

## **ECON 499: About presentations**

We will reserve 50 minutes for most presentations in the honours seminar. This time includes class discussion which absorbs up to half the airtime. This document gives you some information on the presentations. Let us know if you have any questions or comments.

### ***Oral presentations***

Your presentations will differ from those of your fellow students because you have a different topic and a different presentation style. However, good presentations have some common characteristics:

- The presentation has an explicit setup
- It has a well-structured introduction that, as written introductions, explain the audience everything-but-the-details. For example, the introduction of the presentation of your honours thesis could be structured as follows (a) introduction research area and topic (b) the question(s) the thesis addresses (c) a motivation for this question, (d) the approach taken to address the question, (e) the results, (f) an intuitive argument why these results make sense. And, if for some reason the presentation does not cover the entire thesis, (g) the aspect of your thesis your presentation covers.
- The main body with the actual analysis, structured in a sensible way. For applied theses the structure could be, for instance, (a) the empirical framework, (b) the data, (c) the results. For theoretical theses it could be (a) the benchmark model (b) extension bla bla. (c) results.
- A conclusion

In assessing the quality of your presentations we shall look at

- Whether the presentation is organized well
- The quality of contents. (“Quality” is *not* equal to “difficult”. However, some papers are technical by nature & good presentation would explain the important technical details (only the important ones!) in relatively easy terms. With theoretical research you often see that models are presented using simpler “leading examples”).
- The quality of the didactical tools (think of transparencies, or powerpoint presentation).
- Didactical skills (explaining issues, addressing questions, keeping in touch with your public). An important issue here is: has the main message of your article come across, or not? Another important issue is how the speaker handled questions. Finally, did the speaker stick to his/her pre-announced structure of the talk?

Here are some more hints:

- Even in preparing presentations it is often useful to work in groups. For instance, you could team up with a person when preparing your topic presentation.
- This message is a repeat, but in different words. Try to make the presentation *as simple as possible*, however without having to compromise on explaining an important issue or avoidance of difficult matters altogether. For instance, if you presented a theoretical work, and all the results would flow naturally from one core result, it would be important that everybody understood the core result. But this does not necessarily mean that you must include the full-blown proof. Often it will be more effective to explain the intuition of the proposition and its proof carefully, or work out the proof in the context of a simple example.
- A picture is worth a 1000 words

### ***Chairing presentations***

Chair are to briefly introduce the speaker and the topic, and to clarify and enforce the ‘rules of the presenting game’. The speaker has to know and agree with these rules well before the presentation starts! The chair also “streamlines” and, if need be, “feeds” the class discussion. Finally, the chair needs to make sure that timing is enforced so that there is enough room for discussion.

It is difficult to come up with precise rules for chairing. Often a good chair only has to say a few lines. But, sometimes the discussion stalls and much more input is required. During the presentation a possible ‘golden rule’ is to allow the audience to interrupt the presentation for clarification questions, but to redirect questions that lead to long discussions till after the talk. Chairs enforce whatever rules they announce, but preferably without becoming uptight about it. Also, they allow the speaker to handle things, if possible, and only assist if need be.