

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING ABSTRACTS FOR THE COT CONFERENCE

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INTRODUCTION

The first part of these guidelines provides general tips and advice on planning and writing an abstract for the COT conference. The latter part of the document then outlines how the abstracts will be assessed, and provides essential information to applicants on how to address the assessment criteria. Applicants are advised to read through the entire document in order to assist their submission of a high quality abstract to the COT conference.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Planning the abstract

- Plan content of abstract using following structure:
 - Introduction/background to the topic and aims/rationale for the work done - where did the idea come from and what were you trying to achieve?
 - Methods - what did you do, and who was involved?
 - Results/conclusions – what did you find out or conclude? Present what you found/experienced – not what you expected to find – i.e. what happened as a result of the work being done?
 - Ethical issues - what sorts of ethical issues arose during the work that led to your presentation – from simple issues of asking participants to be involved or setting about changing service delivery, to complex issues of confidentiality and ethical review.
 - Clear implications for practice – why does your presentation matter to OT?
- List the important points to be presented
- Limit your information and highlight key facts only e.g. excess information in the introduction will mean you have insufficient word allowance left for the remaining sections
- Consider the following four points:
 - Purpose – why are you presenting the information?
 - Audience – to whom are you saying it?
 - Content – what are you going to tell the audience?
 - Form – how are you going to say it?
- Consider the learning objectives/outcomes for the audience when the information is presented

- Check you have followed the abstract guidelines provided by the conference organizers regarding format of your abstract e.g. where the title, authors' names and institutions should be included
- Check the content of your abstract against the scoring criteria, as shown below

Content

- Write in short paragraphs rather than using bullet points
- Only use abbreviations if the full text has been included first with abbreviation in brackets e.g. College of Occupational Therapists (COT)
- Remember KISS – keep it simple and straightforward
- Avoid the use of specialist terminology - remember the people marking the abstracts may not be specialists in that area
- Do not include more than five references. If you are truly uncomfortable with referencing, try writing it in a way that does not need any references.
- Published information cited in the abstract must be referenced in the text and the full reference included in a reference list at the end of the abstract
- References in the reference list must be cited appropriately in the text
- References must be listed accurately in the correct style – Harvard for the COT conference. For details please see http://www.cot.co.uk/newpublic/about/pdf/Authors_Guide-2003.pdf

Prior to submitting the abstract

- Ask someone unfamiliar with the topic to read the abstract, to ensure they are able to understand it
- Always check your abstract thoroughly against the submission and scoring criteria

Reasons abstracts receive low scores

- Poor referencing - this applies to many abstracts for the following reasons:
 - Articles referenced in the text are omitted from the reference list
 - Articles included in the reference list are not cited in the text
 - Incorrect referencing style used
- Lack of evidence of ethical approval where required, or lack of awareness of ethical issues arising in the course of the work
- Poor detail of methods used in the project
- Poor structure – many have no obvious beginning (introduction), middle (method and results) or end (conclusions and implications for practice)

- Poorly balanced structure - too much information on background to the work and insufficient information on the work to be presented
- Poor description of what was done and who it involved
- Lack of clear findings – some abstracts relate to projects that have not started or produced clear results. If you have no results or findings, perhaps you should wait and submit when you do, or maybe you should report instead on the process so far – what it has taught you that others should know
- Poor grammar or spelling

GUIDANCE REGARDING SCORING CRITERIA

Reviewers will assess abstracts according to the five questions below. Each question attracts up to two marks, for a final maximum score of ten. In addition, all abstracts must satisfy the 'must do' criteria that are explained later.

1. Where did your idea come from and what were you trying to achieve?

Essentially, this is about your question(s) that led to your work on the topic – whether it be a research project, a service review/development, your wish to share an observation about new roles, an event that lead to new learning, or other.

Your response should consider:

- What ideas support what you have done – a school of thought (such as occupational science, or sociology or other lens for seeing the world)
- What knowledge supports your work – anecdotal evidence or other research or published literature that made you question your practice; an audit or service evaluation or a topical issue

Think about how your work might be related to a school of thought – for example, does it draw from theories of practice or clinical reasoning, or is it based on a reflective process?

2. What did you do, and who was involved?

This question concerns methodology, and asks you to outline the design of your work and the methods you used to undertake it. You may start to address this question by describing the nature of the work you are presenting:

- Was it research, service evaluation/development, audit, a practice report, a reflective analysis?
- Was this a large or small scale, formal or informal project?
- If research, was a qualitative or quantitative design adopted, or something else?

- Was this a primary study (reporting research undertaken first hand) or a secondary study (summarising primary studies e.g. a review, guideline development, decision analyses)?
- Is it a personal or joint reflection, or perhaps a philosophical/theoretical discussion?

Your response should then outline the methods you used to collect information and develop ideas, and how you then analysed this. In more formal research, common data collection methods include: administration of a questionnaire, interviews, focus groups, observation, record analysis, or a clinical trial. If your work did not involve any data collection you should describe how you reviewed, summarised or drew conclusions from existing information.

You should also specify who was involved in your work. People involved in your work may include:

- Participants or service users
- Co-researchers, practitioners or other colleagues
- Library staff

Any of these may have been involved in the conception, design and/or implementation of the project. It may also be important to describe the setting or environment in which your work was undertaken.

For research, it will also be necessary to describe your sample - outlining how people involved were recruited, included or excluded from your study.

3. What did you find out or conclude?

Here, we want to know what your thoughts are on the process of the work and then any conclusions you have reached. It may be that there are no results, as such, because you are reporting on the planning, piloting or reconnaissance stage of a project; or perhaps because you have concluded that more work is needed in the area or your results were inconclusive.

In these cases, it is useful to report on any challenges you may have encountered such as: the time and effort involved, the agreement of colleagues, co-researchers or managers, the involvement of service users, the difficulties of carrying out a service evaluation.

Where you have clear outcomes or findings you should consider their validity – how you attempted to ensure that your methods of doing the work resulted in an accurate

reporting of the topic. You must also consider their generalisability – the extent to which they are relevant to other settings or people.

4. What ethical considerations are relevant to what you are presenting?

There will be ethical considerations relevant to any work you are presenting! Any work undertaken within a practice or educational setting will prompt ethical issues to a greater or lesser degree. Ethical issues may arise at any stage of your project, but particular attention should be paid to interactions with clients, service users and colleagues. You may not have encountered any significant difficulties, but it will be important that you illustrate an awareness of issues that may have arisen. Reviewers will be looking for an awareness of the wider ethical issues.

You should make mention of even the simple issues – like rationing and gate keeping, confidentiality, consent (especially with vulnerable people or those unable to make decisions for themselves), monitoring or evaluating the effects of service changes to ensure best practice, etc.

If your abstract is describing a research project you must confirm that you gained ethical approval from an appropriate research ethics committee before commencing with your project. If your study involved university staff or students this may simply involve approval from a university committee. However if your research involved health care professionals working in the NHS or social care, or patients and users of NHS or social care services, approval from an appropriate NHS or social care committee should have been gained. You will be asked to provide evidence of this approval, and abstracts will normally be rejected where research governance requirements have not been met.

5. Why does the presentation matter to occupational therapy?

This may be asking the most obvious question, and the answer might well be evident throughout your abstract. However, read it through and check. If it is not yet clear, then take a few words to spell it out. Why should it be of interest to your OT colleagues?

If you are proposing or using an approach not normally found in OT practice, describe explicitly why it should be part of OT work. Does it link to the fundamental philosophy of OT – the idea that health and well-being can be facilitated by meaningful engagement in occupation? How could it relate to practice?

"The must do's"

Length – Reviewers will reject all submissions that are over the 250 words limit.

Ethics – all topics have any ethical considerations as described in point 4. If ethical considerations are not adequately addressed, the reviewers will reject the abstract. Regardless of whether it needs formal ethical review, any topic of discussion in health, social care or education practice will give rise to ethical issues, though not necessarily difficult dilemmas. We want to encourage everyone to be aware of these and to talk about them.

Relevance to OT – if you have not been able to make it clear why your topic is important to OT, it will not be clear why the abstract should be accepted for an OT conference.

Structure, grammar, spelling, referencing – when assessing abstracts, attention to these elements gives an indication of your attention to detail in general. It may not be the best assessment method, but it is the most straightforward.

If you have created your abstract by cutting and pasting from another larger document, be sure to proof read it well before you submit, or better still, get someone else to read it. It can be difficult to ensure you have explained something in plain English when you know the subject intimately yourself. There is little excuse for not polishing your submission before submitting it, to make sure the reviewers can read it effortlessly and painlessly.

March 2007