

EC501 Development and Growth- PhD seminar
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Guidelines for Presentations

This workshop is intended to aid your transition from student to full-fledged researcher. One skill that you need to acquire is to make professional and well-thought-out presentations of your work. First some rules:

1. If you have a supervisor among the development faculty listed above, you must present in the EC501 seminar at least once per year.
2. We strongly prefer concise to rambling.
3. Failure is OK. If your results fall apart the week before you are scheduled to present, you should still present (see point 1 above). In this situation, you should focus your presentation on what went wrong, your ideas for next steps, and where feedback would help you progress.
4. You should email your title, slides or a copy of your paper to your supervisor(s) and Laura Derksen, who is organizing this year's seminar, by the Sunday before your talk **at the latest**. All materials should be in pdf format and will be posted on the course website.

Now for some guidelines. While there is no substitute for excellent ideas and analysis, even a good piece of research can suffer when it is poorly presented. Following is a minimal list of requirements for a good presentation:

*For **all** papers:*

1. State your question(s) clearly in one slide. Immediately.
2. Provide a good motivation. Why is this question interesting/relevant/important?
3. Make sure you know all related literature very well and state your contribution clearly without replicating other people's findings. It is very important that you can answer questions on related papers but the audience does not need to hear long summaries of existing work.
4. Presentation must look professional: all slides and tables must be legible from the back of the room; all tables must be formatted to journal standards. Note that many tables that are clearly formatted for a journal are illegible for slide presentations. 18 pt font is probably the cutoff; 22 pt is even better. Distil to just the key outcomes or, if you must, distribute handouts.
5. Be up front about any weaknesses. Address as many as possible, preferably in your introduction, and do not try to hide anything.
6. Write down comments. Address them before subsequent presentations.
7. Make the most of your first five minutes. If someone has to leave (or dozes off) after the first five minutes of your seminar they should know what your question is, why it is important, how you approached it, and the highlights of what you found. In addition, they should know the greatest threats to the validity of your research and how you mitigated them. Yes, it's a lot for five minutes, but you have to do it.
8. For work-in-process presentations, it can be helpful to tell your audience during your introduction where you want feedback.

For empirical papers:

1. Even if you do not have a fully-fledged model, you will need a basic theoretical framework to organise ideas in a coherent way. Be clear on how the theory maps into the empirical analysis.
2. Be clear about data sources and spell out the definition of all variables. Present and discuss descriptive statistics for all the main variables.
3. Present your identification strategy, making clear which sources of variation you intend to exploit.
4. Write down the model you are estimating and be prepared to justify the inclusion/exclusions of all variables.
5. Discuss other identification issues (e.g., confounding factors) and how you address them (or plan to).

For theoretical papers

1. Discuss the environment clearly (preferences, technology, who knows what - i.e., information structure, what markets exist)
2. State explicitly the notation for the key variables and parameters.
3. State all your assumptions explicitly.
4. Make sure you can justify all the assumptions and know what happens if you relax them.
5. State the main results. Unless a proof is insightful, logical or very innovative do not spend time on technical discussion of the steps.
6. Discuss the intuition behind your results and try to convince the audience as to why they are both (a) non-obvious and (b) relevant/useful in throwing light on the motivating question/problem.
7. Simple examples (e.g., assuming specific functional forms) and graphs often help. These become critical for job market talks where you will present to a diverse audience including non-theorists.

Other Resources:

A lot of others have written thoughtfully about how to give effective presentations. You should consider looking at:

- Presentation pointer's from Busse & Zettelmeyer. A link lives here: <http://personal.lse.ac.uk/fischerg/Links.htm>.
- Danvy's "Talk on Talks" is general advice about giving scientific presentations, but is still applicable for economics: <http://www.brics.dk/~danvy/talk.html>.
- This is targeted at science folks as well, but also has some useful tips: <http://web.mit.edu/7.17/pdfs/OralPresentations.pdf>.

Some good general advice on the economic job market and surviving graduate school in general can be found here:

- David Romer's "Rule for Making it through Graduate School": http://www.j-bradford-delong.net/Teaching_Folder/Romers_rules.html
- David Levine's Cheap Advice for Going on the job market: http://faculty.haas.berkeley.edu/levine/cheap_advice.html. Also has helpful thoughts on writing a dissertation, presenting results, and starting as new faculty.

- Harvard's advice for job market candidates once lived here: <http://www.economics.harvard.edu/jobmarket/miscadvice>. It moves around—and the current address appears to be unavailable—but is worth reading when you find it.
- Slightly dated but still very helpful job market advice from Bob Hall: <http://faculty.chicagogsb.edu/monika.piazzesi/research/advice.pdf>.