GRADUATE MANAGEMENT ADMISSION COUNCIL

## 2016 European Conference
## November 13-15 Cambridge, UK

### Outline of a Concurrent Session

European Conference concurrent sessions are each 75 minutes long. There are typically four to five concurrent session timeframes. It is important that the session grabs and holds the attention of the audience. Presenters should keep in mind that attendees are attending multiple sessions and networking events each day. The most successful sessions are interactive, relevant, and demonstrate how lessons learned can be adapted to benefit each attendees' unique situation.

The format of each session depends on the content and preference of session presenters. Previous formats that have been executed and which have worked well are:

- **Panel of Schools:** a common challenge/opportunity is addressed in different ways by different schools. A panel allows the audience to benchmark 2-4 best practices from a variety of schools. School variety can include geography, size, public vs. private, program formats: FT, PT, EMBA, specialized masters, etc.
- **Roundtable Discussion:** the audience shares best practices with each other in small groups best achieved when there is a common activity in which all engage; for example, a case study, a set of questions to be answered, etc.
- **Interactive Workshop:** a facilitator interacts with the audience and puts into practice a concept learned.
- **Expert Led Presenter:** the topic requires an in depth description and framework that is best provided by an expert in the subject.
- **Other:** you may suggest another format for best presentation of your session.

A goal of each session should include ways to draw on the experience and examples of several schools in order to make the lesson(s) from the session applicable to our dynamic audience. This might include featuring several schools in one session, allowing an opportunity for the audience to share their input, or other creative solutions.

### Audience Structure

The European Conference hosts around 70 school professionals. Professionals attend the event from all functions and levels within graduate business schools. Most attendees work in admissions, marketing, program management, student services, and career services. Some attendees will be new to the industry while others will have been in the industry for over 20 years. To meet the challenge of catering to such a diverse audience, we suggest that you make it clear in the session description as to who the session is built for.

**<u>Questions to Consider</u>**

**Consider who your attendees will be and their level of knowledge of the subject; what do you believe they should know?** This question helps you distinguish between the "need to know" (what they really must know to succeed) and the "nice to know" (what you as the expert might like to tell them). One of the important considerations to keep in mind is that adults are motivated to learn when the subject is directly relevant and useful. Your challenge is to figure out these key relevant points for an audience that may be quite mixed in experience and level of knowledge.

**What are the three or four key points you wish to share with the session attendees?** The most successful sessions are interactive, allowing everyone to ask questions and share their experience and insights; the time you have to introduce key issues is quite limited. By honing in on the three most important ideas, as well as their supporting points, you will distinguish between the need to know and the nice to know and accomplish what you have planned for the session with ample time at the end for Q&A.

**What do you want them to be able to do differently when they return to their offices?** Thinking though this question will determine the level of information you'll try to share with them, as well as the way you'll do it. For instance, to be able to ride a bike at the end of the session, attendees would need lots of in-session practice to reach that goal. If, on the other hand, they only need to know what a bike looks like, visuals and more general information is sufficient.

**What is the best way they can learn what you wish to share with them?** Going back to the analogy, unless attendees actually need to be able to "ride that bicycle," you need to consider the different ways people prefer to learn -- listening, seeing, discussing, or reading. You might consider incorporating multiple modes of learning into your presentation. For instance, you might present an issue (auditory), include a handout or slide of the key points (visual), as well as allow ample time for discussion and questions (verbal).

**What are some interactive activities you might include in order to create a lively learning environment?** A simple way to increase interaction is to turn a "lecture" into a "conversation" by simply asking open-ended "what if" questions, asking for opinions on a given topic or situation or for additional information. If you note the feedback on a flipchart, you will increase both interaction and energy level as well as learning.

You might also consider dividing a large group into smaller discussion or workgroups. A spokesman for each group could share the results with the whole group at the end.