



PREPARING YOUR ABSTRACTS FOR THE HTCC STUDENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE AT UC IRVINE

WHAT IS AN ABSTRACT?

Abstracts are summaries communicating the central ideas of an argument or project. They are widely used in academic and professional life to offer audiences a short preview of an article, a research program, a presentation, a performance, etc.

WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR THE CONFERENCE?

To apply to the HTCC Conference, you are required to submit two summaries of the presentation, poster, or performance that you are proposing for the conference. The first summary is a very brief 25-word abstract known as a “Proposal Description.” The second is a more detailed 250-word summary known as a “Proposal Abstract.” If you are admitted to the conference, you may also choose to submit a 400-word abstract to compete for conference awards and scholarships and a 250-word abstract to vie for the honor of being published in the post-conference booklet.

WHEN AND HOW DO I SUBMIT THE ABSTRACTS?

Your honors director will ultimately submit the two application abstracts for you, as well as the awards and publication abstracts should you choose to enter those. You should work closely with your mentor professor and your honors director on drafting the abstracts, allowing ample time to receive feedback and to make any necessary revisions before your school’s deadlines. Your honors director will determine the exact deadlines for your school, but the following description of the various abstract types includes a general timeline. You may also consult the conference website for up-to-date information about timelines. Following the table below are guidelines and tips for composing your abstracts.

MANDATORY ABSTRACTS SUBMITTED WITH APPLICATION	Description/Purpose	Submission Period	Your College’s Internal Deadline
25-word Proposal Description	Submitted as part of the conference application, the short Proposal Description will appear in the conference program if your project is admitted to the conference.	Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Check with your honors program director
250-word Proposal Abstract	Also submitted as part of the conference application, the Proposal Abstract will not be included in the conference program but will be the basis for the Conference Committee’s decision of whether to admit your presentation or poster to the conference.	Nov. 29-Dec. 23	Check with your honors program director
OPTIONAL ABSTRACTS			
400-word Awards Abstract	The Awards Abstract will be used to determine the HTCC Outstanding Abstract Awards, HTCC Director’s Award, and UC Irvine Student Research Grants. <i>Note:</i> These abstracts— not your actual presentation performance—are the basis for the awards listed above; however, you must attend and present at the conference in order to be eligible for awards.	Late Jan. (following notification of conference acceptance)- Feb. 25	Check with your honors program director
250-word Publication Abstract	Submitted following the conference, the Publication Abstract will be published in the post-conference booklet if selected. (This abstract may be the same as, or a revised version of, the Proposal Abstract submitted with the application.)	Post-Conference; exact date TBD	Check with your honors program director

GUIDELINES AND TIPS FOR WRITING ABSTRACTS

Format

Follow regulation MLA style, using 12-point Times New Roman font and ragged (not justified) margins. The 250- and 400-word abstracts should contain multiple paragraphs that begin and end in logical places. Whereas the Proposal and Awards Abstracts should be single-spaced, the Publication Abstract will need to be double-spaced. More specific instructions for the 250-word Publication Abstract are available on the Conference page of the HTCC website (<http://honorstcc.org/conference>).

Word Counts

Although writing a few words over the target word counts is acceptable, you should aim for conciseness and should respect these targets as much as possible.

Correctness and Accuracy

Proofread your abstracts meticulously and repeatedly, and revise for conciseness, clarity, correctness of spelling and grammar, and for the accuracy of claims and evidence.

Composing Titles

The title is an important part of an abstract and should be both original and informative. The title that you choose for your initial Proposal Description should then be used for all subsequent versions of your abstract. The title words are not included in the word count. The goal of the title is simultaneously to *interest* your audience and to *inform* them of the topic of your presentation. One effective strategy is to use a two-part title in which the main title is intriguing and suggestive while the subtitle is informative (or *vice versa*), such as “Taking Home the Prize: How to Write a Winning Abstract.”

Content

25-word Proposal Description:

The Proposal Description should be a concise single sentence (or sentence fragment) articulating the thesis, hypothesis, or purpose of your presentation, poster, or performance. Because this description will appear in the conference program, this sentence should—in conjunction with the title—aim both to *intrigue* and to *inform* conference attendees so that they will desire to come hear *your* presentation or view *your* poster! Use active, vivid language, and be clear. If you have already finished your research or project and therefore know your conclusion, attempt to assert a definite claim rather than simply alluding to the fact that you will do so once your research or project is completed. In the examples below, the “less effective” description offers very little to interest the reader since the actual content of the writer’s “learning” is not specified. The “more effective” example, by contrast, attracts the reader with concrete assertions based upon the outcome of the writer’s research.

Less effective: **Behind the Scenes at the Zoo:** In this presentation, I will talk about what I learned about animal behavior from a recent trip to the Los Angeles Zoo.

More effective: **Behind the Scenes at the Zoo:** While captivity can impede animals’ natural behaviors and create behavioral disorders, properly structured zoo environments can effectively stimulate species-appropriate behavior and mitigate animals’ stress.

250- and 400-word Abstracts:

The Proposal Abstract, as well as the Awards and Publication abstracts, should begin with a sentence designed to intrigue your reader and to introduce your topic. (This opening sentence may be, but is not required to be, the same sentence used in your 25-word Proposal Description.) You should clearly articulate your thesis, hypothesis, or purpose towards the beginning of the abstract and should continue with a fuller account of your proposal. You may want to include some or all of the following in the abstract:

- a fuller explanation of your thesis or purpose
- necessary background or context for your project
- an explanation of your research methodology and type(s) of supporting evidence
- a few specific instances of key evidence—examples, statistics, facts, quotations—with accompanying in-text citations
- an explanation of the significance or application of your work
- a relevant and catchy epigraph
- an emphatic or thoughtful concluding sentence

As with your Proposal Description, you should strive to make the language of your abstracts assertive and content-rich. Don't wait until the actual presentation to tell us your central ideas; use the abstract to outline those key ideas.

Considering Your Audience

Although expectations for academic language and form differ among disciplines, the abstracts that you write for this conference should reflect the conference's attendees and goals and should consequently be written to appeal to a broad audience with diverse academic interests and areas of expertise. Your language should be professional and should demonstrate mastery of the concepts and vocabulary appropriate to your discipline(s) of inquiry. At the same time, you should also try to make the language accessible and to make clear why your ideas should be of interest to just such a multi-talented and multi-disciplinary audience.

Documentation

Include with all of your abstracts a *Works Cited* or *Works Consulted* list written in accordance with MLA style and identifying the major sources cited or consulted in your research. This list will *not* count towards the word total for your abstracts. Your abstracts themselves should include brief MLA-style in-text citations where relevant in order a) to indicate any words, ideas, or other evidence included in your abstract that are taken from your research sources or b) to point your reader to sources where such evidence can be found. For more information on MLA documentation style, see [website link], or consult the following sources:

- *The MLA Guidebook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009)
- The online site for Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference*. Use the pull-down menu under "Humanities" and choose "Documenting Sources":
<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/>
- The online Purdue University site available at
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01>
- Any up-to-date college writing handbook featuring a current (2009) section on MLA style

Evaluation Criteria

Abstracts will be judged on the following criteria:

- quality of critical thinking
- originality and relevance of topic, argument, and/or approach
- clarity, logical organization, and cogency of argument

- quality, relevance, and specificity of supporting evidence
- quality and appropriateness of style
- grammatical correctness
- correctness of MLA documentation

Further Information

See the following relevant website pages for examples of successful abstracts and further instructions: <http://honorstcc.org/conference>