



Teacher
Education
Advancement
Network

Writing your abstract

for submission to TEAN Conference

TEAN in association with



University of
Cumbria



LED Research Centre

Learning, Education and Development

Introduction

When writing your abstract to submit to TEAN conference, you are – in effect – ‘selling’ your ideas. You must make your proposal’s title and abstract clear, relevant to the audience, and distinctive, as well as conforming to the [technical guidance](#) provided by the conference organisers.

Although you need reviewers and committee members to accept your proposal, the main audience that both you and they will be focusing on is the teacher educators attending conference. You need to attract a good proportion of them to attend your session. This brief document provides additional guidance especially aimed at new presenters and researchers.

Focus, purpose and audience

You may have a large and complex project, but it is unlikely that you can share all of that within a time-limited conference presentation. So, decide on your purpose in presenting at the conference. Then focus down onto a suitable element or perspective of your project, and make sure it is of interest and value to the audience. The TEAN conference delegates include teacher educators, mostly university-based but some who are based in schools or other providers. The audience includes teacher educators involved in research into teacher education and into continuing professional development for experienced teachers. Many delegates will share TEAN’s aim of developing research-informed practice in teacher education and development and research-informed practice in schools and colleges, so they are likely to value projects with a scholarly underpinning but that also offer practical implications.

If you are presenting a critical evaluation of innovative practice in teacher education then the history and particular context may be crucial, but the audience are likely to be more interested in your theoretical framework, key findings and the possible implications for practice in their own settings. If presenting research into teacher education then you might focus on the data analysis, key findings and implications for practice; alternatively you might decide to focus on the research process and what can be learned from that to inform further research. In terms of writing an abstract for submission to conference, you should make your focus clear and indicate the ‘take aways’ that teacher educators and researchers in the audience might gain from attending.

Language

Always consider your audience to include international colleagues or those using English as a second language or simply busy academics who are likely to skip dense, jargon laden or vaguely worded abstracts. Present complex ideas in Plain English and avoid acronyms and unnecessary local details or terminology. For example, ‘student teacher’ is a far more universally understood and accepted than the contested term ‘trainee teacher’ that seems to have become widely used in England. The abstract will be just one paragraph and is in effect a concise version of your presentation or paper.

If you are proposing to present on a project that is currently in progress, then you may be tempted to use the future tense. This is reasonable given the months remaining between submission and the event. However, try to be clear and specific of what you will have completed before conference so that you reassure the reviewers, the committee and the audience of what you will have done and be able to include in the presentation.

Title

Before he started writing books with infamous titles such as 'The Blind Watchmaker' Richard Dawkins published a paper in the journal 'Science' with the brilliantly concise title: 'Bees are easily distracted' (1969). This title is powerful because in only four words it tells the potential reader what is in the tin as well as providing a hint of the key findings.

It is worth spending some time working on your title because it will catch the interest of conference organizers and make it more likely that your session will attract an interested audience. Your initial draft title might be long-winded and include details, such as the context or methodology, that are not essential.

For example: A qualitative phenomenographic study of the varied conceptions held by university and school-based teacher educators in England of assessment regarding classroom observation in primary schools of student teachers'. Might become 'Teacher educator conceptions of classroom observation assessments'. However, this concise version still does not give a hint of the findings, so it might become: 'Teacher educator conceptions of classroom observation assessments: From expert scoring to peer negotiation'. This version is just under 100 characters which makes it concise and more likely to catch the eye in a conference programme.

Elements of the abstract

The issue or problem and perhaps why it is important

It usually works best to get straight to the heart of the issue, rather than having a preamble about the context of the study such as policy changes or pressures such as the pandemic. How will your presentation be useful to teacher educators across the UK, Europe and beyond as they consider developing their practice or research in teacher education and development into the future?

Previous research by other people and what makes your work distinctive

What do we already know or think we know about the issue from previous international research? How is your practice innovative? Perhaps you are using a distinctive methodology or theoretical framework? What contribution does your work make to our understanding of the issue?

Methods and data sources for your research or evaluation of practice

What data did you generate and what was your approach to analysis?

Key findings, conclusions and implications

This section is often neglected so try to keep sufficient words to include at least one or two key findings, even if in a very concise form. If your project is still in progress then at least try to signal what take aways teacher educators from other settings might gain from the session.

References

Please take the time to make your references complete and in a standard and consistent format. Returning abstracts for minor amendments of references causes delays and creates unnecessary administration costs.

Please follow the style in the examples below which will help to create a consistent style across the conference programme (*note the sections of these examples that are in italics*).

Book: Cottrell, S. (2019) *The study skills handbook*. 5th edn. London: Red Globe Press.

Chapter: Jenkins, L. (2016) Respiratory tract infections, in Blythe, A. and Buchan, J. (eds.) *Essential primary care*. Oxford: Wiley pp. 321-333.

Journal article: Armstrong, J., Green, K. and Soon, W. (2011) Research on forecasting for the manmade global warming alarm, *Energy and Environment* 22(8): 1091-1104.

Online resource: Author or organisation (Year last updated) *Title of site or page*. Available at: URL (Accessed: date).

Refining your abstract

Your initial draft is likely to benefit from review and editing. If possible, allow some time for this and involve a critical friend or mentor to give you some feedback on your draft that informs your revisions before submission. Simply reading your abstract out loud to yourself can be surprisingly helpful.

Useful Links

Sometimes the resources available online do not distinguish between an abstract for a journal paper and an abstract for a conference. There is considerable overlap but also some differences in the requirements.

A useful short article on the Enago Academy website:

<https://www.enago.com/academy/important-tips-for-writing-an-effective-conference-abstract/>

A blog post on the LSE website specifically about a killer abstract for a conference:

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2015/01/27/how-to-write-a-killer-conference-abstract/>

A useful video which is also available in written form by the link below the video:

<https://blog.nafisalondon.co.uk/index.php/2021/04/16/how-to-write-an-abstract-for-a-call-for-papers-conference-presentation/>

A slightly alternative viewpoint emphasising abstract as narrative with three parts, usefully focuses on audience:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0g3QoCuqH4>