- Public speaking tips:
  1. Speak more slowly than you usually would – but not too much.
  2. Speak louder than you usually would – but not too much.
  3. If you can, make eye contact with one or two members of the audience (friends are best). If that makes you nervous, look up at an imaginary point on the back wall, just above the audiences' heads. They will all think you're making eye contact with someone else!



# Presenting - 3

- Public speaking tips (cont.):
  4. Do your best to appear quietly confident – then the audience will never doubt your abilities
  5. Never stop and apologise if you think you've done something wrong or badly. The chances are that no-one has noticed!

# Beginnings and Endings

- Don't forget:
  - At the beginning...
    - Wait until everyone is settled and quiet before you begin
    - Tell the audience whether you prefer them to interrupt with questions or wait until the end
  - At the end...
    - Prepare a good finishing line. If you can't manage anything better, simply say 'thank you for listening' – and smile!
    - If you are answering questions at the end, don't forget to invite the audience to ask questions

# References and Further Reading

- Race, Phil (2003): *How to Study*. Oxford, Blackwell Publishing
  - See Part IV, pp.99 – 115 in particular
- Cottrell, Stella (2008): *The Study Skills Handbook (Palgrave Study Skills)*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.
  - See the end of Chapter Five (pp.107-110) in particular

# Topic 4 – Presentations

*Any questions?*



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