ALL
WELCOME

A guide to inclusive, accessible and sustainable events.

BRITISH ACADEMY OF MANAGEMENT

CABS
CHARTERED ASSOCIATION OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS

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The British Academy of Management (BAM) is a vibrant and diverse community, encompassing management academics, professionals, policy makers, practitioners and students from across the world, from a wide range of intellectual, social, and cultural backgrounds.

The Chartered Association of Business Schools (Chartered ABS) is the voice of the UK's business and management education sector.

Collectively, the Chartered ABS's membership employ nearly 23,000 staff and teach over 400,000 students.

Foreword

BAM and the Chartered ABS are committed to promoting equality, diversity, inclusion and respect as core values and as part of our independent strategies[1].

As part of these commitments and initiatives, we recognise all events should strive to be as inclusive, accessible and sustainable as possible. We aspire for our events to reflect and showcase the diversity of the management community and the full breadth of our research, teaching and professional expertise. It is vital that people of all backgrounds, career stages and paths feel included and able to participate in events and feel themselves and their contributions to be recognised and valued.

We have developed this guide by drawing on examples of best practice from across the higher education sector and beyond, to support members and associates who are involved in organising, hosting and participating in events. These can be meetings, workshops, or conferences, either online or in person.

The premise of the guide is that equality, diversity inclusion and respect are not things that can be 'achieved' or 'ticked off' once and for all, but are values that we should continually work towards. The guide builds on work done by other professional associations and in specific schools, especially Essex Business School, University of Essex, UK. We hope it is useful, and welcome feedback. We also hope that this will be the first iteration of a guide that develops in the future, as practice and research progress. Both its practicalities and its underlying philosophy are open to change, as our society changes around us. If you have any suggestions, based on experience or on knowledge of this area, we would be very happy to hear from you.

In future, we hope that the measure of a successful event for our community will be it meets its direct objectives, providing a forum for discussing specific issues, and that it has also actively promoted equality, diversity, inclusion and respect.

[1]BAM2024: Building on Excellence

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Key Questions and Basic Principles

We have organised this guide around a number of basic principles, some procedural and some analytical. We set these out as a series of questions in this section, then provide more detail in the next section. Some of the questions refer to face-to-face events, but many apply equally well to online and hybrid events.

01

Diversifying participants

Are the organisers and speakers a diverse group? Seek out contributors from underrepresented and marginalised groups if not, or be prepared to explain why this is not possible.

Consider how themes, calls for papers and invitations to participate are presented. Ensure that the wording and themes appeal to a range of potential participants and perspectives.

02

Enabling participation

Are the date, timing, and venue fully accessible to everyone who might want or need to take part?

Have you provided clear contact details for participants to make requests for accessibility and any other special requirements?

Has thought been given to scheduling a lunchtime or daytime event, as this may be easier than an evening event for participants with caring responsibilities?

03

Reaching out

How will you make contact with groups that are typically under-represented or marginalised?

Are you using a range of images in publicity materials?

Can electronic copies of presentations be obtained in advance, to be sent to participants on request?

04 Fair sharing

Have you ensured an inclusive allocation of chairing and discussant responsibilities?

Have you encouraged chairs to take questions from participants who might visibly change the demographic dynamic of events?

Have you provided speaker access to facilities and software to convert presentations, handouts and materials into alternative formats, such as large print or differently coloured backgrounds?

Have you emphasised the need to follow the agenda and timings, and to let as many speak as wish to, avoiding dominance of individuals or groups?

05 Fair access

Are directions and joining instructions clear? Ensure the venue is as accessible as possible for restricted mobility, hearing and vision.

Have participants been asked, when booking, about special dietary requirements, including allergies and vegetarian, vegan, Halal or Kosher meals (if your catering menu is able to provide such options)?

Have you provided alcohol-free refreshments?

Have you taken steps to ensure that adequate catering is provided for all participants, including those with special dietary requirements?

Have you taken steps to ensure that, as far as possible, food and packaging waste is minimised, without precluding any participants from the opportunity to have a sufficient amount of food, and without jeopardising hygiene standards?

Have you scheduled one or more short breaks for events longer than two hours?

Have sufficient changeover times been allowed for events that involve sessions in different locations, especially for participants with mobility needs to be able to move between them?

Is there a named IT contact on the day who will be able to help in case of technological issues that might affect accessibility within the venue?

06 Privacy and safety

Have you made participants aware that they can raise issues with a designated person if something happens during the event that is of concern to them?

If sensitive topics will be discussed during the event, have you made sure they will be treated in an appropriately serious manner and handled sensitively?

If the content of the event includes flashing, flickering and strobe lighting that may cause a problem for some participants, have you issued a warning to participants in advance?

Do you have, or need, a statement in event invitation and confirmation about compliance with data protection regulations)? This should be clear about how personal information, for example, access, pronouns, disability, will be stored, used and deleted.

Who is this guide and guidance for?

We started this process as part of our shared desire to show leadership to our communities in this important area, when Chartered ABS and BAM event organisers realised that many other fields now work to guidance like this; yet, management and business studies as a community lacked a clear statement of principles that could translate into practice. As you can see, we are seeking to speak to as many people involved in community organising as possible: academics, at all stages of working life; event organisers, at all levels of experience; and of course everyone who can, or might, participate in an event that is organised by and for our knowledge and practice communities. As noted above, we propose this guidance as work-in-continuous-progress, open to comments and changes. There is no permanent single best way of organising events to improve inclusivity, accessibility, and diversity. Better than that, there is an ongoing critically reflexive conversation, that we all contribute to. We hope above all that this guide is clear in its invitation to you to do so.

| Why this guide? Why now?

The British Academy of Management and the Chartered Association of Business Schools make a commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). BAM and Chartered ABS have devoted increasing energy and resources towards promoting and achieving equality, diversity and inclusivity in recent years.

This activity has produced notable high profile interventions, such as BAM's research report focusing on the lack of diversity in the FTSE 100 leadership group[2], and Chartered ABS's report on gender and ethnicity pay gaps in management[3].

Alongside this research and policy work, members of BAM and Chartered ABS decided to look inside their organisations. BAM created a vice-chair for EDI, a key strategic leadership role that Martyna Śliwa was elected to in 2019, while Chartered ABS expanded its long-standing EDI committee and formulated a Race Equality Working Group in 2020.

These initiatives are significant in part because BAM and Chartered ABS are our academic community's largest and leading professional organisations. Between them they organise or sponsor more than 80 events each year. These range from small,

specialist, intensive one-day workshops aimed at a relatively small part of our community, to multi-day conferences designed to bring together hundreds of management academics, business school leaders, professional services staff and teaching practitioners – online or in person. Making sure that each of the events that we organise, host and participate in is as inclusive, accessible and sustainable as possible is everyone's responsibility.

There is a legal context to this. As charities registered in the UK, both BAM and Chartered ABS are obliged to conform with the Equality Act. This contains a specific Public Sector Equality Duty that applies to universities, mandating the promotion of equality in their day-to-day work, including the planning and hosting of events. Crucially, this Act stipulates nine 'protected characteristics': age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. This guide speaks to each of those characteristics, and encourages consideration beyond them in the spirit of inclusivity beyond legal obligations.

Of course, organising an event is complex in itself. Each event involves a wide range of decisions, such as when and where to hold it, what to include and exclude from the agenda, what topic to focus on, whom to invite to speak and in what order,

which groups to reach out to as participants, and how to maintain the community after the event. Each decision has implications for how inclusive, accessible and sustainable the event is. Unconscious bias is always a danger – the perceptions that we all have of individuals and groups of people we see as different to ourselves all too easily move from unconscious to our decision making outcomes. When we select a topic and organise an event around it, it is easy not to question why certain individuals or groups might be over-represented and others marginalised, particularly if time and resources are constrained and everyday power relations are present when negotiating what the event should look and feel like.

As a result, events such as conferences, workshops, and large scale meetings can often be indirectly discriminatory and exclusionary. In an ideal world, events are not passively 'representative' of an established field of interest; rather, they can proactively contribute to tackling persistent inequalities and marginalisation. Progressive and positive change are likely to happen a lot more quickly if we aim higher than simply satisfying a minimal checklist. What follows now provides more detail to help both implement and go beyond the approach summarised at the start of this guide.

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[2] *Delivering Diversity: race and ethnicity in the management pipeline*: https://www.bam.ac.uk/sites/bam.ac.uk/files/BAM_CMI_Delivering_Diversity_2017_Full_Report_Website_Copy.pdf

[3] *Chartered ABS report on gender and ethnicity pay gaps in management:* https://charteredabs.org/publications/business-and-administrative-studies-staff-salary-data-analysed-by-ethnicity-and-gender.

1. Diversifying participants

Start early in planning – equality, accessibility and sustainability can and should be considered from the first moment of event planning. It is helpful to think of the inclusivity, accessibility and sustainability of the event as key criteria against which to evaluate its success. Key questions to ask include: are panels and submitting authors representative of the community the event is organised for? If not, how can representation be improved? What are the measures of equality and inclusion? Does the event reproduce established power structures and hierarchies, or does it challenge them?

In early planning stages, consider the theme and range of speakers that might be involved. Aim to be as inclusive as possible, and provide a balanced representation of the topic. Remember that theme choices are not 'diversity neutral'; some themes are more likely to attract members of certain groups than others. Therefore, before settling on a theme, think about whether it is likely to result in interest from a diverse range of participants, and how to make sure that it does not lead to further marginalisation of groups already disadvantaged or relatively excluded.

Consider how calls for papers and invitations to speak are presented. Try to ensure that the wording and themes (including suggested contributions) appeal to a range of potential participants and perspectives. Remember this might include perspectives on a topic with which you as an organiser might not necessarily agree! If practical, you might use an event to highlight the contribution of under-represented groups (e.g. women or members of ethnic minorities); to broaden topic areas (e.g. beyond areas that have traditionally been relatively male-dominated, or have yet to engage with de-colonisation); or to showcase those whose work is at a developmental stage or under-valued (e.g. doctoral students, junior teaching staff and early career researchers).

Women and people from ethnic minority groups are less likely to be invited as speakers, especially in high profile roles such as keynote speakers. A growing number of international conference organisers have already committed to more inclusive panels, to thinking carefully about the order of speakers, and to using organising budgets in innovative ways to encourage diversity. In this area, BAM already has a 'no all-male panels' policy, based on the expectation that ensuring gender diversity of panels should be standard practice for BAM-sponsored events, and requiring a justification when what is being proposed varies from this standard practice. At the same time, it is important to avoid tokenism. Topics and speakers must be chosen on the basis of relevance and expertise. It falls to organisers, hosts and speakers to mitigate against homogeneity, lack of representation, or tokenism.

As emphasised throughout this guide, ensuring inclusivity and diversity is everybody's responsibility. In line with other industries and sectors of work, academic colleagues are increasingly comfortable declining invitations to speak on non-inclusive (e.g. all-male, all-white) panels, or requesting that a commitment to inclusion is a condition of their participation.

If homogeneity or exclusion are a danger, and if you are organising an event or conference stream, consider broadening your search for potential speakers whose work would make a contribution that speaks from and with under-represented groups. Personal invitations are essential. It might be helpful to think in advance of how many slots are going to be available in total for speakers at the event you are organising, and plan how to encourage inclusive and representative programmes to recognise the diversity of the field and community as a whole.

Encourage collaborative abstract submission for events or conference streams to include junior teaching and professional services staff, doctoral students and ECRs as much as possible. If appropriate, highlight that alphabetical ordering of authors' names is preferred. If this is not followed, ask how the order was decided and actively discourage authors being listed in order of seniority.

If possible, consider event formats that foster inclusion, collaboration and interaction and which are conducive to dialogue, reflexive exchange and the generation of new ideas and insights

(e.g. smaller interactive workshops and discussion groups or roundtables rather than formal panels with traditional question-and-answer formats). Multiple keynote speakers or small groups can provide a better platform for different groups and perspectives than single speakers. Encouraging work in progress rather than fully formed paper presentations can also be helpful for encouraging under-represented groups to present their work. If you are organising a stream as part of a larger conference, there may not be much flexibility, but if the organisers are open to suggestions on the format, consider ways in which you could make your stream as inclusive as possible.

Avoid a format that risks marginalising the contribution of junior staff and early career researchers. Encourage all speakers to acknowledge the contributions made by collaborators, and to co-present jointly authored work. Include doctoral students, ECRs and junior teaching and professional services staff, in chairing presentation sessions, and in acting as discussants. If practical, consider a closing 'Going Forwards', future-orientated session that showcases emerging research, practice, or ideas.

You may wish to consider the feasibility of more junior colleagues or new colleagues being offered pairing opportunities to provide mutual support at conferences and other events or being buddied by a more experienced academic who can support and introduce to other participants. Publicising this at the outset might further encourage participation from less established contributors.

2. Enabling participation

Give early consideration to when the event will be scheduled. If possible, try to aim for a start and finish time that will allow participants with caring responsibilities to attend as much of the event as they can. Organisers should consider factors such as the timing of school holidays, relevant religious festivals (consult an interfaith calendar as dates for some festivals change each year), national holidays and caring responsibilities when suggesting dates, so that speakers and other participants have as much opportunity to participate as possible. Finally, bear in mind that the majority of people attending events

organised by BAM and Chartered ABS are professionally affiliated with universities and that the working week in UK universities is from Monday to Friday. This means that scheduling events to take place over the weekend is likely to discriminate against participants who have caring responsibilities.

Like conferences and other larger events, an annual social event that takes place at the same time every year might help to maintain momentum, but also risks excluding the same people each time. Ideally, start and finish times around peak travel periods should also be avoided as this can make

the cost of events prohibitive. When social events are attached to conferences or seminars that involve external participants, consideration should be given to the feasibility of inviting speakers and other participants to bring family members, including children, with them in order to encourage participation. If the event is residential, it is a good idea to offer flexible options for participants to attend all or part of the event, as this might be a chance to be inclusive to participants with caring responsibilities.

3. Reaching out

Try to give people as much notice as possible to make any necessary arrangements, as this is likely to increase opportunities for participation especially amongst those with caring responsibilities or additional needs. In particular, providing advance detailed information about the event will help increase its inclusivity and accessibility for autistic people (see Appendix One for specific guidance on things to consider to make the event inclusive of neurodiverse people as an example of how this can work, and why it is important).

Consider where and how details of the event will be publicised to encourage a broad range of participants. Effective use of social media before and during the event can help extend the range of participation. Consider how will you make contact with groups that are typically under-represented.

If publicising the event involves the use of images, particularly of people, make sure that consideration has been given to diversity of those portrayed in

the images. When planning the wording of your registration mechanism (e.g. Eventbrite) you may also wish to consider providing options for participants to indicate their preferred pronouns, add access requirements, list any special dietary information, and provide any additional requirements. It is good practice to include an accessibility statement in the invitation, registration and confirmation to all participants (including co-organisers and speakers).

For example: We will do our best to meet any requirements that will allow you to fully participate in this event. Please let us know in advance if you have any special requirements such as religious or medical dietary needs, advance access to presentational materials or alternative presentational formats such as Braille or large print, or any access needs such as wheelchair access or the provision of hearing loops.

4. Fair sharing

An inclusive use of language involves using gender-neutral language as well as appropriate, non-discriminatory terminology (such as 'early career' rather than 'young' staff). It also requires prioritising communicative effectiveness, especially in the multilingual settings we often work within where participants' language competence may vary. In practice, this means that both 'native' and 'non-native' speakers need to pay attention to whether the way they communicate contributes to inclusive and effective exchanges. When chairing, hosting or presenting, it is important to keep the multilingual nature of our community in mind in order to ensure that everyone is able to participate as fully as possible.

Any meeting is an opportunity for different people, regardless of their career stage or specific role, to bring a range of perspectives and sets of expertise and experience to the discussion, to make a contribution. Chairs and other participants should try to make sure that everyone who wants to is given an opportunity to make a contribution. Meetings, whether held face-to-face or online, often have limited time slots; sharing the time available fairly is therefore important.

Chairs and participants should aim to share time fairly and equally. Ideally, chairs should try to find ways to ensure that no individuals or groups dominate the time available or the discussion, and to make sure that all participants can contribute.

This could mean actively encouraging participation from communities or individuals that are easily overlooked or marginalised. Consider providing practical guidance to session chairs to increase diversity of participation and intervention in debates, especially in entirely online or hybrid events.

Think about how to make networking accessible to all, including those working online. Conventional structures and cultures of networking can be competitive and opaque in face-to-face events, and these experiences can be replicated, even accentuated, online. Consider providing alternative, smaller scale networking opportunities that can be organised by participants before, during, and after the event. All of these issues need advance planning and to kept under constant review as the event takes shape.

During the event, chairs can take the first question, or two or three questions at a time, from participants who might change the dynamic of the discussion (e.g. those who might otherwise be overlooked, marginalised or feel less confident). It is generally good practice to make it clear that all follow-on questions will be passed on to the speakers, and to encourage them to follow up. This not only provides a mechanism for everyone who would like to do so to ask a question or make a contribution; it also creates an opportunity to build potential networks and collaborations and to encourage ongoing dialogue.

If the event is online only, or a mix of in person and online, consider organising the event in shorter blocks than you might do for an entirely face-to-face event to avoid long periods of screen time without breaks, and to offer as much flexibility as possible. For live video-conference events, find out if any of the participants will need a sign-language interpreter, and what their preferred needs are, well in advance. It might also be worth thinking about 'Zoom etiquette' and how it relates to accessibility. Practices such as displaying a picture when cameras are turned off, use of preferred pronouns alongside names, having an appropriate background, and preferred use of the chat function, can all help to support an inclusive online environment.

Technology might seem 'neutral' but how we use it is not. Make sure that the event is accessible in the most basic ways. As well as screen time commitments, consider issues such as connectivity requirements, timings (especially when working across time zones), social conventions and preferences, and access to event materials before, during, and after the event.

| 5. Fair access

Venue

The venue should be accessible for people who may have a variety of access needs. In addition, information on the range of facilities nearby should be considered and made available to anyone who may require, for instance, reserved parking due to access needs, wheelchair access, hearing loops, gender inclusive toilets, prayer rooms and childcare facilities. The AccessAble organisation conducts access audits so when choosing a venue, so you may wish to check accessibility via AccessAble's website (www.accessable.co.uk).

When planning, ensure that there is going to be a named IT contact on the day of the event who will be able to help in case of any 'technological emergencies' that might occur in the venue, such as issues with the hearing loop or display screen equipment, which can disadvantage guests with accessibility requirements.

Content

All presentation slides and other materials should ideally be made available in advance and in accessible formats on the day. 'Pdf' files should ideally be avoided, as they are notoriously difficult to convert into accessible formats. We would also recommend asking speakers to ensure that their presentations are accessible to all (e.g. with respect to font style, size and slide colour schemes). You may wish to discourage animated, 'busy' or very text heavy presentations; presentation materials should be simple, accessible and flexible.

It is important to think about ways to ensure your event is inclusive and welcoming to all participants and that it actively promotes equality. Event participants often do not feel confident asking questions of or approaching people who they perceive as being more senior than they are. It is important to find ways to encourage participation (e.g. through Q&A functions on Zoom, or by sharing questions in other ways) that minimise the impact of this, and to try as far as possible to make all contributors feel welcome and supported. It is also important to acknowledge all participants and modes of participation during all events (e.g. colleagues who provided cleaning, catering etc.).

Care

As far as possible, it is important to consider participants' dietary restrictions and the needs of participants who may be fasting, for example during Ramadan. Thought should also be given to participants with mobility needs, and how they can be supported (if required) during refreshment and meal breaks (e.g. if buffet-style catering is provided, one of the organisers could provide assistance). It is also worth thinking more generally that we all need fresh, healthy and nutritious food and drink in order to feel physically comfortable and to be able to think clearly. This is especially important when organising events that last for an entire day or longer. Also, ensure that there is a private or designated space near to the venue for people to use for short periods, for example, for religious observance, to administer medication or to take a 'sensory break'. Consideration should also be given to those who may be breastfeeding and may need regular breaks and access to a private space (not a toilet!).

The type of food and refreshments served, as well as the way in which these are served, also influences the environmental sustainability of the event. When commissioning catering, make sure that, as far as possible, food waste is going to be kept to minimum and that excessive as well as disposable packaging is avoided. At the same time, bear in mind that for reasons such as those related to allergies and religious norms, as well as hygiene, it is not always possible to avoid disposable packaging. Similarly, to make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to have a sufficient amount of nutritious food, it might be necessary to accept a certain amount of food waste as inevitable. It is not inclusive to require participants to leave a session immediately and head straight for the food table simply to ensure there will be something left that they can eat! Ensure there are alcohol free refreshments for those participants who do not drink alcohol.

In timing the breaks, thought should be given to scheduling them, for example, for people who may need regular food intake relating to a health condition, and those using services such interpreting or accessibility software. Full day events can be exhausting for everybody, and especially for someone with a disability, including 'invisible disabilities', such as chronic pain which can make it difficult to sit for long periods of time. Keep in mind that some people's circumstances might mean that concentrating for long periods without short breaks can be particularly difficult. Specific guidance on considering and meeting the needs of neurodiverse people is given in Appendix One.

6. Privacy and safety

Attendance and full participation at all events depends on those involved feeling safe. One aspect of ensuring safety refers to following the established procedures for risk assessment. When organising events is concerned, especially if a visitor flags in advance that they have certain health and safety related requirements, it may be necessary to review and update risk assessments.

In professional contexts, people's sense of safety is closely intertwined with intersectional inequalities. Organisers of events need to think in advance about how to ensure that none of the participants is going to experience either overt discrimination or more subtle forms of microaggression during the event. Creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming and mutually respectful environment should be a key priority for event organisers and participants; everyone involved should expect this.

To this end, all participants should know how to report any issues of concern, should they arise. It is important for organisers of all events to be proactive in minimising the risk of what researchers call 'reluctant acquiescence' as a response to unacceptable behaviour. Organisers should feel confident in their capacity to remove from an event anyone whose behaviour is unacceptable. Be aware of any relevant institutional or professional body guidance.

Further resources

Useful information on organising conferences, seminars, and visitor programmes that are inclusive is also provided by the following organisations and resources:

Dr Jenny Rodriguez
University of Manchester

Dr Elisabeth Anna Guenter
Vienna University of Economics & Business

https://theconversation.com/whats-wrong-with-manels-and-what-can-we-do-about-them-148068

Dr Carol Torgan
Resources to enable speaker diversity

https://caroltorgan.com/resources-speaker-diversity-stem

Prof. Melissa Tyler
University of Essex and Prof. Martyna Śliwa, University of Essex

https://www.essex.ac.uk/blog/posts/2021/02/24/open-to-all

The European Commission:

https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/commissioners-support-no-women-no-panel-campaign - focus on panel speaker events

The School of Geography and the Environment, University of Oxford:

https://reachwater.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/2019_05_22_Inclusive-Conference-Guide.pdf

The University and College Union (UCU):

https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/4766/Equality-events

The University of Glasgow:

https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/ris/researchpolicies/ourpolicies/equalityevents/

The World Health Organization:

https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/hrp/HRP-Panels/en/

Appendix:
Guidance on neurodiversity

The neurodiversity movement is a new social movement based on two key claims: first, that there are neurological (brain wiring) differences in the human population, of which autism is perhaps the best-known example; second, that such variations are natural among humans, rather than diseases or disorders – variation is, in short, just 'difference'.

The term 'neurodiverse' is most associated with people labelled with autism, but it is also in wide use by those living with other 'neurological differences', including attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), bipolar disorder, developmental dyspraxia, dyslexia, epilepsy, and Tourette's syndrome.[4]

Key areas for consideration include: social interaction, sensory challenges, physical behaviours, food, time, tolerance of uncertainty, physical environment, participation.

[4] Runswick-Cole, K. 2014 'Us' and 'them': The limits and possibilities of a 'politics of neurodiversity' in neoliberal times. *Disbaility & Society*, 29(7): 1117-1129; Jaarsma, P. & Welin, S. 2012 *Autism as a natural human variation*: Reflections on the claims of the neurodiversity movement. *Health Care Analysis*, 20: 20-30; Baker, D. 2011 *The Politics of Neurodiversity*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Guidance on neurodiversity

01 Social interaction

Many autistic people are, understandably, quite concerned about the heavy social demands of being in a large group, for a short period of time or for several days (for example at a conference). It is helpful to clarify there is no requirement to socialise at all, and there will be no implicit or explicit disapproval of those who choose not to interact with others. A coloured badge system, as recommended by Autscape. org (a conference on Autism, by and for autistic people) is best to follow. It is used for indicating whether an individual would like to socialise or not.

Important: It is not necessary to use any badge at all. If an individual is okay with approaching others, and with others approaching them (even if they do not wish to interact, but are comfortable saying so), then there is no need to use a coloured badge. If green is used as a default for everyone who wishes to interact, whether they can initiate or not, then it is less meaningful for those who have difficulty initiating and rely on others to approach them. It is very important that everyone respect this on the day.

No initiation	Red	Please do not initiate any interaction with me.
Prior Permission	Yellow	Please do not initiate unless I have already given you permission to approach me on a yellow badge.
Please initiate	Green	I would like to socialise, but I have difficulty initiating. Please initiate with me.
Neutral	White (or no badge)	I am able to regulate my own interaction.
●		People who do not wish to be in any photographs or video may wear a black circle.

02 Sensory issues

Many autistic individuals experience sensory challenges. It is important to express complete acceptance and encouragement of ways to reduce them. This should be clearly stated as a part of the information that is shared about the event, ideally in a section that is clearly visible to all, for example to those who may simply be considering attending the event and not just for those who have registered to attend. An example of the way in which such information may be stated is provided by Autscape.org: "No one will think it odd if you wear tinted glasses, ear-plugs, headphones, or whatever you may require. Unfortunately, the venue does have some fluorescent lighting, but we will do our best to reduce exposure".

03 Autistic behaviour

Autistic behaviour may include stimming (repetitive movements), echolalia, distractibility, different or impaired conversation skills, avoidance of eye contact, perseveration, obsessiveness. It is important to state individual behaviours as expected and accepted as part of an inclusive conference.

Guidance on neurodiversity

04 Food service

Food can be challenging for many autistic people, both from a sensory and a social perspective. Full, loud and/or echo-y dining areas can be difficult. Catering for special diets for those who register early should be provided. Individuals who find it difficult to eat in a communal dining area should be offered the option to eat in an additional quiet dining room, outside in a garden or even in their room.

05 Getting sway

Many neurodiverse individuals can benefit from a sensory break from time to time, or when they are exposed to sensory challenges such as too much noise, difficult smells, flickering lights. Providing a designated quiet room, can be useful for taking a sensory break. It is also important to reiterate that individuals are welcome to leave anytime during a presentation as long as they do their best not to be disruptive. It would be also helpful to be specific in terms of the location of the designated quiet room early on, rather than just stating that a quiet room will be available on the day. Access to grounds or a garden can also be offered.

06 Provide visuals

Provide an image of the venue, including an image of the building as well of the room (s) to be used. Where possible, images of the speakers, the equipment to be used, the seating area and seating plan, should also be provided. This can help minimise uncertainty which can be difficult for many neurodiverse individuals.

07 Freedom of movement within the room

Some neurodiverse individuals are more comfortable standing, sitting on the floor or moving around. Providing a variety of seating options such as cushions on the floor, beanbags etc would also be helpful. Some may have to leave the room for a sensory break. If the speakers/organisers make it clear at the start that attendees are free to move if they need to, this will greatly reduce the inhibitions of many neurodiverse individuals.

08 When selecting a venue

Noise can be particularly distracting and disturbing for some neurodiverse individuals. Street noise common for a venue next to a busy road or background noise can be extremely disturbing and even painful for some individuals. Try and choose a quiet venue that minimises street and background noise.

09 Lighting

flickering or artificial lights can be distracting and even painful for some neurodiverse individuals. If possible, try and host the conference at a venue that utilises natural light or provide regular breaks with access to natural light.

Guidance on neurodiversity

10 ### Minimise changes

All of us appreciate planning things in advance and changes at the last minute can be difficult for everyone. Even more so for some neurodiverse individuals who find it difficult to accommodate sudden changes. If changes have to be made, please try and provide as much notice as possible. This is particularly important if changes need to be made to the venue itself. From the perspective of a neurodiverse individual, one space can be sensorily far more acceptable than another. They may also be familiar with one venue but not with another. If changes to the venue are unavoidable, try and share pictures of the venue in advance. In selecting a new venue, please try and ensure that it meets the requirements listed above in terms of noise, sensory break room etc.

11 ### Plenty of notice

Please try and share as many details of the event as early as possible. This allows time to mentally as well as physically prepare for attending the event.

12 ### Travelling to the event

Provide as many options as possible to reach the venue. Some forms of public transport are more sensorily challenging than others so try and share as many options as possible.

13 ### Participation on the day

Many individuals find it hard to ask a question on the day. Provide the option of submitting questions in advance. On the day itself, rather than only relying on verbal questions, which can be difficult for those who prefer not to have attention drawn to them, questions from the attendees should also be collected on post-it notes.

14 ### Filming and photographs

Always ask advance permission for filming or photography of any kind (including that of the presenter), and provide a 'no consequence' option to refuse.

15 ### Minimise ambiguity

Be as precise as possible, especially with the flow/steps of the day and what is to be expected. How does the day begin? Where are individuals expected to arrive for registration, and at what time? What are they expected to do after registration but before the session starts? When will the session start, when will it end? What will happen after the event? Is there networking after the final session and if so for how long? What are the options for those would prefer not to engage in networking? Will there be any cameras or recording? How can you refuse being filmed or recorded? How many people will be attending? Who can you contact for any concerns or questions? How do people attend (group discussion, watch presentation followed by questions, etc). What is the best way of asking for help on the day or reporting an issue?

16 ### Virtual participation and recording of presentations:

Consider providing an option for virtual participation and/or recording of presentations made on the day and made available to all those who registered at a later point.

Useful additional resources

Autism Network International (2013)
https://www.autreat.com/past-workshops.htm

Autscape (2017)
http://www.autscape.org/experience/autisticneeds

Bogdashina, O. (2016)
Sensory perceptual issues in autism and asperger syndrome: different sensory experiences-different perceptual worlds. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

CIPD (2018)
https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/neurodiversity-at-work_2018_tcm18-37852.pdf

https://theconversation.com/how-autism-friendly-architecture-can-change-autistic-childrens-lives-120516
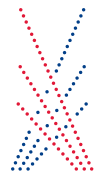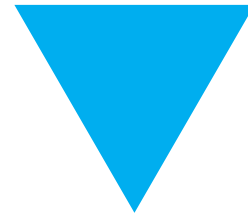
Humphreys, S. (2005)
Autism and architecture. Autism London Bulletin, pp.7-8.

National Autistic Society (2018)
https://www.autism.org.uk/about/behaviour/sensory-world.aspx

Westminster Achieve Ability Commission (2018)
https://www.achieveability.org.uk/files/1516612947/wac-neurodiverse-voices-opening-doors-to-employment-report_2018_interactive.pdf

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