

Conference Abstracts and Proposals

Note: This document should only be used as a reference and should not replace assignment guidelines.

An **abstract** summarizes a paper that has already been written, while a **proposal** details the projected argument and scope of a paper or presentation that you will write. However, both function in essentially the same way. Both abstracts and proposals should

- Summarize the main points of the paper or presentation you want to present, focusing on your conclusions or claims, and, if applicable, your method and/or population
- Persuade the conference committee that your presentation fits the conference theme and community
- Demonstrate how you are intervening in or expanding the “academic conversation” surrounding your topic, without citing too many other authors
- Follow the conventions of academic writing and especially of your discipline
- Generally run about 250 words, though length may vary by discipline
- Include a presentation title and your contact information

Sample abstracts and proposals are included here as examples of concise and persuasive writing for conference committees. Conventions vary by discipline, however, so be sure to seek feedback from experts in your field before submitting your work.

Example Abstract

Fluvial Arsenic in Utah Valley and the Wasatch Range, Utah: Analogy with the Ganges River Floodplain and the Himalayan Range

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Elevated arsenic in groundwater in the floodplain of the Ganges River has been well-documented over the last fifteen years. Measurements of arsenic in the Himalayan Range and Ganges floodplain found that dissolved arsenic was elevated in the Himalayan Range, but fell to undetectable in the Ganges floodplain. The sudden change in dissolved arsenic across the Himalayan-Ganges boundary was accounted for by the residence time in the vicinity of a sediment particle necessary for the large multivalent arsenate ion to adsorb onto sediment, so that arsenate can adsorb onto sediment only when the stream velocity drops.

The result that dissolved arsenic falls to undetectable levels as a river passes from a steep mountain range onto a flat valley floor is so startling and has such major implications for understanding arsenic mobilization and its implications for global public health that the results were tested in the analogous geological environments of the Wasatch Range and Utah Valley. Twenty samples from Provo River and American Fork River were collected and analyzed for As and associated transition elements. In the Wasatch Range, As was relatively low (0.011-0.095 mg/L). In Utah Valley, fine-particles derived from historic mine tailings in the watersheds of Provo and American Fork Rivers have progressively migrated downstream and contributed significant amounts of As to both rivers, resulting in a pronounced spike in As (0.214-0.436 mg/L) at the boundary between the Wasatch Range and Utah Valley. Within 5 km of Utah Lake, As concentration in Provo River drops substantially to 0.048-0.052 mg/L, where flow velocity was sufficiently decreased to allow for sorption and removal of fluvial As.

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Example Proposal

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Tutoring the Unexpected

Since transitioning to a university in 2008, Utah Valley University has developed three graduate programs. Because of this addition, our Writing Center has developed the Graduate Writing Center to specifically target upper division students and those preparing for graduate school. One service we have constructed for these students is the GRE workshop. While other GRE workshops prepare students for all three components of the GRE, our workshop focuses on the writing portion. We help students practice brainstorming and organizing the Issue and Argumentative essays effectively. We also teach them how to identify key terms and analyze prompts for specific details and allow students to practice writing prompts in a simulated testing environment.

Schmidt (1994), Schmidt et al. (1993), Nelson and Evertz (2001) explain that there is evidence that students require a certain level of expertise from their tutors to experience improvement academically. While we as undergraduate tutors have not taken the GRE test, we do have a reasonable amount of knowledge about the writing concepts that the analytical writing portion of the test requires. Students who attended the workshop found our instruction beneficial. Furthermore, the articles suggest that a well-structured learning environment can make up for tutors lacking in a particular area. The GRE workshop incorporated carefully designed outlines and preparation material to further assist the students in attendance. Therefore, we will argue that a GRE workshop taught by peer tutors who have not taken the GRE can still effectively help students prepare for the test because tutors have general knowledge of skills required, and the workshop is taught using directive materials that can make up the difference in experience.