

POSTER PRESENTATION ASSIGNMENT

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COURSE:

NATURAL DISASTERS

(ATOC 185/EPSC 185)



SUMMARY

Students summarize and communicate scientific information in a setting that simulates a research conference. In groups of 6, students prepare scientific posters to present at scheduled sessions throughout the semester. Students receive feedback from peers and from the TA, who also assigns a grade.

GOALS

- Give students the opportunity to present research in a formal setting, similar to a real-world conference experience
- Foster students' group management, research, and presentation skills

"The benefit of hands-on assignments like poster presentations is that students gain a much deeper sense of knowledge about the topic than they would through a simple lecture-exam format."

- John Stix

STEPS

- 1 Students receive an exemplar of the poster to demonstrate what they are being asked to do.
- 2 Instructors divide students alphabetically into groups of 6 students each. Students have 3-4 weeks to prepare their posters.
- 3 Students complete a group homework assignment that consists of short answer questions geared towards developing their poster content.
- 4 Students present completed assignments to peers at in-class conference-style poster sessions.
- 5 Each student fills out a peer assessment form and submits it to the TA.

ASSESSMENT

- Students complete this assignment on two different topics. Each assignment is worth 15% of the final grade (for a total of 30%).
- For each assignment, the group's grade is based on the oral presentation (5%), the quality of the poster (5%), and the homework assignment (5%).
- Instructors advise TAs what criteria to look for when assessing the posters and presentations. TAs use a rubric to assess the homework assignment.
- After the presentations, students assess each group member's contribution to the assignment on a hard copy form with a 5-point scale. They submit their completed forms to the TAs.
- The instructors review all grades and make adjustments in the case of inconsistencies among TA assessment approaches, or if 3+ students in a group indicate that a peer did not contribute adequately to the assignment. Students receive feedback on the first assignment that they can use when working on the second assignment.

READY TO TRY IT OUT?

HERE'S SOME ADVICE ...

- Ask TAs not only to grade assignments, but also to mentor students through the process. Strong TA/student relationships improve quality of work.
- Make some lectures available online in order to free up lecture periods for presentation sessions.
- Give groups agency and choice in how they approach the assignment. Not all members have to present, for example, so let students decide what is best for the success of the group.
- Come visit our class to see the presentations if it's hard for you to imagine the logistics of this assignment.

BENEFITS

- The assignment increases students' understanding of course content because the analytical requirements go deeper than exam questions based on lectures.
- The group aspect of the assignment teaches students to manage time and collaborate effectively.
- Students participate in an actual research process (creating and presenting a poster), which gives them more familiarity with situations they may encounter throughout their academic careers.

CHALLENGES

- Coordination of TAs, groups, and the presentation schedule can be daunting. A strong organization system to store relevant information (e.g., an Excel spreadsheet) is helpful.
- Students may not participate fully in their group. Including the peer assessment helps motivate group members to contribute.

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