Tips for an Effective Presentation
Macro Student Reading Group

1. Crowded slides are difficult to read/follow. Use a large font, limit to 3-4 major bullet points with at most 1-2 sub-bullet points.

2. No more than 2 introductory slides. The first slide should motivate the question and explain why this is important. The second should give an overview of how the authors answer the question. Be sure to state upfront what the main point/result of the paper is. Center the remaining talk around the main result.

3. Only focus on the benchmark model/empirical specification. No need to present the robustness checks and extensions in the paper if they are inessential to the main point.

4. For each slide, make sure you know what the one (or max 2) points of the slide are. Use words effectively, e.g. titles can already state the main message of the slide.

5. After you finish writing a first draft, go back and ask: is all the material absolutely essential to make the main point? If not, cut it out and clean up the slides. If you're unsure, move what you believe is redundant to the back of the presentation and include hyperlinks to that material so you can access it easily.

6. The model (including notation), empirical specification and quantification should be explained fully. Do not cut corners. If the paper contains a model, be sure to explain the agents, preferences, technology and equilibrium concept. Do not simply follow the structure of the paper, always start by laying out the model fully. Do not make us guess what the authors assume, state it explicitly. Oftentimes papers violate these rules, so you may have to fill in the gaps yourself, which is why you should focus the talk on the main model/result in the paper. Ideally, when we leave the seminar room, we should all be able to go code up the model on the computer. If the paper is quantitative or empirical, be sure to discuss how the key parameters are identified.

7. In following these guidelines, you do have to recognize what parts of the paper are more novel and what parts are more standard. Spend more time discussing the more novel aspects of the paper, and less on the more standard ones. For example, if the model is a standard 3-equation New Keynesian model, it's probably of little use for you to spend 30 minutes reminding us how that works.

8. Slides should be self-contained. Someone reading them should be able to understand what is going on without hearing you talk.

9. Avoid as much as possible lengthy algebraic derivations. You should know the derivations and be ready to reproduce them if asked, but put those in backup slides at the end of the talk. Don't spend 30 minutes of the talk doing algebra. Instead of spending time on the algebra, focus on the

economics of the problem. What specific assumption is responsible for a particular result? Would the result survive if we assumed something more standard instead?

10. If you include a graph or a table, be sure to spend time explaining what's on the axes, what each individual curve represents, what the columns of the table are etc. Don't just copy-paste figures/tables from the paper and hope that we'll figure it out on the fly. It is your job to understand the paper and explain it to us. It often helps to pick a point on the graph/table and explain it in greater detail.

11. Practice a few times before the talk. The goal of practice is two-fold. First, you want to make sure you can finish on time (maximum 40 minutes for a one-hour talk so you leave ample time for questions). Second, when you present out loud, it forces you to rethink the presentation. You'll often recognize that you're better off discarding some material since it is not absolutely essential. This will make for a smoother talk and avoid unnecessary digressions.