

Guidelines for Continuing Education

The following guidelines are intended to assist organizers and presenters in putting together a successful short course experience. Remember that a quality short course is usually a successful one, generating a great deal of repeat business, and reflects favorably on the Society as a whole. The guidelines below were drawn up based on collective experiences in residence classroom instruction to professional audiences.

A) Objectives

B) Instructors

C) Advanced Preparations and Participant Requirements

D) Effective Teaching and Learning Styles

Pre-course materials

The title, a brief course description, and an indication of the ideal number of course participants should be provided to the AMS meetings department for the "Calendar and Call" 6-12 months prior to the course offering. A pre-course package should clearly state the goals and objectives, contain a detailed outline that describes the topics to be covered, and state several practical applications in which course material would be useful to the participant. Pre-course materials should also include a clear description of expected prerequisite knowledge and suggested readings for all who attend the course. These materials must be provided to the AMS at least 45 days prior to the course date so that they may be distributed in advance to course participants.

Presentation format

There are a variety of formats suitable for short course presentations. In planning a short course, the organizer should account for a variety of learning modes ranging from active participation to the observer/reflector role. Periodic programmed interaction with the audience will enhance the participants' short course experience. This can range from a short interactive exercise within small groups of participants to a formal "hands-on" laboratory session. It is recommended that short course presentations be broken into 1-hour segments, with a 15-minute break between segments. Frequent breaks not only

allow time for necessary functions, but time for one-on-one interaction with instructors and fellow students. Short course coordinators should be strict timekeepers and should ensure that each session remains focused on the topic. As a general rule, it is a good idea to keep the number of different presenters to a minimum, seldom to exceed a total of four for a one-day event.

Presentation materials

Ideally, materials should be presented in electronic format (e.g. PowerPoint, COREL Presentation, Web, etc.), and short course organizers are strongly encouraged to do so. Handwritten overheads are not appropriate for short course presentations. Each session should begin with a title slide, followed by a list of goals and objectives. There should also be a slide containing summary points at the end of each session. Presenters should use care in selecting font sizes that are large enough to be easily viewed by the audience, and text should be as concise as possible (See AMS conference presentation guidelines for details). All figures should have adequate captions, and should also include a concise bullet(s) describing the main point(s) being illustrated. Avoid overuse of slides; a good rule of thumb is a maximum of one slide per minute of presentation.

Handout materials

Presentation materials, including copies of the presentation slides, must be provided to the AMS in hard copy form (and electronic form, if available) 45 days prior to the course date so they may be copied for distribution to course participants. Handwritten hand out materials will not be accepted.

Intellectual property

Short course presenters are responsible for obtaining copyright clearance on any materials presented and/or distributed. For instance, please don't simply copy figures from non-AMS journal articles or images from the Web without getting permission to use them.

Evaluation

To maintain a high quality of short course offerings, evaluations from participants are needed that identify not only what is successful, but any unmet needs and areas for improvement as well. A formative evaluation surveying participants as to their background and knowledge can be helpful to help mold the course to the audience. Course organizers should reserve time for formal participant feedback to be solicited by means of an end-of-course evaluation instrument developed by the AMS Board of Continuing Education. The post-course questionnaire will be designed so as to not be overly cumbersome, and should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.