

Federal Research Bank of Atlanta's Research Seminar Protocols¹

The goals of seminars should be for participants to learn about new research and for presenters to gain constructive feedback. A lively discussion is an important part of any seminar series and is strongly encouraged. However, to promote a positive environment in the department, it is important that the discussion be an inclusive experience for all. To that end, please be mindful of the following seminar protocols:

1. **Allow presenters time to get through their introduction (approximately 10 minutes) and frame their talk without interruption.** Avoid asking questions about what speaker did in the paper to be presented (For example, “Are you going to do X?”) before they have a chance to explain their research. These types of questions can be raised later in the talk, after the speaker has fully explained their research.
2. **Treat the speaker and your colleagues with respect.** In other words, please make *every* effort not to interrupt or talk over the presenter or another participant. In addition, please refrain from sidebar conversations with other participants and from paying extensive attention to other work during the seminar.
3. **Raise your hand to indicate that you have a question or wish to contribute to the discussion.** This gives the presenter agency to mediate the discussion by calling on audience members and avoids interrupting the presenter mid-thought, a courtesy that may be especially appreciated in job talks. If the presenter doesn't see someone's hand, the organizer can help out. Note: This is only feasible for in-person seminars unless there is a moderator for virtual seminars.
4. **Share the floor.** Please remember that seminar time is a scarce resource. If you haven't had a chance to read the paper, please try to determine whether it addresses your question before you ask it. If you have already asked several questions, consider allowing a bit of time and space to see if others wish to contribute.
5. **Don't hold the talk hostage** A question or comment often leads naturally to some back-and-forth exchange with the speaker. If you continue to be dissatisfied with a response, please allow the presenter to move on and follow up in a one-on-one meeting.
6. **The person hosting the speaker should be prepared to serve as moderator of the seminar.** The speaker's host, or a seminar committee member if preferred, should be prepared to intervene in real time to call attention to someone whose raised hand has been overlooked, to return the floor to the presenter, or to remind participants of our norms of courtesy and respect. That said, everyone in the room can help mitigate power dynamics. For example, if a powerful person dismisses a question from a junior, a member of an underrepresented group in the profession, or a less-connected person, help to flatten the power dynamic by asking to hear the answer to that question.

¹ These protocols relied heavily on the following two documents.

1. Bayer, Amanda, Şebnem Kalemli-Özcan, Rohini Pande, Cecilia Elena Rouse, Anthony A. Smith Jr., Juan Carlos Suárez Serrato, and David W. Wilcox. 2019. *Best Practices for Economists: Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Productive Profession*. American Economic Association.
2. [“Guidance for a Constructive Culture of Exchange in MIT Economics Seminars”](#) (MIT Department of Economics 2019).