# **1** Why do a Presentation?

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Reading this chapter will help you to:

- develop your understanding of the purposes of student presentations
- accept the benefits of delivering these presentations
- understand some of the reasons why presentations can be stressful
- recognize different examples of student presentations

This chapter provides a general overview of student presentations. Even though these presentations are very diverse, it is useful at this stage of the book to construct a general understanding of student presentations. We suggest that you read this chapter as an introduction to the book, before deciding which of the other chapters have relevance for your needs and situation.

Student presentations usually involve an individual or group of students presenting to academic staff, student peers or other invited audiences. Understanding the true purpose of your presentation can help you to prepare and deliver it more effectively.

Student presentations might include:

- Group and individual presentations for a given topic as part of a module assessment
- Seminar presentations giving a paper to an academic or your peers for the purpose of teaching or showing evidence of your understanding of the topic
- Providing an overview of some research carried out by you or your group
- Demonstrating the use of a piece of equipment or software such as PowerPoint to show that you have developed the essential skills to use it appropriately
- Dissertation-related presentations and Vivas to demonstrate your ability to manage a research project
- A job interview where you have been asked to present for several minutes on a given topic

We outline some examples of these later in the chapter. We hope you will find them useful for improving your understanding of the factors that need to be considered when developing your presentations.

To help you achieve the learning objectives for this chapter we have divided it into four parts:

1   Purposes of student presentations
2   Pressures and problems of giving presentations
3   Benefits of student presentations
4   Examples of student presentations

# 1   Purposes of student presentations

There are many reasons why students are asked to give presentations and these will be influenced by your academic course and situational and organizational factors.

The purpose and circumstances of your presentation will influence its style, content and structure. Most presentations will involve a combination of purposes but it may be helpful to think about the different features of each of these presentations.

Student presentations may be given for the purposes of:

- Advocacy/persuasion
- Training
- Teaching and learning
- Informing
- Assessment

By exploring these purposes, we can begin to understand the style that will need to be developed.

## Advocacy/persuasion

This presentation usually involves persuading members of the audience to take some action or make a decision. Examples could include:

- support a cause
- join a student society
- vote for an individual to take up a role on a committee
- buy a product or service
- choose the best candidate for the job

This type of presentation will need a combination of relevant factual content delivered in a convincing and confident style. You will need to communicate clearly and succinctly.

Some emotions such as enthusiasm or passion may be used in your delivery if you think this is appropriate, but you need to make sure that you do not embarrass yourself or the audience. You may also have to deal with some emotional reactions from the audience such as anger or ridicule. You will need to give a confident performance and deal effectively with their comments, manage the crowd and limit any negative reactions. As with all types of presentations it is crucial to keep control, especially when there are contributions and responses from the audience. We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 3. Example 6 at the end of this chapter involves some advocacy by persuading the recruitment panel that you are the best candidate for the job.

## Training

This type of presentation includes examples where students may demonstrate their skills in the use of equipment and also their skills as a trainer or teacher. These types of presentations may be used to practise, demonstrate and eventually assess the level of these skills and techniques.

Examples include:

- Demonstrating the use of a piece of equipment
- Demonstrating a medical procedure
- Training someone in the use of a software package
- Training a novice to use a piece of first aid equipment
- Demonstrating your communication skills as a trainer
- Demonstrating professional practice such as an interview technique, counselling skills or classroom management techniques.

In many vocational and professional courses, students have to learn the skills to use a range of equipment or demonstrate their communication skills. Presentations can also be used on these courses as opportunities for practice and rehearsal before the student is formally assessed and expected to perform in real life situations such as during their placements or probationary periods in employment.

Many first aid courses use this technique so that the participants can develop the key skills needed for proficiency. Health courses such as radiography are examples where the student will have to demonstrate the use of the equipment to a high level of proficiency before they work with patients.

Nurses and other health professionals need to learn the training techniques to communicate effectively on health promotion programmes. These techniques can be developed and practised in this type of presentation which can offer 'safe spaces' in which to develop these skills.

If you can think of presentations as opportunities for your own development, they may seem less daunting to you and indeed, this approach may help you to gain more benefit from preparing and delivering your presentations.

Immediate feedback can be an integral part of this type of presentation especially on the occasions when no formal assessment is given. The tutor may interrupt the session to ask for clarification or suggest an improvement that could be rehearsed several times until the student becomes more confident. Members of the audience may suggest ideas and changes for improvement. Role playing may be used so that students explore the skill or issue from a range of perspectives, then share ideas in a plenary session. Training presentations should result in learning for all the participants but we discuss this below. Examples 4 and 5, at the end of this chapter, are this type of presentation.

## Teaching and learning

Almost all presentations should have some elements of teaching and learning as part of their purpose. However for the purposes of this book it is useful to explore this as a specific purpose and to do this we have chosen a few examples where presentations are used for:

- Developing a deeper understanding of a topic or text
- Covering specific areas of the curriculum in more detail
- Explaining an experiment or cooking process
- Inviting a visiting expert to speak on a given topic

The content of this presentation is usually focused on a topic area relevant to a course or module being studied. This may involve new research and knowledge that extends how the topic has previously been taught by the tutors. It may also involve 'repackaging' knowledge already covered or further exploration of the topic by looking at different perspectives. An example of this could be where a group of students are asked to present on the topic 'Globalization' from the different perspectives of a farmer in a developing country, a small manufacturing organization in England and a multinational organization that has offices on four continents. Sometimes, these types of student presentations are used to explore areas of a curriculum in greater detail than has been covered in lectures. This helps the presenters to develop deeper knowledge and the audience to broaden their understanding of the topic and may be the reason why the academic has included presentations in the module.

All of the examples at the end of this chapter incorporate some teaching and learning but Examples 2, 3 and 4 have a strong teaching and learning purpose.

## Informing

In some circumstances this could be seen as similar to teaching but the aim of this type of presentation could be to communicate as much information as possible in the time available. The purpose of the presentation may be to:

- Describe a new policy
- Outline a set of instructions
- Give a progress report on some research or development

This type of presentation is used in many organizations where students or employees are expected to report progress at key stages of a project. It provides evidence of ongoing work and can be used as a subtle measure of control where individuals work to meet deadlines set for dates of these progress reports. Many employers expect academic courses to have provided opportunities for students to develop their presentation skills so that they could communicate effectively in the organizational environment.

For a student situation, a Viva could have this purpose where the function is to present your research aims and results then answer questions from the audience. Examples 1 and 5 in this chapter describe this type of presentation.

## Assessment

Student presentations are frequently assessed and may be awarded a percentage of the marks that contribute to the overall module mark and credits. However, some presentations may not be assessed but used as an opportunity for students to practise and further develop their presentation skills, without the anxiety of earning marks for the quality of their performance. There is a tension here for students, as most presentations need quite a lot of preparation time. This time may only be seen as worthwhile if it earns marks towards completion of a unit or module of study. Equally, it can influence students to withdraw from non-assessed presentations or use a minimum of effort for such events, seeing them as less important for their learning and achievement. This focus on marks earned, rather than experience gained, may influence some tutors to only use assessed presentations.

Use of assessment can have a positive advantage. For some students, presentations offer opportunities to earn a higher proportion of marks than they might achieve for the written part of their assessment. They may be better communicators and presenters in their use of speech, visuals or technology than in a written mode. These students may feel they need this book less for the general ideas about presentation skills but can use it more for the suggestions about content development. We cover assessment in all the examples at the end of this chapter but discuss assessment in more detail in Chapter 9.

## 2   Pressures and problems of giving presentations

We intend this book to provide you with positive advice and encouragement but we do recognize that presentations are not always popular with students. We think it will be useful to outline some of the problems to reduce or even remove your fears.

- **I would prefer to write an essay rather than deliver a presentation!**
  You may think presentations are more difficult to deliver than having to complete an essay or report for an assignment. They can certainly increase your anxiety levels and you may think that you actually have to work harder for a presentation than for an assignment. Whilst this may not be true, your higher anxiety levels may cause you to believe this and you may not use your time as effectively in the preparation, because of this anxiety.

  You may feel more nervous about reading your work aloud in a presentation than the more private situation where an academic reads your written work alone and no-one from your peer group sees the quality of your work.

  We discuss how to deal with this in Chapters 3 and 5. You might also find some useful advice in Chapter 6.

- **I only seem to learn from the content of my own presentations but not when I have to listen to other students. There is no point attending the other presentations!**
  This is a frequent complaint from students and a real challenge to academics for how to use presentations as a good learning experience for everyone involved. We hope that using this book will help to eliminate this attitude but it is useful to remember that if you feel like this, so will your audience, therefore, think about what you can do to make sure that they learn something from your presentation and find it interesting! Chapter 10 will be useful to help with this problem. Chapter 6 provides some useful tips for keeping the audience involved and Chapter 7 will encourage you to think about developing content that is interesting and relevant to modules being studied.

- **I do not know enough about the topic to give a presentation!**
  Presentations can also be stressful if you are asked to present on a topic about which you have only a limited knowledge. In these situations you may need to use a large amount of preparation time to develop new knowledge before you feel confident enough to prepare and plan the presentation. Whilst you may see this as stressful and a disadvantage of presentations, in some circumstances, this is exactly why they are chosen as a method of assessment. They force you to develop new knowledge and to prepare well for the event. Use Chapter 5 to help you with this.

- **There is so much information on the topic I cannot decide what to include and what to leave out!**
  In this situation, you may feel overwhelmed by the size of the topic and experience feelings of panic when you have to make decisions about the content. There will probably be some guidance and advice in tutorials to help you decide what to include and what to leave out. Chapter 7 will also help you to cope with this situation.

- **I am nervous of using technology in public**
  To some extent, this is less of a problem for the younger students who will probably have developed higher levels of ICT skills at school, compared with mature students who may be less experienced. Using technology may be a real problem for mature students. Some presentations are designed to provide opportunities for practice. We

outline an example of this within the purposes section on Training, earlier in this chapter. Chapters 8 and 9 will also be useful to help you deal with this problem and will help you to use technology to improve the presentation.

- **I am always nervous about speaking in a public situation**

  Most people feel nervous about the public performance required for a presentation, even if the audience is only one or two people instead of a larger group. Whilst good preparation and rehearsal will help to reduce some of the nerves, it is only through practice that you will learn to use your nervousness in a positive way that helps your performance. Chapter 3 gives some useful tips. Some students say they feel more nervous when presenting to other students on their courses than when presenting to people who they do not know such as for a job interview. You may find it useful to think about whether judgment by your peers may seem more daunting than by strangers. Whichever preference you have, we discuss how to deal with an audience in Chapter 6.

- **Group presentations are usually a problem. I usually feel that I do more of the work than other group members!**

  You may experience higher anxiety levels preparing for and delivering a group presentation than for an individual presentation. Problems with group behaviour may divert attention away from the real preparation tasks and more time can be spent arguing or discussing what needs to be done instead of actually doing the work needed to complete the preparation. These are discussed in Chapter 4 which offers suggestions for how to work well together.

- **I think I could earn higher marks for an individual presentation than for a group presentation!**

  Sometimes this is experienced by students who have previously had problems working for a group presentation. You may believe that you could earn higher marks because you are more capable than other group members, or that the group pressures divert energy away from good content development. Whilst this may be true in some situations, many tutors use group presentations as opportunities to develop the team working and project management skills that many employers say are essential in the workplace. On many academic courses the assessment procedures are monitored and adjusted to make sure that final marks reflect the true ability of the individual student rather than the group members, so a group mark may only be a small proportion of the total marks for the module.

  In spite of these concerns, presentations are a frequent experience in education and you will probably have to deliver several on your courses, so it is useful to recognize the benefits as well as the problems. When presentations have been completed, students frequently claim to have enjoyed the experience and report feelings of exhilaration and a sense of achievement. We discuss these benefits briefly below.

# 3    Benefits of student presentations

As with the variety of purposes, the benefits of student presentations will be influenced by the situation but they can be summarized as providing opportunities for:

- Student-centred participation in their learning
- Developing new knowledge and different perspectives on a topic
- Practice in a known environment/situation
- Increasing confidence to speak and present in front of an audience
- Improving marks earned for a module assessment
- Developing a wide range of communication and presentation skills
- Preparation for skills needed in the workplace
- An exchange of roles and perspectives from audience to presenter

## Student-centred participation in their learning

Presentations offer variety and challenges that contrast with regular delivery by an academic lecturer. Students can sometimes be more willing to learn from the poor and good performances of their peers than from their tutors. Presentations can also be used as an effective form of peer learning. By taking responsibility for preparing and delivering a presentation, you take an active role in the process of your learning.

## Develop new knowledge and perspectives on a topic

Presentations offer opportunities for developing skills and knowledge together. This process can strengthen learning and enthusiasm for further knowledge. If the presentation is effective, the audience should have learned something new and increased their interest about the topic. We sometimes remember information when we have heard it from an unusual source or one that is different. Tutors can learn new ideas from student perspectives which can influence their teaching and delivery.

## Practice in a known environment/situation

Presentations offer opportunities for students to practise performing in a fairly safe environment. When you have to prepare several presentations on a course, you will begin to develop the essential skills and transfer these from presentation to presentation. The academic environment will probably be familiar to you. You might present in rooms where you attend lectures and other events and this can help to reduce some of

your anxiety. If the audience is made up of other members of your cohort, they may be supportive because they can empathize with your feelings.

## Increasing confidence to speak and present in front of an audience

Well-managed presentations, as part of academic courses, can be used developmentally to improve both skills and confidence levels. You may be able to demonstrate your personality in a way that is not possible as a passive listener in a lecture. Presentations can help you to be noticed and stand out from the rest of the group. They enable you to show your individuality. You can learn to deal with nervousness in a positive way that can help to reduce your fears and anxieties. With regular practice, you will improve your confidence and enter employment with some of the interpersonal and communication skills that employers value.

## Improving marks earned for a module assessment

Sometimes, presentations give you opportunities for earning a higher percentage of marks than for written work alone. Students who prefer to speak rather than write, may be better communicators and presenters in their use of speech or visuals than in a written mode. This is because presentations use different intelligences in addition to the linguistic intelligence needed for essays and reports. In our experience some students are quite confident for their presentations and work better in group situations than on their own. These students may earn a higher total mark for the module where there is a combined assessment of presentation and written report, especially when the presentation earns up to 40 per cent of the module mark.

## Developing a wide range of communication and presentation skills

You may need to think about your own skills and preferences for how you communicate. Do you prefer charts and graphs, diagrams or text, mind maps or lists? Presentations can help you to communicate using different media formats. They also give you opportunities to practise performing in public and develop your speech, use of hands and breathing, all of which we discuss in Chapter 3. Students in the audience will also watch and learn from the presenters' skills, especially if an opportunity is provided to comment on the presentation. Indeed, students are often highly critical of their own performance and that of their peers. These observations and criticisms can provide

useful reflection and recognition of what makes presentations an effective learning situation for them. This reflection can improve future performances and be used in the wider application of job interviews and appraisals.

## Preparation for skills needed in the workplace

Many employers seek confident candidates and use presentations as a part of their selection procedures. Some organizations use staff presentations frequently for progress reports, staff appraisal and development. Preparing and delivering presentations as a student can help you to be a more competent and confident candidate for interviews. They offer opportunities to develop your team working and project management skills. You will have to work to deadlines and take responsibility for delivering an outcome of your work. You will improve your research, design and communication skills as well as your general presentation skills. We encourage you to see student presentations as a positive experience that helps to prepare you for future employment.

# 4   Examples of student presentations

You may find it useful to read through the examples provided below. These examples are used in later chapters where we discuss some of their features in more detail and provide some useful tips for delivering effective presentations. These examples are:

1   A Viva to present an overview of your research.
2   A seminar presentation.
3   A group presentation on a topic allocated to the group.
4   A demonstration of your skills for using equipment.
5   Non-assessed presentations to report research progress or demonstrate your product.
6   An individual presentation for a job interview.

Even if your presentation situation does not match these examples exactly, you will be able to see some features that are similar to your own experience. To help you identify their relevance, we have structured each example under the same headings for easy comparison. You could use these headings as a template to think about the different features of your own presentations. These headings form a useful acronym PACTHATC:

- Purpose
- Assessment
- Content
- Timing
- Handouts
- Audience

- Technology
- Comment

# Example 1: a Viva to present an overview of your research

*Purpose*    All students are final year undergraduates presenting the research they have carried out for their dissertation.

*Assessment*    This Viva will be assessed to earn a percentage of marks that contribute towards your degree classification. The percentage varies across courses and could range from 10–40 per cent. A small proportion will be for your presentation skills but the majority of the marks will be given for the quality of research and your under-standing of the subject area.

*Content*    This should consist of a brief outline of the research aims and objectives and the methods used. However, the main part of the presentation should concentrate on the results, conclusions and recommendations for future research. At the end you will be asked questions about different aspects of your research to test your knowledge and understanding of what has been achieved.

*Timing*    One hour has been allocated for each student presentation. Within this time, you will need to enter the room, load any PowerPoint presentation, present the content for about 20 minutes, answer questions for up to 30 minutes, pack up and leave the room. If time runs out you will lose marks for poor structure and time management.

*Handouts*    These must be provided for panel members and will probably consist of a copy of the slides used plus additional notes that you think are important. These need to be of a high standard as they could be used in the panel discussion after you have left the room and may have a small influence on the final mark.

*Audience*    This is a panel of three people, two will be academics. One is your Dissertation Tutor. You may have been taught by the other academic who is in the same teaching department as your tutor. The third person is an external visitor who could be either an academic from another organization or a professional practitioner. The panel will probably have agreed their questions before the start of the Viva but there will be freedom and flexibility for them to explore the themes that emerge during your

presentation. This means that the direction of the questions can be uncertain and you will need to be knowledgeable and confident enough to guide their questions to areas that you consider to be most useful or beneficial to your performance.

*Technology*    You will be expected to use the most appropriate technology such as PowerPoint, audio, video or any kit that needs to be demonstrated.

*Comment*    This Viva will be an important event in your course. You will have worked hard on your research and this is your opportunity to demonstrate the quality of your research and your understanding and enthusiasm for the topic area. You will have only a short amount of time to get your message across to the audience. At this final stage of the course you will have deeper knowledge and be very 'close' to the research so that preparing the presentation might be difficult. You will need to step back and be objective about what is the most useful content that conveys the level of work in such a short amount of time. However, this could be an opportunity to explain and justify what was not articulated in the dissertation. It might be possible to find out who the panel members are beforehand and this could help you to focus the content on specific themes, especially if they are experts in the topic area of the presentation.

## Example 2: A seminar presentation

*Purpose*    You are asked to give a paper to your tutor and your student cohort. The purpose of the seminar is for you to provide evidence of your research for and under-standing of the topic or the text. Also, in this situation, you take some responsibility for teaching the other students who attend the seminar. They are expected to understand the content and use it elsewhere in the module when it is relevant.

*Assessment*    For this presentation you earn a fixed amount of marks that are 15 per cent of the module total but completing the seminar to a 'reasonable standard' earns the marks rather than marks being awarded for content and performance. However, if the tutor judges it to be of a low standard and of limited value, you will be asked to deliver it again on another occasion. This is to ensure that students work towards an acceptable standard of preparation and delivery. However, a similar example could be developed where you earn an individual mark within the 15 per cent that reflects your skills and performance in the seminar.

*Content*    You have been briefed about the text or the topic areas to be covered by the academic tutor. You have to provide an overview of the text or topic then explore key

themes in more detail. The tutor has been available to offer guidance and you have reported your progress and asked any questions through e-mails.

*Timing*    The seminar will last for one hour. This will consist of approximately 40 minutes for your presentation and the remaining 20 minutes for questions and discussion. You are free to decide how and when you allow the questions to be asked. The tutor may interrupt during the seminar to ask you for further explanation and may direct the questions to ensure that relevant themes and issues have been covered.

*Handouts*    You are expected to provide some handouts that explain the topic as it will not be covered in detail in any other seminars or lectures on the module. These could be a copy of your script for the seminar. Alternatively, they could be a list of the main themes in your content, with brief descriptions, examples, facts and key issues relating to the topic. Both types of handouts should include references to useful resources that can be followed up at a later date.

*Audience*    This will be the module tutor and student members of the cohort so it could range between 4 and 20+ people.

*Technology*    Use of technology will vary between giving a handout that is used to direct the structure of the seminar to use of PowerPoint to cover the content.

*Comment*    In this example, your presentation skills are not directly assessed but you will be expected to deliver the content in a clear style that generates interest in the topic. Probably much of the preparation time will have been spent reading so that you understand the topic or text well enough to present a seminar from which the other students can learn. You will need to develop a logical structure that explores key themes and draws some conclusions. The quality of your performance in this seminar will develop your reputation for delivering good or poor quality seminars. The audience will feel more positive towards you if they leave with some useful notes and a deeper understanding of the topic and consider their time to have been well spent!

## Example 3: Group presentation on a topic allocated to the group

*Purpose*    This presentation provides an opportunity to research and provide a more detailed review of an area of the curriculum covered in the general lectures. You are

expected to draw on themes covered throughout the module to demonstrate how well you understand the topic. The audience will be expected to learn more about the topic by listening to the presentation. Thus it combines several purposes of teaching, learning and assessment.

*Assessment*    This presentation earns a percentage of marks that contribute towards the overall module mark. The percentage varies across courses and could range from 10–50 per cent. How these marks are given will vary with the situation but they could be given for your presentation skills, the quality of your research, your understanding of the subject area and perhaps the supporting handouts. In some presentations, marks may also be given for how well you work as a group. All members of the group will be given the same mark so you might be concerned that you will be limited by the weaker members of the group. There will however, be an opportunity to earn the remaining percentage through your individual piece of work.

*Content*    The topic areas to be covered have been allocated by the tutor. You have to provide an overview of the topic then explore key themes in more detail. The tutor has been available to offer guidance and you have reported your progress and asked any questions through e-mails.

*Timing*    A fixed amount of time will have been allocated for this presentation. The time could be between 20 and 60 minutes. A small proportion of this time will be devoted to questions from the audience.

*Handouts*    You are expected to provide some handouts that explain the topic as it will not be covered in detail in any other seminars or lectures on the module. These should be more than just copies of any slides used and could be notes from part of the script for the presentation or summaries of key themes with references to useful resources that can be followed up at a later date.

*Audience*    This will be the module tutor and student members of your cohort so it could perhaps be up to 40 people. They will probably have a general understanding of the topic but apart from the tutor, they will not be experts.

*Technology*    You will be expected to use the most appropriate technology such as PowerPoint, audio or video.

*Comment*    In this example, you will be expected to work well as a group. Your presentation skills will be assessed and you will be expected to deliver the content in a clear style that generates interest in the topic. Probably much of the preparation time will have been spent researching and reading so that you understand the topic well enough to deliver a presentation from which the other students can learn. Time will also be needed to allocate tasks between the group members and share the responsibility for preparing the content, designing the handouts and practising the content. You will need to develop a presentation that has a logical structure and interesting content that explores key themes and draws some conclusions.

## Example 4: A demonstration of your skills for using equipment

*Purpose*    This type of presentation is an opportunity to demonstrate your current level of skill for using some equipment so that the academic can give advice on how to improve these skills. This equipment will be something that you will be expected to use competently in your future employment. This could be in a medical context or craft design or technology courses. First aid training could be another example where dummies are substituted for people. Other examples could include: hairdressing, cookery, car maintenance, laboratory work. The purpose is to show the tutor your skills, plus you will have the opportunity for further learning and improvement of these skills.

*Assessment*    This is not assessed as a presentation. You will have some formal assessment in the future before you become a practitioner so this presentation will be useful as a form of rehearsal and training before the final assessed presentation.

*Content*    You will need to explain the context for the use of the equipment and demonstrate the correct use. You may also need to outline some examples of variations of its use such as for different patients or different medical conditions. If it is a laboratory situation, you may also need to explain safety precautions or how problems and mistakes can be rectified.

*Timing*    The time may vary between 10 and 60 minutes depending on the type of demonstration. Some time for feedback will be included so that areas for further practice can be discussed and agreed.

*Handouts*    These may not be needed for this type of presentation. However, you may be asked to provide a set of instructions for demonstrating the equipment as the process

of creating these instructions will improve your understanding of the techniques needed.

*Audience*    The tutor will be present but there may also be other members of your cohort as this can be a useful learning event through the chance to observe the procedure and discuss aspects that arise from the demonstration.

*Technology*    The technology will be central to the purpose of this type of presentation rather than a communication tool or enhancement. This will vary depending on any of the examples given above such as the use of a dummy for a first aid course, engineering equipment or a sewing machine on a craft course.

*Comment*    Do not think that because there is no formal assessment, you do not need to prepare for this type of presentation. You will need to work and rehearse as for any others. This presentation offers an opportunity for some coaching and learning. It is really useful to demonstrate your level of skill and where you are having any problems with the technology. The tutor will advise you on how to improve and may give tips to solve any problems.

## Example 5: non-assessed presentations to report progress or demonstrate a product

*Purpose*    There are two presentations in this example. You are a member of a group that has to design a website for the final assessment of a module. (On some courses this could be a garment, prototype, recipe or other relevant product.) You also have to write an individual report about the development of the site and discuss the reasons for choice of features and content. Halfway through the assignment, everyone in the group has to meet the tutor for an informal presentation on the progress of your work. The idea is that the presentation will inform the tutor of the progress you have made, so that she can advise you on any problems. This is similar to the previous example where the tutor will advise and encourage the students to improve their product for the final assessment. At the end of the module the completed website (product) will be demonstrated by the group.

*Assessment*    Neither of these presentations will be formally assessed. You will be given an individual mark for your own final report and a separate mark for the website that you develop as a group. It is therefore in your interest to create a good product with the group but also produce a high quality individual report so that you earn a good

combined mark for the assignment. Whilst this presentation will not earn a mark it should contribute to your final mark if you use it wisely. Having a date for the presentation can help group members to focus on tasks that need to be developed. You will also be able to explain any problems that have arisen and seek some advice and suggestions from the tutor. The final presentation can be used to 'sell' the product and convince the tutor of the quality of the website or product. This will be important if it could influence the final mark given to the product.

*Content*    For the first presentation, you only have a few minutes to explain your ideas clearly. You will explain your progress so far, any problems you are having and how you see the product developing. This will be interactive as your group and the tutor will be able to ask questions about the product. The second presentation will be more formal as you will explain and demonstrate the completed site. The tutor will ask questions at the end of the presentation and make notes that will help later when she marks the site and the individual reports.

*Timing*    You are going to be allowed about 10 minutes for the first presentation and 45 minutes for the second one.

*Handouts*    For the first presentation you will probably only need notes of the work in progress that show tasks and proposed time scales that can be reviewed by the academic. However, clear detailed notes that perhaps include diagrams will help to keep you working well towards the goal. For the second presentation you are asked to demonstrate the product and give a brief outline report of the key features of the product and anticipated users. This report will be included as part of each of the group members' final individual reports that will also include critical analysis and reflections on the processes used and features of the product that could be improved further.

*Audience*    The presentation is to the tutor but other members of the cohort are supposed to be present, so that they see the products created by other students, and learn by observing their peers' performance.

*Technology*    This will be the software package used to develop the website.

*Comment*    In this example, you need good presentation and communication skills but they are not directly assessed. You may not feel very motivated because you know that you will not get a specific mark for the presentation. It is important to see this as an

opportunity to practise in a non-threatening context, then to convince the tutor of the merits of your product.

## Example 6: an individual presentation for a job interview

*Purpose*   You are one of six candidates in the final selection group for a job. You are asked to attend a final interview where you will meet the recruitment panel to answer questions about the skills that you can bring to the job. You have also been asked to prepare a 10 minute presentation on a given topic using PowerPoint. This presentation is one of several methods used to select the most suitable candidate but it is your opportunity to demonstrate your presentation skills, levels of confidence, personality and interpersonal skills.

*Assessment*   The panel will use a scoring system for the presentation of each candidate, but you will not be given this score. They understand that you will be nervous but will award marks for: keeping within the brief given; selection of relevant content; clarity of communication skills; appropriate use of PowerPoint. The quality of the presentation will contribute towards a final score of marks earned for group exercises and psychometric tests which will also be used in the selection process. However, where these scores are similar between candidates, the presentation will probably influence the final choice. It is therefore an important method within this range of selection methods.

*Content*   You have been given a topic or statement relevant to the type of job you have applied for. In a short presentation it is essential to be very succinct. However it can still be useful to provide a brief introduction to the content, structure the main part into three broad themes then close the presentation.

*Timing*   A fixed amount of time will have been allocated for each candidate and the 10 minute presentation is part of this. The panel members will be able to question you after the presentation and this could take up to 20 minutes. After you leave the room, they will discuss your performance and agree the final mark.

*Handouts*   You have been asked to provide a handout of the set of slides used with space for notes at the side. Panel members will use these to make the notes needed to remind them of your performance when they are comparing you with the other candidates.

*Audience*    This will be members of the recruitment panel and there may also be several of the team of people who the successful candidate will be working with. You will not have met any of these people before the interview; neither will you be able to visit the place of the presentation before the event. The panel will make the decision for offering you the job or rejecting you as unsuitable for the post.

*Technology*    You will have been informed about the levels and type of technology available. You have been asked to e-mail the file to a specific address the day before the interview but are also advised to bring a copy on disc in case of unforeseen problems with the organization's intranet.

*Comment*    In this example you will need to make an impact and get your message across in a short amount of time. You will be expected to 'sell' yourself by using good presentation skills to show your potential as a strong candidate for the job. Somehow, you need to be better than the other candidates. Inevitably you will also be judged on your appearance and how they see you as capable of representing their organization in a positive way. Read Chapter 11 for more about this type of presentation.

## Conclusion

Having read this chapter, you will now be aware of a range of examples of student presentations, why they are used, and the problems and benefits you can experience from delivering presentations. We hope you find the rest of this book helpful for preparing and delivering all of your presentations.