Giving presentations is one of the skills that employers expect graduates to have, so you should make the most of any experience you can get at university. You may need to give presentations:

- in tutorials
- as part of the assessment of projects
- in Union activities or staff-student committees.

Preparing your presentation

- Objectives: why are you giving this talk, to whom, how much do they already know, what outcome do you hope for?
- Limitations: how long do you have, is there a set format, where will you be presenting, can you change the room layout?
- Main points: no more than three points in a ten-minute talk, with a logical connection, and supporting evidence
- Getting started: introduce yourself, check that everyone can see and hear, identify time for questions, outline the talk, and think of an introduction that will get your audience's attention
- Lead the audience through the main points in a logical and interesting way: use examples, anecdotes, case histories
- Using PowerPoint: no more than a dozen slides for ten minutes, keep text (24pt or larger) and effects simple, and make full use of video clips, charts etc
- Handouts: decide content and when to hand out
- Artefacts and examples: to hand round during the presentation or look at afterwards?
- Conclusion: summarise the main points of the presentation and conclusions drawn, and leave the audience with something to think about
- Review your proposed presentation from the audience viewpoint: does it meet objectives, is the structure logical, are the length and content right?
- Decide how the presentation might be edited should you run short of time
- Check that the equipment you need will be available in the room you are going to use, on the day
Practising your presentation

- Practise giving your talk on your own, so you are used to the sound of your own voice. Check the length of the talk, and when you are happy with it, try out on a friend.
- Visuals - do they all work? Practise talking to the audience, not the computer display or the screen, and managing slide changing along with giving the talk.
- Try not to read from a script: if you need prompts apart from the slides, use index cards with key words, phrases and facts, written large enough to see at a glance.
- If using PowerPoint, take a copy on a flash drive as backup, and consider having a print copy of the slides to hand, in case of equipment failure.

On the day

- Arrive in good time. Check all the equipment is working, and arrange the room as required.
- Try not to be nervous: breathing slowly and deeply a few times helps.

Giving your presentation

- Presence: stand tall, take a deep breath, and look as if you are going to enjoy the presentation yourself.
- Eye contact: keep eye contact with all members of a small group in turn, or different groups of a larger audience - people respond better if they think you are talking directly to them.
- Voice: speak slowly and clearly, and loud enough for everyone to hear - and breathe slowly.
- Movement: keep to essentials and avoid pacing or fiddling with objects - keep your hands away from your face, but not in your pockets!
Useful tips

• The audience's attention will tend to drift: state essential points more than once, and use slightly different words

• Their attention span is short: if necessary break the talk into clear sections with brief pauses between

• Focus on the key points, avoid unnecessary detail and keep focussed yourself

• It is much harder to follow a complex argument or a series of points when listening: a chart or handout is really helpful

• If you are short of time, don't rush to finish: edit the talk to fit the time

• Audiences like 'stories' so use relevant examples and case studies where you can

• If you can't think how to end the talk, smile and say 'Thank you'!