

Scientific Communication, Presentation in English: Assessment Criteria

1. Talk, presentation and answers to the questions are adapted to the target audience

The audience is made up of young scientists with different backgrounds (biology, psychology, cognitive sciences...) and little or no previous training in neuroscience, an English teacher who is a specialist in scientific communication and has a general culture in neuroscience and a professional neuroscientist.

2. Narrative, structure and content

- Solid understanding of the paper and logical organization of the presentation
- Clear and creative introduction to the topic: from the big picture to the unique scientific question, why it is interesting and its significance
- Clear definition of the scientific question and goal/hypothesis
- Clear focus on the main points throughout the presentation: selection of key findings with an analysis of relevant and accurate evidence
- Appropriate breaking-up of information into chunks: each result is told as a story (brief rationale, statement of methods, explanation, and conclusion)
- Smooth transitions to connect key points and explain the scientific process, take-home messages are highlighted
- Logical, effective and relevant conclusion: from specific conclusions to the broader context and possible future insights; the limits of the paper can be briefly discussed

3. Visual aids (slides)

- Slides designed to communicate
- Background with no visual content
- Wise use of color
- Fonts: sans serif, easy to read
- Text kept to an absolute minimum (\leq one-fourth the total area of the slide)
- Slide titles making points
- One point per slide
- Good quality photos/images
- Animations and transition slides do not call attention to themselves and help make the science clear
- Simple slide layout
- Slides are as easy to read as possible

4. Delivery

- Clear, effective and confident talk
- Easy to follow for a lingua franca audience: comfortable intelligibility
- Use of scientific words appropriate for context
- Accurate pronunciation of key terms: understanding is not compromised
- Suitable speech volume (to the back of the room) and pace
- Varied, meaningful and engaging intonation

- Slides are not used as presentation notes
- No presentation notes visible from the audience
- Effective use of eye contact
- Fully engaging the audience
- Controlled body language
- Appropriate and purposeful use of laser pointer (or any other pointing device)
- Good use of signposting strategies that help the audience to follow
- Good control of grammar and vocabulary: meaning is not compromised
- 15 minutes for the presentation, no more, with fair contribution from each speaker

5. Answering questions

- No more than 10 minutes for the question-and-answer session, with fair contribution from each speaker
- During the question-and-answer session, it is possible to display a slide that contains a simple summary of the talk or additional slides relative to specific points
- Clear demonstration by the team of the knowledge of the paper
- Confident, precise, concise and appropriate answers to all questions
- Do not start answering any question before it has ended
- Consider rephrasing the question for the audience before providing an answer

6. Asking questions

- Clear, short, precise, and relevant questions
- Fair contribution of all members of the audience to questions
- One question at a time

Notes

- There is a practical limit to how much new information one can reasonably expect the audience to assimilate each minute, and speakers risk confusing and alienating the audience when they exceed this limit.
- Student speakers are beginners in Neuroscience and are not expected to have an extensive background and culture in the domain. Questions should thus target their knowledge of the main points of the paper.
- There is no time in a 15-minute paper to teach standard or sophisticated technology. Student speakers should have a broad and critical knowledge of the methods used in the paper, but they are not expected to be specialists.
- The full range of grading, from zero to 20/20, can be used. Although there is not such a thing as a perfect talk, 20/20 is given when the presentation is almost perfect. Grades are given individually, but greatly reflect the team's work.
- Native speakers and speakers with an excellent mastery of English should take into account the international and lingua franca context.
- Speakers with lower levels of mastery can still produce very successful presentations if they prepare carefully.