

Oral Presentations

Oral presentations form a standard part of the learning and teaching process in seminars in the Department at every level. The ability to give a confident and well-structured oral presentation to your fellow-students is one of the key skills we aim to develop through your undergraduate education. It is a vital skill in many areas of employment and in adult life more generally.

Typically, presentations are expected to be relatively short at level one and two (for instance, five-ten minutes) and longer at level 3 (say, twenty minutes). The module-director or seminar-leader will give you specific guidance about what is expected; but here are some general guidelines which hold good for seminars at all levels.

1. Clarity of Argument

Think out in advance the main points you want to make and the way they fit together into a connected argument. Give a short introduction, explaining the scope of your presentation and your main theme and round off the presentation by summarising your main findings and conclusions.

2. Accuracy of Content

Prepare the material accurately, with careful reference to relevant primary (ancient) sources and secondary material (modern scholarship). Where appropriate, draw attention to the difficulties or ambiguities in the ancient evidence and to differences in the way that modern scholars interpret this evidence (this is especially important at level 3). Prepare a presentation that matches the topic set and the time allowed for giving the presentation.

3. Clarity of Presentation

Give the presentation in a way that highlights your main points and the stages of your argument (it is sometimes useful to list these numerically). Speak slower than in ordinary conversation, allowing enough time for your fellow-students to take notes - otherwise they are not going to get the full benefit from your presentation. Some points need repeating or rephrasing; this also gives others time to write down your points.

It is often useful to give exact references as you go along to the page references (or book-chapters, or line references) of the set text or source being discussed or to the relevant passage of the secondary sources used. Use the board to write up references or to give key words or drawings.

For longer presentations (especially at level 3) you may want to use a short handout or the OHP; ask your lecturer to have this copied in advance or take it to the Dept Office in good time before the class.

4. Personal Interaction

Speak clearly and loudly enough so that you can be heard by everyone in the room. Try to maintain some degree of eye-contact with your fellow-students from time to time throughout the presentation. It is better to prepare a presentation in advance so that you can give it by referring to your notes than to read the whole text. Prepare to take questions after the presentation and to respond positively and co-operatively to questions even if they may seem challenging or critical of your presentation.