This report summarises the discussions on academic presentations from the Academic Monitoring Dissemination Event on the 9th October 2013 and the subsequent follow-up meeting on 29th October 2013. The group composed the following members:

- Rosalind Doig       ELT
- Gillian Mitchell   History
- Maggie Ellis       Psychology and Neuroscience
- Bruce Sinclair     Physics and Astronomy
- Gerald Prescott    Biology
- Philip Parry       English

A central discussion for the group focused on the recording of presentations. This stemmed from the LTC proposal that a sound recording is now a minimum requirement for the assessment of oral presentations.

The group discussed this and was of the view that filming would be preferable in terms of being a more accurate means of auditing assessments and of giving effective feedback, particularly given the importance of body language and gesturing in communicating meaning and emphasis, and also in generating interest in the subject matter. However, concern was expressed over the logistics of doing this in the following areas:

- how large schools who widely use presentations as a form of assessment may not have the time or facilities to record all presentations
- how much storage space would be required to film large numbers of presentations
- the expense involved in acquiring extra space if needed
- the length of time such material would require to be kept (therefore impacting on the two above concerns)
- the lack of request from our external examiners for such a recording
- the time taken for external examiners to review the material if recording were required.

There was also some discussion of issues such as confidentiality and the importance of keeping such files secure, the potential time involved in re-assessing presentations via the live recordings and the question of added value to be had from recording presentations.

Representatives from the Schools of Biology, Physics and ELT reported that they routinely use written pro-formas to mark presentations; examples of these were provided by Rosalind Doig. The pro-formas were generally used by two or more markers to independently mark presentations before an agreed mark was determined. Biology and Physics both indicated that their external examiners were very happy with these arrangements, but both agreed they would discuss the possibility of recording with the externals at their next visit.

Further discussion surrounded the pro-formas and how these could be adapted to assess different characteristics within a presentation. It was widely agreed pro-formas should be carefully designed with specific assessment criteria in mind and that this may differ between assignments. The pro-formas provided by ELT were widely appreciated by the group. Several schools represented were actively interested in amending their current marking pro-formas and the discussion surrounding these was considered valuable by Schools developing these new pro-formas, “I have subsequently found myself reflecting on some of the marking pro-formas contents while marking presentations for my current modules, and already I am consciously trying to be more specific and helpful in my comments to students about both delivery and content of presentations.”
A useful outcome of these discussions was the suggestion that examples of pro-forma could be hosted on the university website, allowing people to see and develop marking pro-formas appropriate for their own presentations. It was also thought to be helpful if Schools could provide ELT with their pro-formas, as this would allow ELT to focus on developing the skills that Schools needed.

Another discussion point raised by one of the group members was how different Schools approached situations whereby a student’s disability made it difficult for them to give oral presentations. Schools shared their approaches to this and it was recognised that it was helpful to hear the procedures followed by others in situations where this occurred. It was also recognised that a specific procedure may only be able to be established if the student has a recognised disability and may not be appropriate for students who were simply nervous about giving presentations, as this should be considered as a core transferable skill.

In summary, the group found the discussions both helpful and fruitful and the success of the grouping can best be described by the following quote, “the guidance on the assessment of presentations has up to this point been mixed. However, the Academic Monitoring Dissemination Event has provided me with some clarity in terms of methods for assessing oral presentations. It has been personally beneficial to discuss a range of experiences in this area with colleagues from other departments in the university. As a result of these meetings I intend to use a pro forma to assess and video record student presentations”

**Key outcomes of the group:**
- Several schools will use the discussions as guidance while amending presentation marking pro-formas
- Logistical problems may exist to the recording of all oral presentations and it may be helpful to review these before this becomes policy
- Easy access to example presentation marking pro-formas could be beneficial to many schools
- Discussions encouraged and will continue to encourage reflection on our practices.

Report created by Dr Gerald Prescott, School of Biology