

Dissertation Oral Presentation

Each student is required to give an oral presentation to their supervisor and at least one other person with some knowledge of the field of the dissertation. These will usually take place in the final two weeks of Hilary Term. The presentation does not count towards the final assessment of the dissertation, however, it will give you an opportunity to consolidate the material you have covered and to practise your presentation skills and you will receive feedback on your talk afterwards.

The presentation should last approximately 25 minutes and you should aim to talk for at most 15 minutes, leaving the remaining time for questions and discussion. Since the presentations do not form part of the final assessment for the dissertation you are not required to wear sub fusc. Even though the presentations are not formally assessed, you may not attend other students' talks.

After you have given your presentation there will be time for questions and discussion. This will give chance to your supervisor to test, through questioning, your understanding of the material included in the project. This should help to clarify the structure of your dissertation and the level of details required.

You may prepare slides for the presentation. Since you are likely to have mathematical equations in the presentation, LaTeX is recommended. There are various LaTeX classes for creating slides including the beamer class. A sample file using the beamer class can be downloaded from <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/system/files/attachments/PresentationTemplate.zip>. An alternative to using slides is to give a presentation on the whiteboard. This will require a similar level of preparation to writing slides and you will still need to decide carefully in advance exactly what points you wish to make on the whiteboard.

Before writing the presentation it is worth writing an outline of the talk in the form of a few bullet points to make clear what you will cover. You should describe the problem you have studied and why it is interesting. One model for the remainder of the talk is to describe the methods you have used to approach the problem and your key results and conclusions. Remember that it is not necessary to describe all the work you have done; in fact this will likely be impossible within the time limit. Your audience will appreciate a coherent description of a portion of your work much more than a high speed and difficult to follow presentation of all that you have done. It is appropriate to aim the level of your talk at a fellow OMMS/Part C student doing a similar selection of courses but not having specialised in the topic of the dissertation.

How many slides you prepare is partly down to subject area and personal preference. If you have more than one slide per minute, you almost certainly have too many. However, up to 15 slides may be appropriate if you have a lot of figures and results that can be discussed fairly quickly. Regardless of how many slides you have, it is sensible to prepare the key points you would like to make about each slide and then practise to check the presentation takes about the right amount of time. Similarly if you plan to give a whiteboard presentation, you should practise this in advance to check you have enough time to write and discuss everything you intend.

When you make the slides you should ensure the font size is large enough to read from a distance and that there is not too much information on each slide. It is recommended that you avoid fancy

backgrounds and special effects (e.g. moving type) as these tend to distract the audience. Overlays (where parts of the slide are revealed at once) can be effective if used relatively sparingly.

Giving proper credit for any material copied or adapted from other sources is just as important in a presentation as it will be in your final dissertation. In particular remember that if you include a figure in your talk that you did not generate yourself, then you must state where it came from. Text taken from other sources must of course also be appropriately quoted and cited – for Oxford's policy on plagiarism, see <https://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/plagiarism?wssl=1>.

When you give the talk remember to face the audience and speak clearly. Make sure you explain the key points on each slide and be sure you explain the important features to pick out from figures and tables of results. Avoid reading from a script: the commentary may be a little less perfect this way, but it is usually more natural and engaging which helps to retain audience interest.

The presentation will give you a chance to step back from the minutiae of your dissertation to think about how its overall impact and narrative (or that of a section) is going. This should be a useful opportunity ahead of completing the writing up.