

Frequently Asked Questions about Academic Festival

1. *How and when do students submit a proposal for Academic Festival?*

- Beginning in late March, you can submit a proposal via the on-line form: http://cms.skidmore.edu/hf/students/forms/academic_festival.cfm. Do not email your proposals to the Director or the Administrative Assistant of the Honors Forum.
- Proposals may be no longer than 75 words; there is a character limit in the on-line application form, and you will not be able to submit your proposal if it goes over the maximum length.
- Your proposal will be included in the program, further incentive to make it clear to a non-specialist audience and well written.
- If a student is part of more than one proposal or if a faculty member is sponsoring more than one proposal, it is important for you to tell that to the planning committee so that inadvertent scheduling conflicts can be avoided.

2. *Will all submissions be accepted?*

- Every proposal must be accompanied by the name of a faculty sponsor, as the submission form indicates. We rely on the expertise of the faculty member to assess the merit of each proposal he or she sponsors. If a faculty member signs on as a sponsor, the planning committee will accept the proposal.
- The committee may ask students to revise/clarify the description of a project before it is published in the program.
- Academic Festival is a celebration of our students' best creative work. That is why the Council advises against stipulating "presentation at Academic Festival" as a requirement for any course.

3. *What if there are several speakers for one presentation?*

- The on-line form asks for the name of one of the speakers to act as a representative, so the planning committee will have someone to contact if questions arise about the proposal. However, we need everyone's name and class year for the printed program.

4. *What if a class or seminar wishes to present a panel?*

- We recommend submitting this as a panel session. A panel needs a faculty sponsor, likely the course instructor. If you try to enter all the different presentations on the same proposal, you may run out of space on some of the fields of the electronic form. However, for the printed program, we need the names and class year for each presenter.

5. *How long does a student have to speak in a presentation?*

There are several formats for presentation this year.

- **A 15-minute presentation.** In many professional academic conferences, a speaker has only 15 – 20 minutes to speak, so this is the model we are following.

Please note, even though some presenters prepare 40-60 minute thesis presentations for their professors and colleagues in their majors, this is **not** the kind of talk we are looking for in an Academic Festival presentation. The presenter should create a 15-minute presentation, which students, faculty, and staff who do not have expertise in the discipline will find engaging.

- **A 7-minute roundtable presentation.** Many academic conferences offer roundtables, and this year, we have chosen four themes appropriate for students in all four years at Skidmore. We hope to attract presenters in a variety of disciplines to present on each topic. The topics are as follows: “Visual Communication,” “Skidmore and the Saratoga Community,” “Quantitative Learning,” and “Undergraduate Research.”
- **A 1-hour panel presentation.** These are typically made up of class panels or panels the Academic Festival Committee puts together based on common themes. Some panels will be 75 minutes long to accommodate four presentations.
- **Poster Presentations.** These posters will remain on display for the entire Academic Festival day. However, we will schedule a time for students to be available to discuss their posters to a larger audience; formats for poster sessions appear below.

6. What kind of proposals should students submit for roundtables? How many students will present at a roundtable?

Ideally, six or seven students will present at a roundtable. We hope to have students from different disciplines discussing how the following topics have become vehicles to achieve excellence and practice creativity.

- “Visual Communication”—in anticipation of this year’s Senior Week Symposium—invites students to talk about using or creating maps, power points, diagrams, art work, exhibitions, etc. to enhance their learning.
- “Skidmore and the Saratoga Community” welcomes students to present how they have innovatively utilized the resources of Saratoga—whether that is via community organizations or Saratoga’s natural resources—or shared their skills with the wider community in service learning or HF Citizenship Projects.
- “Quantitative Learning” invites students to talk of ways they have used their creativity in courses that rely on scientific or mathematical data, quantitative reasoning skills, and science literacy.
- “Undergraduate Research” encourages students to talk about ways they have worked in laboratories, libraries, studios, or field sites and collaborated with their professors and fellow students, conducting research across the disciplines. Students need not have participated in the undergraduate summer research initiatives to present on this roundtable.

N.B. According to student interest, we will create more than one roundtable on any given topic.

7. *How long are the sessions?*

- ❖ Many AF sessions are made up of three or four 15-minute presentations, separated by 5 minutes between talks, taking up 60 or 75 minutes. Sticking to this format allows the audience to move about between the sessions and attend as many different talks as they'd like, and be assured that they all start and end at the same time.
- ❖ However, there may be exceptions to this general rule. The planning committee may decide that only two presentations make sense as a single session, so some sessions may be shortened to 40 minutes. At the other extreme, it is possible that the Planning Committee may approve as many as five talks together in one session, so it is possible (although not desirable, and therefore, not common) for a session to be as long as 90 minutes. The target is 60-75 minutes.
- ❖ As stated on the on-line form, 30-60 minutes may be allowed for a poetry reading or a fiction reading, and 60 minutes may be allowed for a panel or a performance.
- ❖ The planning committee can be flexible, however – if you need 75 minutes instead of 60 for a panel, reading, or performance, please ask – we usually can accommodate.). Please take this into consideration when submitting a proposal.

8. *Beginning in 2010, the Planning Committee adopted a policy that no longer accommodated very long sessions that run for three or four hours.*

- ❖ Long sessions do not allow students and other audience members to attend as many different sessions as possible, which is, after all, one of the goals of Academic Festival – to celebrate creative accomplishments across the campus and not stay cloistered away in one's own department or program attending talks only by one's own colleagues or students.
- ❖ We understand this deviates from past practice, and we understand that some of these events had good reasons for meeting in one long session, such as audience participation from off-campus groups. However, the planning committee still believes the audience will come to sessions separated by a 15-minute break for refreshments, allowing the audience members to attend different sessions if they want to.
- ❖ If you cannot break up your event into 75-minute sessions, and are unwilling to allow the planning committee to schedule the talks in this format, regrettably the committee will not accept the proposal and will ask you to hold your event on a different day from Academic Festival.

9. *Can I request a specific room, or time for my presentation?*

- ❖ The planning committee is willing to consider requests, but cannot guarantee they will be granted. The committee's first goal is to put together a program that has academic integrity with presentations grouped together to highlight interesting interdisciplinary connections. Like most professional conferences, individuals or groups submit proposals, while the Planning Committee will construct the program.

10. *Can I schedule my department's capstone presentations as part of Academic Festival?*

- ❖ While that may have been done many years ago, the Academic Festival has been moving away from that model for at least seven years now, as stated in the document circulated during the Spring 2008 about “the evolving nature of Academic Festival.”
- ❖ Since assessment of a capstone project most likely requires a detailed, technical presentation of longer than 15 minutes, this is not appropriate for Academic Festival. On the other hand, many students prepare shorter (15-minute) versions of their capstone presentations suitable for a general audience, or even a poster about their capstone project. These are suitable for Academic Festival and are quite welcome.

11. *How do poster sessions work?*

There are two models for poster sessions.

- ❖ In model one, people mill about looking at the posters, then; after a while, each presenter in turn gets five minutes to describe the work on her/his poster to the entire audience. The audience members listen to all the presentations, separated by a short one or two minute Q & A period.
- ❖ In model two, the presenter stands by his/her poster for the entire 75-minute session (or however long the session is). People move about from poster to poster listening to presentations and asking questions.
- ❖ The advantage of the first model is that each person makes his/her presentation once, and he or she only needs to stand by a poster for about 6-8 minutes. In the second model, each presenter may give the same presentation several times and answer the same questions over and over again. Moreover, in the second model the noise in the room can be considerable; with everyone talking at once, it is often difficult to hear what the presenter is saying. We encourage anyone who is organizing a poster session to consider the first model, despite the fact that the second model seems to be the more common one at professional conferences.

12. *How is the exact time of my presentation stated in the program?*

- ❖ The exact time of the session is listed in the program. For sessions consisting of 15-minute presentations, assume the order of the presentations will be the order in which the talks are listed in the program, with 5-minutes between the talks. Thus, a session beginning at 9 AM will have presentations at 9:00 AM, 9:20 AM, and 9:40 AM, leaving time for Q and A and ending at 10:00 AM.
- ❖ For less well-defined sessions (such as poster sessions), we leave it up to the presenters and/or session chair to organize the session.

13. *What is the role of the session chair?*

- ❖ The session chair will introduce each speaker and monitoring time to keep the presenters on schedule. This will be particularly important for roundtable talks.
- ❖ The chair will also ask the audience if there are any questions and will help make sure the next talk starts on time.

- ❖ In poster sessions or film sessions, the chair may help organize the order of presentations (see bullet above). He/she should also count the number of attendees at each presentation and/or session.
- ❖ It is our hope that faculty will become engaged with the panelists before AF if they are chairing student panels they are sponsoring.