



URS Presenter Handbook

Office of Undergraduate Research

Shackouls Honors College

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About the Undergraduate Research Symposium and Showcase (URS)

The Shackouls Honors College hosts Mississippi State University's Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium in April and its Summer Undergraduate Research Showcase in August. Many undergraduates participate in faculty-guided research and creative activity throughout the year, and all undergraduates in every program of study, not just honors students, involved in research and creative works are invited and encouraged to participate in the URS. Visiting students to MSU are also encouraged to present.

The **Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium** provides the opportunity for students to construct research and competitively present those research findings through poster and oral presentation sessions to a group of judges. All undergraduate participants are eligible to win gift card prizes valuing up to \$100. Additional gift card and cash prizes are available for other sub-competitions held during the Symposium by various sponsoring departments.

The **Summer Undergraduate Research Showcase** is an event where students from across the university communicate original research and scholarly work in the form of poster and oral presentations. The Showcase provides an important professional development opportunity for students and is commonly used to satisfy course and capstone requirements. The summer event is a showcase only and projects are not presented to judges for prizes.

How to Submit an Abstract

In order to participate in the URS, you must submit an abstract to register for the event. The submission form can be found [here](#). Please read the following instructions carefully to ensure a successful submission.

Choose a Project Category

In the submission form, you will need to classify your poster or oral presentation/performance as belonging to one of the four categories:

1. Biological Sciences and Engineering (Poster only)
2. Physical Sciences and Engineering (Poster only)
3. Social Sciences (Poster only)
4. Humanities and Arts (Poster or Oral Presentation/Performance)

It will be up to you and your faculty mentor to properly classify the project. Someone from the Shackouls Honors College may contact you and your mentor if your project seems misclassified. Please pay close attention to the date and time of your project category as different categories may be presenting at different times.

Choose a Presentation Format

The following project categories are poster only with no access to technology*:

- Biological Sciences and Engineering
- Physical Sciences and Engineering
- Social Sciences

Those participating in the Humanities and Arts project category may choose to present in any of the three formats: poster, oral presentation, or performance. Oral presentation and performances will have access to technology.

*On the submission form, if a student is listed in any subject area other than Humanities and Arts and selects “Oral Presentation” or “Performance”, his or her project will be shifted to poster format, and the student will be notified by someone from the Shackouls Honors College. If the student is listed in a poster only category and requests technology, the student will be notified by someone from the Shackouls Honors College and the request for technology access will not be approved.

Write your Abstract

An abstract is a summary of your research, usually in one paragraph of 300 words or less, that includes: 1) the overall purpose of the study and the research problem(s); 2) the basic design of the study; 3) major findings or trends as a result of your analysis; and 4) a brief summary of your interpretations and conclusions.

- Abstracts must be no longer than 300 words in length.
- [View examples from the past symposium](#) as a useful resource for writing an abstract.

Your abstract will be published in the URS Abstract Booklet; therefore, you should submit a high-quality version [approved by your faculty mentor](#).

It is your responsibility to check with your research mentor as to whether or not your research project is restricted (i.e. classified, export controlled (EAR/ITAR), proprietary or other restriction). If your mentor identifies your research as restricted, the release of any information to the public must be coordinated with the Office of Research Security to obtain required authorizations before release. Severe penalties, both civil and criminal, may result if restricted information is made public without the proper authorizations.

Complete the Submission Form

Once you have completed the above steps, you are ready to submit your abstract to participate in the URS. Please fill out all of the information in the [submission form](#), paying close attention to detail as some of this information will be published in the URS Abstract Booklet.

Upon completion of the entry form, you and your listed faculty mentor will receive an email acknowledgement of your registration. If you do not receive a confirmation email, you are not registered.

Group Projects

Group projects are an integral part of research and are encouraged. **However, there should be only one designated principal presenter during the event.** The principal presenter should complete the submission form with his or her name and information and can list any co-authors and collaborators in the submission form. Names of any co-authors and/or collaborators will appear in the Abstract Booklet.

SPRING SPYMIOSIUM ONLY: Only the principal presenter can present and answer questions from the judges. Co-authors may assist the principal presenter when presenting to the public audience. Prizes will be awarded to the principal presenter only.

Groups are encouraged to submit individual abstracts and present different posters or give separate oral presentations for the same research. A large part of the project evaluation is being able to answer questions showing a deep understanding of the work that has been done.

Preparing your Presentation

After submitting an abstract, you will need to prepare your poster or presentation for the URS. Below are guidelines and tools to help you create your products.

Preparing a Poster

On the day of the symposium you should bring your printed poster and foam board to mount it on. Your poster should be:

- a maximum of 36 inches tall x 48 inches wide.
- attached to a foam board* and ready to display on the provided easels.

***Foam board backing should be no larger than 36 inches tall x 48 inches wide. If your poster or board exceeds the maximum size requirement, you may be prohibited from displaying your project.** PLEASE NOTE: The Shackouls Honors College does not provide foam boards or clips/tacks for mounting posters. You should check with your mentor or department for reusable boards or purchase a foam board at places such as the Chalet or other framing shop. You do not need to pay for mounting, you may clip or tack your poster to the foam board.

Design help online:

- PowerPoint (Microsoft)
[Webex tutorial](#)
- Publisher (Microsoft)
[Printable instructional handout](#)
[YouTube tutorial](#)
- InDesign (Adobe)
[Printable instructional handout](#)
[YouTube tutorial](#)

Design help workshops:

- [MSU Library Poster Design Workshop](#)

The library has workshops (at the library and on-line) to help you learn the basics of poster design. Type “poster” in the calendar search bar to filter the workshops.

Printing your poster:

The best on-campus option (and usually the most cost-effective) for wide-format poster printing is the [Mitchell Memorial Library](#).

- **Submit your design to be printed no less than 3 business days before you need it. It is always best practice to call and confirm the time needed for printing with the vendor.**
- Library printing starts at approximately \$7.50 per linear foot. Additional locations near campus include:
 - Prographics
 - Copy Cow

- Chalet

Preparing for an Oral Presentation or Performance

Your presentation or performance:

- Should be ten minutes in length. There will be an additional three minutes for Q&A.
- Should be geared toward a non-field expert.
- May be accompanied by a visual slide show and/or handout for the audience.
- May include a live demonstration or performance.

The following technology will be available:

- A computer with access to the internet and Microsoft Office (Word, PowerPoint, etc.)
- A projector and screen
- A podium microphone
- A clicker

You must submit a copy of your presentation (PowerPoint) at least 3 business days before the event through a link emailed to you by the Shackouls Honors College. This email link will be sent to you after the submission deadline has passed. If you plan to use PowerPoint, it is advised to test your slide show before the presentation day. You may not use your own laptop.

Guidelines for the Day of the URS

Check In your Project

When you arrive to the event, you will need to check in before setting up your poster or reporting to the presentation room. Check in tables will be located at the front entrance of the event space. All participants will receive an email with further instructions for check in at least a week before the event. Projects will be listed under the name of the principal presenter (individual whose name was on the submission form). Poster presenters should arrive at their scheduled check in time and oral presenters/performers should arrive at least 20 minutes before their scheduled presentation time.

Poster Presentations

Once you have checked in, you may set up your poster. The easels will be numbered, and your easel number, otherwise known as your project number, is located on your name tag and in the abstract booklet. Easel number sheets will be placed underneath the easels. **Please pin the numbered sheet to your poster and make sure it is visible during the event.** Remember that, while easels are provided, **we do not provide backing boards (foam boards)** for your posters or clips/tacks.

You should be prepared with a two to three minute summary for visitors and judges using your poster as a visual guide. Additional questions may be asked.

Once the poster session comes to a close, you are responsible for removing your poster and foam board from the easel. The Honors College is not responsible for any forgotten, lost, or stolen materials and personal belongings.

Oral Presentations

The number on your name tag will be your project number. A presentation schedule will be emailed to you prior to the event, and your presentation time will also be listed in the Abstract Booklet. Once you have checked in, you may go to the scheduled presentation room. Be mindful of the schedule and only enter and exit the presentation room between presentations to not disturb other presenters. You will give your oral presentation at the scheduled time you have been assigned.

A room assistant will be assigned to chair the presentation session. This individual will be responsible for introducing you and assisting with inviting audience questions after your presentation has concluded. The room assistant will also be responsible for helping you stay on schedule and will signal you by using a sign when there are 5 minutes left and 1 minute left in your presentation time.

A trained ITS person will be available in the presentation room if needed and assist in pulling up your visual presentation on the computer/projector.

Once your presentation and Q&A has concluded, you may leave the presentation room. The Honors College is not responsible for any forgotten, lost, or stolen materials and personal belongings.

General Symposium Etiquette

As participants, you are encouraged to:

- Wear professional/business attire.
- Come prepared, which means:
 - poster presenters should arrive with their posters **and foam boards** during the scheduled check in time to set up
 - oral presenters and performers, should arrive to the presentation room at least 20 minutes before their scheduled presentation time. Please wait until students are finished delivering presentations (or are in between presentations) before entering or exiting a presentation room.
- (Poster presenters) stay with your poster for the entirety of the session.
- Visit the event space prior to the event in order to get a feel for the building
- Review the map and schedule in the Abstract Booklet prior to the event.
- Notify Dr. Anastasia Elder at the Shackouls Honors College at aelder@honors.msstate.edu in a timely manner if you are unable to present for any reason.

Parking

All MSU students, staff, and faculty should park in their designated permit area. Guests and visitors to MSU can view parking options provided by Parking & Transit Services [here](#).

Judging Procedures (Spring Symposium Only)

Judging takes place during the Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium only. Each project will be assigned 2-4 judges, and presenters will not be notified of the number of judges assigned to their project. Judges will visit posters for the entirety of the judging session. Each judge is given a rubric to assign the projects he/she reviews a total score based upon that rubric (X/100). The Judges' scores will be z-scored against themselves and the normalized scores for each participant will then be averaged to develop a ranking. The ranking will be used to determine the top rated projects for each category:

Biological Sciences and Engineering, Physical Sciences and Engineering, Social Sciences, and Humanities and Arts. Students may view a sample judging rubric from past symposia. This may not be the final rubric but is very similar.

Symposium Poster Scoring Rubric

Judges: Use this rubric to help you assign numeric scores for evaluating the posters. It is helpful for you to use a range of numbers for z-scores to be calculated and to distinguish between projects in determining winners.

Quality of Research (50 possible points)

Excellent (40-50 points)

Scholarly significance readily apparent • Robust research design • Rigorous methodology • Analysis of data/texts is compelling • Results/conclusions are sound • Incorporates the ideas of other scholars • Makes an original contribution

Good (30-39 points)

Rationale, methods, analysis and/or results are sound but may need clarification • Significant but not necessarily original/inventive • Adequate research design • Some reference to other scholars

Developing (0-29 points)

More than one element (rationale, methods, analysis, results) missing or incomplete • Poor research design • Little or no connection to ideas of other scholars • Ideas poorly developed • Lacks scholarly significance

Poster Design (20 possible points)

Excellent (16-20 points)

Eye-catching • Conveys information effectively • Appropriate use of visual aids (pictures, charts and graphs) • Easy to read and font sizes are appropriate • Title is clear • All elements clearly labeled • Not too much text

Good (12-15 points)

Effective layout, but not as eye-catching as some • Most design elements used effectively • Legible though sometimes hard to read • Crucial elements labeled • A few proofreading/printing errors

Developing (0-11 points)

Difficult to read • Does not catch the eye • Layout not well-matched to content • Proofreading errors • Crammed with text • Small fonts • Few, or no, visual aids

Communication (30 possible points)

Excellent (24-30 points)

Communication and/or interaction is engaging and concise • Student offers strong answers to questions • communication adds significant value to the poster • Student is prepared & knowledgeable

Good (18-23 points)

Some difficulties with communication • Willing to answer questions, though some answers unclear • communication adds some value to the poster • Student is adequately prepared

Developing (0-17 points)

Needs to work on communication skills • Does not answer questions well • communication adds little value to the poster • Unprepared

Total Points (100 possible points)

Symposium Oral Presentations/Performances Scoring Rubric

Judges: Use this rubric to help you assign numeric scores for evaluating the posters. It is helpful for you to use a range of numbers for z-scores to be calculated and to distinguish between projects in determining winners.

Quality of Research (60 possible points)

Excellent (48-60 points)

Scholarly significance readily apparent • Robust research design • Rigorous methodology • Analysis of data/texts is compelling • Results/conclusions are sound • Incorporates the ideas of other scholars • Makes an original contribution

Good (36-47 points)

Rationale, methods, analysis and/or results are sound but may need clarification • Significant but not necessarily original/inventive • Adequate research design • Some reference to other scholars

Developing (0-35 points)

More than one element (rationale, methods, analysis, results) missing or incomplete • Poor research design • Little or no connection to ideas of other scholars • Ideas poorly developed • Lacks scholarly significance

Oral Presentation (40 possible points)

Excellent (32-40 points)

Oral presentation is engaging and concise • Student is approachable and professional • Offers strong answers to questions • The presentation skills of the speaker clarified the topic significantly • Speaker is fully prepared

Good (24-31 points)

Some difficulties with delivery • Willing to answer questions, though some answers unclear • The presentation skills of the speaker clarified the topic adequately • Speaker is adequately prepared

Developing (0-23 points)

Needs to work on presentation skills • Does not answer questions well • The presentation skills of the speaker clarified the topic poorly • Unprepared

Total Points (100 possible points)

Spring Symposium Sub-Competitions

For the Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium, all student abstract submissions are automatically entered to compete in the main Symposium competition, but students also have the opportunity to enter to compete in other sub-competitions sponsored by various departments and colleges across campus. A list of the Symposium sub-competitions can be found online.

Presenters who wish to be considered to compete in a sub-competition should designate that in their abstract submission form. After the abstract submission deadline, students selected for sub-competitions will be notified of the separate rules and procedures by hosting department or college. Judging for most of the sub-competitions will take place in conjunction with the main symposium event with a separate judge or set of judges. Some sub-competitions may have a separate scheduled presentation time.

Symposium Awards

Undergraduate students who place in the Symposium and other event competitions will be announced tentatively by the end of the following week through an official university press release and on the Honors College website (honors.msstate.edu). Undergraduate students who place in the Symposium and/or other event competitions will be honored at the Shackouls Honors College Awards Ceremony which is typically held on a Saturday in early May prior to the university's graduation. Place winners, faculty mentors, and their guests are invited to attend.