

Five College Coastal and Marine Sciences

Tips on How to Begin Your Research Poster

BEGINNING YOUR POSTER:

- Think about whether you want to try making your own poster format, or begin with a template. Here are a few useful poster design tutorials and templates (there are many more):
<http://www.makesigns.com/tutorials/scientific-poster-parts.aspx>
<http://www.personal.psu.edu/drs18/postershow/>
<http://www.utexas.edu/ugs/our/poster>
https://www.makesigns.com/SciPosters_Templates.aspx
- Decide what program to use to create your poster
(Power Point and In Design are recommended, but there are others).
- Set poster size and orientation
36" x 48" preferred (no smaller than 30"x 40", if you already have a poster printed or completed). Keep in mind that sizing up (printing at a bigger size than your file was created) can be tricky, so it's best to begin the poster at the size you intend to print.
Please use landscape format, unless you have a compelling reason to create the poster in portrait format.
- If you are tweaking a poster used to present at a conference and need to re-size, good re-sizing tips can be found here, if needed:
<http://www.makesigns.com/tutorials/poster-sizing.aspx>
- Aim for 300 pixels per inch at the printed size.

WHAT TO INCLUDE IN YOUR POSTER:

As discussed in the Independent Research Project Guidance PDF (on the FCCMS website, <https://www.fivecolleges.edu/marine/certificate>), your poster should address the following questions:

- What is your scientific question or hypothesis?
- Why is your research question important or relevant?
- What methods did you use to address this question?
- What were your main findings?
- How did those findings directly address your question?
- What are the bigger-picture implications of the work you have done?

Useful headings to address these questions:

- Title (with authors and affiliations)
- Introduction / Objectives / Aims / Problem / Goal
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusions
- References
- Acknowledgements (mentors, professors, sources of funding, anyone who helped you)
- Contact Info

GOOD POSTER QUALITIES/THINGS TO CONSIDER:

Visual impact: Will the poster attract an audience-is it visually appealing? A poster should not be a reproduction of your paper (all black and white, large amount of text, etc.) Pay attention to color, line, white space, type/font, image placement.

Readability: Consider font size, use of white space, bullet points, vocabulary and syntax (make sure terms are understandable by non-specialists). Consider using “containers” for text (boxes, shading, etc.) Use bulleted points instead of paragraph form when possible, so information is quickly processed by the reader.

It is important that your poster be easy to read from a distance of a few feet.

Use these font ranges as a guide:

Title: 90-120 pt or more

Headings: 36-48 pt

Text: 28-36 pt

Captions: 24-28 pt

Navigation: Is the poster pathway easy to discern? Is it obvious which way the poster should be read (left to right, columns, etc.)

Content: How well does the poster communicate meaning? Is information digestible in 5 minutes in a distracted space? Can viewers quickly and easily ascertain what your research is about and why it matters?

Images/Graphics: Are they meaningful or decorative? Are all fonts readable (especially graph axis titles, footnotes, etc.) and colors able to be differentiated (enough contrast, avoid red and green for color blindness). Is information easy to digest, or would it be better represented in a different form? Several small images would be better replaced with fewer larger images. Make sure images contribute information to your poster (if you can't read the text on the graphic, it does not provide information).

*****Have your FCCMS advisor take a look at your poster before printing, so you have time to incorporate edits/suggestions as needed. This is also a good time to have your completed FCCMS Certificate Application signed. There will be a box for dropping off completed Certificate Applications at the poster session. *****

OPTIONS FOR POSTER PRINTING:

Save poster as a PDF and use that file to print, for best results. Check to make sure PDF looks like your Power Point, In Design, or other program file, before sending PDF off for printing. If you print your own poster, save your receipt for reimbursement. You will need to bring it to the poster session (write your name on it) and staple it to a W-9 form (available at the poster session, which you must fill out with your social security number and sign), in order for your check to be mailed. There will be an envelope at the poster session where you can submit reimbursements.

FCCMS Printing

If you have your poster submitted to Cindy at marinesci@smith.edu, we will print your poster for you using Mount Holyoke College's printing services, and your poster will be waiting for you to pin up at the session. This option means less paperwork for all (no reimbursement forms), and you don't have to worry about transporting your poster to the presentation in the rain. Please send files as a PDF (check to make sure PDF looks right first). If you have any trouble with this, contact me. Receipt of your file will be confirmed.

****Posters due to Cindy by noon on Monday, April 9th for FCCMS printing****

Mount Holyoke College

Printing is available at Auxiliary Services, and will take about 1 day and cost about \$30.

https://www.mtholyoke.edu/auxservices/copiers_main

UMass

You will need to make an appointment (several weeks in advance) at the DuBois Library Learning Commons to have your poster printed (website below). The cost for a 36" by 48" poster is about \$35.

<https://www.library.umass.edu/services/computers/poster-printing/>

Amherst College

Will take about 1 day and cost about \$30

<https://www.amherst.edu/offices/printandmail/copy-print/large-format-printing>

Amherst Copy: 37 East Pleasant Street, Amherst

You can get a poster printed here **in less than an hour**. Ask for the "student special" to get your poster printed for about \$35.

<https://amherstcopy.com/posters>

PRESENTING YOUR POSTER:

Make it clear by your appearance and manner that you are the poster creator (you will be wearing a name tag). You don't need to be overly dressed up to do this. In the natural sciences, business dress is actually frowned upon, so neat and comfortable works well. Smile and greet people as they come by. Talk to them about your research. Do not read the poster to your audience, but adapt the information shared to fit your audience (faculty, mentors, friends, family). Get to the poster session in time to set up and have a bite to eat without being stressed and rushed-you will have a better time!

2018 Poster Session

April 12th (Thursday)

4:00-5:45 pm (arrive at 3:45 to select an easel and pin up your poster-all supplies provided)

Free parking (no permit necessary) in lot in front of the Alumni House