Presentation best practices for Teaching and Learning

1.1 Purpose of this document

Powerpoint slideshows are part of most lecturers' teaching strategy. This document is compiled by Academic Support Services on the Potchefstroom Campus and provides guidelines for the use of PowerPoint in a Teaching and Learning environment. The current trend at the NWU indicates that the slides are "text heavy" and include irrelevant images. In many cases Afrikaans and English are mixed on one slide which hinder readability and cognitive processing. The purpose of this document is to highlight the main purpose of a Powerpoint presentation and how it can be used to ensure that the presentation enhances students' learning and captures their attention.

1.2 Introduction

In planning a presentation or lecture, ask yourself if PowerPoint is the best "tool" to convey the message or learning outcome. It is important to know that you **don't have to** use PowerPoint all the time. The main criticism is that:

- PowerPoint presentations hinder critical thinking by students;

- PowerPoint has become a comfort blanket for lecturers and learners alike which can lead to students "not thinking" for themselves;

- PowerPoint is teacher centred, not content driven or student driven and the role of the student is in many cases being passive;

- Too many animation and colours distract students to actually listen to what the lecturer is saying;

- PowerPoint can be boring because lecturers read the content from the slides.

To assist you in planning your class or presentation ask yourself if this type of presentation and the content in the presentation encourage active learning to help students to develop the knowledge and skill to realize the learning outcomes of the lecture?

PowerPoint can assist lecturers to transmit information - especially complex information to students. Such information can be presented in graphs, with visuals and animation – and can lead to increased understanding of content. PowerPoint can be useful to encourage interactivity in class and actually help the students learn. If PowerPoint is used effectively the PowerPoint slideshow should ideally not make sense to students that did not attend class. The reason should be because your slides are not the platform to summarize content for students. Garr Reynolds argues as following:

> *Slides are slides. Documents are documents. They aren't the same thing. Attempts to merge them result in what I call the "slideument" – which is not a word.*

Rather support your presentations with handouts or by using the notes pane in PowerPoint

A few points are supplied that you should keep in mind if you use PowerPoint as your medium of presentation of content.

1.3 Presentation length

You might be overusing PowerPoint slides. Slides are there to support your points, and not to deliver content. Keep in mind that the slides were never meant to be the "star of the show" (the star, of course, is your audience). Students attend to hear you and be moved or informed (or both) by you and your expertise as subject specialist. Don't let your message and your ability to tell a story get derailed by slides that are

unnecessarily complicated and busy (Reynolds, 2008). Thus use slides sparingly, remember what it felt like as a learner when slides are overloaded with text and the presenter read the content from the slides.

1.4   Segmenting and chunking

Avoid a wall of text. Separate your information into logical "chunks", making it easy for people to understand.

1.5   Limit bullet points & text

- The best slides may have no text at all. Remember, the slides are meant to support the narration of the speaker, not make the speaker unneeded. Many people often say something like this: "Sorry I missed your presentation. I hear it was great. Can you just send me your PowerPoint slides?" But if they are good slides, they will be of little use without you. (Unless you have your speaker notes added in the notes section).

- PowerPoint templates usually invite you to have a heading followed by text in bullet format. In TL it is argued that bulleting knowledge can result in students not seeing the bigger picture, understanding the context or learning professional skills. Students tend to only focus and learn the words on the slide. The narration or explanation of concepts by the lecturer is in many cases devalued. A picture, short sentences, or problem to be solved are better to use.

- Do not clutter the slides, use a six by six rule or at the most 8 by 8. Six words in a row and not more than six lines on a slide.

- The **notes panel** in PowerPoint can be very effective if you want to add additional information for students or yourself, as students can view and print these notes. This can help to do away from text heavy sentences. For example if a slide consist of an image only, the notes panel can be used for notes to student regarding the main points. The student will not see the notes on the slide, so he will listen to you, but he can view the notes on the slideshow, or print the slides with notes pages included.

1.6   Images

- Images can have powerful meaning and enable a learner to process a message 60 000 times faster than text. A relevant image can support what you are saying to your class. For instance if you are speaking about abuse, a high quality image that shows exactly what you want the students to recognise can help convey a message much more than a highly colourful template with text about abuse. If you require high quality images you can search on http://www.shutterstock.com The NWU is licensed to use these images for teaching and learning purposes. Please contact Graphikos at 018 299 4100 for assistance.

- Spoken words with pictures are better than pictures with text, as integrating an image and narration takes less cognitive effort than integrating an image and text.

- **No clipart:** Avoid using clip art and those unnatural stock images of business people looking at the camera. And especially not images with copyright marks all over them.

- Balance text and images on a slide - it is sometimes clever to use the one or the other.

1.7   Limit transitions & animation

- Do not allow the technology to override the content, for instance flying text from different angels and other distractive movement.

- Text that appear chunk by chunk or bullet by bullet can help students focus on what you are going to explain. If all text are revealed when the slide appear students tend to want to read the slide and not listen to the lecture.

- Animation can also assist lecturers when explaining a difficult process or reveal information step by step.

1.8   Have a visual theme and pay attention to detail

- You need a consistent visual theme throughout your presentation, but most templates included in PowerPoint have been seen by your audience countless times (and besides, the templates are in many cases designed for marketing rather than TL. Specific NWU templates are available on request which are developed by graphic designers taking into account the TL context).

- Do not use too many colours or templates that have many colours. Text should preferably be dark on a light background – this means high contrast

- Use fonts that are easily readable, such as Arial, Times new roman, Verdana or Trebuchet. Do not use "funky" fonts or decorative script fonts – this is not easily readable.

- Use 28 point type for the headline, 18–24 point type for the body text, and 14 point type for reference listings and call-outs
- Afrikaans and English mixed on one slide is not ideal and should not be used especially if slides are "text-heavy" (see example below). From an interpreter's perspective it is also difficult for the interpreter if slides are full and bilingual. As suggested rather use the notes panel to insert extra text in both languages for students to refer to after your presentation or have separate files for English, Afrikaans or other languages. Students can download whichever they prefer.
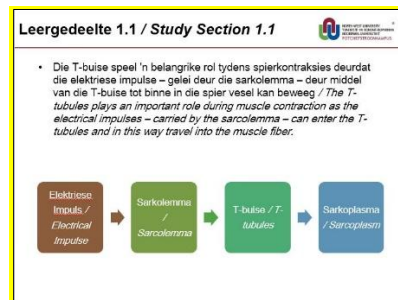
- If slides are bilingual text should be limited on the slide and a clear distinction should be made between languages, for example:

- Do not use only capitals, and avoid italics. Text in capital letters is harder to read than lowercase text. In instances where both languages are used on one slide please do not use italics for the second language, see example attach of how you can use both languages if you have to absolutely have to. Although this will mean that you will have to have more slides, students will not be bombarded with information and try to read both languages and listening to the lecture and or the translator.

- Ensure that spelling is correct

- Emphasize main points with bolds

- Google slides (https://docs.google.com/presentation/u/0/) have beautiful PowerPoint templates and there are a few templates specifically for education purposes.

1.9 More tips

- Inform your students about how you will use your PowerPoint, for example, "as a student you will have to make notes, reading the slides will not be enough to pass the exam", or "the slides are available on eFundi so please give attention to the lecturer and participate actively in class", etc.

- If you want students to read the slide, give them some time before you start to speak to ensure that they do not have to listen and read at the same time.

- Do not leave the slide on if you discuss a different topic, use the "b" key to black out the screen – this will ensure students focus on the conversation and not on the slide

- Add a blank slide while presenting to record students' feedback or interesting points that came out of discussions.

- Students learn best in class if students listen to spoken text and by looking at graphics

- PowerPoint can also be used to instruct students to participate in a class activity

- **Handouts** is still very effective in class, whether you make them available online or hand them out in hard copy. A handout usually provides information about the session or main points summarized or supplementary material, and in some cases can be used for interactive learning such as a reflective activity, problems to solve, mind maps, incomplete sentences etc.

- Use simple cues to direct learners to important points or content. Using text size, bolding, italics, or placing content in a highlighted or shaded text box is all that is required to convey the significance of key ideas in your presentation.

- Limit the number of slides. Use the one-minute-per-slide rule as a guide for determining how many slides to include. You can discuss a slide for longer than a minute, but you therefore have to adjust the remaining number of slides to keep within the time allotted for the presentation. When considering the final number of slides, it helps to ask yourself the question: If you had to keep to only 10 (or 5, or even 1) slides, which slides would you keep?

- Allow yourself enough time for Q&A. Reflection is very important.

1.10 For more information please contact the following departments:

Graphikos (018 299 4100)	**Academic Advisors PC (018 299 852246)**
• Designing or redesign of templates • NWU templates • Shutterstock photos • Information regarding Visual design principles	• Interactive learning and teaching strategies • Workshops regarding TL and visual design • Professional development opportunities and mentorship • Contact session evaluation on request • Lesson planning • Curriculum design and assessment strategies
D-media (018 299 1866)	**ITE (Information technology in education) 018 299 2002**
• Multi-media design and development • Instructional design • Video recording and editing • Voice-overs, animation and special effects	• Integrating technologies (audio/video/screencasts/wiki's/forums and assessment) within eFundi • Training and workshops for technology enhanced learning • Individual and small group consultations to address specific technology needs in TL

IT (PK) Please visit (http://www.nwu.ac.za/it/training)
• PowerPoint training 1: Presentation essentials, working with text and designing a presentation in Ppt • PowerPoint 2: Adding tables and graphics, creating SmartArt as well as using animation and multimedia in Ppt • PowerPoint 3: Securing, sharing and delivering a presentation in Ppt

Resources

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