

GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING ABSTRACTS FOR THE COT CONFERENCE

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On behalf of the Scientific Programme Committee

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 – what did you want to find out and why?
 - Methods – what was the design of the work and involvement of participants? For workshops and round tables, a clear outline is required of the issues to be explored and the methods to be employed within the session.
 - Results/conclusions – what was the outcome of the work and what were the conclusions, or what is the likely outcome of the workshop/round table?
 - Impact on service users - what was the impact on users or what type of service user 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 occupational therapy – why is your presentation relevant and important to occupational therapy?
- 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 criteria below. Each criterion is awarded a maximum of 2 points, giving a final mark out of 10. Two points are awarded where the criterion is fully met, 1 point where criterion is partially met, and 0 points where the criterion is not addressed. For both criteria 4 and 5, a minimum of 1 point is required (see 'must do' criteria below). If either of them are given zero, the abstract is rejected.

Scoring criteria

1. Is it clear what the author/s wanted to find out and why?

The title should be clear, short (no more than 12 words) and relate to the abstract.

The abstract should clearly outline the background to the work, question or problem that led to the work outlined on the abstract. The question may be clinical, professional, managerial, educational or research-based, but should outline the key aim to the work. The abstract should be explicit in stating what the author wanted to find out, and why. Abstracts for workshops or roundtables should state the background to the topic or issue to be addressed.

This section should also highlight the ideas and knowledge supporting the work. The ideas might refer to a school of thought, or a form of theory. The background knowledge might be anecdotal evidence, or evidence derived from published research or related activity.

2. Is the design of the work and involvement of participants adequately described?

Within this section authors should outline the methodology of their work, e.g. the design of the activity and the methods used to undertake the work. It should be clear what type of project was undertaken:

- 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?
- What methods and processes are proposed for workshop or round table sessions?

This section should outline the methods used to collect information and develop ideas, and how information was then analysed, i.e. what was done and who was involved. If the work did not involve any data collection, the author should have described how they reviewed, summarised or drew conclusions from existing information.

This section should also specify who was involved in the work, e.g. participants or service users, co-researchers, practitioners or other colleagues. For research projects, the author should have briefly described their sample, highlighting how people involved were recruited, included or excluded from the study.

3. Is the outcome of the work clear and any conclusions justified?

Within this section any key findings should be outlined, i.e. what was found or concluded. It should be clear how findings emerged from the data collected. It may be the case that no results have been reported, as the author is reporting on the planning, piloting or reconnaissance stage of a project, in this case this section should highlight any conclusions reached on the process of undertaking the work. Where no results are presented, the author should have reported on any challenges experienced in the course of the work.

Where there are clear outcomes or findings, the author should have touched upon issues of rigour (e.g. validity or trustworthiness). How has the author attempted to ensure that the methods used resulted in an accurate reporting of the topic? To what extent are outcomes/findings relevant to other people and settings?

Learning outcomes of a workshop or round table session could be highlighted.

4. Have the author/s considered the impact of the work on users? (Minimum 1 point or rejected)

Consideration of the impact on service users, applies to all work presented. Work undertaken within a practice or educational setting will prompt issues relating to the impact on service users to a greater or lesser degree. Authors must illustrate an awareness of the issues of the impact on service users, which may have arisen in the course of their work. Particular attention should have been paid to interactions with clients, service users and colleagues. Authors should at least mention issues such as rationing, gate keeping, confidentiality, consent, anonymity, and risks and benefits to participants.

If the abstract is describing a research project the author must confirm that they have gained ethical approval from an appropriate ethics committee. If the study involved university staff or students this may involve approval from a university committee. However if the research involved health care professionals working in the NHS or social care, or patients and service users of NHS or social care services, approval from an appropriate NHS or social care committee should have been gained and must be demonstrated by inclusion of the approval reference number on the online submission.

In a workshop or roundtable session – what issues will be raised or addressed about the impact on service users within the context of the workshop activities?

5. Does the abstract cover a subject of relevance and important interest to occupational therapy? (Minimum 1 point or rejected)

Finally, the abstract should be explicit in highlighting why the work should be of relevant and important interest to occupational therapists. It is not up to the reviewer to surmise, but for the author to make this evident throughout the abstract. If the author is proposing or using an approach not normally found in OT practice, they should have described exactly why it should be part of OT work.

In a workshop or roundtable session the importance and relevance of the topic area to occupational therapy practice should be stated.

“The must do” criteria

In addition, all abstracts must satisfy the criteria below or they are rejected regardless of their score. Where these essential criteria are not addressed, the abstract will not be accepted.

Word count - Abstracts exceeding the 250 word limit will automatically be rejected.

Good structure - Abstracts should have a clear structure, outlining the contents of the proposed presentation.

Good grammar and spelling - It should be clear that authors have considered these elements. This provides an indication of the author’s attention to detail in general. Abstracts should be written in plain English with good grammar and spelling.

Correct referencing - References should be listed accurately within the abstract and as a reference list. References should be in the Harvard style. For details please see http://www.cot.co.uk/newpublic/about/pdf/Authors_Guide-2003.pdf.

Impact on service users (e.g. in health and social care or education) - Authors should be explicit in describing the impact their topic has on service users (whoever they are). If it is not clear how the abstract content/findings impact on service users, then it should not be accepted for conference. For further guidance on marking refer to the descriptor outlined in point 4. Where no points are likely to be awarded in line with the marking descriptor, the abstract should be rejected. *(See scoring descriptors under criterion 5 for minimum required.)*

Clear relevance to OT- Authors should be explicit in describing why their topic is important to OT. If this is not clear, then it should not be accepted for conference. For further guidance on marking refer to the descriptor outlined in point 5. Where no points are likely to be awarded in line with the marking descriptor, the abstract should be rejected. *(See scoring descriptors under criterion 5 for minimum required.)*

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