Research competition category
written pitch

LSE FESTIVAL 2020

SHAPE THE WORLD

Can you turn your research findings into an engaging written pitch to an external audience?

This is a way of creating engagement with an important non-academic audience such as the media and policymakers that is clear, concise and convincing in writing. Your headline should grab attention and the summary of your findings should point out the importance of the research to a user community, whether in the public or policy realm.

Judging criteria

1. Does the headline grab attention and capture the important insight from the research?

2. Does the pitch make the case for why the audience should be engaged by the research?

3. Is the pitch well-written, concise and communicative?

Submission information

A maximum of one written pitch may be submitted as part of a single exhibit from either an individual or a group. Your pitch must be:

• Maximum one headline and one 250 word summary

• Maximum one page Word document

• Do not include any logos, for example the LSE logo

How to enter your written pitch

• Upload your file to WeTransfer https://wetransfer.com/ and get a download link

• Complete an entry form at lse.ac.uk/researchcompetition

• Read the terms and conditions as you will be asked on your entry form to agree to them

The deadline for submissions is Monday 27 January 2020

Toolkit: how to write an engaging pitch

Concept

Writing an engaging pitch is your opportunity to share your research with a non-academic audience. It needs to summarise your findings succinctly and be easy-to-read, accessible and convincing for those outside of the research community.

The headline

- Keep the headline short and snappy – anything above 10-12 words is getting too long

- Make your headline attention-grabbing and interesting while keeping it true to your findings. A good headline is crucial as it is the first thing people see – on average, eight out of ten people will read a headline but only two out of ten will read the text below

- Make the most of punctuation in headlines by considering colons or question marks

- Think of key words that people will Google about your topic and try and use them in your headline. Use key words and phrases to communicate and have a look at political/media buzzwords currently in the field of your research.

The pitch

- Start with your key finding/insight and work down from there – outlining other important findings and the context of your research. Use key numbers if they help the argument

- Highlight why your research is relevant to your target audience e.g. media, policy makers.

  Why should the wider public be interested in your findings?

  How does it currently fit with the political or media agenda on the topic?

  Why should they engage with it?

  How will your research make a difference to your target audience?

  How does it currently fit with the political or media agenda on the topic?

- Use every day understandable language – how would you explain your findings to a friend?

  Don't spend time defining your terms whilst making clear how you conducted your research e.g. literature review, focus groups, survey, data analysis

- Be succinct – keep to the word limit of 250 words.

Common errors to avoid

- Copying and pasting your thesis introduction – you are writing this pitch for a non-academic audience and need to tailor it accordingly

- Using jargon or acronyms – some people won't understand what they mean and may lose interest or feel alienated

- Including references – your pitch is just a summary of your findings

- Using long flowery sentences – keep them short and clear.

Examples

Take a look at the LSE Brexit Blog for some examples of **blog posts** that we know are read by a wide audience, and specifically by both policymakers and the media. Think of your pitch as a blog that you are writing to appeal to non-experts where every group who might have an interest in the research could have potential for engagement.

http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/brexit/category/culture/

Take a look at LSE news articles too for further examples to help with putting together your written pitch via
http://www.lse.ac.uk/News/Search-News

These two written pitch case studies give examples of clear, convincing and concise research summaries:

Case study 1
Banning mobile phones improved student GCSE outcomes equivalent to increasing the school year by five days.

The first causal research on the impact of banning mobile phones in schools found that bans improved GCSE outcomes for students on a par with an extra hour of school every week.

The research combined information on mobile phone policies in schools in representative cities with achievement data and characteristics of state-educated students in England. It allowed us to measure average test scores in a school both before and after the introduction of a ban, while taking into account characteristics such as prior achievement that may also predict outcomes.

This data allowed us to estimate the impact of a phone ban by comparing the change in test scores for students when their schools implemented the ban to the change in scores among similar students at schools that didn't introduce a ban.

Student performance increased by 6% of a standard deviation after a ban, the equivalent to an additional hour a week in school, or an increase to the school year of five days. This was all driven by students with low prior achievement measures – students in the top 40% of achievement gained nothing, but those in the bottom 40% gained 12% on average.

Of schools that responded to the phone policy survey, none had a mobile phone policy in 2001. By 2012, 98% did not allow phones.

In schools that do not currently ban mobile phones, educational standards for the most at-risk children may slip as unregulated presence of mobile phones negatively impacts them.

Case study 2
Middle-class children "closer" to parents in challenging economy

The parents of middle-class millennials are providing vital emotional and financial support to their young adult children in a challenging employment and housing environment, new research has shown.

In the study families viewed the achievement of adult independence for millennials as a 'family project', with children needing support as students and as graduates returning home to seek graduate jobs through unpaid internships, or to save money for a deposit in an expensive housing market.

Parents recognised that their millennial offspring required a level of parental support that was not necessary when they were entering adulthood circa 1970.

Despite challenges for parents, the renewed contact between parents and children led to a closer family dynamic, with parents wanting things to be "different" from their parental relationships.

At the micro-level the research shows that intergenerational relationships are more significant than previous studies about intergenerational inequalities suggest, raising concerns about intra-generational inequality.

The research comes against the backdrop of rising intergenerational inequality, with studies finding that baby boomers enjoy a better quality of life than millennials, while making demands on the welfare system.

The experience of baby boomers contrasts with that of their adult children who have faced the introduction of tuition fees in England, resulting in some of the highest levels of student debt in the world. The cost of housing has become increasingly prohibitive, and a 'graduate job' more elusive. Where possible, graduates rely on family resources to provide a buffer against structural and policy changes that have affected their prospects.