



Policy on conferences organised by ACB staff or members

Date reviewed: 21 April 2023

Introduction

Conferences, meetings and workshops (hereafter referred to primarily as conferences) are important elements of professional life. They are valuable to all and they provide opportunities to find out about the latest research, to learn new skills, and to share best practice. They are also venues for formal and informal networking that can be crucial for job enrichment and career development.

Whether such events are taking place at ACB or other venues, they should be considered an extension of the professional workplace and learning environment and offer the same protections to staff and members.

For any conferences involving members of ACB acting in a professional capacity as attendees, speakers or organisers, we would expect the same adherence to high standards of professional conduct and the same commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion that we aspire to within the Association. All members of the ACB are expected to be familiar with the policy on Bullying and Harassment, which provides guidance on how to deal with incidents of unacceptable behaviour and how to prevent them from occurring in the first place.

At ACB we also recognise that there are groups who are under-represented among our membership, particularly at more senior levels of the profession and within the Association. One of the ways we can try to address this issue is to take active steps to promote equality, diversity and inclusion at conferences that are associated with ACB. We believe this aspiration is fully consistent with the desire of conference organisers to invite the highest quality speakers and discussants, to be able to offer the richest possible experience to attendees.

These twin goals, to enforce conduct that respects the dignity of the individual and to be proactive in enabling the full participation of everyone in our activities, reflect our values and are fully aligned with ACB's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. To that end we have produced this policy document for members of our community who are involved in conference organisation.

The document is divided into two parts: (A) a code of conduct; and (B) guidance on how to incorporate considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion in conference planning and participation.

Given the range of scales and formats of conferences, meetings and workshops likely to involve our staff and members, it is not possible to produce a policy that covers every type of event or set of logistical and financial constraints.

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

Further details of the ACB's expectations on how the various provisions of this policy should be applied are given in sections A and B.

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

A. ACB 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 support organisers in this task, a detailed template Conference Code of Conduct is provided in Appendix 1.
4. Use of the code of conduct in different circumstances:
 - a. For conferences organised by ACB staff or members and hosted at ACB premises, the code of conduct above should be adopted in full.
 - b. For externally organised conferences the organisers are expected to develop a code of conduct that is in line with the ACB code. If it does not, it should adopt the ACB's code.
 - c. For events organised by external organisations who are utilising ACB premises (and have been instructed in their contracts not to use the ACB branding or logo), it is not feasible to ask for adherence to this code of conduct. However, the policy will be shared with such organisers with an explanation of the organisational values that it reflects outlining the expectation that they too operate to a similar standard.
 - d. For conferences not held on ACB premises, but where ACB staff and members are involved as organisers (e.g. as members of a learned society), there is an expectation that attention is drawn to the benefits of having a code of conduct and to offer the ACB template as the basis for creating one. Conferences without a code of conduct that is in line with the ACB code will not be permitted to use the ACB Auspices.

B. Guidance on how to incorporate considerations of equality, diversity and inclusion 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 (e.g. available facilities) under which they operate. The challenges of promoting equality, diversity and inclusion can also differ depending on the disciplinary coverage of the meeting.

The guidance below offers examples of good practice which we would expect to be considered by staff and members of ACB who are involved in conference organisation.

We wish to encourage organisers to be as ambitious as possible 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 (e.g. 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 to ensure that it can take a broad view of potential invited speakers. Offer diversity or unconscious bias training to the committee.
- c. Consider developing and/or using databases to aid the search for high-quality speakers from underrepresented groups (e.g. SheNote – <http://www.shenotespeaker.org/>; 500 Women Scientists – <https://500womenscientists.org>).

2. Be inclusive and accessible. Where possible:

- a. Consider travel times, and start and finish times of sessions for those with caring responsibilities.

- b. Criteria for relevant bursaries to consider funding for those with caring responsibilities
- c. Be mindful that long conferences or workshops that require minimum attendance may present difficulties for those with caring commitments.
- d. Ensure all facilities are fully accessible (and equipped with accessible toilets); make sure venue maps are well-signed
- e. Offer free attendance for the carers of disabled attendees who require one
- f. Consider dietary requirements pertaining to preference and/or beliefs e.g. vegetarianism, veganism, Halal or Kosher requirements
- g. Consider availability of religious spaces e.g. prayer rooms or nearby facilities for attendees who require them
- h. Consider the use of quiet spaces

3. Make the Policy Visible and Responsive

- a. Publish the policy well in advance on the conference website. Explain its purpose and invite feedback. If possible, set aside time at the conference to discuss the policy.
- b. Regularly gather and report the data on how well the policy is achieving its aims. Some data-gathering on the demographics of the participants may be necessary to inform the initial aims of the policy and regular reviews. Initial targets may well vary by field, but is it important to consider setting stretching targets for speaker diversity in order to foster change and provide role models for younger attendees.

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.
- d. Any subsequent decision on whether to participate must 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.



21/04/2023



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Jane Pritchard
ACB Chief Executive Officer

Date

Rachel Wilmot
ACB EDI Champion

Date

Appendix 1: ACB Conference Code of Conduct Template

Introduction

The organisers are committed to making this conference productive and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, physical appearance, body size, ethnicity, nationality, religion, neurodivergence or stage of career. 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

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, religion, neurodivergence or stage of career.

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 ACB premises, organisers are reminded that ACB 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 nominated member of the Organising Committee. The Committee is committed to addressing and resolving the matter to the best of their abilities.

Note: The designated point(s) of contact for complaints will be communicated prior to the event and be known to all staff running the event.

Sanctions

When someone is asked to stop any behaviour that makes others uncomfortable, they are expected to comply immediately. In response to inappropriate behaviour (e.g. sexual content, rudeness, unprofessional) 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.

Appendix 2: References and other resources

Policy adapted from Imperial College: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/governance/policies/conference-policy/>
[Accessed 16th February 2023]

Other resources include:

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>

Fox, 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/inclusivescientific-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>