

# Chairing a session

## I. Introductory remarks

## II. Useful phrases for the chairperson

### I. Introductory remarks

The purpose of this section is to give you practice in chairing a session. The Chair must be well-organized, keep their head in unexpected situations, speak in a clear voice, use language that is easily understood by all, and be polite but firm when it comes to keeping the schedule.

The exercises give you an opportunity to practise the following situations:

- **opening the session**, making announcements, making apologies,
- **announcing changes** in the programme,
- **introducing the speaker**, thanking the speaker,
- **managing the discussion**, closing the session.

## II, Useful phrases for the chairperson

### 1. Opening the session

#### Getting attention

*Right, is everybody here? Good, I think we can start.*

#### Welcoming the audience

*Good morning, everyone.*

*I'd like to welcome you all on behalf of the department/Faculty/the organizers.*

#### Looking at the session programme

*You can see from the programme that we have a lot to get through today. I'd like to remind participants that they have a maximum of 10 minutes for their presentation with 10 minutes allocated for questions at the end.*

### 2. Making announcements

Keep the announcement SIMPLE. Repeat it at least once. Remember, the members of the audience include non-native speakers like you. The most important information is the new TIME, PLACE, DATE and the title of the presentation. First, attract the audience's attention and then give them the new information clearly and slowly. You may include the original location and time, but it is not necessary and may only confuse the audience.

#### Attracting the audience's attention

*Ladies and gentlemen, could I have your attention for a moment?*

#### Announcing timetable changes and changes to meeting rooms

*We have made some changes to the programme.*

*The presentation on (Design Science) will now take place (today/on Tuesday) in (room 311) at (four thirty this afternoon) and not in (room 214) at (2 o'clock). I repeat ....*

#### Making apologies

*We have just received a message from (Professor Heinz) that his flight has been delayed and that he will be unable to make his presentation on (Kaizen Theory) today. Instead, (Professor Anderson) has kindly agreed to give his talk on (Cluster Theory). That means*

*(Professor Anderson) will speak (at one thirty this afternoon) and (Professor Heinz)(will give his presentation (at three thirty on Wednesday afternoon).*

*Professor Kaminsky has sent his apologies that he will not be able to make his presentation today, but instead, Professor Andrews has kindly agreed to bring his presentation forward from tomorrow afternoon.*

#### **Announcing excursion information**

*We have made some changes to the excursion today.*

*Just a reminder to everybody that the trip to the (Skoda Research Centre) leaves from (here) at (nine thirty tomorrow morning).*

#### **Announcing other changes**

*I would also like to bring your attention to a change in the lunchtime arrangements. Lunch will now be from 1 o'clock to 2 o'clock at the Continental Hotel and not from 12.30 to 1.30 as printed in your programme. The coffee breaks will remain the same. I hope this doesn't cause any problems for you.*

### **3. Introducing the first speaker**

*Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome Professor/Doctor Brown/ Mr/Ms Brown, who will speak on ... (do not say: Mr/Ms Professor/Doctor)*

*It is my pleasure to introduce our speaker for today, ...*

*Mr/Mrs Smith/Professor Smith ... is a well-known authority on ...*

*Today he/she will speak on ....*

*OK, now let's move on to the first speaker. I'm delighted to introduce (Professor Suzuki from the University of Osaka), who will tell us something about ...*

*There will be time at the end of the presentation for any questions you may have.*

#### **Asking the speaker to start the presentation**

*Now I'd like to hand over to you, Professor ...*

### **4. Reminding the speaker of the time limit**

*I'm sorry to interrupt you, but due to our tight schedule today speakers must stick to only ten minutes.*

*I'm sorry to interrupt you, but you've just 3 minutes left to finish your presentation.*

*Sorry, but you've got only 3 minutes left.*

### **5. Thanking the speaker**

*On behalf of everyone here I would like to thank you for a most interesting presentation.*

*I'd like to express our appreciation of your most interesting talk.*

### **6. Managing the discussion**

#### **Opening the discussion**

*I am sure that after that stimulating presentation you would like to ask some questions or comment on some of the points the speaker made.*

#### **Encouraging participants to ask questions**

*As nobody seems to be ready to ask a question at the moment, I'll use this opportunity to ask the speaker if/why/how ...*

*I think we need to break the ice. I have a question I'd like to ask.*

## **Asking questions**

### **- Asking general questions**

*Would you mind ...*

*I wonder if you could ...*

*May I ask ...*

### **- Asking for further information**

*Could you be a little more precise?*

*Could you give us some more details about ...?*

*Could you expand on ...?*

### **- Asking for opinion**

*What's your view on/reaction to that?*

*What do the rest of you think?*

### **- Asking for clarification**

*I don't understand. Can you be a little more specific?*

*I'm sorry. What do you mean by ('a small problem'/that)?*

*Would you mind explaining ...?*

*Let me see if I understand. Are you saying ...?*

*Sorry, do you mean that ...?*

### **- Asking about possible consequences**

*What do you think the implications might be (for ...)?*

*What do you think this might result in?*

*How do you think this would affect ...?*

## **Encouraging participants to share their knowledge/experience with the others**

*Mr Smith, I know you've been involved in this area for many years. I'm sure people would like to hear what you think about ...*

*Dr White, I'm sure everybody here would be interested in your views on ...*

## **Widening the discussion**

*Is there anything else we should consider?*

*What other ways are there to approach this?*

## **Closing one topic and opening another**

*I think that's enough about .... Can we now move on to ...?*

*I think we have covered the main points. Let's move on to ...*

## **7. Summarizing**

*So, can I just summarize what's been discussed so far?*

*I'd now like to sum up the main points of our discussion.*

## **8. Closing the session**

*I would like to thank again our speakers for their very interesting and stimulating contributions and the participants for the valuable following discussion.*

## **EXERCISES**

### **I. Managing the discussion.**

**Look at these situations. You are the chairperson. What phrases would you use to manage the discussion in each case?**

1. You've opened the discussion and nobody seems to be ready to ask a question.

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2. Professor Smith has mentioned “process re-engineering” and one or two people look confused. You think an explanation is needed.  
.....

3. There has been a long discussion about the Temelín power plant. You want to finish it and start discussing the overall energy policy of the Czech government.  
.....

4. Mr Novák is explaining that your partner institution is having serious financial difficulties. Ask him how this might affect the joint project.  
.....

5. The discussion is not going well. You know that Dr Wilkie is an expert in the field and that his experience would be relevant to all present.  
.....

**II. Practise chairing a session at an international conference. Follow the instructions below.**

**1.** The participants are very noisy, some people are standing, others are wildly gesticulating. The meeting should have started three minutes ago. **Get the participants’ attention.**  
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**2. Welcome the participants.**  
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**3. Give information on the agenda:** presentations max. of 10 minutes, questions 10 min. at the end of each presentation  
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**4. Make announcements:**

- **changes to the programme:** Prof. Brown unable to come, his presentation cancelled, the time gained can be used for discussion  
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- **changes to rooms:** today’s afternoon meeting moved to a bigger room (123), the number of participants interested in the topic is growing  
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- **other announcements:** tour of the Faculty – 9.00 next morning, meeting point – lobby  
.....  
meeting the Dean – after the tour, around 11.00  
.....  
farewell dinner – 7.00 p.m., Park Hotel, meeting point – in front of the hotel  
.....

**5. Introduce the first speaker:** Prof. Williams, Brunel University, specialist in design science  
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**6.** Prof. Williams has been speaking for 7 minutes and it seems that he will not be able to finish his presentation in the 3 minutes left. **Remind him of the time and the need to finish according to schedule.**

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**7. Thank the speaker**

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**8. Open the discussion**

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**9. Close the session**  
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