

JMU Honors College Symposium

Poster Design, Printing, and Submission Instructions

Overview:

We're delighted you're planning to present a poster at the JMU Honors College Symposium!

Below, please find detailed instructions for designing and printing your poster.

Important dates and deadlines:

April 3	Registration deadline. If you have not already, please visit BeInvolved and register for the event as a presenter. For group presentations, each presenter should register separately.
April 20 (9:00 am)	Poster and presentation upload deadline. See instructions below for formatting your poster; all posters submitted on time will be printed by the Honors College free of charge. For group presentations, only one person needs to upload the poster file, but please make sure all group members' names are on the poster.
April 21 (9:00 am)	Program Edits deadline. We will contact you to confirm your presentation title and name for inclusion in the program; please submit all edits by this date.
April 23 (5:00 pm)	Poster Dropoff deadline. If you opt to print your poster yourself (at your expense), you must drop it off at Hillcrest House by 5:00 pm to be included in the Symposium.
April 24 (12:00-3:00 pm)	Honors College Fall Symposium in Madison Union Ballroom

Where do I begin?

Answer these two sets of questions:

1. What is the most important/interesting/astounding finding from my research project?
Remember: most of the people you talk to will not be experts in your field. Design your poster with the general audience in mind.
2. How can I visually share my research with conference attendees? Should I use charts, graphs, photos, images? What kind of information can I convey during my talk that will complement my poster?

How to design an academic poster

1. Microsoft PowerPoint is the most common program used to design posters, but options such as Canva and Adobe InDesign are appropriate as well.
2. Feel free to use the basic PowerPoint poster template provided by the Honors College (located on the Honors College Capstones and Portfolios Canvas page). You should customize this template to your purposes and preferences.
3. Look at poster examples online. Search for “academic poster” or “research poster.” You can even look for examples in your own field: “History academic poster,” “Biology academic poster,” “Anthropology research poster.”
4. You can use any template or format you choose. However, **the poster size should be 36” x 48” with landscape orientation.**
5. Your poster is a visual tool. It should be informative, easy to read, and brief. Think of a poster as a series of highly efficient, organized “panels” (a storyboard) upon which appear synopses of the relevant information you want to convey – just enough to get your point across. Text should be concise and minimal. Less is often more.
6. Use of bullets, numbering, and headlines makes it easy to read.
7. Organize your poster materials in an easy-to-follow sequence, using headings, such as “Introduction,” “The Research Question,” “Methodology,” and “Findings.” These headings will make it easy to identify the key points.
8. Use large fonts. For headings, use at least a 48-point font. For text, use nothing less than 18-point. Important information should be readable from about 10 feet away.
9. For line-spacing, choose 125%-150% of the font-size. For example, if you are using a font-size of 30 points, you should select a line-spacing of 38-45 points. (With some software, this is expressed as a ratio, such as 1.5 or 150%). This is also good use of typography.
10. Make your poster appealing. Incorporate color. Use photographs, graphs, charts, maps, and the like. Simplify charts and figures to include only information that can be grasped at a glance. Be attentive to the layout and placement of your materials and maintain high content to background contrast.
11. Place the title of your work in a prominent position on your poster. Try and keep the title short. Be sure to include your name and any important basic information about you and your project: for Honors capstone projects, your department/major and faculty advisor; for other projects, the course in which the project was completed, instructor or faculty advisor, etc.

Creating a Poster in PowerPoint (Detailed Instructions)

1. Create one large slide in PowerPoint that is 36 inches tall and 48 inches wide. It is important that you take this step at the beginning, so that the result is high-resolution enough for printing.
 - Open PowerPoint and choose File -> New -> Blank Presentation
 - For the slide layout, choose: Blank Slide (with no title)
 - Select: File -> Page Setup
 - Enter 48” for the width and 36” for the height
 - Make sure your slide is in “Landscape Mode” (wider than it is high)
 - To view your entire poster on the screen at one time, select: View -> Zoom -> Fit
 - To zoom in on sections of the poster to work on them in finer detail, select: View -> Zoom -> 100% (or some other level or resolution)

2. Next, cut and paste images, text, blocks, and charts into the PowerPoint slide that you have created.
 - To open a text box on your poster, select: Insert -> Text Box
 - Then click anywhere on your poster and begin typing in the box.
 - You can size/move the text box by using the lines and dots on the edges of the box.
 - You can change the font size, color, and so forth as you would in Microsoft Word.
 - You can put gridlines on the slide so that you can line up your pictures and text by clicking on the Show/Hide Grid button on the toolbar. If you don't see the shortcut, click View -> Grid and Guides -> then check the box for Display Grid on Screen. You can also change the spacing of the grid lines right above the Display Grid on Screen option.
 - Other objects can also be inserted in a similar way by selecting the appropriate object (picture, diagram, chart, table) from the Insert menu. Keep in mind that any images will be blown up in a poster and there may be some distortion or pixilation when it is printed. Be sure to use high resolution images.
 - You can add colors to the poster by using autosshapes and changing the fill color. Shortcuts for these options can be found on the drawing toolbar. If you do not see the drawing toolbar (located at the bottom of the screen) select Tools -> Customize -> Toolbars -> then check the drawing box and the toolbar should appear.
 - You can stack shapes or text-boxes on top of each other. For example, if you wanted to create a colored border around a white textbox, you could use the rectangle

autoshape to draw a box and fill it with a color. These options are located on the drawing toolbar. You could then draw a textbox inside the rectangle. Right click inside the textbox, choose the Format Textbox option, and change the fill color of the textbox (change it to white or any other color).

- Right click inside the textbox again and choose the Order option, then choose Bring to Front, so the textbox would be seen on top of the colored rectangle. You can stack shapes, pictures, graphs, etc. in the same manner by right clicking on the object and choosing the Order option.
 - If you have objects stacked on top of each other, you can group them together so all the stacked objects become one new object. They can be moved around the page together. This is done by clicking on each object you want to be grouped together while holding down the Ctrl key. For example, if you had a textbox with a colored rectangle behind it you could click the rectangle to select it, then hold down the Ctrl key and click on the textbox. Right click on the object and select the Grouping option, then click Group. (Ungroup can also be selected in the same way to separate the objects again.)
 - Remember to leave at least 1/4-inch of white (unprinted) space around the outside of your poster since large-carriage printers typically cannot do “full bleed” printing (i.e., they cannot print right up to the edge of the paper).
3. You can also paste other PowerPoint slides (from a previous presentation, for example) right onto the poster.
- Open a PowerPoint presentation file.
 - Select: View -> Slide Sorter.
 - Right-click on a slide and select Copy.
 - Go back to your PowerPoint poster file and select: Edit -> Paste Special -> Microsoft PowerPoint Presentation Object.
 - Now you can move and size the slide as a separate object on your poster.
4. Create a final PDF version for uploading or printing.
- Select: File -> Save As -> then label your file as follows:
 - For individual presenters: LastName.FirstName.Spring26Symposium
 - For group presentations: PresentationTitle.Spring26Symposium
 - Select PDF as the Save As Type to ensure you make a PDF version
 - Select: Save

Poster Upload Instructions

Upload your poster file to the [Spring Symposium Submissions](#) folder by 9:00 am on April 20 for free printing by the Honors College.

Please make sure you have named your file as follows:

- For individual presenters: LastName.FirstName.Spring26Symposium
- For group presentations: PresentationTitle.Spring26Symposium

If you have trouble uploading your poster file, contact Aiman Rahman, Honors College Graduate Assistant by emailing rahma5ax@dukes.jmu.edu. Please include your poster file as an attachment.

Where Can I Print My Poster?

If you would like to print your poster yourself (at your expense), we recommend you send a digital copy of the poster in PDF format to your printer well in advance of the symposium. Plan to drop off your poster at Hillcrest House by 5:00 pm on April 23.

JMU Print Services is a great resource for printing your poster. Posters on the cheapest paper cost as little as \$12 to print. Send your poster in a PowerPoint file (PDF is also acceptable) to copycenters@jmu.edu. Please allow at least 48 hours for your poster to be printed.

Some departments and colleges have printers that can make posters, and some departments and majors offer mini-grants to help you defray the costs of the poster.