

Monday, 7th November 2022

09:00-09:30	Introduction
09:30-09:45	The thesis defense: General information
09:45-10:30	The introduction of the presentation
10:30-11:30	Structuring the presentation
11:30-13:00	Basics of scientific argumentation
<i>13:00-14:00</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:00-15:30	Constructing the main argument
15:30-17:00	Preparing and presenting the introduction

Tuesday, 8th November 2022

09:00-10:30	Discussion of exercises
10:30-11:00	Dealing with nervousness and general tips for preparation
11:00-13:00	Handling difficult questions
<i>13:00-14:00</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:00-16:30	Further exercises and mini-presentations
16:30-17:00	Closing round and feedback

Tips on rhetoric and presentation techniques

- Say a few nice words to the audience at the beginning.
- Never start by mentioning problems (for example, technical problems)
- Use a presenter (remote control) to control your powerpoint presentation
- Stand firmly on the ground with both legs
- Don't talk with your face towards the flipchart or the presentation
- Disturbances (e.g. a mobile phone ringing) are a priority: You have to address them or wait until the disturbance is over.

Tips for dealing with nervousness (and to avoid blackouts)

- Being well prepared is the best way to avoid nervousness!
- Plan your presentation so that you are sure you don't exceed the time.
- Use your slides as a safety net.
- Avoid negative thoughts during the days and hours before your presentation. Focus on positive thoughts („It will be great“ ...).
- Remember: the thesis defense is not an oral exam!
- If your heart is pounding: breathe deeply and use pursed-lips-breathing
- Stay in a high-power pose for several minutes before the presentation.
Avoid low-power poses

Tips for your presentation



Amy Cuddy: „Power Posing: Brief nonverbal displays affect neuroendocrine levels and risk tolerance“. *Psychological Science*, October 2010.

https://www.ted.com/talks/amy_cuddy_your_body_language_may_shape_who_you_are

Dealing with blackouts

- Fear of blackouts does more harm than the blackouts themselves
- Take a deep breath, take a sip of water
- Look at someone familiar in the audience
- Have your notes in front of you and use them as a safety net
- Repeat the last sentence you said
- Know the beginning and the end of your presentation by heart

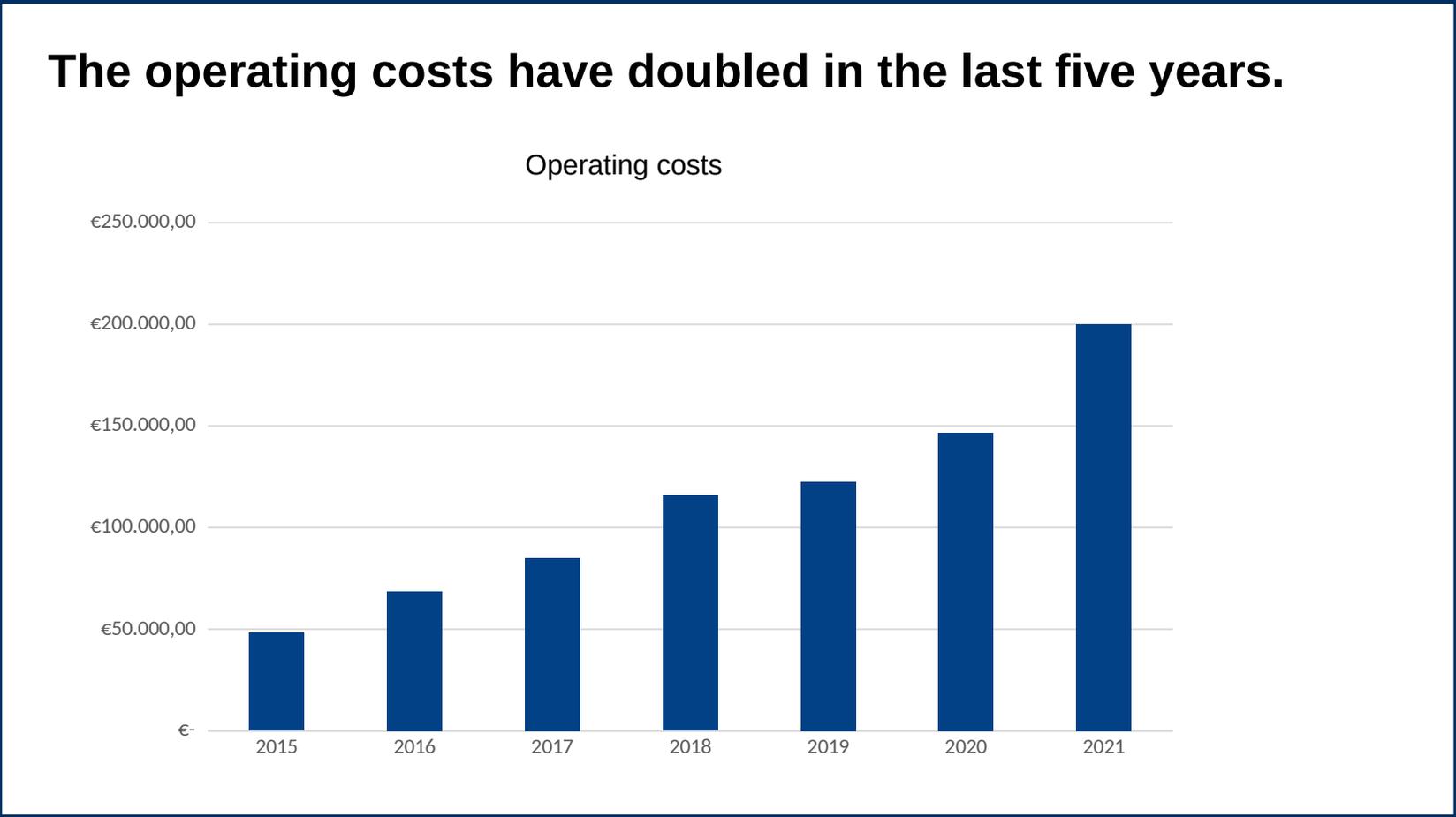
How to design the slides for your presentation:

- The slides should support your presentation
- Use images and graphs, not too much text, no long sentences
- Use the slides to emphasise your main points
- Ideally: one idea / message per slide, not too much detail
- Use the slides to make the structure of the presentation / of your main argument transparent – e.g. have little symbols in the corner for different parts
- If you have more than a few words on a slide, indicate when you're referring to which text, read it aloud – avoid a situation in which people read text on the slide while you talk about something else
- Use the university logo / layout

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"Action Title"



Handling difficult questions...

Kinds of difficult questions and ways to deal with them

- **Very long questions / monologues without a question**
 - Take notes
 - React (agree/disagree), ask for clarification / ask for the question
 - Repeat / summarise the argument / the question as you understood it
- **Questions you don't understand (too complex or too detailed)**
 - Repeat / summarise the argument / the question as you understood it / the part you understood and ask for further clarification
- **Question you don't know the answer to (but you feel you should know it)**
- **Questions about details of theories or studies (knowledge questions)**
 - Answer a part of the question if you can
 - Admit that you don't know the answer
 - Say something in the same area that you do know
- **People pressing the same difficult point**
 - Summarise different views, try to draw some conclusion

Kinds of difficult questions and ways to deal with them

- **Very general questions that challenge the whole purpose of your work**
- **Questions that fundamentally challenge parts of your research**
- **Questions about methodology**
 - be transparent about the limitations of your work
 - defend your claims with confidence (your dissertation was accepted, you have good reason for your approach and your results)
- **Committee discuss among themselves**
 - It's the job of the chair to stop it
 - If they fail to do it, try to bring yourself back into the conversation without being rude
- **Misunderstandings**
 - Clarify immediately. How to do it in a polite way: "Thank you for bringing this up, this gives me the opportunity to clarify a very important point: I don't claim... but ..."
- **People asking about your (missing) references to their own work**
 - Defend your approach with confidence, appreciate the work maybe as a starting point for further research

General advice

- Show confidence in your own work
- Find out beforehand about research areas of committee members – anticipate questions and objections
- Prepare extra slides for predictable questions
- Repeat questions and objections – gain time, you appreciate the question, you show you understand the point, you make sure you answer exactly what was asked
- If you get critical questions:
 - don't feel personally challenged or worried that your research is flawed
 - the thesis defense is about challenging and discussing your research
 - criticism is often a sign of appreciation (deep engagement with your work)

Speed Debating

You take contrary positions and one of you starts to present an argument for their claim. The other first repeats the argument in their own words, and only after that is allowed to put forward their own argument. Do a few rounds of arguments and then take some time to reflect on the experience.

You should never lie to your partner. // Sometimes it's okay to lie to your partner

Smartphones should be banned from schools. // Smartphones should not be banned from schools.

Bike helmets should be mandatory // should not be mandatory.