

ECA USC Student Poster Session Guidelines What is a Poster Session?

A poster session is a display of multiple research papers in poster/discussion format. Rather than a formal presentation, poster sessions allow authors to display their findings through both text and illustrations, and at the same time, discuss their research with participants attending the session. The idea is to get a large number of people to see your work in a quick, efficient, clear, organized, and professional manner.

Posters are comprised of small amounts of text along with charts, graphs, photographs, diagrams, and other visual representations of data and findings. The author(s) of each manuscript/poster stands adjacent to his/her poster, ready to discuss what is displayed in further depth with conventioners who attend the session. Although there are formal starting and ending times to the session, attendees may visit the posters at any time during the session.

ECA Poster Session Awards

The Top Posters in the Undergraduate Poster Division will receive awards. No posters will be considered for these awards if they do not adhere to the “Poster Session Absolutes” listed below. Judges will be coming through the poster sessions on both days to evaluate the posters. All judge's decisions are final.

Poster Session Absolutes

These items are absolutely necessary and important for you to know about your poster and the poster session:

Professionalism:

- Dress professionally (no jeans, sneakers, hats, etc. but a suit is not necessary).
- At least one author must be at his or her board for the entire time of the session.
- Arrive approximately 15-20 minutes prior to the beginning of the session with all of your materials.
- Posters may only be displayed during your scheduled session and all posters and materials must be taken with you at the end of your session. If your poster is not removed, it will be discarded and you will be disqualified from any award.

Materials:

- You will be given an easel – any other items you must bring (such as: the poster board itself, any handouts, copies of your paper, etc.).
- The easel holds a poster board of standard size: “oak tag” is about 2’ high x 3’ wide; it is sturdy enough to stand on its own without being secured to the easel (no materials will be provided to help your poster stand up). Be sure to have one of the 2’ x 3’ size – no larger.
- Avoid any glossy types of finish as there may be glare from the fluorescent lighting.

- You should put together your poster before the session begins and be ready to start immediately; if you are not preparing the poster before you travel, bring to the convention any extra materials that you used in putting your poster together as well as anything needed should your poster get damaged (e.g., an extra printout of each page, extra tape, glue, glue stick, push pins, etc.).
- No computers or electronic equipment will be available in the session and we ask that you do not bring your own.

The Poster Itself – Items that MUST be included on the poster:

- The paper title (at the TOP of the poster) must be the same title you submitted with your accepted paper, even if you've made revisions since then.
- The author(s) name(s) and affiliation(s).
- The main findings of the paper – typed text and graphics.
- Absolutely **NO** handwritten text or free-hand drawings.

Poster Session Further Suggestions

These items are not absolutely necessary, but are strongly recommended for more effective posters. Ratings for posters considering these suggestions do tend to be higher.

Preparation

- Start your preparation as soon as you receive this document!
- Things can go wrong, and it can take a lot longer than you might think to get your paper into poster format so you might want to start now.

Handouts:

- We strongly recommend that you have a half page to one page handout to give to those interested in your poster. (Not everyone who comes to the poster session will be able to have a discussion with each author, and those you do engage in discussion generally would like to have something to take with them. These people may be in touch with you later about your research or be part of the award decision process.)
- At a minimum, the handout should have the author(s) name(s) and contact information, the title of your paper, an abstract, and a list of references used (you may want to have this list handy in case anyone has a question about where you got your information).
- Note on the handout that this was presented at the ECA 2014 Undergraduate Scholars Conference Poster Session. The handout should not be a representation of your entire paper but more like an extended journal abstract (Those interested can email you for the full text of your paper.)
- Bring approximately 25 copies. You could also bring a sign-up sheet in case you run out of copies.

Poster Text:

- Text should be large enough to see from about 3 feet away – test this.
- The title should be able to be seen from 4-6 feet away – this is what will determine whether people will look closer at your poster – be sure they can see it.
- The poster should consist of no more than 50-60% text, as graphics (discussed below) are important in a poster session.
- Text should be edited so that the fewest number of words say the most. When printed, the text font should be around .5" to 2" high, depending on which parts (headings larger), and all text should be in a normal (not fancy or hard to read) font style with no more than 2-3 different sizes and no more than two font styles.
- Your paper title and any subtitles on the poster should be **bold** for easier reading from a distance. Do not use all capital letters, unless it is in a heading/subheading.
- Bulleted lists are effective for text. Full-length paragraphs should be limited.

Graphics:

- Graphics make the poster visually interesting, and often visitors to the session may have time to read the graphics, but not the text – make the graphics work for you.
- The main point of the graphics should be clear without extended viewing.
- Like text, all graphics (photos, graphs, charts, etc.) should be large enough to be seen from about 3 feet away – test this.
- Color can be effective if used strategically and sparingly.
- Figures can be used to explain statistics and findings (like those in the Results or Discussion sections), and all should have brief explanatory captions.
- All graphics should be of high quality.

Layout:

Try to maximize the space on your poster by effectively using each inch of space without forcing the poster to appear crowded. It is helpful to have some type of separation between each part of the poster (i.e., colored paper behind white paper with text; a bit of white space between each sheet of paper). Posters should generally read from top to bottom and left to right, as that is how the eye travels.

In general, the layout or points of visual focus should include:

1. The items mentioned at the top under "MUST include"
2. An introduction/abstract, main points from the literature review (if your paper is a literature review, maximize this; if not, minimize this or put with the introduction)
3. Methods (if data were collected)
4. Results (if data were analyzed)
5. Conclusions (if you had hypotheses and/or research questions, it may save space)

to display these with or as a part of the results)

To save space, it is recommended that your references NOT be listed on the poster board, but that you have your full list of references with you.

Discussion During Your Poster Session:

- Don't read from your poster – use it as a visual aid – practice ahead and know where everything is laid out on the poster for easy reference.
- Don't worry about repetition – you may feel that you're repeating yourself, but each person you interact with is hearing your information for the first time and has not read your paper.
- Prepare three different discussions: 30-seconds, 2-minutes, and 5-minutes. You can decide which one to use depending on who you're talking with and what types of information they're asking. These "discussions" should be rehearsed ahead of time, but do not need to be written down, and should focus on the main points of the poster/paper. To decide what to say, think about what you would like people to remember about your research.
- Remember that although those attending the convention are communication experts, communication professors, and communication students, not all attendees are interested in or are experts in the same areas of communication. Gear your messages to an intelligent audience who may or may not know a lot about your specific area of communication.
- Maintain eye contact, and try to involve those hovering around by asking them if they'd like to hear more about your paper/research. If one person seems to monopolize your time, be aware of those around you and ask them to join in.

Sample Poster Presentation Layout

See the ECA example poster. Do not feel the need to follow the layout and style shown. Instead, use this as an example of large font as well as engaging and logical design. (Some poster presenters, such as the one from which the example was drawn, use PPT and then have their posters printed in their school's print shop.)

Websites Consulted

<http://www.ncsu.edu/project/posters/NewSite/>

http://www.kumc.edu/SAH/OTEd/jradel/Poster_Presentations/PstrStart.html

http://cte.umdj.edu/career_development/career_posters.cfm

http://www.asp.org/education/howto_onPosters.html

Note: All of these references were consulted in the creation of this set of guidelines, but if you consult the sites for more information, please remember to use the guidelines created specifically for your ECA Undergraduate Scholars Conference poster sessions.

*****Original ECA Poster Session Guidelines were created by Professor Kelly Rocca DelGaizo***

at St. Johns University