

Writing the AAEE 2012 Structured Abstract

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Purpose

Beginning in 2012, the AAEE Annual Conference is upgrading its paper submission process. These upgrades will support authors in a number of ways:

- Structured Abstracts. This new format will assist authors in identifying and conveying the key elements of their papers. Authors will submit and receive feedback on their structured abstracts before submitting their full papers.
- Revised Review Criteria. The AAEE Executive Committee, working with key community members across Australia, is developing new review criteria for conference papers which will more clearly describe those features of a paper that are essential for acceptance.

The goal of these upgrades is to strengthen the quality of papers published in the conference proceedings, reflecting the increasingly rigorous requirements of institutions for funded attendance. A secondary goal is to increase the quality profile of the conference internationally.

The aim of this paper is to assist authors in writing the structured abstract, the first step in the paper submission process. First, a short section discusses constructing arguments within your paper. Then the individual sections of the structured abstract template are discussed in light of how to convey the key features of your arguments.

Your Paper Makes an Argument

Typically, AAEE conference papers address topics related to a specific research project, to a local or regional change in teaching practice, or some hybrid of the two. Regardless of the paper's focus, there is a set of common elements that together form the basis of a quality paper. These elements, captured in the Structured Abstract template, are the foundation of the arguments you are making in your paper. Any argument is constructed of three basic elements: the claims you are making, the evidence that supports your claims, and the logic that demonstrates why that evidence is a good support for your claims.

Whether focused on research or a change in teaching practice, the primary claims in your paper should address the:

- Significance of the problem being addressed
- Important or innovative features of your research approach or teaching intervention
- Relevance of the results of your work, whether research or teaching-related, to the greater community.

All papers should also include evidence supporting each of these claims. In terms of the significance of the problem, evidence can be found primarily in the related literature with supporting evidence from current practice. Claims about the importance of innovation of your approach will again be primarily supported by evidence from literature about similar studies or projects, as will claims about the relevance of your results or findings. While references are optional for the initial structured abstract submission, the inclusion of them may strengthen the claims you are making to the abstract's reviewers.

Understanding the Structured Abstract Format

The Structured Abstract will help you write your final paper, as well as serving as the front page of your published paper. The Structured Abstracts will also be collated into the book of abstracts that delegates will receive at the conference in December.

The Structure Abstract template is comprised of seven sections in which you will be able to communicate the main points of your final paper:

- **Background.** A brief background of the study or the change in teaching practice reported in your paper, including the context and motivation. Give some indication of what is already known about the topic.
- **Purpose.** Briefly describe the research question (that is, what you wanted to find out), hypothesis or the reason for the change in teaching practice. What were you trying to understand better by doing this study?
- **Design/method.** Include a brief summary of what was done in the study or the change in teaching practice, what data or evidence was collected and how it was analysed.
- **Results.** Summarise the key results of the study or the outcomes of the change in teaching practice. If the study or change is not finalised by abstract submission, what are the anticipated results or outcomes at this time?
- **Conclusions.** What conclusions can you draw on the basis of the evidence presented and how do they compare to what is currently known about the topic? If the study or change is not finalised by abstract submission, what are the likely conclusions?
- **References (optional).** References are not required for abstract review process. If references are included please use [APA referencing style](#) (as this will be used in the Full Paper).
- **Keywords.** Include 2 or 3 relevant keywords

For the initial submission of the structured abstract, you are asked to limit your submission to 1-2 pages. For the Full Paper submission, the abstract will be limited to one page.

For work yet to be completed at the abstract due date

The Conference organisers recognise that many authors may be in the midst of completing their projects by the May 28th abstract due date. In this case, please discuss your *anticipated* results and conclusions in the relevant sections of the template. These can then be updated when you submit your full paper, where the updated structured abstract will be the first page.

Writing the Structured Abstract

Each section of the Structured Abstract Template calls for the author to summarise their key “talking points” about their paper as follows:

Background

This section describes the background to and context of your project, whether that is a single subject or a course of study, the types of students or a common teaching practice. In a short paragraph, describe your background and context so that someone unfamiliar with what you are investigating can understand the rest of the abstract (and eventual paper).

Purpose

This section is used to document what you are intending to accomplish in this context. Make explicit reference to the research questions, the hypotheses, or the reason driving your project.

Design/Method

In one or two brief paragraphs, describe the basics of your research design or change in teaching practice. Please include a description of any data or evidence that was collected and how that was analysed or interpreted.

Results

Here you can describe what you found as a result of your project, specifically in terms of the evidence you gathered. Any discussion of the greater implications of your project will go into the Conclusions section.

If the study or change is not finalised when you first submit your abstract, describe instead what you think you may find. This text can also serve as an interesting point for discussion if the anticipated results differ from what is actually found.

Conclusions

This section should talk about how the actual or intended results help answer the initial research question or hypothesis. In addition, you can also discuss the relevance of your findings to the greater community, especially in terms of other similar work that has already been reported in the literature. As with the results section, if the study or change is ongoing when you first submit your abstract, describe what the likely conclusions are.

In addition, the template gives you room to list any references you want to mention (they are optional at this point) as well as two or three key words describing your project.

Structured Abstract Review Process

The AAEE conference will use Structured Abstracts for the first time in 2012. You need to submit a Structured Abstract using the new [AAEE Structured Abstract Template](#) via the [AAEE 2012 Easychair](#) website. The Organising Committee will then provide individual, supportive feedback including, if necessary, suggestions on how to improve the ideas for the full paper.

To prepare for this review process, we encourage you to draft your Structured Abstract in time to ask a colleague to read it and give you comments before you submit. This is a useful way to check that what you're meaning to say has made its way onto the page.

We welcome your comments and feedback. Please email Dr Llew Mann: lmann@swin.edu.au