# Follow the white rabbit:
guiding nursing students to creative poster presentations

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# Background

- ❖ Hibernia College is a small, private higher education college established in 2000

- ❖ Widely regarded for post-graduate programmes in teacher education

- ❖ Began an undergraduate Nursing programme in 2022

- ❖ Since its inception there have been Nursing cohorts each year with the earliest cohort now entering their final year

- ❖ Poster assessment has been a part of the assessment strategy for the Nursing programme since its inception

# Poster assessment

- Supports diverse assessment strategies

- Goes beyond traditional methods

- Respects learner diversity

- Creative, impactful, and engaging

- Enhances visual communication skills (e.g. graphics, layout)

- Help nurses integrate their learning into patient care

- Develops lifelong skills (e.g. conference and service user posters)

'Nursing students embraced with enthusiasm the opportunity to explore their creativity and develop alternative communication skills. Many students expressed relief at not having to write an essay' (Conyers, 2003, p. 39).

# DLD involvement

- ❖ Librarian and DLD researcher often collaborate on projects e.g. academic writing and referencing resources and supports, IASC repository, Digital literacy etc. and have presented posters at many conferences and events

- ❖ Reputation within the college as "the poster people"

- ❖ Approached by the Nursing team due to poster design experience and expertise

- ❖ No prior experience providing instruction on poster design – approach developed "from scratch"

# Workshop – Instruction

## An introduction to creating academic posters

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## How papers and posters are different

**Academic paper**

- Contains all information
- Follows accepted structure for academic writing
  - Abstract, background, literature review, question, methodology, findings, discussion, conclusion, references
- Text-based
- No illustrations (except graphs of data etc)
- May be intended for publication in journal
- To be read in full at reader's leisure

**vs**

**Academic poster**

- A concise summary of your research/study
- Starting point is often a paper but could also be a literature review, a work in progress or preliminary findings for discussion
- Structure depends on content – more flexible than for an academic paper
- Combines text and graphics – visual
- May be published in proceedings, repositories etc (not peer-reviewed)
- Usually displayed at events along with many other posters
- Usually read in 3 or 4 minutes

## Creating a poster from written text

- What is my main point? Everything on the poster should support the main message.
- It is difficult to leave out content you've worked on, but it is absolutely necessary!
- Think visually – can I use an image instead of lots of text?
- Can paragraphs be broken up, shortened, replaced with bullet points or graphs/graphics?
- It's worth learning to write concisely (handout to share on this)
- Think about the layout and how your reader will read the poster
- Titles are important as they're the first thing your reader will read
- Use the centre for key information e.g. a striking visual, something to link the other elements
- White space is important
- Draft, draft and draft again
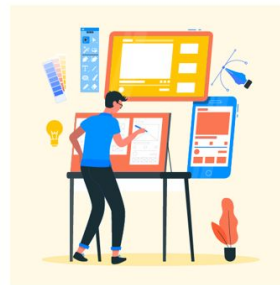
## Checklist for academic posters

- ✓ Leave adequate white space – assists readability
- ✓ Convey your message clearly – what are you trying to communicate?
- ✓ With text, less is more!
- ✓ Use a (relevant) visual image
- ✓ Make it readable – contrast background/text
- ✓ Pick fonts carefully
- ✓ Use colour thoughtfully
- ✓ Add a QR code for more information
- ✓ Line it up!
- ✓ Proofread/feedback

# Workshop – Activity



## Exercise

In small groups, critique a poster – keeping in mind all that we've discussed about the purpose of a poster and good poster design.

# Handouts

## Poster design checklist

Ann Byrne and Irene O'Dowd, Digital Learning Department.

√ **Use of whitespace:** Some empty space is critical to readability and legibility. Without it, the reader has no visual pauses.

√ **Clear message:** The poster should capture the attention of attendees and convey at least one significant idea they'll remember. Most people spend 3 to 5 minutes viewing a poster, so use plain, descriptive language that leaves no doubt what your poster is about.

√ **Use of text:** Less text usually means greater impact and greater interest from viewers.

√ **Visual elements:** People retain visual images longer than the written word, so aim for at least one visual image—a photograph, an illustration, a graph.

√ **Make it readable:** Use high contrast between background and text. A lighter background with darker text is easier to read. If displaying at a conference, design the poster so it can be read from a distance.

√ **Use of fonts:** Arial and Tahoma are examples of non-serif fonts that work well for poster titles. Serif fonts, such as Times New Roman and Courier, are easier to read at smaller sizes and work well for body text. Avoid writing in all-uppercase letters (i.e., ALL CAPS).

√ **Use of colour:** Colourful posters can be very effective but use colours carefully. Blue and green are popular because they're considered calming – but using another colour scheme can help your poster stand out.

## Creating concise posters

Ann Byrne and Irene O'Dowd, Digital Learning Department.

### Introduction

Getting to the point concisely is a key skill when creating an academic poster. When revising, critically examine each paragraph and ask yourself whether it is necessary to your overall argument. You may decide to cut some paragraphs. This process could be painful, especially if you have done a lot of research you'd like to include but it will strengthen your poster. Even at the sentence level, there are things you can do to eliminate unnecessary content. Below are some tips to help with this.

1. **Eliminate redundant pairs**

There is no need to use words and phrase that involve repetition of the same idea.

Some examples include: "each and every", "whole entire", "first and foremost", "true and accurate".

2. **Delete unnecessary qualifiers**

Often, we use qualifiers that aren't necessary to express our meaning. While this may only involve deleting the odd word, if you have used a lot of qualifiers, it can add up to a significant reduction in word count.

Some examples of qualifiers are: actually, really, basically, probably, very, definitely, somewhat, kind of, extremely, and practically.

3. **Identify and reduce prepositional words**

Overuse of prepositional phrases (which begin with words like "in," "for," "at," "on," "through," and "over") can make a sentence clunky and unclear. Try going through your draft and identifying and highlighting prepositional phrases. Reread the sentence to see if they are really necessary.

# Feedback

Please rate the poster design workshop
(5 stars being the highest score)

**4.25**

Average Rating

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

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I found the two handouts ('poster checklist' and
'tips for concise writing') helpful
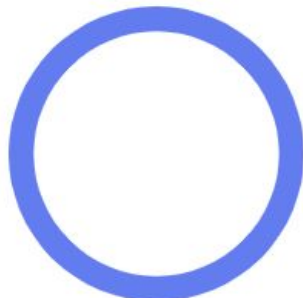
100%

BEFORE the workshop, I would rate my confidence with
poster design as [ ] out of 10

**3.50**

Average Rating

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

AFTER the workshop, I would rate my confidence with
poster design as [ ] out of 10

**7.00**

Average Rating

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ ⑦ ⑧ ⑨ ⑩

# Feedback

"Explained what made a good poster"

"Clarity"

"How to actually make the poster on PowerPoint etc"

"The example posters"

# Outcomes

❖ Feedback indicates students were satisfied overall with the support offered and had a better understanding of poster design after the session

❖ Collaboration and partnership across roles and departments

❖ Face-to-face student interaction

❖ Development of skills, knowledge and experience for librarian and DLD researcher

# Future directions

❖ Greater scope for collaboration and student engagement - Posters recently also included as an assessment method on PME programmes and advice sought from librarian and DLD researcher

❖ Inclusion of resources on poster development on the library research page

❖ Action student feedback e.g. increase scope of workshop/handouts to include PowerPoint guidance?

❖ Encouraging and supporting students to submit posters at conferences – e.g. HECA student poster awards

# References

❖ Conyers, V. (2003) 'Posters: An assessment strategy to foster learning in nursing education', *Journal of Nursing Education*, 42(1), pp.38-40.

❖ Crawley, L. and Frazer, K. (2015) 'Posters as assessment strategies: Focusing on service users', *British Journal of Nursing*, *24*(16), pp.830-832.

❖ Summers, K. (2005) 'Student assessment using poster presentations', *Paediatric Nursing*, *17*(8), p.24.

# Hibernia College

# Thanks for listening!

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