Policy on conferences/meetings organised by Imperial College London staff or students, or held on College premises.

The aim of this policy is to promote diverse representation among speakers/panellist at events involving Imperial staff and students and to ensure that such events are welcoming to all.

Introduction

Research, educational, and professional conferences, workshops, and other types of meeting or event are important elements of university life. They provide valuable opportunities to staff and students to discuss the latest research, hear about new ideas and developments, learn new skills, or share best practice. Such meetings are also venues for formal and informal networking that can be crucial for job enrichment or career development.

Whether such events are taking place at Imperial or away from the university campus, they should be considered an extension of the professional workplace and learning environment and offer the same protections to staff and students. We would therefore expect organisers to view their meeting as an opportunity to exemplify Imperial's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and to the values and behaviours that we want to shape our working environment.

To aid implementation of this policy we have produced the attached guidance notes for members of our community who are involved in organising conferences, workshops or meetings. These should help organisers attend to diversity and inclusion, and to the creation of a welcoming, respectful environment when planning events.

Given the range of scales and formats of conferences, workshops, and meetings likely to involve our staff and students, it is not possible to produce guidance that covers every type of event or set of logistical and financial constraints. The principle of proportionality should apply; for example, it would not be reasonable to put all the suggested measures in place for short, one-off events.

In devising this policy, we primarily have in mind events hosted by or in association with the College, on or off our campuses that are open to people who may not be members of Imperial. Events that are wholly internal, involving only members of Imperial, are covered by the College's existing policies, though we would still expect organisers to consider in their planning our values and the guidance provided here on promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

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Associate Provost (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)

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This policy will be reviewed every two years. The next review is scheduled to take place by September 2025.

The document is divided into two parts (see below for details):

(A) Guidance on how to incorporate EDI considerations in planning and participation of meetings

- Develop a speaker policy that proactively considers diversity and inclusion

- Make your speaker policy visible and responsive

- Make meetings accessible and family-friendly

- Set an example – personally commit to promoting change

(B) A code of conduct

This will help to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all meeting participants. Where practicable, it also defines pathways for reporting and resolving complaints about inappropriate behaviour. A template is provided that may be modified to suit different scales of event.

A. Guidance on how to incorporate considerations of EDI in conference planning and participation

The size and range of formats of conferences, workshops and meetings can vary enormously, as can the resources available to organisers and the practical constraints (for example available facilities) under which they operate. The particular challenges of promoting EDI can also differ depending on the disciplinary focus of the meeting.

The guidance below offers examples of best practice which we would expect to be considered by members of Imperial who are involved in conference organisation. We recognise that the resources to implement all of the suggested measures may in many cases not be available. Nevertheless, we wish to encourage organisers to be as ambitious as practicable and will seek to recognise examples of innovative practice.

1. Develop a speaker policy

a. State what the conference organisers want to achieve in terms of diversity. For example a gender balance that reflects that of its audience; geographical representation; ethnicity; seniority; discipline/sub-discipline; disability.

b. Establish a balanced and informed program committee that appreciates the importance of promoting EDI, and is equipped to identify high-quality speakers or panellists from all backgrounds.

c. Consider developing and/or using databases to aid the search for high-quality speakers from underrepresented groups. For example SheNote or 500 Women Scientists.

d. Bear in mind the evidence showing that simple measures, such as inviting a female audience member to ask the first question following a presentation, can help to create a more inclusive experience for meeting participants. The same may also be true for other minoritized people.

2. Make the speaker policy visible and responsive

a. Publish the speaker policy well in advance on the conference website (or on the website of the organisation responsible; for example the relevant learned society). Explain its purpose and invite feedback. If possible, set aside time at the conference to discuss the policy.

b. If practicable, gather and report the data on how well the policy is achieving its aims. For example via a feedback form to speakers/attendees that gathers anonymous information on sex, ethnicity, or other protected characteristics. Targets for the diversity of speakers may well vary by field, but it is important to consider setting these at a stretching level to foster change and provide role models for younger attendees.

3. Be accessible and family-friendly – support parents and carers at meetings and disabled attendees.

Where possible, consider:

a. Travel times, and start and finish times of sessions for those who may be attending with children.

b. Offering financial support for those with caring responsibilities. For example see Imperial's expenses policy on how to claim child-care costs when attending conferences; and Imperial's carer's support grant for details of the financial support offered by College to carers attending work-related events.

c. That long conferences or workshops that require minimum attendance (for example two weeks) may present difficulties for those with caring commitments.

d. Offering reduced fees to those who can only attend for part of the meeting.

e. Providing creche facilities and a family room to allow participants with children to follow proceedings by video-link.

f. Providing a quiet room with a video-link for those who prefer not to be in crowded spaces.

g. Ensuring all facilities are fully accessible (and equipped with accessible toilets); make sure venue maps are well-signed.

h. Reminding speakers of best practice in making audio and visual materials accessible - see College accessible content guidance.

i. Offering free attendance for the carers of disabled attendees who require one.

4. Set an example – personally commit to promoting change

a. When invited to help organise, attend, or speak at a conference, ask to see the conference speaker policy before you accept. If there isn't one, offer to share this one as an example to work from.

b. If invited to speak or participate at a conference, ask to see the list of invitees and if there isn't a reasonable gender balance or diversity in the line-up, raise this with the organisers.

c. Any subsequent decision on whether or not to participate has to be a personal one. If declining because of the lack of reasonable diversity, explain your reasons to the organisers. Alternatively, individuals may decide it is better to participate but call attention to the lack of diversity when at the meeting.

B. A code of conduct

1. To ensure a safe and inclusive environment, we require conference organisers to develop and publish a conference code of conduct which includes a strong anti-harassment statement.

2. The code of conduct should be made available to participants in advance of registration or as part of any invitation to participate. It should be made clear that participation is dependent on agreeing to abide by the code of conduct.

3. To help organisers in this task, a detailed template Conference Code of Conduct is provided in Appendix 1. Further examples are given in Appendix 2.

4. Use of a code of conduct in different circumstances:

   a. For conferences organised by Imperial staff or students and hosted on a College campus, the code of conduct developed in accordance with point 1 above should be adopted in full.

   b. For externally organised conferences hosted in collaboration with College on a College campus, we expect the organisers to have a code of conduct that is in line with the College code. If it does not, it should adopt the College's code.

   c. For events organised by external organisations who are simply using our facilities (and have been instructed in their contracts not to use the College branding or logo), it is not feasible to ask for adherence to this code of conduct. However, we would share the policy with them, explain that it reflects our values as an organisation and expect them to operate to a similar standard.

   d. For conferences not held on College premises, but where Imperial staff and students are involved as organisers (for example as members of a learned society), we would expect them to draw attention to the benefits of having a code of conduct and to offer the College template as the basis for creating one. Conferences without a code of conduct that is in line with the College code will not be permitted to use the College logo or to claim to be supported by Imperial.

Appendix 1: Imperial Conference Code of Conduct Template

This template is based on Imperial's approach to dealing with bullying and harassment but also developed from a range of other sources[1]. It has been written with day-long or residential conferences involving external participants in mind. Shorter, modified versions are likely to be more appropriate for smaller or one-off events.

Introduction

The organisers are committed to making this conference productive and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, physical appearance, body size, ethnicity, nationality, or religion. We will not tolerate harassment of participants in any form.

As part of the registration process, attendees are required to agree to adhere to this Code of Conduct.

Code of Conduct

Imperial College London takes very seriously its duties to protect academic freedom and freedom of speech. This is to facilitate robust discussion. At conferences we would expect all such discussion to adhere to high academic standards and to be conducted in a respectful manner.

Behave professionally. Harassment and sexist, racist, or exclusionary comments or jokes are not appropriate. Harassment includes sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, sexual attention or innuendo, deliberate intimidation, stalking, and photography or recording of an individual without consent. It also includes offensive or belittling comments related to gender, sexual orientation, disability, age, physical appearance, body size, ethnicity, or religion.

All communication should be appropriate for a professional audience including people of many different backgrounds. Sexual language and imagery is not appropriate.

Be kind to others. Do not insult or put down other attendees.

For any conference hosted on an Imperial campus, organisers are reminded that, although the College is a public space, Imperial holds the right to remove any person who does not adhere to the Code of Conduct.

Incident reporting and resolution

If you observe someone making you or anyone else feel unsafe or unwelcome, please tell them so, and remind them of the Code of Conduct.

If you are hesitant about addressing the person yourself, report it as soon as possible to a member of the [Organising/Code of Conduct] Committee - see contact information below. The Committee is committed to addressing and resolving the matter to the best of their abilities.

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[1] Sources include the Lorne conference statement, which is based on a Code of Conduct written by Andrew Pontzen and Hiranya Peiris at University College London. Elements were also incorporated from the UKSG Code of Conduct, which derives from the FORCE11 Code of Conduct.

Please use the following contact information, and explain what happened and who was involved so that we can investigate.

[Name1 and email address]; [**Name2** and email address]

The designated point(s) of contact for complaints should be chosen and advertised (and known to all staff helping to run the conference). There should also be a clear pathway for escalation of the complaint; for example an agreement that the Organising or Code of Conduct committee will meet within 2 hours and decide a course of action (for example ejection of a participant or the gathering of more information). The committee should be clear on their rights to eject any participant not adhering to the Code of Conduct, before the conference begins.

The complainant should be asked what mechanisms they need in order to safely continue at the conference, for example an escort to venues. The organisers should have a pathway to support any complaint, for example a list of support services such as Rape Crisis.

Sanctions

When someone is asked to stop any behaviour that makes others uncomfortable, they are expected to comply immediately. In response to inappropriate behaviour (for example sexual content, rudeness, unprofessionalism) organisers may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the person in question, asking them to leave the event, or removing them from a mailing list.

Specific actions may include but are not limited to:

- asking the person to cease the inappropriate behaviour, and warning them that any further reports will result in other sanctions
- requiring that the person avoid any interaction with, and physical proximity to, another person for the remainder of the event
- early termination of a talk that violates the policy
- not publishing the video or slides of a talk that violates the policy
- not allowing a speaker who violated the policy to give (further) talks at the event
- immediately ending any event responsibilities or privileges held
- requiring that the person immediately leave the event and not return
- blocking the person on social media platforms (for a defined time period)
- banning the person from future events (for a defined time period)
- publishing an anonymous account of the harassment
- reporting the incident to the person's employer

Appendix 2: References and other resources

Favaro B, Oester S, Cigliano JA, Cornick LA, Hind EJ, Parsons ECM and Woodbury TJ (2016) Your Science Conference Should Have a Code of Conduct. *Front. Mar. Sci*. 3:103. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fmars.2016.00103/full

Foxx, AJ, et al. and Webb Williams, E (2019) Evaluating the prevalence and quality of conference codes of conduct. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 116 (30) 14931-14936. https://www.pnas.org/content/116/30/14931

Inclusive Scientific Meetings – Where to Start (2019). https://500womenscientists.org/inclusive-scientific-meetings.

Martin JL (2014) Ten Simple Rules to Achieve Conference Speaker Gender Balance. *PLoS Comput Biol* **10**(11): e1003903. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1003903

REACH Best practice guide: developing inclusive conferences
https://reachwater.org.uk/resource/best-practice-guide-developing-inclusive-conferences/

Other example codes of conduct

https://fallmeeting.agu.org/2018/agu-meetings-code-of-conduct/

https://conbio.org/mini-sites/imcc-2016/registration-participation/code-of-conduct/