



THE ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE 2009 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Responsibilities of Session Chairs for Research/Scholarly Paper Sessions

Chairs are assigned to each research/scholarly paper session. The main role of the chair is to provide organization and cohesion to the session. This is accomplished through a variety of specific tasks:

Prior to the conference, chairs should introduce themselves via email to all of the presenters in the paper session as well as the session's discussant. Chairs can also remind the presenters and discussant of the session's date, time, location, and title. They should also remind presenters of the following responsibilities:

- Must furnish a completed research or scholarly paper via email to their discussant and the others in their session by **October 21, 2009**. Discussants have the right to refuse to review a paper if it is received after this deadline or if the paper submitted to the discussant is incomplete. (To help presenters, chairs should provide the email address of the session's discussant.)
- At least one author on the paper is required to give a presentation of the completed paper at the 2009 ASHE Conference in Vancouver. For more information about the format of the presentation, see: [Recommended Format and Content of Research or Scholarly Papers and Presentations](#)
- Should bring copies of the paper to their session, or otherwise devise a plan to make available the paper to interested parties

Chairs should be in communication with discussants to ensure that all papers arrive by the above deadline. Chairs should send a reminder to authors if papers are late.

During the research/scholarly paper session, chairs should do the following:

1. Greet the presenters and discussant.
2. Determine the order of speakers right before the session begins.

3. Introduce session, speakers, and paper topics
4. Keep time for each presenter – bring note cards with five minute and one minute announcements.
 - For panels with three papers, each paper presentation should last a maximum of 15 minutes, with discussant remarks following the last paper and lasting approximately 10 minutes. The remaining time should be reserved for audience questions or questions from the presenters to the discussant.
 - For panels with four papers, each paper presentation should last a maximum of 12-13 minutes, with discussant remarks following the last paper and lasting approximately 15 minutes. The remaining time should be reserved for audience questions or questions from the presenters to the discussant.
5. Thank presenters between or after presentations.
6. Introduce the discussant and inform the discussant when there is five minutes and one minute left of presentation.
7. Ask presenters if they have a comment or question about discussant's comments. Please minimize this time, though, as there should be time for audience questions.
8. Ask for and field questions from audience.
9. Keep time and end the session at the predetermined time.

Responsibilities of Discussants for Research/Scholarly Paper Sessions

Discussants are assigned to each research/scholarly paper session and are generally senior scholars and/or scholars with expertise in the session's topic area. The discussant's role is to help the audience understand the full substance, and in particular, significance of the papers. Discussants should critically analyze "ideas" presented, but should not focus their discussion exclusively on critical commentary. Discussants are asked to refrain from personal attacks or proselytization; instead, critiques of papers should be framed constructively with attention to how the paper can be improved to further benefit the scholarly community. In addition, discussants are strongly encouraged to provide written feedback for each of the papers to be presented to the authors at the session. The discussant might see his or her role in the following way:

- Advance the ideas in the paper – provide new ideas or reference material, question assumptions, critically analyze, and provide the author(s) with detailed individualized feedback
- Advance the audience understanding – highlight key ideas, posing challenging questions, and identify key themes across the papers. Both of these roles can and should be accomplished with careful planning on the discussant's part

Prior to the conference, discussants should be in communication with session chairs to ensure that all research or scholarly papers from the presenters are received by **October 21, 2009**.

- If one or more author(s) do not submit their completed paper to the discussant by the above deadline, discussants have the right to refuse to read and provide feedback for the paper.
- If the paper an author(s) submits is not complete (before, on, or after the deadline), again, discussant may reserve the right not to read and provide feedback for the paper.

Also, prior to the conference, discussants should read all of the submitted papers and be prepared to provide feedback and remarks to the authors and audience during the session. For sessions with three papers, discussants should plan on 10 minutes for their remarks; for sessions with four papers, 15 minutes. Please pay special attention to the format of the paper and provide feedback accordingly; for example, scholarly papers will not include an empirical analysis, and thus should not be criticized for lacking a methods and results section. Feedback is encouraged to be substantive and professional.

Similar to the evaluation of ASHE proposals, research papers should be evaluated based upon:

- Importance of the topic to higher education
- Originality of the work
- Quality of theoretical or conceptual frameworks
- Soundness of the research design, analysis, and/or interpretation
- Reasonableness of the conclusions and implications, and
- Overall clarity of the paper

Scholarly papers should be evaluated based upon:

- Importance of the topic to higher education
- Originality of the work
- Quality of the analytical argument, including how well the argument is supported by the literature
- Persuasiveness of the conclusions, and
- Overall clarity of the paper

During the research/scholarly paper session, discussants should arrive in time to hear all of the paper presentations. After the completion of all of the papers, the session chair will introduce the discussant and then the discussant is invited to provide his or her remarks.

Here are some hints for helping to make the sessions as informative as possible:

- As you critique the papers for the audience, highlight major issues only. Provide the authors with written feedback about minor issues (as well as the major issues).

Authors appreciate receiving comments and critique that is presented in an organized and thoughtful manner. Often papers are presented at conferences to get feedback prior to submitting for publication. It is your responsibility to assure that authors get the kind of thoughtful feedback that will assist them in bringing the piece to publication.

- Focus your critique on issues that members of the audience might also be facing, rather than idiosyncratic problems of the paper. If the paper presented the research in a weak way, you might want to bring this up and provide resources for helping the author to present the data.
- In your role of providing resources, come prepared with full citations for both the author and the audience. Websites might also provide helpful resources. Everyone learns when valuable resources are discussed.
- Synthesis is difficult without reading a paper several times. Read each paper once jotting down notes about items for critique. Read the paper a second time for themes. Most people cannot adequately extract both criticism and themes at the same time.
- Consider writing themes you identify on note cards or different legal pads and conduct an analysis similar to qualitative analysis of data. This usually helps to provide the most thoughtful synthesis of themes and ideas.
- After the theme analysis and critique, review for overarching questions. It is usually most productive to develop questions after the other analysis has been conducted. Questions are often the strongest way to end your discussant comments. Develop questions for either the authors or the audience or both.

Both experienced researchers as well as new professionals often find themselves struggling in their role as discussant. There are many different reasons why people feel conflict over their role. Below is a list of some problems as well as some helpful hints for addressing them.

- *Papers are late*
Tactfully acknowledge the paper came in late. This is important for the accountability to all your colleagues. Note that, unfortunately, this is why you do not have feedback for this author, or can only provide skeletal feedback. This helps the author know that they missed out on important feedback. If the paper is severely late, you should feel free to explain that you just did not have time to review this paper due to its lateness.
- *Papers are of varying quality*
It is important to acknowledge that the papers are at different stages of progression. If you note this in a developmental way, it is encouraging to authors, but also helps

the audience realize that all are not of equal quality. When critiquing the papers, emphasize how the paper can be improved, not how it is weak.

- *The papers are not strongly related to your research expertise*
If you have a colleague who can read the paper and clarify issues for you, this can be very helpful. Otherwise, acknowledge your lack of expertise in specific areas and ask the audience members with expertise in this area to please bring up issues in the discussion. If you know people in the audience who have expertise, ask them to address an area you thought might be weak or had questions. But, overall, focus on the areas where you do have expertise and make suggestions in other areas even if you are unsure, however, noting your lack of clarity.
- *Methodology or theoretical framework is foreign*
Sometimes papers take a perspective that is completely outside your knowledge base; for example, it utilizes critical theory and you have no background in this area. Again, ask a colleague to provide you with insight or suggestions for evaluating the quality. Otherwise, use caution in your critique describing things that do not make sense to you, and explain your unfamiliarity. Suggest that the paper may be difficult for people without this insider knowledge to understand and ways they might make the paper accessible to a broader audience. Remember, your lack of understanding may not be a fault of the paper, but your lack of familiarity.
- *Papers are completely unrelated*
You may find that you are discussing papers ranging from athletics to administrative teams to accreditation to student outcomes. What to do? Dig deep into the theme analysis, look for links. Even the most tangential papers usually tie to some larger themes such as diversity, policy, external forces, etc. When all else fails, drop the synthesis and admit the papers are unrelated, but pose interesting questions.
- *Presenters provide data or interpretation in their presentations that are not in the papers*
This makes your role as discussant challenging as it often makes your prepared comments null and void! The best tactic is to take careful notes during the presentations and try to quickly modify your comments with the new information. This also stresses the importance of listening carefully to the presentations because they can sometimes vary from the papers. Make sure to acknowledge this change to the audience since these modifications are often not reflected in the paper distributed.
- *The time remaining in the session is inadequate to properly present your prepared comments*
It is often best to tell the audience you have important feedback for the authors that you will supply to them individually (another important reason to type up your feedback!). Instead of a critique, name some of the themes you saw and relate the themes to a set of questions that you pose to the audience. Or, another tactic is to

review the themes in depth and to ask for questions, if you feel the papers will have generated a significant amount of questions.

In the end, there is no recipe for the role of discussant. But, understanding the role and its responsibilities, being armed with some techniques for developing your comments, and remembering the hints for addressing common pitfalls should help each of us in properly carrying out this important function.

Recommended Format and Content of Research or Scholarly Papers and Presentations

Research papers present the results of quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods studies. These studies are based on original data collection or secondary data analysis. Research papers should not be longer than 30 double-spaced pages with 12 point font (excluding references, tables, and appendices), and all portions of the paper must be completed, written, and submitted to the session's discussant by **October 21, 2009**.

Research papers should contain as many of the following as are applicable, preferably in this order:

- Objectives or purposes of the study
- Review of relevant literature
- Theoretical or conceptual frameworks/perspectives
- Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry
- Data sources or evidence
- Results, conclusions, and
- Significance of the study findings

Scholarly papers take the form of essays that present well-developed arguments on philosophical, theoretical, or practical problems in the study of higher education. They are not required to adhere to an empirical research design (i.e., methods, data collection, and data analysis). Instead, scholarly papers pose analytical questions, synthesize divergent bodies of literature, or elaborate new theoretical or conceptual frameworks.

Scholarly papers should contain as many of the following as are applicable, preferably in this order:

- Objectives or purposes of the inquiry
- The philosophical, theoretical, or practical argument
- Literature, sources, or evidence to support the argument/analysis
- Conclusions and implications of the argument, and
- Significance of the argument for higher education.

For both research and scholarly paper presentations, author(s) should plan on summarizing each of the above aspects of their papers. For sessions with three papers,

author(s) will have a maximum of 15 minutes to present their papers; for sessions with four papers, author(s) will have a maximum of 12-13 minutes to present their papers.

The following are additional guidelines to follow for the presentation:

- Carefully time your presentation. You will be asked to conclude your presentation at the allotted time whether you are finished or not. Session chairs will be monitoring the length of each of the presentations, and can cut off a presentation if it runs over in length.
- Develop overheads, a PowerPoint presentation, handouts, or some way to engage the audience in the complex ideas you will present. An LCD projector and screen will be provided in each room. However, presenters should be advised to bring their own laptops/flash drives and to remember that they must keep within their time allotment—no exceptions will be accommodated. In addition, the LCD connection is only PC-compatible; MAC users should bring their own LCD connection cords.
- Bring copies of your completed paper to the session for the audience members. Alternatively, provide a way for audience members to get in touch with you after the conference and obtain a copy of the paper.
- Practice your presentation with someone who knows nothing about the topic and see if he or she can understand it from your materials (e.g. overheads) and talking points. If not, go back and revise to cover key information, provide illustrative examples, and methodological components
- Make sure your presentation reflects the substance of your paper. Do not introduce new ideas in the presentation that are not in the paper.
- Arrive a few minutes early for the session. Introduce yourself to the chair, discussant, and other presenters. Let the chair know about any special needs or concerns you might have (program authors incorrect in the program, three people will be making the presentation of the paper).
- Be attentive to other speakers so that you can contribute to the discussion at the conclusion of the presentations.
- Carefully listen to discussant and you may wish to write down some notes or questions. The discussant should provide notes or comments on your paper, so you need not take verbatim notes.
- Answer questions, but do not be defensive. Try to understand the nature of the question. Ask for clarification. Seek to understand the person posing the question. You can always agree to disagree.

Recommended Format and Content of Symposia

A symposium is a thematic, integrated, and interactive engagement between a panel of presenters and the audience. The focus of the discussion is a clearly identified theme or topic that:

- Utilizes a particular disciplinary or theoretical perspective in considering a research problem
- Reflects an emerging issue in a specific area of research, policy, or practice, or
- Centers on the development of educational theory or research methodology.

A symposium is research-oriented but, unlike a research or scholarly paper session, the symposium organizers determine the theme and set of presenters for an entire session. Members of the panel will make brief presentations linking their talking points with the theme, after

which ample opportunity should remain for discussion. The discussion should be moderated. All symposia must be interactive: it is crucial that the audience is a part of the discussion.

Finally, individual papers are not required for a symposium, but if presenters have a completed paper, it is greatly appreciated if they would bring copies of the paper to the session, or otherwise make available copies to interested parties.

Recommended Format and Content of Roundtables

The roundtable is meant to facilitate small group discussions that are intended to advance, enhance, or share information about topics of policy, practice, professional, historical, or theoretical concern. A roundtable will have one or two conveners (the presenters) who:

- Gather and welcome the attendees
- Share significant information in a conversational style; information can include:
 - Objectives or purposes of the proposed discussion
 - Perspectives or theoretical/conceptual frameworks that will guide the discussion
 - Data, evidence, or resources related to the discussion topic, and
 - Implications and significance of the topic
- Encourage and allow time for all attendees to participate in the discussion, and
- Ensure that all leave with ideas and resources that inform subsequent research and/or practice

Roundtables are not appropriate venues for formal paper presentations or for topics that would engage large groups of people. If, however, the roundtable conveners have prepared a paper, it may be shared with attendees, or otherwise made available to interested parties.

Roundtable sessions last approximately 40 minutes, and are scheduled during four time blocks:

Thursday, November 5, 2009, from 1:00-1:40 pm
Thursday, November 5, 2009, from 1:45-2:25 pm
Saturday, November 7, 2009, from 1:15-1:55 pm
Saturday, November 7, 2009, from 2:00-2:40 pm

There are approximately 12 roundtables per each 40 minute session; roundtable presenters will be informed of their scheduled time. Presenters may choose any of the roundtables for their discussion. Attendees are free to move from table to table and join any discussion during the session. There are no session chairs or discussants for roundtable discussions.

Recommended Format and Content of Posters

Poster presentations provide a forum for scholars to engage in active discussion with other conference participants about a completed research project or about a project in developing stages. The poster venue allows scholars with similar research interests to interact by using the poster as a focal point. Poster presenters will display their research on a large bulletin board (provided at the conference). Presenters will attend the poster session to discuss the project with conference attendees and also should bring as handouts a written detailed summary of their work.

Recommended content for the poster includes:

- A clear statement of the purpose or goals of the research (i.e., the primary research questions or issues being addressed)
- A brief summary of the theoretical or conceptual foundation for the work
- A description of the methodology being used and the project findings (if applicable), and
- The theoretical and/or practical significance and implications of the research.

The poster session consists of aisles of freestanding boards on which authors present a concise summation of their research. Each board is numbered so that conference attendees can find the presentation they are looking for by referring to their programs and finding the corresponding display board.

- Set-Up: Start at 11 a.m.
- Display Time: 1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
- Take-Down: Start at 2 p.m., done by 3 p.m.
- Size of board: 4' x 6'
- Push Pins are not provided. Please bring your own.

No other activities are scheduled during the poster forum. There are no session chairs or discussants for the poster session.

The following are tips to enhance your poster:

- Keep it simple and brief. Determine the key points for your paper and highlight these, rather than trying to cover the whole paper. You can elaborate on these points on an individual basis.
- Use large enough fonts so people will not have to squint to read the material. Headings of at least 48-point font and text at least 18-point font is helpful to readers. Readers will typically be three feet away from your poster.
- Make your poster visually appealing. Be creative. Incorporate color. Use photographs, graphs, charts, maps, and the like. Be attentive to the layout and placement of your materials.
- Handouts are an excellent complement to a poster session.
- Consider having a pad of paper handy to allow visitors who have more in-depth questions or would like more information about your research to provide you with their contact information or provide you with their business card.
- You may also want to consider bringing/making business cards of your own to hand out.

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING TO MAKE THE
2009 ASHE CONFERENCE THE BEST ONE YET!**