

## **Policy on conferences organised by Imperial College staff or students, or conferences held on College premises.**

### **Introduction**

Conferences, meetings and workshops (hereafter referred to primarily as conferences) are important elements of university life. They are valuable to academic and professional staff, and to students. 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 Imperial College 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.

For any conferences involving members of Imperial College 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 as a university. All members of the College are expected to be familiar with the [university 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. In addition, they are expected to uphold the [Respect for Others pledge](#).

At Imperial we also recognise that there are many groups who are still under-represented among our students and staff, particularly, in the latter case, at more senior academic and professional levels. 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 the College. We believe this aspiration is fully consistent with the desire of conference organisers to invite the highest quality speakers and discussants in order 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 institutional values and are fully aligned with [Imperial'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 students, 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 College on or off our campuses that are open to people who may not be members of Imperial College. Events that are wholly internal, involving only members of Imperial College, are covered by the College'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 College'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 September 2021.

## A. The Imperial College Conference 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.
4. Use of the 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 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 College staff and students are involved as organisers (*e.g.* 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 Imperial 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.

## **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 particular 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 members of Imperial College 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 accessible and family-friendly – support parents and carers at meetings and disabled attendees. Where possible:
  - a. Consider travel times, and start and finish times of sessions for those who may be attending with children
  - b. Offer financial support for those with caring responsibilities (*e.g.* to pay for child-care)
  - c. Be mindful that long conferences or workshops that require minimum attendance (*e.g.* two weeks) may present difficulties for those with caring commitments.
  - d. Offer reduced fees to those who can only attend for part of the meeting
  - e. Provide creche facilities and a family room to allow participants with children to follow proceedings by video-link.
  - f. Provide a quiet room with a video-link for those who prefer not to be in crowded spaces.
  - g. Ensure all facilities are fully accessible (and equipped with accessible toilets); make sure venue maps are well-signed
  - h. Offer free attendance for the carers of disabled attendees who require one
3. Make the Policy Visible and Responsive
  - a. Publish the policy well in advance on the conference web-site (or on the web-site of the organisation responsible; *e.g.* the relevant learned society). 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 it is 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. 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.

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## Appendix 1: Imperial College 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<sup>1</sup>.

### **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 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:**

*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 College 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.*

*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]**

*Thank you for your participation in the [xxxxx] community, and your efforts to keep our conference welcoming, respectful, and friendly for all participants!*

**Note:** *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; e.g. an agreement that the Organising or Code of Conduct committee will meet within 2 hours and decide a course of action (e.g. 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.*

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

*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 (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.*

*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/>