

The Smeed Prize Aim, Rules and Assessment

Aim

The purpose of the Smeed Prize is "to recognise the best student paper and presentation at each Annual Conference of the UTSG".

The prize is offered in honour of Reuben Smeed who became the first professor of Traffic Studies at University College London in 1969. Smeed was associated with the first serious proposals for implementation of road pricing. As Head of the Traffic and Safety Division of the Road Research Laboratory, he was appointed by the Minister of Transport, Ernest Marples, to chair a "Panel on Road Pricing" which had the remit to investigate and report on the proposals for implementing road pricing. The Smeed report of 1964 supported the principle of congestion pricing and suggested that several technologies - with further development - could be used to implement it.

Rules

Eligible papers are those prepared and presented entirely by an author who has carried out the work described in the paper while registered as a postgraduate student at a UTSG member institution. When selecting the eligibility of papers, the Smeed Prize panel will give preference to postgraduate research students, with priority to those who have already made a significant contribution in their field. (MSc students are also eligible where supported with a special case from their supervisor, and where the work reported is essentially their own.)

Abstracts for papers to be included in the Smeed Prize competition are submitted in the same way as standard papers for presentation at the Annual Conference, but with the following additional regulations:

- The paper must be prepared solely by the student based on the research carried out as part of their studies.
- The length of abstracts submitted for the prize shall be 800 - 1000 words.
- A separate e-mail from the student's supervisor must be sent to the Conference Coordinator to arrive before the closing date for abstracts. This email must confirm that the paper reports on the research carried out by the author while a student at the institution, and the degree being undertaken at the time. Please note that it is the author's responsibility to ensure that this email is sent.
- Candidates will only be eligible to have a paper accepted for consideration for the Smeed Prize once. If, after acceptance, the paper is subsequently withdrawn, the author will not be permitted to re-enter as a Smeed candidate in future years (unless exceptional extenuating circumstances are accepted by the Executive Committee).

When papers for the conference are determined, it shall be ascertained which are eligible and whether their author wishes to be considered for the Prize. In the event of there being more papers than available presentation slots at the conference, the Executive Committee reserves the right to select competitively from those abstracts submitted. Failure to adhere to any of these Smeed Prize regulations will lead to the abstract only being considered as a standard paper and not entered into the Smeed Prize competition.

A judging panel of at least three assessors, from among those expected to attend the whole of the conference, will be appointed by the Conference Organiser with the approval of the Chairman of UTSG. Members of the judging panel will receive copies of all Smeed papers in advance of the conference. The conference timetable will be constructed so that all Smeed

papers are presented at different times so as to permit as many judges as possible to attend the presentation of each paper entered in the competition.

The chair of the judging panel will announce the decision of the panel before the conference closes. If the panel agree that there is no paper and presentation of sufficient standard, the prize need not be awarded.

Factors Considered During the Assessment

As candidates of all ages and experience are encouraged to apply throughout their period of registration of academic study, the judges will face a difficult problem in assessing a variety of contributions on applied and theoretical topics, and research work at different stages of completion. In awarding the Prize, the assessors shall have regard to the purposes of the Prize and shall consider:

- (i) the subject matter of the papers including the complexity of the problem and the depth of the research and analysis undertaken;
- (ii) the quality of the written word in preparation of the paper;
- (iii) the quality of the oral presentation and associated visual aids;
- (iv) the student's performance in answering questions.

Advice on the Preparation of Papers and Presentation at the Conference

Authors should read "Quick Tips on Preparing and Delivering a Good Presentation" available from the UTSG website, but as for many entrants in the Smeed Prize competition this may be their first presentation at a large conference the following advice may also be of help.

1. General Advice

Many otherwise admirable presentations are marred by faults in their delivery. Members of an audience choose to attend a presentation because they are interested in the subject and therefore the speaker can normally rely on their support and attention. However, they will lose interest and be less tolerant of sloppy presentation. While it is impossible to lay down hard and fast rules to guarantee a successful presentation, a speaker who does not communicate well, either because the talk is badly structured or poorly delivered, will lose the attention of and fail to make the audience understand the paper.

2. Structure

The essence of a good presentation is to confine yourself to the crucial issues. During a presentation, listeners can only absorb a limited number of new ideas and, in general, only one at a time. It is, therefore, important to isolate and select those points which are relevant to the paper and present them in a way which helps the audience to grasp their significance and relation to one another. Ideally a talk should follow a straight line with as few branches as possible. The structure to the presentation is vital and should indicate the relevance of the work, the aims of the research, the methodology adopted, the results and conclusions. Without a sound structure the attention of the audience may be lost. It is important that you "tell a complete story", show your enthusiasm for your research and instil confidence that you understand what you are talking about.

3. Notes

It is not desirable to read directly from a written script. Those confident enough to talk without full notes may still find it helpful to have the main points written down however, as it is easy for the mind to go blank during a presentation. As an alternative, it can also be a good idea to make a set of cards containing the main points to ensure that the talk is kept to the planned sequence and nothing important is left out. Consistency between your overheads and notes is essential.

4. Total Time of Talk

A half-hour slot is set aside for the delivery of your paper and questions. You should aim to deliver your paper in 15 -20 minutes, leaving time for questions. It is important to avoid racing through the last few points and the conclusion to reach the target time.

5. Delivery

The speaker will be well advised to rehearse the delivery of the paper in full, including all visual aids. If possible, this should be achieved before an audience of colleagues or peers, who are sufficiently senior and/or uninhibited to criticise effectively. The following are some faults to look out for:

- (i) Too-rapid delivery;
- (ii) Mumbling and stumbling;
- (iii) Reading from the text with eyes down.

To emphasise a particular point it is helpful to look an individual in the audience straight in the eye. The emphasis of this direct glance will communicate itself to everyone else. The speaker should try not to turn away from the audience and also avoid turning away frequently to look at, or point to, slides. If it is necessary to point to a slide, it is best to do so briefly and then turn back to the audience.

6. Using Visual Aids

Visual aids should be used to give greater impact to information and enable the presenter to emphasise key points. A picture or diagram can often make clear in seconds what it would take minutes of hand-waving talk to explain. However, it is not enough simply to display a slide and read out the contents. Visual aids will often do more harm than good if they are inappropriate, irrelevant or not well prepared. Speakers often try to include too much material on slides and transparencies so that the audience has to choose whether to puzzle out the contents or to listen to the speaker and ignore the slide. In the same way, over elaborate use of PowerPoint can detract from the academic content of the presentation. In either case, the speaker communicates less effectively with the audience. Authors are advised not to rely on the automatic timings of PowerPoint unless they can be sure of the speed of their delivery.

Slides add variety and impact to a talk if they are well prepared and effectively used. Legibility is essential. The audience, including those at the back of the room, must be able to read and understand the information on the slide. The amount of detail that can be seen easily is determined by the visibility of the characters on the screen, not by their number. For clarity of slides consisting mainly of words, these should be confined to key words with a maximum of six or seven lines. The font size should ensure clarity for reading for the delegate furthest away from the screen. Care should be given to the contrast of colours of lettering and the background. Diagrams should make maximum use of the space available. All non-essential detail should be omitted. A diagram suitable for a publication is usually too complicated to make a good presentation slide. Tables should be avoided if possible and replaced by bar or pie charts. If unavoidable, they are best confined to about three or four columns with typically six entries per column.

7. Feedback

As the judging panel is not able to provide formal feedback on the judging process, Smeed Prize candidates are strongly encouraged to approach academics, on the advice of their supervisor, to obtain peer observation of their presentations during the conference. Consistent with the aims and objectives of the UTSG conference, all students are strongly advised to contribute to discussions and ask questions.

8. Good Luck!!