
Congress Participation

Guidelines for the report

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Congress Participation seminar is a core element of the Master's programme, designed to introduce students to the wider academic and professional community in their field. This course allows students to visit and participate at a scientific conference in the fields of Sport & Exercise for Health & Performance. Students further learn that having a critical view and providing constructive criticism are important in order to promote science. They are encouraged to participate with their own research presentation. The “congress participation”, which can take place every semester, can only be accomplished with supervision and upon prior agreement. It is the students' responsibility to find and select a supervisor.

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These guidelines walk you through each phase of the process before, during, and after the congress and set out the expectations for your report. The report should typically be between 2 and 8 pages in length, with the appropriate length depending on the scope and content of the congress you attended. A short, focused congress may warrant a more concise report; a multi-day event with many sessions will naturally call for a more comprehensive account.

Please read these guidelines carefully before making any commitments regarding congress attendance, and do not hesitate to reach out to your supervisor if you have any questions.

2 BEFORE THE CONGRESS

Before registering for or committing to attend any congress, you must first contact your supervisor to discuss your plans and obtain their approval. This step is not a formality. It is an opportunity to ensure that the event you have chosen is genuinely relevant to your research and academic development.

2.1 Written Communication to Your Supervisor

You are required to send your supervisor a short e-mail **before** registration or even attending the congress. This message should address the following points:

- *Which congress you wish to attend, including its full name, location, date and homepage.*
- *Why this congress is relevant to your field of study or research interests? Basically your rationale for choosing it over other possible events.*
- *The key topics or thematic areas you hope to explore at the congress. What aspects of the programme are most aligned with your current work or interests?*
- *At least one specific presentation, keynote, or session that you are particularly looking forward to attending.*
- *How you became aware of the congress. Was it recommended by a peer, discovered via a mailing list, advertised on social media, announced at your institution, or found through another channel? This helps your supervisor understand your engagement with the academic community.*

2.2 Supervisor Approval

Please ensure that you have received explicit approval from your supervisor before finalizing your registration or making any travel arrangements. Attending a congress without prior approval may mean that the participation cannot count towards your seminar requirement.

2.3 Checklist: Before the Congress

- Identified a congress that is relevant to your field or research area
- Checked in with your supervisor explaining your choice by
 - Describing your key topics of interest and reasons for attending
 - Identified at least one presentation or session you are particularly excited about
 - Noted how you became aware of the congress
- Received written approval from your supervisor before registration

3 DURING THE CONGRESS

Active engagement during the congress is central to the value of this seminar requirement. You are not simply attending as a passive observer. You are expected to document your experience thoughtfully and to engage with the presenters and attendees around you. The notes and observations you make during the event will form the basis of your written report.

3.1 Summarizing Presentations and Sessions

You should write summaries of the keynote lectures, presentations, and sessions you attend. These summaries may be organised in one of two ways, and you should choose whichever structure best reflects the character of the congress:

*A) **Chronologically:** presenting each session in the order in which you attended it, with a clear date and time reference for each entry.*

*B) **Thematically:** grouping presentations by topic, with appropriate subheadings for each theme. This approach works particularly well when several sessions addressed related questions or methods.*

Your summaries may be organised into one or more chapters or sections within your report, mirroring the overall thematic or structural logic of the congress. There is no single correct approach. The goal is for your report to read as a coherent and reflective account of what you experienced.

3.2 Conversation with a Presenter

You are expected to approach at least one presenter after their talk and engage them in a genuine intellectual conversation. This does not mean asking a single question during a Q&A. It means seeking out a speaker after the session has ended and continuing the discussion in a more personal, exploratory way. Ask questions that go beyond what was covered in the presentation itself: about their methodology, their future research directions, their perspective on open debates in the field, their scientific path or anything else that arises naturally from their work.

In your report, this exchange must be written up as a reconstructed transcript from memory. This is not a verbatim recording. You are not expected to have noted every word, but a faithful and honest reconstruction of the conversation in an adequate format, written as you recall it. The transcript should be presented as a clearly labelled subsection within the body of your report (for example, under the heading 'Conversation with [Speaker Name]').

3.3 Photographs (Optional)

Photographs from the congress are warmly encouraged as a way of capturing the atmosphere and context of the event. You might photograph session rooms, poster boards, speaker moments, social gatherings, or the venue itself. If you choose to include images,

they should be collected as an appendix or attachment to your report, with a brief descriptive caption for each photograph.

Please note that photographs are entirely optional and will not affect the evaluation of your report. However, they can add a vivid dimension to your account and are always appreciated.

3.4 Checklist: During the Congress

- Written summaries of the keynotes and sessions attended
- Chosen a clear organisational structure (chronological or thematic) for the summaries
- Approached at least one presenter after their talk for a substantive conversation
- Written up the conversation as a reconstructed transcript in dialogue format
- Labelled the transcript as a dedicated subsection in your notes
- (Optional) Collected photographs with brief descriptive captions

4 AFTER THE CONGRESS: CRITICAL REFLECTION

The final section of your report should move beyond description and into critical reflection. This is your opportunity to step back from the individual sessions and conversations and consider the congress as a whole. Report what you learned, what surprised you, and what you would maybe change. A strong critical reflection demonstrates not only that you attended, but that you thought carefully about what you experienced.

Your reflection should address the following five dimensions:

4.1 Content Takeaways

What were the most significant intellectual insights or learnings from the presentations and discussions you attended? Which ideas or findings will stay with you, and why? How did the content of the congress relate to, or challenge, what you already knew about the field?

4.2 Soft Skills and Personal Development

Academic conferences are as much about observing professional conduct as they are about content. What did you notice about how researchers communicate their work, e.g., in terms of presentation style, clarity, use of visuals, handling of questions? What did you observe about networking, collegial exchange, or the informal social dynamics of the event? What, if anything, would you like to apply to your own academic practice?

4.3 Expectations vs. Reality

Before the congress, you identified topics of interest and sessions you were looking forward to. How did the reality compare to your expectations? Was the congress what you anticipated? What surprised you – positively or negatively? If you were disappointed by anything, can you articulate why?

4.4 Critical Evaluation of Presentation Formats

Most congresses use a variety of presentation formats such as keynote lectures, short (~10min) presentations, poster sessions, panel discussions, workshops, and so on. How effective did you find the formats used at this congress? What worked well and what did not? Were there formats that seemed particularly well-suited to the content being presented, or formats that fell short of their potential?

4.5 Recommendations to the Organizing Committee

Imagine that you have been invited to serve as an external advisor to the congress organising committee for future editions of the event. Based on your experience as an attendee, what would you recommend they improve or change? Your suggestions should be constructive and specific based on what you actually observed, rather than generic good practices.

4.6 Checklist: After the Congress

- Addressed all five reflection dimensions (content, soft skills, expectations, formats, recommendations)
- Ensured that reflections are critical and analytical, not merely descriptive
- Verified that the report is between 2 and 10 pages (excluding any photo appendix)
- Included the reconstructed transcript as a clearly labelled subsection
- Applied the formatting requirements set out in *Formatting Requirements for the Report*
- Submitted the report to your supervisor

5 FORMATTING REQUIREMENTS FOR THE REPORT

Your report should present a clean, professional appearance appropriate for an academic document. Please adhere to the following formatting specifications:

5.1 Typography and Layout

- Font: Arial, Times New Roman, or Helvetica throughout the document
- Font size: 11–12 points for body text; section headings may be slightly larger
- Line spacing: 1.1
- Margins: standard (approximately 2.5 cm on all sides)
- Structure: numbered headings and subheadings; coherent paragraph structure throughout

5.2 Length and Structure

The report should roughly be between 2 and 8 pages in length, excluding any photo appendix. The appropriate length will depend on the scope of the congress you attended and the density of your experience. Do not pad your report to reach a minimum length, and do not omit substantive content to stay brief.

5.3 Transcript Subsection

The reconstructed conversation with a presenter must appear as a clearly labelled subsection within the body of the report and not in an appendix. It could be formatted as a dialogue (e.g., with speaker labels such as 'Presenter:' and 'Student:') and introduced with a brief contextual note identifying who you spoke with and when.

5.4 Photo Appendix (Optional)

If you choose to include photographs, attach them as a clearly labelled appendix at the end of the report. Each image should have a brief caption. The appendix does not count towards the page limit.

5.5 Submission

When submitting your report, please name your file using the following convention:

Firstname Lastname_Congress-Participation-Report_CongressAcronymYear

For example: Justin Case_Congress-Participation-Report_ECSS2025