

**Your Abstract and
Your Audience:
*Adapting Your
“Research Pitch”
for Interdisciplinary
Spaces***

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Introduction

At ICUR, we believe that **global, interdisciplinary problems require global, interdisciplinary solutions**. These solutions happen when researchers from all disciplines and backgrounds are able to meet, engage, and connect with each other - sharing their own knowledge, learning from each other's expertise, and working together on new approaches, ideas, and understandings.

That's why ICUR is an **interdisciplinary conference**. Submission is not only open (and encouraged!) for all topics and disciplines, but these different research areas are **actively put into conversation together**.

ICUR promotes **interdisciplinary connection and conversation** through:

1. **Interdisciplinary Panels** *structured via three main pathways (the overarching **purpose** of your research, its **theme(s)**, and your **methodologies**)*
2. **Peer Mentorship** *in the form of our **Session Chairs**, who introduce you to your ICUR peer network, support you in developing your presentation, and help you to forge international connections*
3. **Interdisciplinary Engagement Training** *from the point of abstract submission through presentation development and up to the conference itself (as presenter and audience member)*

What does this have to do with my abstract?

Participation in ICUR asks you to think about presenting your research to an **interdisciplinary audience** from the point of abstract submission.

ICUR audiences will engage with your abstract before they see your poster or hear you speak. **Think of it as the “elevator pitch” for your research** - it's only a short piece of text, but it can be the deciding factor for somebody deciding whether they're interested in learning more about your work!

Therefore, the **ICUR Abstract Review** is conducted by reviewers from a wide variety of specialties, disciplines, and backgrounds.

We do not assign reviewers based on subject specialism - each abstract is reviewed by two people who may or may not share your level of knowledge about your subject. They will be looking at your abstract to see how you communicate the complex ideas within your research projects to non-specialists; and how you invite your audience along on your research journey with you.



What should I do if I'm...

Writing an interdisciplinary abstract for the first time?

There are many ways to write an effective abstract. At ICUR, we ask you to follow the **IATL Method** ([click for Abstract Guide](#)) - an approach which has been developed and refined over years to support you to **include relevant information** and **complex ideas** in an **accessible way**. If you're writing an abstract from scratch, you're in a great position because you can begin by thinking about non-specialist audiences!

We ask you to think about four questions in relation to your research - **Why? What? So what? Now what?** Your answers to these questions are not assessed by reviewers directly - but reviewers *will* be looking at how well you **communicate** them to non-specialists in your abstract itself.

Storytelling

Try thinking about your abstract as a story - the **story of your research project**. Maybe audiences won't know the full, specific context of your work - but if you can show how you got from Point A to Point B - problem/question to solution/answer - they'll be able to follow and relate to your story more easily.

Big Picture

In a subject-specific conference, audiences might ask you very detailed questions about your methodology - but an interdisciplinary audience of non-specialists is more likely to be interested in *why* you did it and what it *means*. In your abstract, **think about the big picture** - the context in which your work intervenes, the debates you're addressing, and the real-world impact and relevance of your findings.

Language

Language can make or break a reader's engagement with your abstract. Discipline-specific jargon (dense theory, technical terms, formulae and equations, etc) can be very alienating for non-specialists - and **often people do not want to engage with work which makes them feel alienated or uninformed**. How would you explain your work to a university friend or colleague in a different department?

Personal/Personality

Research always **begins with the researcher**. You thought your project was interesting for a reason - so how can you highlight that reason in your abstract? In some disciplines it feels unfamiliar to write abstracts in first person; but a personal touch and a bit of your own personality can make readers or audiences more invested in your work.

What should I do if I'm...

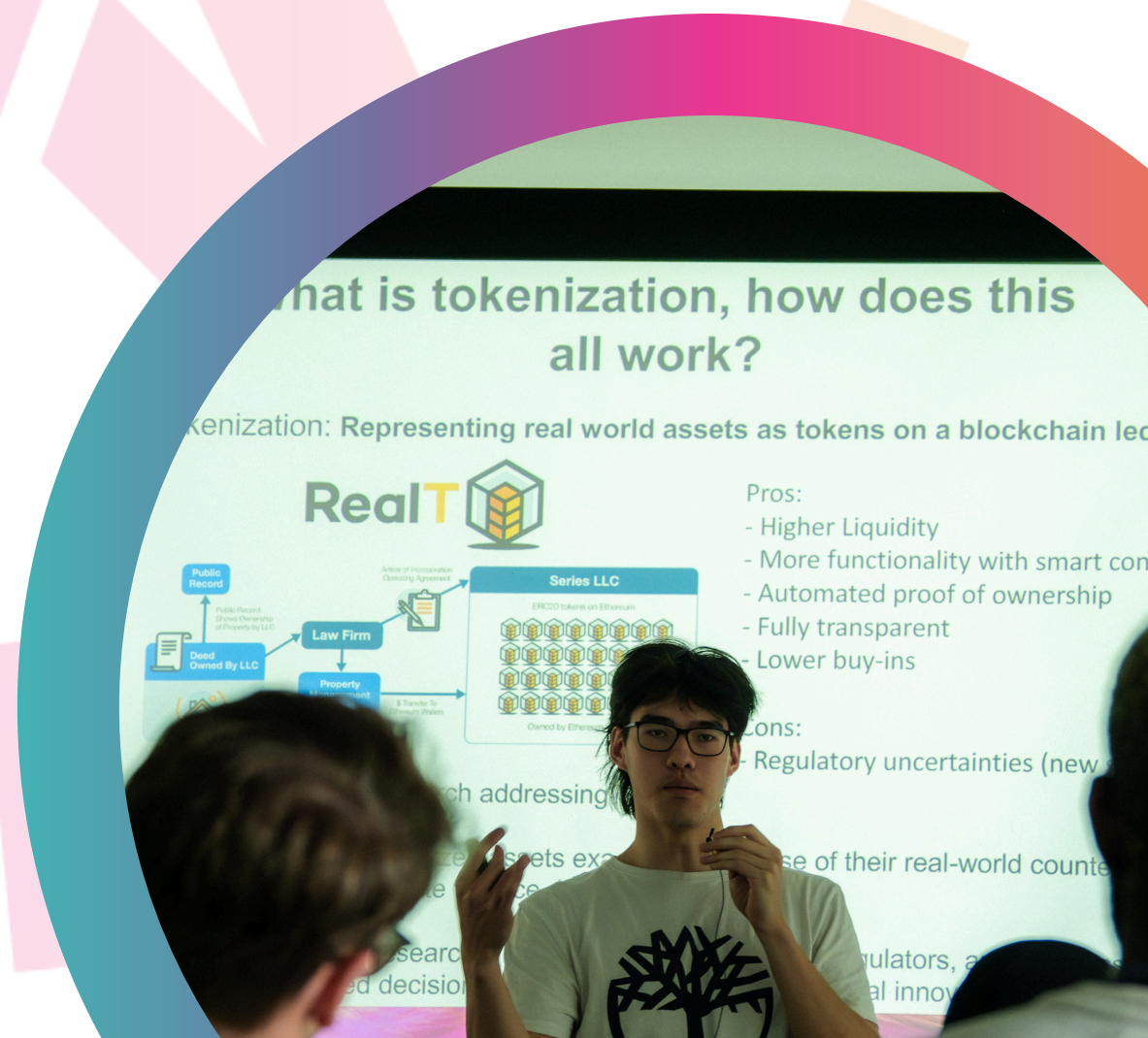
Adapting my discipline-specific abstract for an interdisciplinary audience?

All of the tips which apply to writing an abstract from scratch also apply to adapting an existing abstract for ICUR. But implementing them is a little more of a challenge when you already have the material, and you've already started thinking about audience and reader.

The good news is that **having the abstract material already means you can spend your time *refining*** rather than having to come up with something new.

Again, the best first step is to familiarise yourself with the **IATL Method** and our Abstract Writing Guide. This will give you a better idea of what reviewers are looking for.

You may also find it helpful to break your existing abstract up and map it against the reviewing rubric. For example - what do you think is the **Why** (the context) for your research? How would you answer someone who asked you "**So what** - Why should I care about your project?"





Example: A Successful Interdisciplinary Abstract

Below is an example of a successful ICUR abstract which has been written to convey complex ideas to an audience of specialists and non-specialists alike.

1 Matchmaking Math: From Stable to Slightly Wobbly

2

Securing accommodation at university is high-risk, and as an inexperienced first year, I knew no better than to house-hunt straightaway. After the inevitable collapse of my friend group, I wondered: if all my friends created individual “ideal housemates” lists, where would they place me?

4 The Stable Roommates Problem is a well-known extension of Gale and Shapley’s Stable Marriage Problem. It addresses finding a “stable matching” for a set containing an even number of elements. Here, a “matching” separates the set into disjoint pairs (or "roommates"). It is considered “stable” if no two individuals prefer each other over their assigned roommates. In my research, I aim to address extensions of this- what if a room were to contain three, four, or n “roommates”? In what ways can we establish preference orders for these and accordingly define notions of “stability” for a “house”?

6 The central research question holds significant relevance in the broader context of matching algorithms and their applicability, impacting fields from online dating to doctor-hospital allocation systems. By mathematically modelling real-life preferences, we can consider users’ perspectives and enhance existing algorithms. Certain approximation techniques and algorithms can be utilized to cut down computational time and derive a “good enough” solution efficiently, which- as a best-case scenario- may just spare a few freshmen from a year of dubious housemate experiences.

3

5

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1

Even the **title** for this abstract is working to hook interdisciplinary audiences. Perhaps non-mathematicians might be less inclined to engage with an obviously mathematics-focused abstract - but here, the alliteration and reference to “Matchmaking” are intriguing, and “Stable to Slightly Wobbly” adds a touch of humour.

2

The author introduces the **story** of their research - both the context they’re investigating (the problem of finding a good group of housemates at university) and themselves as a researcher (here, someone who has experienced the problem they’re investigating). Notice that there isn’t a primary research discipline identified yet - the author is focusing on relatability and bringing their audience along on the research journey by encouraging them to think about their own experiences.

3

Again, the author is highlighting their **personality** and their **personal** investment in their research. First person here is both humorous and a useful tool in identifying how their *own* interest in their project began - but also in highlight the kind of research question it will ask (the WHY).

4

Here, we start to see more about mathematics specifically. But although the author has used a specialist terminology (“Gale and Shapley’s Stable Marriage Problem”), they go on to break this down in **language that is accessible** for interdisciplinary audiences. We learn what is meant by “stable” in this context - potentially confusing otherwise, as this term might have different meanings across different disciplinary contexts. The author also hasn’t used any equations or mathematical formulae - instead, they have broken down the concepts they’re talking about in a way which isn’t intimidating or alienating for non-specialists.

5

The author identifies the WHAT of their own research - what it does and what they hope to find out. Again, they’re focusing on the **big picture** - they’re not getting stuck in the smaller details of formulae, method, or approach, and instead they’re drawing out the areas which will be meaningful and on which they can expand later. **This isn’t about a simplification of your research - it’s about adapting it to your audience, and helping them to understand.**

6

The abstract combines the SO WHAT and the NOW WHAT to identify the real-world applications of the research. From this, it’s clear to readers and audience members both why this mathematical research is relevant to them (and why it should be of interest!) This is another part of the **storytelling** of this abstract - when the narrative reaches its peak, and when it concludes.

7

A final touch of humorous **language** to conclude the abstract, and remind the audience/reader of the research context and why it’s relatable and relevant to them.

FAQs

I haven't done any interdisciplinary communication before. Is there any extra support available?

Very much so! Check out the [Training Calendar](#) on the ICUR Portal to see our upcoming abstract training sessions, and [sign up for your chosen session\(s\) online](#). You will also be added to our Teams space for the ICUR 2025 Student Community, where you can meet other prospective ICUR presenters.

What will happen if I submit my abstract without adapting it for interdisciplinary audiences?

If you submit an abstract which isn't tailored to interdisciplinary or non-specialist audiences, this will be picked up on in the feedback you receive from our abstract review. It's likely to mean that you will receive a **Revise and Resubmit** outcome in the first instance: this outcomes means that, in order to be accepted to present at the conference, you will need to go back and amend your abstract submission in line with the feedback you receive from reviewers. Thinking about your audience from the point of writing your abstract can save you a lot of work later on, and prevent you from missing out on a brilliant opportunity to share your work with the world!

What are the benefits of writing an abstract for interdisciplinary audiences?

There are benefits for **your audience** and for **yourself**.

Your audience will find that an interdisciplinary abstract - and therefore an interdisciplinary presentation - offers an opportunity to engage with research and information in an entirely new way. Your research could be responsible for someone's new project idea or area of interest; or you might inspire someone who didn't previously think research was something available to them.

You will benefit from the opportunity to develop and hone skills in communication and engagement - skills which are valued in professional, personal, and academic settings. You'll also get a wider, more diverse audience for your work, and be able to see the real-world impact of your findings on people who might not otherwise have come across your ideas!

Are there any quick links which might be useful to me?

The ICUR Portal is full of **Resources for Students** to support you in developing your abstract. You might find the below helpful!

[Training Calendar](#)

[Abstract Writing Guide](#)

[ICUR FAQs](#)

[Oxford Abstracts Guide](#)

[Online Training Sign Up](#)