



The British Association of
Prosthetics and Orthotics



For the prosthetic and orthotic workforce
**A guide to preparing abstracts
and presenting at conferences**

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Foreword by Dr Lisa Ledger

Assistant Director - Allied Health Professions.
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The prosthetic and orthotic profession is built on innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to improving the lives of the people they serve. Research plays a vital role in this mission. By contributing to and engaging with research, the prosthetic and orthotic workforce not only help advance clinical knowledge and improve patient outcomes but also enrich their own professional development and career experiences.

Supporting the workforce to share insights, evaluate practice, and present new ideas is essential if they are to continue strengthening the impact of their field. Writing abstracts and presenting at conferences are valuable ways to take part in this process, whether you are new to research or building on existing experience.

This guide is an excellent resource for anyone wishing to learn more about how to prepare and submit an abstract, develop engaging presentations, and build confidence in communicating research. It encourages participation at all levels, ensuring that the prosthetic and orthotic community continues to grow as a vibrant, evidence-informed profession.

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Executive summary

This guide has been developed to support the prosthetic and orthotic workforce to engage with research, and to share research and projects effectively at professional meetings and conferences. It provides practical information and advice about preparing abstracts and delivering oral presentations. While it is not specific to BAPO conference guidelines, the guidance will serve you well when preparing for a variety of national and international conferences.

We encourage staff and learners at all levels to get involved with research, service evaluation, and quality improvement projects; this includes prosthetists, orthotists, technicians, support workers, students, and apprentices. BAPO is committed to providing an equitable platform for everybody to submit abstracts and present their work at our conferences. We are especially keen to support educators to share their work, recognising the importance of developing the educator workforce within the prosthetic and orthotic profession. To reflect this, every BAPO conference includes a dedicated space for an educator presentation.



Introduction

Oral presentations are central to academic and clinical conferences. They provide opportunities to disseminate new research, audit results, service improvements and innovative practice. Those working in the prosthetics and orthotics profession often underestimate how valuable their experiences and insights are to the wider field. Sharing this knowledge contributes to improving services, strengthening the evidence base, raising the profile of our profession, and ultimately, improving patient care.

Engaging in research has been shown to improve not only the skills and confidence of individual clinicians but also the quality of care delivered by services and outcomes for patients. Research-active hospitals have been associated with enhanced patient feedback, better information provision, and overall improved institutional performance¹. Organisations and clinicians who participate in research tend to demonstrate better healthcare performance, including improved processes and, in some cases, patient outcomes².

In order to present your work at conferences and professional meetings, you will often have to submit an abstract beforehand, which summarises the work that you and your team have undertaken. The prospect of condensing a project or research study into a limited abstract can be daunting. Knowing how to provide the correct level of detail in a restricted number of words is a skill which can be challenging, even for experienced researchers.

This guide aims to support members of the prosthetic and orthotic workforce at all levels to write a strong abstract to showcase their work, and to support the next stage of undertaking an oral presentation.

Someone once gave me the catchphrase: 'Hate it? Change it.' This stuck with me, as I believe that we have a responsibility to make change for the better in our different roles, but I also believe this is empowering for us as professionals. We can't necessarily change everything, but we have professional knowledge and skills that we can use in creative ways. Research can sound off-putting – but if you work in teams, playing to your strengths, you can help to change things through research. It can be a form of advocating for people and the devices or services they need. Research can and should then lead to innovation, which leads to more research – and better solutions for the people we care about.

Professor Cathy Bulley

Co-Director Centre for Health, Activity and Rehabilitation Research (CHEARR).
Head of the Graduate School, Queen Margaret University. Chair QMU
Enterprise and Innovation Network. Co-Director of QMU spin-out social
enterprise: Health Design Collective CIC. Division of Dietetics, Nutrition,
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- 1 Jonker, L., Fisher, S.J. and Badgett, R.G., 2022. Hospital clinical research activity, rather than staff motivational engagement, significantly links effective staff communication and favourable patient feedback; a cross-sectional study. *Journal of healthcare quality research*, 37(1), pp.44-51.
- 2 Boaz, A., Hanney, S., Jones, T. and Soper, B., 2015. Does the engagement of clinicians and organisations in research improve healthcare performance: a three-stage review. *BMJ open*, 5(12), p.e009415.

The benefits of submitting abstracts and presenting your work

Submitting abstracts and giving oral presentations at conferences offer numerous benefits for individuals and services in the prosthetics and orthotics profession. Abstracts provide a concise summary of your work and are often published in conference proceedings, giving professional recognition and enhancing academic visibility.

Oral presentations allow you to showcase your findings to a wide audience, highlighting their relevance and originality, while also providing immediate feedback that can strengthen your work and stimulate new ideas. Conferences also provide excellent networking opportunities, enabling delegates to build connections with peers, mentors and potential collaborators, which can lead to new research or service development projects.

Presenting your work helps to refine communication skills, develop confidence in public speaking, and foster leadership qualities that are valuable both within clinical practice and in broader professional contexts. Active participation also signals a commitment to professional growth, contributing to continuous professional development (CPD) portfolios and career progression.

Furthermore, many presenters find that conference presentations act as a springboard to publication, either through extended abstracts, journal special issues linked to conferences, or by refining their presentation into a full manuscript.

- ➔ **Professional recognition:** Abstracts are often published in proceedings, contributing to academic visibility.
- ➔ **Skill development:** Presenting builds confidence, communication skills, and leadership qualities.
- ➔ **Networking:** Conferences connect you with peers, mentors, and collaborators.
- ➔ **Career progression:** Presentations strengthen CPD portfolios and enhance professional credibility.
- ➔ **Pathway to publication:** Many presentations develop into journal papers, poster articles, or extended abstracts.



Employer support to engage with research

Employers play a pivotal role in fostering a research-active prosthetics and orthotics workforce. When organisations encourage and support staff to participate in research, they help build a culture of curiosity, evidence-based practice, and continual improvement. Providing protected time, access to training, and opportunities to collaborate with academic or clinical partners empowers practitioners to develop skills that directly enhance patient care³. Employer endorsement also signals that research is valued, boosting staff confidence and motivation. Ultimately, workplaces that invest in research engagement not only strengthen professional development but also have the potential to drive innovation and elevate the quality and impact of P&O services^{4,5}.

Prosthetists and Orthotists bring unique expertise that is vital for advancing patient care. Engaging in research by writing abstracts, presenting at conferences, and contributing to studies strengthens the profession and ensures that innovation continues to improve patient outcomes. Through my work with BAPO, I have seen first-hand how much value the UK, P and O community brings when we share our insights and evidence. Every practitioner's voice and experience matter. Your skills are not only valued but also essential in shaping the future of rehabilitation and assistive technology.

Professor Nachi Chockalingam

Director of Research and Innovation, Reading Central PCN



3 Jonker, L., Fisher, S.J. and Dagnan, D., 2020. Patients admitted to more research-active hospitals have more confidence in staff and are better informed about their condition and medication: Results from a retrospective cross-sectional study. *Journal of evaluation in clinical practice*, 26(1), pp.203-208.

4 Peckham, S., Zhang, W., Eida, T., Hashem, F. and Kendall, S., 2023. Research engagement and research capacity building: a priority for healthcare organisations in the UK. *Journal of health organization and management*, 37(3), pp.343-359."

5 Newington, L., Alexander, C.M. and Wells, M., 2021. Impacts of clinical academic activity: qualitative interviews with healthcare managers and research-active nurses, midwives, allied health professionals and pharmacists. *BMJ open*, 11(10), p.e050679."



Writing a strong abstract

WHAT MAKES A GOOD ABSTRACT?

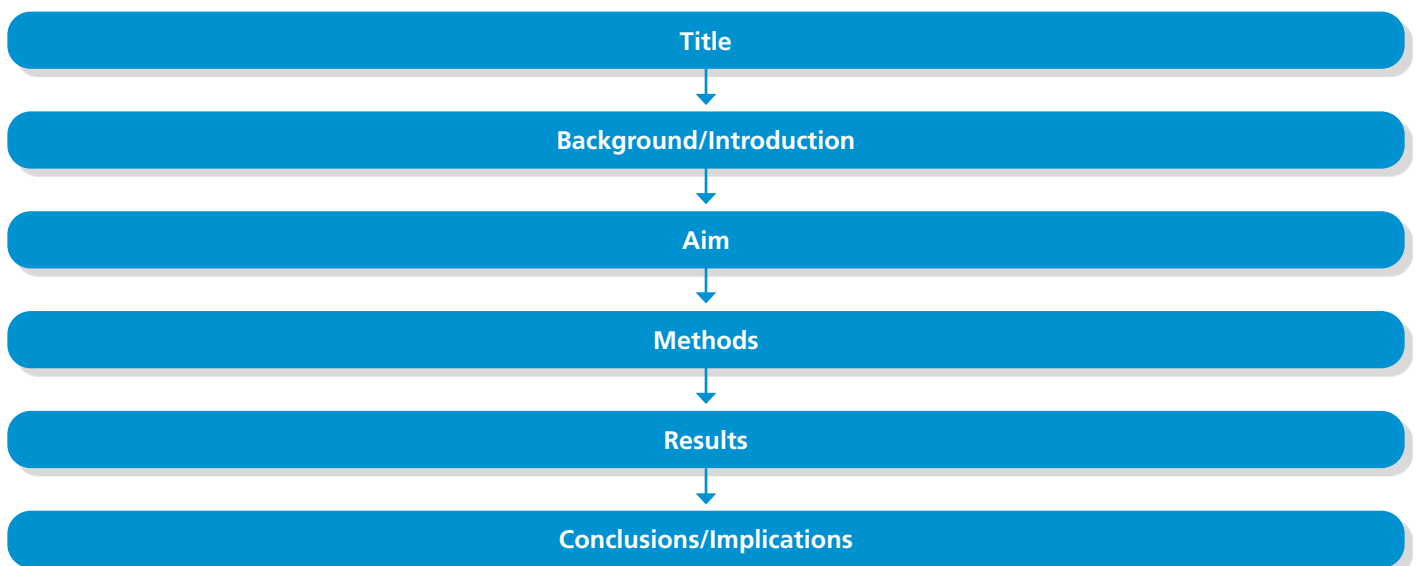
A good abstract is concise, clear and convincing. It should summarise your project, highlight its relevance, and leave readers wanting to know more.

Although the structure of an abstract will often have standard headings, the information included within those headings may differ depending on the type of project, study or research trial you are presenting. The following sections demonstrate the standard headings used commonly for conference abstracts, followed with more detailed information about each heading with examples of the information you may wish to include for different types of studies.

STRUCTURE AND WORD LIMITS

Most conferences specify a strict word limit for abstracts, typically between 250–350 words. This means you need to be concise and focused. Word counts are often checked automatically by submission portals and exceeding them may result in your abstract being rejected outright. Therefore, it is important to prioritise essential information and avoid unnecessary detail.

A typical abstract structure is as follows:



With the increasing availability of technology and the growing desire to improve patient outcomes, applied prosthetic and orthotic research is needed at the forefront of the discipline. Ecological, in-the-field research impacts both clinical and academic practice, driving the advancement of the P&O profession and ultimately improving patients' confidence and mobility.

Professor Richard Jones

Prosthetics and Orthotics Programme – University of Salford



Think of your abstract like the trailer for a film - it gives just enough information to catch interest and make people want to see the whole story.

The specific detail that you include in the abstract will depend on the subject, and the type of project, but the following sections provide more detail on areas you may wish to include for each section.

TITLE

The title is the first thing reviewers and delegates will see. It should be **short, clear and informative**, reflecting both the content and the importance of your work. Avoid vague titles such as "An audit of orthotic practice"; instead, use something more precise, e.g. "Improving patient satisfaction with new orthotic service pathways: results from a multi-centre audit".

- For research studies:** highlight the population, intervention, or outcome, e.g. "The effect of energy-storing prosthetic feet on gait efficiency in transfemoral amputees: a pilot study".
- For service improvement:** emphasise the change and its impact, e.g. "Reducing waiting times in prosthetic repair clinics through technician-led triage".
- For case studies:** make it engaging and specific, e.g. "Use of 3D-printed ankle-foot orthoses in complex paediatric neuromuscular conditions: a case report".

BACKGROUND / INTRODUCTION

This section sets the scene. In just a few sentences, explain **why your work is important** and what problem it addresses. The background should provide enough context to show reviewers that your work is relevant and timely.

- For research studies:** briefly summarise the knowledge gap, e.g. "Despite widespread use of microprocessor-controlled knees, evidence of their impact on daily activity levels in elderly users is limited."
- For audits:** outline the standard or guideline you are measuring against, e.g. "NHS England recommends a maximum 6-week wait for orthotic provision, but local data suggest this target is often not met."
- For service improvements:** highlight the driver for change, e.g. patient feedback, staff challenges, or policy priorities.
- For case studies:** explain why the individual case is unusual or instructive.

AIM

The aim should be **clear, specific and achievable**. Avoid vague statements like "to improve patient care." Instead, focus on what you intended to investigate, measure, or change.

- Research studies:** "To compare gait symmetry in unilateral transtibial amputees using two different prosthetic foot designs."
- Audits:** "To measure compliance with NICE guidelines on diabetic foot risk assessment in an orthotic outpatient service."
- Service improvement:** "To reduce appointment waiting times by 20% within six months."
- Case studies:** "To describe the management and outcomes of a patient with bilateral limb difference using hybrid orthotic-prosthetic solutions."

METHODS

This is often the longest section of an abstract, but space is limited, so it must be concise. Explain **what you did, how you did it, and who was involved**.

- Research studies:** include study design (e.g. randomised trial, observational study, pilot), participant numbers, and key methods of data collection/analysis. Avoid unnecessary technical detail, but ensure the design is clear enough for reviewers to judge validity.
- Audits:** describe data sources, time period, and sample size, and specify the standard used for comparison.
- Service improvement:** outline the intervention (e.g. introducing new equipment, training, or pathways) and describe how change was measured (e.g. before-and-after analysis, Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles).
- Case studies:** describe the patient, intervention, and outcome measures clearly but concisely.

RESULTS

The results are the **most critical part** of your abstract. They should be specific, measurable, and linked to your aim. Avoid vague terms like “improved significantly” without evidence. If statistical analysis was performed, include the key numbers.

- Research studies:** present the most important findings with figures (e.g. mean values, confidence intervals, p-values) but avoid overwhelming detail.
- Audits:** report the level of compliance with standards and highlight key areas of concern.
- Service improvements:** present before-and-after data, preferably with numbers or percentages that demonstrate impact.
- Case studies:** describe the outcome in terms of function, satisfaction, or clinical relevance.

If your project is ongoing, you may be allowed to present preliminary findings but avoid abstracts that only state “results will be available by the conference.”

CONCLUSIONS / IMPLICATIONS

This section should link your results to **real-world practice**. Keep it focused: what do your findings mean for clinicians, patients, or services? What should change as a result?

- Research studies:** highlight implications for clinical guidelines, patient outcomes, future research, and any important limitations of the work.
- Audits:** describe what actions are needed to address areas of non-compliance.
- Service improvements:** explain how the change improved practice and whether it could be replicated elsewhere.
- Case studies:** highlight the learning points or messages that others can apply to their own practice.

TOP TIP

Avoid over-stating your conclusions. A small audit or case study cannot claim to “transform national practice,” but it can highlight important lessons or areas for further work.



While some conferences will give you specific word counts for each section, others won't. It's important to include all key parts – Title, Background/Introduction, Aim, Methods, Results, and Conclusions/Implications – so the abstract tells the full story clearly and effectively. It's easy to focus on the results, but without outlining the methods properly, readers won't know how those results were actually achieved.

TIPS FOR CLARITY AND IMPACT

- Scientific writing should be objective and formal, so avoid using the first person (e.g., 'I' or 'we') in your abstract.
- Avoid jargon – write as if explaining to an informed but non-specialist colleague.
- Focus on what is new or important.
- Use active language and short sentences.
- Proofread carefully and ask a colleague to review before submission.
- Tailor the abstract to the conference theme if possible.

TOP TIP

Stick to the word limit. Abstracts which exceed the word limit may be automatically rejected or cropped.



Preparing your oral presentation

So, you've submitted your abstract and been selected to give an oral presentation - what happens next? An oral presentation provides the opportunity to expand on your abstract and present your project in greater depth. However, you will not have time to include every detail, so it is important to be selective. Focus on the most important findings and messages and consider how they align with the overall theme of the conference or meeting. Highlight aspects of your work that showcase innovation, clinical relevance, or impact on patient care.

STRUCTURING YOUR TALK

- **Follow the guidelines:** Conferences may specify a format or presentation package (for example, Microsoft PowerPoint). Always check the requirements carefully.
- **Start strong:** Introduce yourself, your role, and why the topic is important.
- **Present aims and methods simply:** Keep these sections concise and easy to follow.
- **Focus on key results:** Select only the most relevant findings to share; avoid overwhelming your audience with too much data.
- **End with impact:** Conclude with two or three clear take-home messages that you want the audience to remember.

TOP TIP

Record yourself to check pace and clarity.



DESIGNING EFFECTIVE SLIDES

- Keep slides clean and uncluttered - ideally one key point per slide.
- Use large fonts, strong contrast, and minimal text for readability.
- Graphs, figures, and images are often more engaging than large tables of numbers.
- Avoid reading directly from your slides - use them as prompts to guide your spoken presentation.

TOP TIP

Practice your presentation in front of a family member, friend, or colleague - someone you trust to give you honest and constructive feedback. Practice makes perfect!



TIMING AND DELIVERY

- Confirm your allocated time (typically 10 to 15 minutes) and practise to ensure you stay within the limit.
- Speak clearly and at a steady pace, pausing to emphasise important points.
- Rehearse aloud several times, ideally in front of colleagues, to refine your delivery and build confidence.
- Consider recording yourself to review pace, clarity, and body language.

TOP TIP



If your abstract isn't selected for an oral presentation, you may be offered the opportunity to present a poster instead. Be sure to check out BAPO's "Guide For Preparing and Presenting Posters at Conferences" which can be found in the resources section of the BAPO website!

TOP TIP



If your abstract is not selected, ask for feedback. Understanding the reasons will help you strengthen future submissions. Also, if your abstract isn't selected, it doesn't mean it's not good quality – conferences often have limited presentation slots, and other submissions may have been more closely aligned with the specific theme or focus of that event. Try again – your work is still valuable and worth sharing.



Presenting at conferences

The day is here, and you're ready to present your work. It's completely normal to feel nervous - many presenters do - but embrace the moment. This is your opportunity to showcase the important work you've been developing over months or even years. Your preparation and practice will serve you well, not only during your presentation but also in the discussions and networking that follow.

HANDLING NERVES

Feeling anxious before presenting is natural, especially in front of peers and professionals. Here are some strategies to help manage nerves and boost confidence:

- **Breathe and pause:** Take a few deep breaths before you begin. Pausing briefly before speaking can help you settle and project calmness.
- **Focus on your message:** Shift your attention from yourself to the value of your work. You're there to share something meaningful.
- **Visualise success:** Imagine yourself presenting confidently and receiving positive feedback.
- **Use positive self-talk:** Remind yourself that you're prepared and capable.
- **Connect with the audience:** Make eye contact, smile, and look for friendly faces - this can help you feel more grounded.
- **Accept imperfection:** Minor mistakes are normal and rarely noticed by the audience. Keep going and stay composed.

HANDLING QUESTIONS

After your presentation, you may be asked questions by the audience or panel. This is a chance to clarify, expand, and demonstrate your expertise.

- **Listen carefully:** Make sure you understand the question before responding. It's okay to ask for clarification.
- **Be honest:** If you don't know the answer, it's perfectly acceptable to say so. Offer to follow up or suggest where the answer might be found.
- **Stay concise:** Keep your responses focused and relevant. Avoid going off-topic or over-explaining.
- **Stay professional:** Even if a question feels challenging, respond respectfully and confidently. Delegates are often asking questions to learn more not to try and catch you out.

MAXIMISING ENGAGEMENT AND NETWORKING

Conferences are not just about presenting - they're also about connecting with others in your field. Engaging with fellow attendees can lead to collaborations, mentorship, and new opportunities.

- **Introduce yourself:** Take the initiative to speak with other presenters and delegates. A simple "Hello, I really enjoyed your talk" can open a conversation.
- **Share your work:** Consider including a QR code on your final slide linking to your abstract, poster, or contact details.
- **Be approachable:** Enthusiasm and openness make a lasting impression. People remember those who are passionate and friendly.
- **Follow up:** If you make a connection, follow up afterwards with a message or email to keep the conversation going.

Oral presentation competitions

Some conferences include competitions for the best oral presentation, offering recognition for outstanding work and delivery. Being shortlisted or winning can be a valuable professional achievement, so it's worth understanding what judges typically look for and how to prepare accordingly.

WHAT JUDGES CONSIDER

While criteria may vary slightly between events, judging panels often assess presentations based on the following key areas:

- **Scientific quality and rigour:** Is the research methodologically sound? Are the conclusions supported by the data?
- **Clarity and organisation:** Is the presentation well-structured, with a logical flow from introduction to conclusion?
- **Visual quality of slides:** Are the slides clear, visually engaging, and free from clutter? Do they support the spoken content effectively?
- **Presentation skills and timing:** Does the presenter speak clearly, confidently, and within the allocated time? Is the delivery engaging and professional?
- **Originality and impact:** Does the work offer new insights, demonstrate innovation, or show clear relevance to clinical practice or patient outcomes?

PREPARING FOR SUCCESS

If you're presenting in a competitive session, consider the following tips to help you stand out:

- **Know your audience:** Tailor your language and emphasis to suit the conference theme and attendees' interests.
- **Refine your message:** Focus on the most compelling aspects of your work - what makes it unique or impactful?
- **Practise with purpose:** Rehearse your timing, transitions, and tone. Ask colleagues for feedback and refine accordingly.
- **Polish your visuals:** Use consistent formatting, high-quality images, and clear labels. Avoid overloading slides with text or data.
- **Engage with confidence:** Make eye contact, use expressive body language, and show enthusiasm for your topic.

HANDLING THE PRESSURE

Presenting in a competitive setting can feel daunting but remember that judges and audiences alike appreciate authenticity and clarity. You don't need to be perfect - just prepared. Focus on sharing your work with pride and professionalism.

Evidence, Research and Development is often the forgotten pillar in the four pillars of practice. This is particularly highlighted in the lack of sharing of Evidence and Research at conferences and events. This should not be just in the hands of those with formal research contracts, it should be in all our hands. If you have found out something that works, tell your profession, if you have found barriers or enablers for treatments with a client group let the community know. Submitting an abstract to a conference should be an expression of this, don't be afraid of presenting, tell your story, tell it simply, simple questions of enquiry are often the most impactful.

Professor Jim Richards

Associate Dean for Research & Knowledge Exchange, School of Health, Social Work and Sport, University of Lancashire. Director of the Research Institute for Behaviour, Sport and Rehabilitation, University of Lancashire. Chair of the Motor Control Technical Group, International Society of Biomechanics



Final checklist

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

- Title is concise, specific, and engaging.
- Background explains why the work matters in just a few sentences.
- Aim is clear, focused, and achievable.
- Methods are described briefly but with enough detail to judge validity.
- Results are specific, measurable, and linked directly to the aim.
- Conclusions highlight relevance and implications without overstatement.
- Word count is within the conference limit.
- Language is clear, free of jargon, and proofread by a colleague.
- Abstract aligns with the conference theme or priorities.

PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

- Conference format and technical requirements checked.
- Introduction is clear and engaging.
- Key results are prioritised and explained simply.
- Take-home messages are clear (two to three points).
- Slides are uncluttered, readable, and visually engaging.
- Timed practice completed to ensure delivery within the limit.
- Rehearsed aloud, ideally with feedback from others.

ON THE DAY

- Breathing and grounding strategies ready to manage nerves.
- Confident, clear opening planned.
- Eye contact and body language used to connect with the audience.
- Ready to respond to questions honestly and concisely.
- Networking plan in mind (e.g. QR code, follow-up messages).

This checklist is available as a separate printable download in the Research Resources area at www.bapo.com

Amy Williams

Clinical Lead Orthotist



When was the last time you presented your work at a conference?

I presented most recently at the BAPO conference earlier this year in Wigan, where I spoke on "Aligning practice: building consensus and driving research for pelvic orthoses in pregnancy."

How would you describe the experience?

It was energising and rewarding. I felt proud to be able to give something back to the orthotic community, especially as I have been supported in my master's by the OETT. This piece of research came directly from projects within my studies, so it felt like a full circle moment to share that work with colleagues. I was also surprised by how many people approached me afterwards with questions and offers to collaborate.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

Yes, I was definitely nervous, but also excited. I worried I might speak too quickly or miss some of my key points. Once I started though, I realised the audience was genuinely interested in my work and that gave me confidence to keep going.

What do you think the benefits of presenting at conferences are?

Presenting makes you visible and allows you to share your ideas and passion with peers. It helps build confidence, communication skills, and professional networks. For me, one of the biggest benefits has been connecting with people who share my interests and who can offer collaboration, mentorship, or simply a fresh perspective.

Did you encounter any challenges when preparing your abstract?

The biggest challenge was condensing my ideas into the word limit. When you are passionate about a subject it is tempting to include every detail. Learning how to refine my abstract into something concise but impactful was a valuable skill in itself.

What advice would you give to someone who is preparing an abstract and presenting at a conference for the first time?

Keep your abstract simple and focused. Make sure you clearly state your aim, your method, and why it matters. When it comes to presenting, remember that the audience is on your side and wants you to do well. Do not aim for perfection, aim for connection. Speak with enthusiasm, share your passion, and let your personality come through. Finally, practice your timing so you can present with confidence and finish within the limit.

Elaine McCurrach

Prosthetics Service Manager, NHS Highland



When was the last time you presented your work at a conference?

2008! (A long time ago!!!)

How would you describe the experience?

It was really daunting, but nothing bad happened, and afterwards was glad I'd had the opportunity to share our work and contribute to the conference. It made me feel part of our P+O community.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

I was really nervous, especially thinking about all my respected colleagues who were also presenting at conference or in the audience, and hoping I would do a good enough job.

What do you think the benefits of presenting at conferences are?

Presenting at conference provides a unique chance to share your work, and the work of your team. This gives colleagues a chance to ask questions and engage with your work. Ultimately sharing our experiences and practice is good for our learning, generates ideas and ultimately benefits the end user, which is why we're all here.

Did you encounter any challenges when preparing your abstract?

Keeping it brief and factual, while making it sound interesting enough that busy BAPO members would want to attend and listen!

What advice would you give to someone who is preparing an abstract and presenting at a conference for the first time?

I would say make the abstract as clear and concise as possible, staying within the word count. My advice for presenting is take your time, remember it doesn't need to be perfect, it needs to communicate clearly, and engage and interest the audience. No-one knows how nervous you are on the inside, the audience just want to learn and share your experience in order to be better Prosthetists and Orthotists. Focussing on a friendly or familiar face in the audience can really help and remember people have chosen to come and listen to you because they are interested in what you have to share. Taking advantage of any opportunity to have an IT run-through and sound check so you can check the slides and microphone can be really helpful, and make sure there's water available or take your own. And don't worry too much!

Gwen Lyn Roberts

Prosthetist, Cardiff



When was the last time you presented your work at a conference?

I presented at the BAPO Regional Conference in Cardiff (2024), and I'll be presenting on a different topic in Glasgow this November (2025).

How would you describe the experience?

It's a mix of emotions- both anxiousness and pride. I'm always excited to share what I've been working on and to hear feedback from the community, but I can struggle with my nerves. To manage them I practice breathing exercises, especially in the final few minutes before presenting.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

My first presentation was at BAPO's Speakeasy Forum as an undergraduate. Interestingly, I felt less pressure then, even though it was a national conference with a larger audience! As a student, we presented frequently and had plenty of time to practice, so expectations felt lower. As a clinician I've felt greater pressures from time constraints, competing priorities, and that internal voice who demands perfection.

What do you think are the benefits of presenting at conferences?

I'm really passionate about helping the P&O profession grow, whether that's through connecting with others, speaking up for what we do, or finding ways to make training and development more accessible. We all need to be confident working across the four pillars of practice, and sharing our work is a big part of that. Presenting has been a positive experience for me, not just for networking or adding to my CV, but for feeling part of a community that genuinely wants to move the profession forward together.

Did you encounter any challenges when preparing your abstract?

Time management has been the biggest challenge. I now schedule two dedicated timeslots in my diary a few days apart- one to complete the abstract, and another to review and submit (or to finish it off when the first session is interrupted!)

What advice would you give to someone preparing an abstract and presenting at a conference for the first time?

- Tailor your abstract to fit the theme and audience of the conference — but don't reinvent the wheel
- Keep it simple — those interested can read your work or contact you for more details
- Have a supportive colleague or mentor who can offer feedback or help you get "unstuck"
- Avoid using AI to write your abstract. If you don't write it, you won't remember it! But it can be a helpful tool, especially when you're struggling with phrasing or staying within the word limit

Naveed Ahmed

Lecturer in Prosthetics & Orthotics at Keele University



When was the last time you presented at a conference?

I last presented at a BAPO Regional Conference West Midlands 2024, sharing Keele University strategies to address workforce shortages and sustainability in Prosthetics & Orthotics.

How would you describe the experience?

It was a highly rewarding and professionally enriching experience. Having had some previous experiences to present, I felt more prepared and confident this time. I was also fortunate to have an excellent support team around me, which made a significant difference. That said, balancing preparation with the demands of a full-time role was challenging.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

Yes, I was very nervous, especially since my first presentation was at the 15th ISPO World Congress in 2015. At the time, I didn't have access to proper guidance or mentoring, which made the experience more daunting. However, it was also a valuable learning opportunity that helped me grow both personally and professionally.

What do you think are the benefits of presenting at conferences?

Conference presentations offer a unique opportunity to share your findings and knowledge with a wider professional audience. It provides a platform to receive insightful feedback from experts with diverse experiences, which can significantly enhance your work and future research. It's also a great way to share your work and inspire others in the field.

Did you face any challenges when preparing your abstract?

Yes, time management and understanding how to condense complex ideas into a clear and concise abstract format to meet the required standards were key challenges. It took several revisions and feedback from colleagues to refine it effectively.

What advice would you give to someone preparing an abstract and presenting for the first time?

Start preparing early and seek as much guidance as possible from those with prior experience. Focus on clarity, make sure your abstract communicates the key message of your work. Be confident in your work, even if your abstract isn't accepted, the process itself is a valuable learning experience that will strengthen future submissions. It's perfectly normal to feel nervous when presenting; don't be afraid to acknowledge that. Preparing notes for your presentation can help you stay on track and manage your time effectively during delivery. And remember, presenting at a conference is a great way to grow professionally and contribute to the professional community.

Paul Charlton

Orthotist



When was the last time you presented at a conference?

ISPO World Congress Stockholm 2025 and BAPO Cardiff.

How would you describe the experience?

I really enjoyed it. I now love sharing my work and getting feedback from my peers.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

Yes, very!!! I started presenting probably about the age of 24. Small in service teaching type things to physiotherapists. Then progressing to larger audiences. We used to have small orthotic regional meetings back in the days of BIST pre BAPO and that got me used to presenting to fellow orthotists in small informal groups. It's like many things in life, a bit scary the first time but gets increasingly easier with familiarity and confidence. It's just getting over the first hurdles.

What do you think are the benefits of presenting at conferences?

Multiple benefits. I think it developed me as an individual. It made me more confident and made me dive deeper into the topics I presented so I was confident I could answer any questions appropriately and confidently. It also makes you think and learn more if you get questions from your audience. I always like to receive questions. Presenting is fantastic for growing your network, people remember you, and contact you which often leads to opportunities. I have been fortunate to be invited to speak at international events from such contacts. You also gain respect from your peers as you demonstrate your knowledge and understanding. Presenting our work is a great way of showcasing our profession and getting those who work with us to better understand our role and how we may contribute. It leads to greater use of our skills and more appropriate referrals. We all need to learn all of the time. The range of presentations and clinical challenges we face are massive and none of us know everything. It's so important we learn from each other.

Did you face any challenges when preparing your abstract?

I still do. I like academia but I'm not very good at it! I'm very much a clinician and write as such. Academic writing and referencing appropriately is a different skill. Never be afraid to ask for help!

What advice would you give to someone preparing an abstract and presenting for the first time?

I would always go with something I have a passion for and can see the benefits. If you do the homework and have done something unique, even something as simple as an offloading insole. If you believe in what you have done and have strong clinical reasoning. Share it with confidence. Nobody in the world will have the understanding of your particular project than you. Be confident of that. Try and anticipate the questions you may get and be prepared. Don't try and bluff. If you know it then state it. If you don't, then be honest about it. There is nothing wrong in saying you had not considered a different angle that may be put to you or stating you haven't seen a particular reference that is quoted at you. Be honest, pragmatic however do some research to see if anything similar has been done and how yours compares. Be realistic with your timing, I still practice out loud and time myself. It is rude to overrun your time slot, it potentially deprives fellow presenters of their time, similarly you don't want to run dry too soon. Once mastered, it's a great and rewarding skill to have. Good Luck.

Samantha Jackson

Orthotic Clerk



When was the last time you presented your work at a conference?

BAPO conference, Wigan, 2025

How would you describe the experience?

Insightful. The first time I came to a conference I was very nervous because I am an administrator and now I sometimes feel the confidence to ask questions.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

Yes as I was unsure what was entailed.

What do you think the benefits of presenting at conferences are?

That admin can take part and be included as we do research every day without knowing.

Did you encounter any challenges when preparing your abstract?

Being neurodivergent but I have an amazing team that support me.

What advice would you give to someone who is preparing an abstract and presenting at a conference for the first time?

Go for it, its an amazing opportunity that has led for more doors to open for me and given me more confidence to do more.

Tabby Heeley

Senior Prosthetist, Wrexham ALAC



When was the last time you presented your work at a conference?

I presented at BACPAR, in Brighton, on the topic of Neurodiversity within Amputee Rehab. I presented jointly with my colleague Rachel Malcolm.

How would you describe the experience?

Exciting! It was incredibly fulfilling to be able to share work that is so important to me, on a stage, to others in the industry. I felt really welcomed, and it gave me a lot more confidence in my work and the value it has for the profession.

Were you nervous the first time you presented?

Yes - however I believe that stage fright is a good thing, because it's a sign you're putting your whole heart into something; of course that is going to cause nerves! I am afraid because I care about things going well.

What do you think the benefits of presenting at conferences are?

- Opportunity to share expertise and contribute to the evidence base.
- Inform and be informed; shape best practice.
- Meet potential collaborators/corroborators.
- Share and celebrate your hard work (especially as a lot of our best work in P&O happens very quietly).

Did you encounter any challenges when preparing your abstract?

I hadn't presented at a conference before so didn't know the 'unspoken rules' - I was nervous about getting something wrong. It helped that I was working with a colleague. The conference organisers were also very kind and helpful, and gave us feedback through the process to make it easier. We weren't expected to know everything.

What advice would you give to someone who is preparing an abstract and presenting at a conference for the first time?

Don't overthink it - just put yourself out there! The best work we do comes from the things we are most passionate about. Lead with what you're passionate about, believe what you've got to say is worth saying, and everything else will fall into place.

Useful resources

A range of resources are available to support prosthetists, orthotists, and the wider P&O workforce in developing research skills and confidence.

BAPO's Research Support Policy is specifically designed to facilitate research activity within the profession, offering guidance, access to support, and examples of successful projects. The policy, along with case studies from researchers, can be accessed at www.bapo.com/research-resources/

BAPO's Mentoring Programme provides members with personalised, one-to-one guidance at any career stage. Whether someone is exploring an early research idea or developing a more advanced project, the support of an experienced mentor can help build clarity and confidence. Information and registration are available at <https://bapo.onpld.com/>

BAPO's Education Resources include regular delivery of education courses, some of which focus specifically on research or research-related skills. These sessions provide opportunities to build methodological knowledge and connect with peers who share an interest in research. Details of available resources and upcoming courses can be found at www.bapo.com/resources/education-resources/





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