

ELEVATOR PITCH

What is it?

An Elevator Pitch is a short, engaging presentation of the main elements of your research. It concisely sums up what you do and why it is important, and it uses plain language to be understood by an audience unfamiliar with your work.

Purpose

As an ACAP research student, you may deliver presentations in class, at a research day, or at seminars and conferences, so speaking confidently in public about your research is extremely important. An Elevator Pitch allows you to develop your skills in academic communication and increase your capacity to succinctly explain your research in a language appropriate to a given audience.

Process

You will make a presentation of your research to your ACAP peers, supervisors, teaching staff and other interested stakeholders and then accept questions. Although you have been focused on the details in your research, an elevator pitch presents only the gist of your work. Think of an elevator pitch as enough to catch someone's interest and potentially start a conversation. If they want to know more details, they will ask.

Format

- The presentation will be a maximum of 3 minutes, and you will accept questions for up to 5 minutes
- A **single static** PowerPoint slide is permitted. You will, therefore, not be able to include much textual content, but should consider one key message or graphic.
- If you do include text, it should be no more than 5 or 6 lines, with heading 36pt or larger, and body text 28pt or larger.
- You cannot use slide transitions, animations or 'movement' of any description and no electronic media like sound and video files
- The slide is to be displayed from the beginning of the presentation.
- No additional props/equipment are permitted.

Hooking your audience

Your elevator pitch should have three main sections:

1. The Hook

If you want to keep your audience's attention, you need to start with a 'hook' to grab them. One idea is to present the problem or phenomenon your research addresses. Don't forget to include the main topic you study and give a brief background to your research.

2. What is your solution or insight?

Next you need to explain how your work solves the problem or provides further insight into the phenomenon. Either briefly cover your major findings, or if it's still early in your research, outline what you expect the results to be.

3. Why should your audience care?

This is the most important section of the elevator pitch as it lets the audience connect your work to real-world applications. Try, if possible, to show the relevance of your work to a global issue like climate change or politics, or personal development like being fitter or more confident.

Delivering with confidence

When you are presenting your research, your audience will expect you to:

- be thoroughly prepared and professional
- speak with fluency and confidence
- communicate your research clearly and succinctly

To achieve this, consider the following aspects:

Practice

Few people can present successfully without preparation, so invest time to develop your presentation skills and build practice time into your planning. Getting the timing right is a critical part of this format, and another reason to practise your delivery several times.

Presence

Don't rush due to the time constraints, but rather speak slightly slower than normal. If presenting live, stand confidently facing the audience and remember to make eye contact. If presenting via video, look straight at your camera and use headphones to assist with voice clarity. In either case, don't fidget or sway, and dress appropriately for your presentation.

Handling question time

Question time is an opportunity for members of the audience to clarify issues or gain more information on the topic. There are different types of questions that may be asked:

- indicating a gap or point of confusion in your talk, such as 'What is the relationship between...?.'
- requiring expansion on a particular point, such as 'Could you say more about...?'
- checking understanding, such as 'What technique did you propose to use for...?'

Here are some tips for handling question time:

- Listen attentively.
- Paraphrase the question or ask for it to be repeated if necessary.
- Answer honestly and stay within the limits of your knowledge. Your audience will know immediately if you try to bluff.
- It's ok to not have an answer, especially if your research is ongoing. For example: 'I can't answer that question at this point in the research. I hope to have an answer in a few weeks' time...' 'I don't know. It's something I'll be looking into, so I'll have to get back to you on that one.'



Tip

Rehearse your presentation with fellow students and invite questions. Take note of the questions and consider whether the information elicited by the questions is so important that it needs to be included in the body of the presentation. Don't try to include everything, though.

Sample marking criteria - Use this to check your presentation is on track

Comprehension and Content

1. An understanding of the research is given, including background and significance to the research question, whilst explaining terminology and avoiding jargon.
2. The impact and/or results of the research are communicated clearly, including conclusion and outcomes.
3. The Elevator Pitch follows a clear and logical sequence.
4. The topic, research significance, results/ impact and outcomes are communicated in language appropriate to the audience
5. Each element receives adequate time, so that one section is not prioritized over another.

Engagement and Communication

1. The oration makes the audience want to know more
2. The presenter is careful not to trivialize or generalize their research
3. The presenter conveys enthusiasm for their research
4. The presenter captures and maintains the audience's attention.
5. The presenter has sufficient stage presence, eye contact and vocal range; maintains a steady pace and has a confident stance.
6. The PPT slide enhances the presentation, is clear, legible, and concise