

# Suggested conference session formats

## ● Papers sessions

### Suggested session format/structure

Paper sessions are made up of at least one presenter presenting their conference paper as an oral presentation, followed by questions/discussion, which may involve a discussant and/or the audience.

The session is usually organised around a central challenge or topic, and presenters are invited to submit paper proposals responding to that topic. A papers session is usually organised by one or two organisers, one of whom will act as session chair at the conference.

For a session length of 100 minutes (1 hour 40 minutes), the following formats might be considered by session organisers:

- *Multiple papers:*
  - Five 15 minute presentations each with 5 minutes for questions (either immediately following the paper or at the end of the session);
  - Three or four presentations of 15 minutes each with 5 minutes for questions, followed by a discussant of approximately 15-20 minutes (this usually works best if the papers can be sent to the discussant in advance); or
  - Three presentations of 20-25 minutes each with up to 5 minutes of questions each, and with approximately 20-30 minutes for roundtable discussion.
- *Keynote:* One or two longer 'keynote' presentations (of up to 30 minutes each), addressing different aspects of a challenge/topic. This format is usually followed by a chaired discussion involving presenters and audience.
- *Interactive short papers:* Up to ten short presentations of 5 minutes each, followed by a chaired interactive discussion involving all the presenters and the audience to explore common themes from the papers.

### Preparing the session

Session organisers may choose to make an open Call for Papers, in which anyone may submit a paper proposal to the organisers, from which the organisers choose which papers they want to include; or invite presenters to give papers in the session on a particular topic without advertising the session.

If you choose to put out a public Call for Papers, some key information to include is:

- A short title and abstract for the session, explaining the challenge or topic that you are organising the session to address, and the conference for which it is being organised (include a link to the conference website). Remember that your title and abstract are 'marketing' for your session – make them inviting!
- A brief description of the session format, if you have already decided, e.g. number of papers you plan to accept
- Names and email addresses of the session organisers in case of questions
- Submission guidelines for presenters – what information should they send, to whom, and by when (e.g. a paper title, abstract of up to 150 words, and full contact details, sent to both organisers).

### Choosing papers

Consider giving priority to papers with an original perspective, or which have not been previously presented at other conferences. Organisers might also consider also how the session 'hangs together' in terms of providing a breadth of papers on the session's topic/challenge and encouraging papers from researchers at different career stages.

### Keeping in touch with presenters

After selecting your papers, it's a good idea to keep in touch with presenters before the conference. Remind them of: how much time they have to speak, whether you want a copy of their paper/presentation before the conference takes place or afterwards.



If you have a presenter withdraw from the session, it's helpful to have a back-up plan, whether this is inviting someone else to take their place or inviting a discussant to comment on the other papers.

From an audience perspective, more questions and discussion are better than allowing presenters more time.

### **Running the session on the day**

It is important that the session chair keeps the session running to time. Presenters who over-run their allotted time will reduce the time available for the remaining presenters. Suggest that presenters pre-load their presentations onto the PC before the session starts, and keep things running by making only a short introduction of each presenter as they stand up to speak.

Session chairs are encouraged to have a question for each presenter in case the audience is slow to ask a question. Having a few pre-prepared questions that open up the session topic or theme might be helpful if a chaired discussion is planned.