

Characteristics of Exemplary Conference Proposals

The following characteristics were compiled from proposal reviewers and session participants when asked:

- *What are the top five characteristics of an exemplary proposal?*
 - *What are significant shortcomings (errors of omissions/commission) of a poor proposal?*
 - *Do you have any suggestions for improving the quality of proposal submissions?*
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✓ *Clarity and succinctness of writing*

clear and concise explanation of topic, goals and format
no jargon or “insider speak”
clarity of thought shown in the description
readable
clear proposal structure
concisely stated objectives
understandable content for someone not familiar with the work
evidence of thought given to content and session plan
and how the plan will accomplish the objectives
communicates precisely what will be happen in the allotted time
underlying concepts/theories are clearly stated
written in the active voice

✓ *Timeliness and importance of the topic*

topic is relevant to current educational practices
innovative, original and creative, fills a niche or is a hot topic
interesting- fun to read; exciting new idea or approach
appeals to both logical and creative sides of the brain
topic is “right” for the Generalists audience
has potential for contributing to literature and practice
if an older topic, authors should demonstrate awareness of previous work
topic is relevant to the conference theme

✓ *Organization and completeness*

organized in content and plan
purpose, format and content fit the session type
time allotment is realistic based on the outlined plan
author has followed the written instructions
all required materials are included
typed, clean copy, no errors
well-defined audience activities
title and abstract are relevant, original, intriguing
title matches description and abstract

✓ *Academic merit*

methods match intended purpose of study
concept and conclusions are theoretically grounded
suggestions are offered for further study/activity
study objective and plan are provided
summary of study is succinct
strengths and weaknesses of study are included
demonstrates knowledge of current literature
generalizable and portable (useful to others)
demonstrates authors having “wrestled” with topic
data and results are well supported

Shortcomings of Poor Proposals

⊖ *Absence of characteristics listed above*

⊖ *Weak knowledge base*

unacknowledged methodological problems
evidence that the author is not current on important issues
lack of familiarity with previous writings on the topic
no literature citations; unoriginal work
lack of or a weak theoretical base
limited generalizability - too limited to one school/program

⊖ *Failure to follow directions for proposal submission*

⊖ *Evidence of hasty preparation*

Typographical and/or grammatical errors (no proofreading)

⊖ *Inadequate supporting data*

indications that data has been collected but not analyzed;
no preliminary results are necessary

⊖ *No plan to engage audience (for most session types)*

⊖ *Presentation seems too long/ too short for session type*

⊖ *Lack of clarity/ thoroughness*

incoherent, incomplete sentences; run-on sentences
verbosity
too few details
rambling writing style, lack of direction or focus
unrelated, disconnected narrative unrelated to study

Suggestions for Improving the Quality of Future Submissions

- tighten requirements for acceptance to counteract the perception that it's "easy" to get a proposal to the Generalists accepted
- provide advance notice during the conference about next year's proposal deadlines
- schedule a "brainstorming" session for those who only see each other once a year to work up an idea for the next conference
- include an ideal proposal with the Call for Proposals; include annotations to point out most effective aspects
- include handout, "Characteristics of Exemplary Proposals" with the Call for Proposals
- consider having only 2 types of session categories: descriptive and workshop; define each clearly in the instructions
- revise the "proposal review form"

Proposal Writing: Getting Started

Challenges	Strategies
<p>Knowing about and choosing a presentation format Finding the time and place to do it</p> <p>Why am I doing this? What have I done that would be interesting and would contribute to medical education and/or to the work of other Generalists?</p> <p>Doing a literature search and finding time to review sources</p> <p>Need for perfection</p> <p>Knowing what to include and what to exclude</p>	<p>Dictate initial ideas - in the car, on an airplane with no distractions etc. Think about content and session outline <u>before</u> writing it down</p> <p>Get a first rough draft on paper, then plan time to polish it later</p> <p>Involve a colleague in brainstorming and/or writing the proposal Assign tasks to collaborators- agree on deadlines</p> <p>If you were the reviewer of your proposal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the topic interesting? - Would you want to go to this session? - Is there enough time to cover the proposed material? - Did you complete all sections on the submission forms? - Can you imagine how the session will flow? - What other questions would you have as the reviewer? - Does the proposal/topic have a theoretical base? <p>Let go - deal and understand the drive for perfectionism</p> <p>You may not need to cover all aspects of the topic. Narrow the topic if necessary. Could it be divided into two or more proposals?</p>