

## 4th year Projects: Oral Presentation

As part of your 4<sup>th</sup> year project you will need to present a report of your project in an oral presentation. In some departments, this presentation is at the end of the first semester of the project, so that the purpose of the presentation is to present a progress report. In other departments, this presentation is part of the final reporting at the end of the project, so that the purpose of the presentation is to present the complete project and to report its outcomes.

### Requirements

---

Different departments have different requirements for the oral presentation, so you must always check the particular requirements of your department.

In Mechanical Engineering, the length of the presentation is 10-12 minutes with an additional 3-5 minutes for questions, while in Civil Engineering, the length is about 20 minutes, with an additional 10 minutes for questions.

### Guidelines

---

There are significant differences between a report of your work in an oral presentation and in a written report. An oral presentation involves face-to-face, more informal spoken communication where you only have time to inform the audience of the key aspects of your work.

**The key features of a good presentation are:**

- **a clear logical** structure
- **effective** visual aids, **and**
- good delivery **techniques.**

### Structure

---

Formal talks are highly and explicitly structured. The language clearly marks each section in the presentation in order to help the listener keep track of where they are and in order to help them remember important information. Predictably, presentations have an introduction, a body and a conclusion.

**The introduction** makes important statements about the topic, provides an overview of the key aspects of your investigation and outlines the structure of the talk. It also clearly establishes the purpose of your presentation (for example: to present the three major findings of my investigation; to outline the background to my investigation and then to focus on the key features of the design.). **The body** presents and develops your topic, moving through the sections you have outlined in the Introduction. **The conclusion** summarises the major outcomes of your work, emphasises its contribution and provides a clear and memorable ending to the presentation.

## Visual aids

---

Visual aids, usually powerpoint slides but also other displays, are a vital part of an effective presentation. They provide important visual information to support, and enhance, the verbal communication and make it much easier for your audience to understand your information and to remember the main points of your presentation. While powerpoint slides significantly improve the communication of your ideas, devising them forces you to condense the content of your presentation to the key ideas and they thus provide you, and your audience, with a clear, logical structure during the actual talk.

Use visual information wherever it helps you to communicate your message to the audience.

### Remember:

- for word slides, use only key words or short phrases.
- for drawings and diagrams, label them clearly and give them titles.
- for graphs, label the axes clearly and take the audience slowly through the graph to explain what is significant in the data shown.

## Delivery techniques

---

It is important to remember that, when you give a presentation, you are making face-to-face personal communication. A successful presentation is more than just words and slides. It involves the whole person, and therefore a relaxed posture, good eye contact, natural hand and body gestures and a pleasant strong voice can help you to communicate your ideas. You should aim for an interactive, animated presentation style similar to a natural conversational style. You want your presentation to be interesting and engaging, and you want to share your enthusiasm for your subject with the audience.

## Question time

---

There will be about 5 – 10 minutes of question time at the end of your presentation. Prepare for this by anticipating the questions that the audience might ask you. Go through each section of your presentation carefully, and work out questions that you could be asked about the work presented in it. If necessary, change the information in the section so that the most important questions are now clearly answered as part of the presentation. Otherwise, have a good answer ready for those questions.

**For further information on giving effective presentations, you can consult the following references.**

Mablekos, C 1991 ***Presentations That Work***, IEEE Engineers Guide to Business, The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, New York.

Mandel, S 1994 ***Technical Presentation Skills: A Practical Guide for Better Speaking***, Crisp Publications, Menlo Park, California.

**Online tutorial on Oral Presentations at**

<http://www.monash.edu.au/lls/llonline/speaking/presentations/index.xml>