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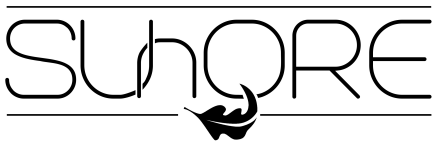
# SUnORE Generic Skills

## How to Prepare a Conference Presentation

Presented by Jan van Vuuren



August 27th, 2021

# Our Agenda for Today

- Where we are in our Friday programme
- Part A: Before the presentation
- Part B: During the presentation
- Part C: Question time
- When we next meet generically

# Our Friday Programme — Where we are . . .

- 27 Aug: How to prepare a conference presentation (JvV)
- 03 Sep: Research feedback (Alexandra, Pierre L, Himil)

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- 06–09 Sep: Practising ORSSA Presentations (08:00–11:00)
- 10–17 Sep: Engineering Test Week (4th Years)
- 12–15 Sep: Online ORSSA Conference (Senior Students)
- 18–26 Sep: University Recess (not us, of course!)

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- 01 Oct: 30 Seconds: Masters *vs* (4th year & PhD) challenge (JZ)
- 08 Oct: Characteristics of a good operations researcher (JK)
- 15 Oct: How to compile a CV & prepare for a job interview (PC)
- 22 Oct: How to conduct yourself at an oral examination (JvV)
- 29 Oct: Capitec Hackathon (SN)
- 11 Nov: OR Quiz: Masters *vs* (4th year & PhD) challenge (SN)

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- 09 Nov: First Examination Opportunity (4th Years)
- 21 Nov: Strandfontein Weekend Away (Anyone who is keen)
- 27 Nov: SUnORE Year End Function (Everyone, please!)

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# Part A
# Before the Presentation

# Part A: Plan together with your supervisor

- It is your responsibility to book a planning session with your supervisor(s) — do it well in advance of the conference
- Things to discuss:
  - Which parts of your work should be presented
  - Of these, which parts should form the focus
  - What level of technical detail should be included
  - How many slides should you have
  - What should be on each slide
- Make notes of the discussion
- Implement the suggestions of your supervisor(s) — they are based on experience.

# Part A: The nature of your slides

- Preferably use Beamer (your work is already in LaTeX)
- Each slide should have a single, clear purpose
- Aim for:
  - Consistency across your slides
  - A minimalist look & feel (avoid clutter)
  - Use figures & tables rather than mathematics (if possible)
  - Fewer slides than minutes in your presentation
- Avoid:
  - Unnecessarily many logos
  - Extremely contrasting or very light colours
  - Excessive animation
  - Punctuation as far as possible
- Make sure your slides are carefully proofread
- Number your slides!

# Part A: Compulsory slides

- A title slide (first slide), containing:
  - The full title of your presentation (as submitted online)
  - Your name and that of your collaborators & supervisor(s)
  - The affiliations of all the people listed (perhaps logos)
  - The date and presentation occasion (perhaps even a logo)
- An agenda or plan of presentation
  - This need not be the second slide of the presentation
  - Much like a table of contents in written work
  - It should be meaningful and orientate the audience
- A conclusion or summary slide
  - Recap what you have said very briefly
  - Help the audience form a clear picture of what you said
- A slide containing key references (last slide)
  - Should be legible and in standard bibliography format
  - Don't include too many references (include your own work)
  - Avoid clapping hands, "Fine" or "Questions?"

# Part A: The remaining slides

Perhaps include additional slides on:

- Your problem statement & study objective(s)
- Essential works in the literature
- Your modelling / analytic approach (flowchart)
- Key assumptions in your work (list of key words)
- The results obtained (graphs & figures)
- A clear set of findings / recommendations
- An appraisal of / critique on your own work
- Ideas for possible / desirable future follow-up work.

# Part A: Prepare what you will be *saying*

- Don't think your preparation is done when your slides are done
- Make careful notes of what you want to say about each slide
- Do not deviate from your planned verbal discussion
- The level of the audience should guide your presentation level
- Spend more time on the hard stuff and less on the easy stuff
- Explain your work to someone beforehand — amend your planned discussion to address what they didn't understand
- Allow enough time for your problem statement & conclusion
- Avoid technical detail in your explanations — big picture
- Plan the first two minutes word-for-word if you're nervous
- Litmus test: Can you replicate your presentation closely?

# Part A: Handouts to the audience

- You may want to provide accompanying handouts
- Only do it if it will make a difference in understanding
- Keep it very short (2–3 pages) — don't print out every slide
- Distribute your handouts *before* the presentation starts
- Make sure you have enough copies (difficult to gauge)
- Possible handout content:
  - a short problem description
  - your model assumptions
  - meanings of key symbols in your model
  - a few central graphs or tables
  - your final conclusion / recommendation.

# Part A: Practice it beforehand

- Practice your presentation a few times on your own (out loud)
- Practice in front of your girl/boyfriend or parents — they will be sympathetic and focus on how you come across
- Practice in front of your fellow students — they will tell you if you don't explain the technical detail well
- Practice in front of your supervisor(s) — he/they will give you improvement tips based on experience
- Once you know your presentation well, time yourself.

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# Part B
# During the Presentation

# Part B: What to bring, wear & do before starting

- Aim to:
  - Arrive early & check working of equipment
  - Put up your title slide before being introduced
  - Possibly write some key information on the blackboard
  - Look clean, shaven & alert; come across as a professional
  - Make sure there is a glass of water available
- Avoid:
  - Shorts, hats, jeans & T-shirts with slogans
  - Plakkies, jogging shoes, open shoes & high-heel shoes
  - Too much makeup / looking too sexy
  - Wearing a suit / tuxedo
- Bring along:
  - A slide clicker & laser pointer
  - A flash disc containing your presentation slides
  - Your notes, handouts & a paper copy of your slides
  - A pen & copy of your written work
  - A laptop & data projector (if required).

# Part B: Don't mess with the chairperson

- Allow the chairperson to introduce you — don't just start
- Don't repeat your name and presentation title if this is mentioned by the chairperson; otherwise start with your name & presentation title
- Stop when the chairperson says your time is up
- Don't end your presentation by inviting questions — it's the chairperson's prerogative to invite/disallow questions
- End your presentation by bringing up the references slide, merely saying "Thank you"
- Don't indicate to audience members to start asking questions when their hands are up.

# Part B: Engaging the audience

- Act professionally, avoid jokes and excuses
- Speak slowly and loudly (project your voice)
- Don't read your presentation from written notes
- Maintain balanced eye contact with the audience
  (do not focus on one or two people in the audience)
- Do not turn your back on the audience
  (except if you absolutely have to do blackboard work)
- Avoid irritating habits — saying uhm, moving to & fro, *etc.*
  (make a video of yourself talking to discover your habits)
- Don't point with your finger; use the laser pointer
- Don't move into the slide projection light
- Avoid work on the blackboard (except possibly beforehand).

# Part B: Getting the timing right

- Don't start out too relaxed — maintain good pace at the start
- Do not accelerate your presentation pace towards the end . . .
- Stick to what you planned to say; avoid going off on a tangent
- Practice out loud beforehand, timing yourself (preferably in the same venue you will be using for the real presentation)
- Look out for intermediate time warnings from the chairperson
- Prepare for the possibility of omitting a slide or two if time is tight — never stop abruptly before your conclusion.

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# Part C
# Question time

# Part C: Question time

- Allow the chairperson to indicate who may ask questions when — don't signal for questions yourself
- The purpose of question time is for the audience to enhance their understanding and to suggest alternative approaches
- It is not an opportunity for the audience to attack you; therefore don't be on the defence — answer calmly & politely
- Make sure you understand a question before you answer
- Once understood, reflect a few moments before you answer
- Always be 100% truthful in your answer to a question
- But for heaven's sake, don't shortsell yourself
- Average presentations often elicit few questions — many questions may be an indication of a poor or an excellent presentation
- After questions audience members may engage with you privately — take a printout of your published work or chapters.

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# Questions / Discussion

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# When We Next Meet Generically

# When we next meet generically . . .

. . . Alexandra, Pierre L & Himil will

*Present research feedback on their skripsies*