



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

# BIRMINGHAM PHD VIDEO ABSTRACT GUIDANCE



Showcase your thesis. Raise your profile. Extend your reach.



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# INTRODUCTION

The University Graduate School (UGS) is offering all doctoral researchers the chance to submit a short accessible video about their research: a video abstract.

Video abstracts will be hosted on the [UGS YouTube channel](#) and may also be chosen to feature on the main [University of Birmingham \(UoB\) channel](#). Video abstracts will also be linked to theses in the [UoB eThesis Repository](#).

Creating a video abstract provides you with an excellent opportunity to:

- raise the profile of and extend the reach of your research;
- showcase your thesis to potential employers;
- develop experience in presenting your research to non-specialists;
- demonstrate skills in research, communication, and creativity;
- celebrate the achievement of gaining your PhD with a video that can be shared with friends and family!

Please keep in mind that the information covered in these pages is intended to offer you help and support - you do not need to be an expert in video editing or a technical specialist in order to take part!

Ultimately, the most important thing is that you can record a short talk that summarises your thesis. Feel free to be creative and use tools and methods that you feel most comfortable with, even if they aren't listed in this document!

# ELIGIBILITY AND TIMELINE

To be eligible for this opportunity, you must:

- have received written approval of the video by your supervisory team (and external partners, if applicable);
- consent - via submission - to your video being uploaded to the UGS YouTube channel and, if selected, the main UoB YouTube channel;
- submit a video that is 5 to 8 minutes long and delivered in the English language. Your video must be recorded in a landscape orientation.
- have submitted your thesis, or intend to submit it within the next 12 months. Your video will only be added to YouTube when your PhD has been awarded (i.e. you have completed your viva and any required corrections/revisions have been made).

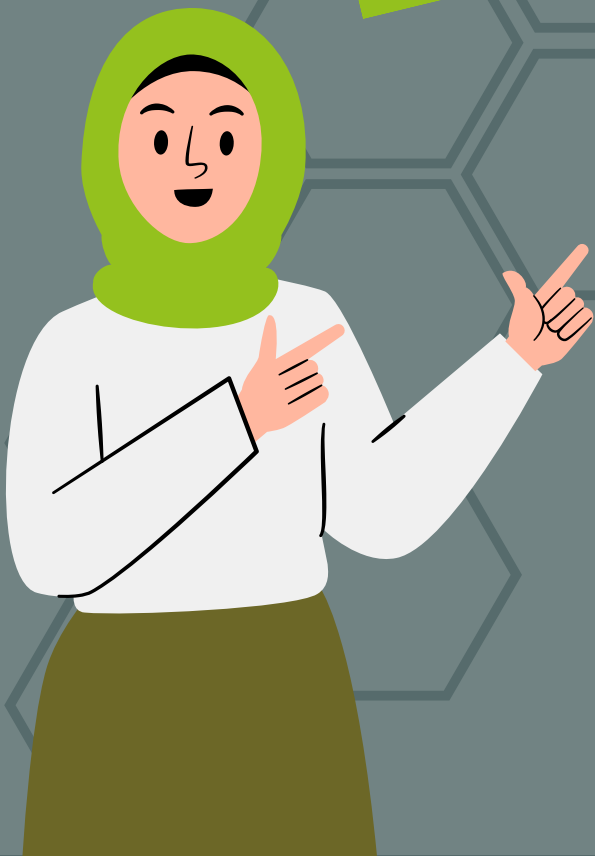


There is no formal timeline for completing your video abstract. Once you have submitted your expression of interest using **this form**, a member of the UGS will check in with you regularly to ask for updates and provide support where necessary.

Once you have submitted your video abstract using **this form**, please allow for up to one month for it to be checked for approval and uploaded to the UGS YouTube channel.

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# YOUR ABSTRACT



# HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE!

Think about how you will 'hook' your audience at the start of your video abstract to capture their attention and how you will keep them interested throughout it.



Some strategies that might 'hook' your audience include:

- Opening with a rhetorical question
- Using a shocking statistic
- Making a bold (but provable!) claim

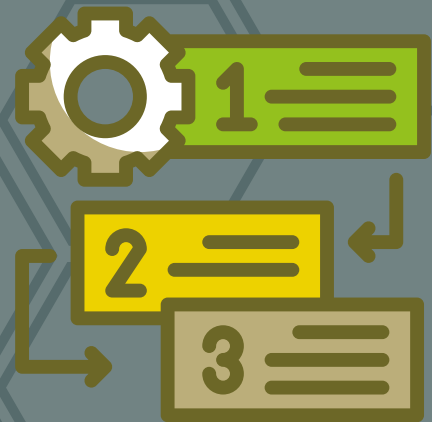
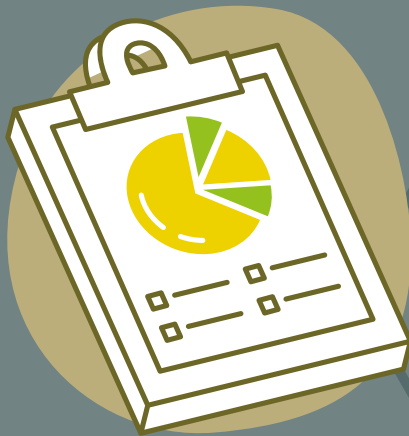


You might also want to use these strategies throughout your video abstract too.

Consider using verbal emphasis, visual elements, and transitions as well!

# SEQUENCING

Ensure that you have sequenced your abstract in a logical way!



It may be helpful to address the background to your research, the significance of your topic, and the importance of your research questions early in your video abstract.

Avoid spending too long on background, however - the emphasis should be placed on what you did, how you did it, and what you found out.



Be sure to include the impact of your research! What is the impact of your results, your conclusions, or how they could be applied?



# CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

Keep your audience in mind as you write your video abstract. Although you can expect a degree of educatedness from them, don't assume that they will be within your specialism! Use non-specialist terms where possible, and use similes or everyday comparisons to help to explain unavoidable specialist terms.

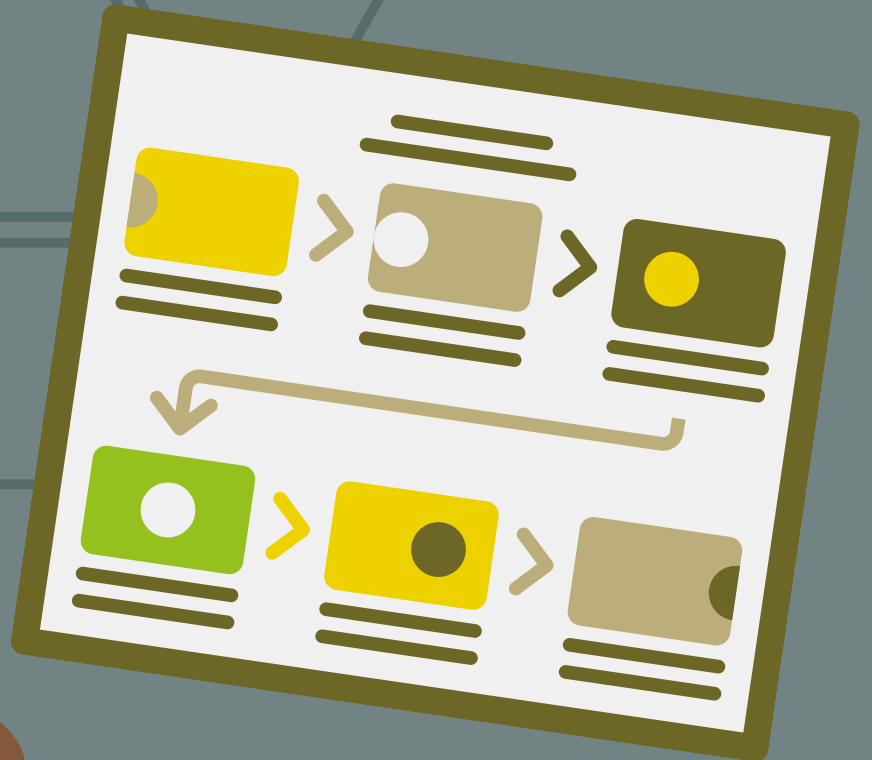
Continue to consider hooks throughout your video abstract. What might be the most interesting thing about your thesis? Or the most surprising? Or have the most real-world, day-to-day relevance to people's lives? Make sure you include these throughout your video abstract!

Your video might inspire your audience or really capture their interest, and so they might want to find out more about your research! Can you send them to look at any of your publications, or do you have a website or research-focused social media account that they could have a look at? Do you welcome their questions, and if so, how should they contact you?





# PREPARATION



# KNOW YOUR ABSTRACT

Draft a full script for your video abstract. Remember that it will be read out loud, so avoid overlong sentences and awkward phrases. A comfortable speed for spoken delivery is around 80 words per minute. Use this guideline to help you speak clearly and at a measured pace.



Rehearse your script and time yourself! Make changes if necessary, e.g., if it is too long overall, if a sentence or section goes too long without pause, or if you keep on tripping up over the same phrase.

You may find it useful to include pauses or emphases in your script. (2) might tell you to take a two second pause for effect - or to breathe! - whereas you might use **bold text** to remind yourself to really stress a certain word or phrase.



You are not required to know your script off by heart, although relying less on a paper script may result in a higher quality video abstract overall.

**TOP TIP:** If you are using Powerpoint, write your script in the notes section and then record yourself using PowerPoint's "cameo" feature. Your script will appear at the top of the screen, underneath your webcam!

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# SUPPLEMENT YOUR ABSTRACT

Will you use slides, images, props, or audio? If so, make sure that these are not a distraction for yourself or your audience (e.g. too many words on a slide; too complex an image; too obscure a prop). These elements should aid in conveying meaning, not hinder it! Directly refer to your slides, images, and props where relevant.

If you are using slides, images, props, or audio, you may find it useful to make a storyboard that helps you to think about how these will work with your script.

This could also be as simple as making a note of images and props as 'comments' on a word doc version of your script.

Or it could mean filling out a table that looks like this:

Time	Script	Visuals	Notes
00:00-00:10	Hello, my name is...	Talking head	Name + affiliation put on-screen
00:10-00:40	As you can see...	Slide 1	Slide 1: bullet point research qs

This could be as simple as printing your slides out (we recommend 3 per page) and writing your script in the space provided.

# RESOURCES AND COPYRIGHT



Do you need any equipment (e.g. a recording device), tools (e.g. PowerPoint slides), or props (e.g. some books related to your research) for your video abstract? Make sure you have them all before you start recording!



When using other media, including images and music, be wary that they may be subject to copyright. Media with a Creative Commons 0 licence (CC0) is free to use, although you may need to include attribution to the copyright holder somewhere in your video.

**Always check copyright licence information before using media.**



Copyright-free media libraries include: [Pixabay](#), [Pexels](#), [Unsplash](#), [Public Domain Pictures](#), [Pickupimage](#), [Bensound](#), [Free Stock Music](#), [YouTube Audio Library](#), [Freesound](#), and [BBC Sound Effects](#)



# RECORDING



# EQUIPMENT

How will you record visual footage?

- Most mobile devices have good quality cameras.
- Most laptops / desktops also have good quality webcams.
- If you have a camera, you could also use that!



How will you capture audio footage?

- Again, most mobile devices have good quality microphones.
- Some laptops and PCs have good quality in-built microphones.
- Some headphones with in-built microphones are also of a good standard.
- If you have a camera or external mic, you could also use that!

How will you ensure your footage is well-lit?

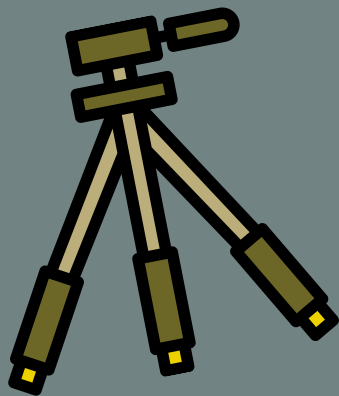
- Lamps and reading lights - especially ones that can dim - are often suitable.
- A ring light, if you have one, is also sufficient.



Try out different configurations of equipment and see what produces the best result. Ultimately, you do not need to buy any new specialist equipment!

# SPACE (1)

Record against a plain background to reduce distraction, and also to help your recording device focus on your face!

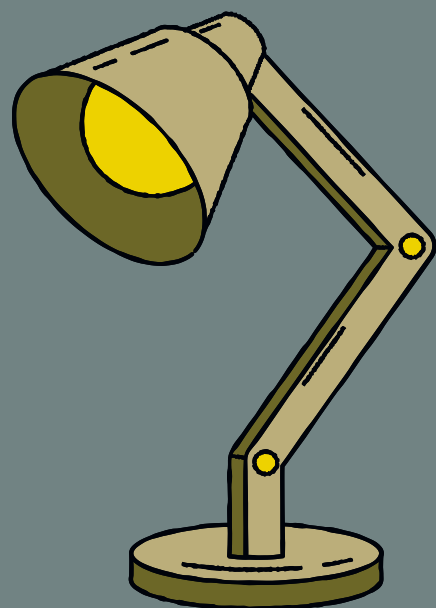


Keep plenty of space around your recording device and make sure that it is securely balanced. Use a tripod if you have one, or a stack of books!

Control the light levels in the space you are recording in.

Close windows and blinds if possible, and turn off big lights. Use a small light to highlight yourself.

Ensure you are lit from the front and from or slightly above face level - it's more flattering!

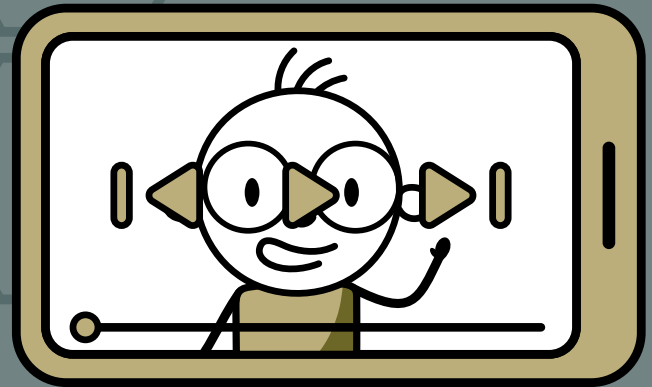


# SPACE (2)



Minimise noise levels around you as you record – close windows and doors, turn off noisy appliances, silence your phone, remove rustling papers, etc.

You can sit or stand as you record – whichever is most comfortable for you! Either way, ensure that you have sufficient space around you for your recording equipment.



Place your camera between 3-5 feet away from you. Ensure that your face is in the centre of the frame, leaving some space above the top of your head and under the bottom of your jaw. Your recording device should be at face level, not under or above it.



# TOP TIPS!



Pause for a couple of seconds between takes and reset your facial expression. This will make your life easier when editing!



Keep a glass of water nearby! Talking to camera for a prolonged period of time can put a strain on your voice.



If you stumble over your words as you record, pause for a moment, and start again from a few words before the previous pause (comma, full-stop, etc.) - this will help your new take to sound more natural and will allow your microphone to balance out sound levels.

Don't forget to smile! Not only will this make your video abstract more appealing, the difference between smiling and not can be heard in your voice!

# USEFUL LINKS AND NEXT STEPS



[Filming guidance \(birmingham.ac.uk\)](https://www.birmingham.ac.uk)

More guidance for filming from the University.

[Introduction to Video Editing \(bham.ac.uk\)](https://www.bham.ac.uk)

A canvas course covering video editing, including some software recommendations.

[Animated Explainer Videos \(bham.ac.uk\)](https://www.bham.ac.uk)

A canvas course outlining how you can use animated explainers to help you create a video.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0dhR0kvIIVA>

A recent, clear, and comprehensive YouTube video outlining how to make a good video abstract

