



CHAIR OF MICROECONOMICS

Presentation and Seminar Guide

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Version: 12. August 2015

1 Introduction

The aim of this guide is to help you making good presentations and to introduce you to the procedure of seminars at this chair. In the first part we will suggest an approach of how to assess a paper in case you do not have to present your own work. Second, we will give you some advice for presentation of your content. We will answer some questions like

“What might be covered by a presentation?”

“Is a PowerPoint-presentation always the best choice?”

“How should I handle formulas?”

and “What else is important to keep in mind if you present something?”.

In the last part of this guide we will render some assistance according to seminars at this chair in general. We will answer some questions like

“What is a session chair?”

and “What do I have to do if I am the discussant of a presenter?”.

Of course, this guide makes no claims of being complete. Also, there is no cookie-cutter approach. Please do not take this guide that way. It is possible and sometimes necessary to vary from the methods suggested here. And now, good luck and have fun with your next presentations!

2 Assessing Papers – A How To

In the following, we suggest a procedure of how to read, understand and assess scientific papers. Of course, this is only one possibility of how this can be done, but not the only one. Nevertheless, it might help you to access the important content of a research paper.

0. Before you read the paper please make clear that you know the differences between definitions, theorems, lemmas etc.¹
1. To get an overview of the scientific questions which are asked and answered in the paper it might be helpful to have a look at the abstract or introduction.
2. Now, we have to go more into the details of the scientific work. Start with the model description. In particular, have a close look at the notations, definitions, assumptions and economic interpretation. Make sure that you get the connection to the main question.

¹If you are not familiar with the distinctions you can find explanations of this vocabulary at the end of this guide.

3. Have a look at the results. (It might be helpful to have a look at the paper's conclusion to get an overview of the results.) Which are the most important ones? Do they answer the main question(s)? Can you interpret them in terms of the economic story? Please consider the formulas here and try to understand them. It is not necessary at this point to go through the proofs (but it will be later, of course).
4. Have again a closer look now. Let us go back to the assumptions and limitations of the presented model. Are the assumptions plausible? How restrictive are they? And what lesson do we learn as economists?
5. Now, have a look at the proofs. What is the idea of the proof? Which strategy do the authors follow to establish the results? Is there an economic argumentation? Does the proof help to understand the goal of the paper?
6. Check the literature. Which work did the authors cite and where is their work cited? Do you miss anything in the model? Are there possible extensions?
7. Now, it is your turn to think of the model and to relate it to your own ideas. What do you would like to change in the model?
8. Let us bring together what you should have learned now. You know the problem, the model, the results (especially the most important ones) and the proofs. Can you classify the model and its results into a basic case and extensions or in relevant and more “technical” results? Now, you are ready to prepare a presentation.

3 Presentations – A How To

There are many possibilities at the university why you are asked to present something. If you write your Bachelor or Master thesis, you may be asked to present your results. If you attend a course with a seminar part, you are often asked to present a paper or a chapter of a book written by someone else. But no matter what your topic is, there are some general things you should keep in mind for a presentation.

3.1 Content of a presentation

The presentation may be structured into the following parts. This is only a suggestion. You are free to deviate from the following “agenda”:

- **Title page:**
 - name of paper
 - authors

- presenter
- date
- etc.
- Start with the **agenda** of the talk (you might show it after each section).
- **Motivate** the relevance of the paper!
 - Tell the “story”. State the question(s).
 - possibly related literature (here or at the end)
 - top-level description of results
 - What is the contribution of the paper?
- Present the **model** (framework for the analysis):
 - Try to use an intuitive “language” for the notation.
 - What are the basic assumptions?
- Present the **results**:
 - Interpretation of results (verbatim version)?
 - Explain formulas instead of let them pass without comment.
 - What is the relation between the result and the original question?
 - Discuss the assumptions.
 - optional: explain the proof strategy.
- **Critically assess** the paper (YOUR own opinion):
 - Formulate your opinion on the model, results, question, relevance of the contribution in the paper.
 - What was the lesson to be learned?

Keep in mind the following general suggestions.

- State the main results! You should finish your presentation in a certain time, perhaps in half an hour or in 45 minutes. Nevertheless, you should inform your audience about the most important facts of the work. It is not important to mention every detail or to state every formula but to *explain* the most important results. So, do not be afraid in excluding some parts of the paper.
- Important is to “tell the story”! This means that it is important to be consistent and to make it possible for the others to follow your talk. Is there a clear concept in your presentation?

- Make your talk interesting! Do not be bored yourself about the topic you are presenting. By presenting the facts show your audience why they are important. Give some examples to illustrate them. Do not only read out the formulas loudly but also explain what they mean and why they are important.

3.2 Formal concerns

- Structure your presentation well and show your agenda! It is easier to follow your talk if the audience is aware of your agenda and knows about what you will talk.
- Use your own words! If you present the work of someone else it is important that you are the one who explains it. You should use your own words to do so. Reading out the paper is not the intention of a presentation.
- If you cite (directly), denote it. It might be useful to cite something directly. This is okay if you make clear that it is a citation.
- Make sure that formulas are displayed correctly! If you use software to create slides, use an appropriate editor to display them correctly. Your audience can only understand them if they are able to read them. The best way to guarantee that is to prepare a PDF version of the slides to avoid incompatibilities of Powerpoint (or other) versions.
- Do not overload your slides! Put the most important facts on the slides, not everything that you will tell your audience. It is useful to use only keywords and write in a huge enough font size.

3.3 Media

Please feel free to use any media you want! Sometimes it is useful to write on the board, for example. If you want to prepare slides or are asked to do so, PowerPoint is not the only possibility.

- **Microsoft PowerPoint (or LibreOffice Impress)**

If you use PowerPoint (or LibreOffice Impress), please save your work not only in .pptx (or .odp) but also as a PDF file. If you want to present your work with the help of another notebook, it could be the case that the PowerPoint versions are not fully compatible. Therefore, it is useful to have a PDF file in reserve.

- **\LaTeX Beamer**

If you are already familiar with \LaTeX or want to present a paper with a number of formulas, you could use the \LaTeX Beamer class to create slides. Good introductions can be found in the internet.

L^AT_EX is a type-setting system and free software. If you want to learn more about L^AT_EX, you should have a look at the “L^AT_EX presentation template” and the general Introduction to L^AT_EX (provided together with the thesis template) on our website.

- **Handout**

It might be useful to make an additional handout for the audience. A handout is not longer than 2 pages and either contains the most important facts of the presentation or additional aspects of the topic.

- **Board**

If you want to use the board, make sure that there is one in the announced room and that there is chalk. You can get colored and white chalk at the Service Center of the university. Please structure your notes at the board well.

- **Others**

Of course, you can use other media like the overhead projector. You can also use a video or play some music. Feel free to do whatever you think supports your presentation.

4 Some important facts about seminars at this chair

Mostly, not only a lecture but also a seminar is part of a course at this chair. Your main task there is to present a paper or some other work. The first challenge for you and for the chair is to allocate the papers to the participants. Therefore, you are asked to form complete preferences over the given papers and to send these preferences to the chair. After some time you will then receive the topic of your presentation.

However, in seminars at this chair the presentation is not your only task. Of course, you are invited to ask questions and to discuss with each presenter about his topic after the presentation. Other important tasks are the following:

4.1 Session Chair

In our seminars you also may be asked to be a session chair. The task of a session chair is just to announce the title and to kindly remind the presenters to obey time restrictions.

4.2 Discussant

In addition, in some of our seminars you may also be asked to be the discussant of a presentation. This task is a little bit more challenging than being the session chair. The task of the discussant is to discuss (not summarize!) a certain presentation, that has been allocated to you in advance, after the talk in about 5 minutes. You are free to prepare a

small presentation with no more than two slides. Of course, it is possible to work together with the presenter before the seminar takes place.

5 Vocabulary

In the following, you can find some explanations of commonly used terms for mathematical statements. This list is not claimed to be complete.

Axiom

An axiom does not require a proof. Mostly it is considered as an assumption or a property that describe a solution concept, for instance.

Definition

A definition explains the meaning of an expression or a phrase used for a formal description within a model and thus, does not need to be proven.

Theorem

A theorem is a claim or a statement that has to be proven (often with the help of lemmas). It is mostly used for the important or main results.

Proposition

A proposition is a claim or a statement of minor importance. Often it can be proven relatively easy and may be intuitively expected to follow from the assumptions imposed on the model.

Lemma

A lemma is a “helping theorem”. It is mostly needed to proof a larger theorem.

Corollary

A corollary follows with no or a very short proof from a preceding theorem.