

PGR Tips on designing academic posters

Graduate Junction, the online network dedicated to early career researchers, are holding an [online poster competition](#). The deadline is the 15th October, so there is still time to enter. This is a great opportunity to raise your profile and get some practice at designing an academic poster (Graduate Junction have their own [list of resources and help](#) on this topic). [Poster presentations](#) are often how you first present at academic conferences, especially in the sciences. It can be an effective way to present research which encourages individual discussion and facilitates networking activity in poster sessions. Most institutions run courses on this topic, in person or e-learning.

Vitae supports some poster competitions so check our website to see whether there's one local to you. Several Hubs have held regional competitions recently; view some examples of entries, including many of a very high standard, at [Vitae YNE Hub poster competition](#).

Imagine the environment your poster will be viewed in

There is invariably competition for attention, so you need to capture your audience's attention. If an abstract is published, make sure it is exciting as this will target people to your poster. Eye catching images can help, but only if the text then engages the reader.

Design your poster as a visual presentation of information

Do not simply reproduce a written paper in poster format. Consider overall design, colour schemes and the font. Give some thought to the order it will be read in. The balance between text and graphics will be different from a written paper and there is more pressure on the wordcount:

Limit the number of words

The [excellent online tutorial](#) from the University of Leicester on designing academic posters has examples of how posters look using 300 and 500 words. Clearly less is more..... Decide what to highlight and leave out by considering the likely level of specialist knowledge for the audience and what they will want to know.

Pay particular attention to images

Of course a picture paints a thousand words. It is worth thinking about the format of any [charts](#), making sure you keep them simple and big. Resolution is important, for printed posters this needs to be 300 pixels per square inch (a lot of images online are only 72 pixels per square inch). Allow plenty of room for pictures.

Allow yourself plenty of time

It takes time to plan, write and check the text and the images. Also allow yourself plenty of time for the process of having it printed and consider having it laminated.

It's not just about the poster

Make sure you are prepared for a poster session at a conference. Know the time and place of your session, any requirements such as Velcro? Prepare for likely questions you will be asked. Consider preparing business cards or hand outs.