

# **Accessibility, Inclusion, Support, and Safety at Events**

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## **Summary**

This document is to summarise the measures to be taken during the planning of all future conferences, meetings, symposiums etc in order to make them accessible, inclusive and safe for all. These considerations are recommended to be read by all attendees. To streamline the process, an initial accessibility survey will be disseminated to all onsite and virtual attendees to highlight the main areas that will need addressing.

Details in this document will need to be clarified for specific venues and countries, and will need input from the Local Organising Committee (LOC) and organising community.

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# 1. Financial Support

A comprehensive list of all known available financial support opportunities (internal and external) will be posted alongside registration details on the conference website and shared with all attendees via email in good time.

## Details of awards to provide and/or clarify:

- Eligibility criteria and selection process: e.g., if candidates meet eligibility criteria they will be randomly selected from, or they will be designated to a category and a number will be selected from each (i.e., UN designated LDC/LLDC/SIDS, ECRs, disabilities).
- Deadlines.
- Maximum amount available.
- When finances will be made available.
- How finances can be accessed (e.g., paid in lump sum into account, arrange booking with members of the LOC with access to funds, reimbursement [least preferred as excludes those without prior access to funds]).
- What the funding can be used for.

# 2. Visual Support

Guidance will be provided for those preparing oral and poster presentations on minimum font sizes, layout, and colour choice guidance for effective communication. Prior to the submission deadline for posters/presentations, the LOC is encouraged to run a session on best practices for design and delivery.

## Suggestions for presentation slides:

1. Use sans serif fonts. Don't use too many different fonts.
2. Use a minimum font size of 18, a minimum spacing of 1.15 and normal tracking.
3. Avoid using all capitals, italics or underlining.
4. Leave ample white space between lines of text and graphics.
5. Give each slide its own title.

6. Split lots of information across several slides to avoid overcrowding.
7. Number your slides so people can follow the progression of your presentation (maybe keep an overview of progression somewhere on the slide, e.g., a bar at the top).
8. Aim for high levels of contrast between text and background.
9. Use a plain background, avoid too much detail behind content.
10. Don't use colour alone to show meaning – use text and symbols in addition.
11. Avoid overcrowding of slides by leaving adequate white space.
12. Use an equal width border around slide content.
13. Less text in larger fonts, more text in smaller fonts.
14. For any body of text that is too large to display on a slide: create a QR code that links to the text, so readers can view it on their phones/laptops instead.

#### Suggestions for graphics:

1. Choose palettes suitable for colour-blindness where possible (for example [this](#), or [this](#)).
2. Use the [Alt Text](#) function to generate a full alternative text version of your graphics.
3. Try to avoid embedding text in graphics (not picked up by reading software).
4. Use sans serif fonts. Make sure axes titles, titles and legends are legible.
5. For any image that is too complicated to display on a slide: create a QR code that links to the image, so readers can view it on their phones/laptops instead.
6. Try to use PNG/SVG files for image clarity.
7. Frame graphics that blend into the background to better highlight its content or choose contrasting colours.

#### Suggestions for bodies of text:

1. Use heading styles: they make it easier for someone to scan your document for information.

2. Left-aligned text is more accessible for dyslexic readers, as opposed to justified or centred.
3. Number pages in long documents.
4. Don't use a watermark.
5. Use a minimum font size of 11, a minimum spacing of 1.15 and normal tracking.
6. Use sans serif fonts. Don't use too many different fonts.
7. Minimise use of all capitals, bold, italics and underlining.
8. Social media hashtags to be written in [#CamelCase](#).
9. Avoid overcrowding of slides by leaving adequate white space.
10. Use an equal width border around bodies of text.
11. Less text in larger fonts, more text in smaller fonts.
12. Use a plain background.

#### Suggestions for posters (for A0 format):

1. Use sans serif fonts. Don't use too many different fonts.
2. Use a minimum font size of 24, a minimum spacing of 1.15 and normal tracking.
3. Avoid using all capitals, italics or underlining.
4. Use heading styles: they make it easier for someone to scan your document for information.
5. Left-aligned text is more accessible for dyslexic readers, as opposed to justified or centred.
6. Leave ample white space between lines of text and graphics.
7. Aim for high levels of contrast between text and background.
8. Use a plain background, avoid too much detail behind content.
9. Don't use colour alone to show meaning – use text and symbols in addition.
10. Avoid overcrowding of slides by leaving adequate white space.
11. Use an equal width border around content.
12. Try to use less text in larger fonts, more text in smaller fonts.
13. For any body of text that is too large to display on poster: create a QR code that links to the text, so readers can view it on their phones/laptops instead.

14. Choose palettes suitable for colour-blindness where possible (for example [this](#), or [this](#)).
15. Try to use PNG/SVG files for image clarity.
16. Frame graphics that blend into the background to better highlight its content or choose contrasting colours.

### **3. Audial Support**

- Audio transcriptions of all embedded video materials and presentations are to be made available post-conference.
- Ample lighting and unobstructed view (seating near the front) of presenters is to be provided for attendees that require lipreading in the venue.
- [Immersive Reader](#) should be made available for all digital content on the conference website.
- Where possible, the LOC could print a few (~10), small 250-word/size A5 summary handouts for their presentation, provided by the presenter; this is also a nice keepsake for anyone who wishes to get in contact with you about your research!
- Members of the LOC can provide a basic introduction to the local language with translations of some useful phrases such as "hello", "please", "thank you", "what's your favourite deep-sea animal?", "where is the free food?" in an audio/video format.
- Look into the possibility of [ADA standard accommodations](#), such as a compatible microphone or assistive listening system where speech can be transmitted directly to hearing aids and cochlear implants.
- ASL/BSL interpreters could be hired, but this may prove difficult due to international attendance and many existing sign languages.

### **4. Mental Health Support**

The LOC should designate one/two support personnel for anyone experiencing issues that they need immediate assistance with. Those who wish may request emergency contact details for these support personnel

#### 4.1. Noise

- A designated quiet room should be assigned throughout events for meeting attendees to retire to in the event that it is needed to retire from the hustle and bustle of the conference. This room will be left unlocked at all times and provide seating, water/cups and tissues. No excessive noise should be made in this room and no meetings are allowed in this room.
- Any individuals wishing to make themselves known to a dedicated on-site safety officer may do so privately at any time, but preferably at the beginning of the event, in the instance that they may require any additional support.

#### 4.2. Undue Stress

- Plan your travel to the host country well in advance and make sure to prepare for disruptions, language barriers (bring a translation app/book/etc), culture shock and unexpected situations.
- Always carry emergency contact details for family members/friends/partners, designated members of the LOC and the local emergency services with you, including separate to your mobile phone in case it is lost/dead.
- Keep in contact with family/friends/partners and others attending the conference.
- If desired, the LOC may facilitate the pairing of visitors travelling from the same countries to minimise the number of people travelling to a new destination alone.
  - Those who sign up may contact each other in their own time to arrange simultaneous travel/meet ups etc.
  - Use a shared online space to coordinate, e.g., Slack.

#### 4.3. Attentive Requirements

- Regular short breaks will be included in the conference program to ensure that those attending with ADD, ADHD or other similar attention-deficit disorders have adequate opportunity to engage in talks.

## 5. Physical Health

### 5.1. General Hygiene

- All attendees are encouraged to wear a face covering if that is their preference.
- Frequent hand washing is encouraged, and mandatory following the use of any bathrooms or prior to consuming shared food at a conference event.
- As these events usually bring together a large number of people in confined spaces, attendees are requested to ensure they maintain a good level of personal hygiene through daily showering, clean clothes etc.
- Information on nearby health and hygiene resources should be provided, such as location and costs of the nearest hospital, laundrette, and pharmacy.

### 5.2. On-site Cleanliness

- The LOC may advise attendees on existing cleaning regimes.
- All common touch areas will be disinfected at the end of each conference day to prevent the transmission of any illnesses.
- Hand sanitisers will be available in all main shared areas at the conference venue for the use of attendees.
- Adequate ventilation of the conference facilities will be maintained where possible, i.e., opening windows dependent on weather conditions.
  - o Or, where possible, events will be held outside.

### 5.3. Coronavirus

- Any attendees experiencing COVID-like symptoms are encouraged to maintain social distancing if already present at the conference at the least, or preferably switch their attendance to virtual if possible.
  - o The LOC can provide details on switching to virtual attendance in the event of an illness.
- A small number of COVID tests should be made available by the LOC for those concerned with infection.



- Provide regular updates to attendees well in advance of travel regarding COVID-19 testing/vaccination requirements in the host country, including:
  - Accepted test types (rapid antigen, PCR), required timing (e.g., 24/48 hours prior to departure) and whether you need to keep the test with you/take photos for proof during travelling.
  - Any declaration forms that need to be filled out prior to travelling.
  - Any host country suggestions for good health practices once in the country.
  - Details on accepted testing/vaccination exemptions.
  - Any in-country requirements to wear face masks in all public spaces, and penalties for failure to comply.
  - Recommended mask types, e.g., FFP2/3.
  - Any event-specific recommendations, e.g., daily testing/temperature checks, what facilities will be provided on-site for attendees, where attendees can purchase tests/masks in-country.
- Remind attendees to check their home country COVID-19 testing/vaccination requirements in good time for their return.
  - If required, provide details for testing facilities in the host country, for attendees that need testing prior to departure back to their home countries.
- Remind attendees to bring an appropriate amount of suitable personal PPE with them.
  - These measures are to protect vulnerable/immunocompromised individuals so that they also may attend the event.
  - Attendees should also self-declare that they have no symptoms of COVID-19.
- Communicate further event-specific mitigation measures and enforcement well in advance to set expectations and ease local organisation, e.g.:
  - Recommend that attendees travelling to the conference on public transport wear face masks, as travel remains a more likely place to catch COVID-19.
  - Daily COVID-19 testing for all attendees prior to attending the event. If possible, provide test kits but ask attendees to test themselves either outdoors or offsite before arriving to avoid the spread of infection.

- o Well-ventilated rooms (with flow through of fresh air), with frequent breaks where everyone leaves the room to allow the room to vent. Air filtration with HEPA and of capacity commensurate to a room where ventilation is insufficient, sized for capacity.
- o Coffee/lunch events held outside as much as possible.

## **6. On-Site Accessibility**

### **6.1. Arrival/Departure**

- The LOC should provide suggestions for accessible options within public/private transport options in the area and from the airport.
- Location(s) of accessible parking will be labelled on the site map.
- If car hire is common in the host country, details on where to find reputable hire companies, information on local driving laws and provisions for international drivers should be communicated to attendees.

### **6.2. At the Hosting Location**

- A full site map/floorplan is to be provided in advance of attendance with details on where to find accessible entrances, lifts, W/C, quiet room, etc.
- Full consideration of space required by wheelchair users will be given when setting up meeting/lunch/activity rooms for attendees.
- Ample lighting and warnings of low ceilings/steps/other physical hazards will be provided throughout the venue in order to maximise safety when navigating the conference.
- Ensure accessibility is addressed in all fire evacuation plans and that attendees are made aware of these plans in advance/on arrival.
- Ensure the building has ample A/C or heating facilities in order to maintain a comfortable temperature and humidity level inside throughout the event for attendees.
- Prior to attendance, the LOC will ensure the presence of ramps, lifts, areas within meeting/lunch/activity rooms for wheelchair users.
- Where possible, the LOC will measure and photograph/video all accessible features (e.g., lifts, doors) and note all limits (e.g., weights, heights) so

wheelchair/other mobility equipment users can ensure prior to travelling that the location will be accessible to them.

- All required information will be provided on lift facilities:
  - Do they connect all spaces that will be used for the symposium?
  - Is the lift floor flush with the external floor?
  - Are the lift doors fully automated?
  - Is the lift wide enough for easy reversing out or are there separate entry/exit doors?
  - Is there an audible announcement and a visual representation of lift operations?
  - Are the lift buttons accessible from wheelchair height?
  - Is there adequate lighting inside?
- There is a great example of onsite descriptions on <https://www.accessable.co.uk/venues/medrus#0d0a0d8a-e99a-144e-a1c5-7dfe4a5e2f32>.

### 6.3. Support for Presenters

- A height adjustable podium is to be provided. This can be optional for wheelchair/mobility vehicle users in the case where it produces an obstruction when presenting.
- A clear floorplan of all meeting rooms is to be provided.
- All available presenting features will be listed in advance, e.g., laser pointer, chair, slide control, speakers etc.

## 7. Host Country Specific Information

### 7.1. Local Laws and Customs

List any important laws/customs specific to the host country here, e.g.:

- Restricted items that should not be brought into the country.
- National Security concerns/laws.
- Uncommon things that may get you fined.

## 7.2. Weather and Climate

- Any local weather warnings or common phenomena to look out for.
- Expected temperature range, weather conditions and suggestions for attire.
- Expected hours of daylight.
  - If desired, the LOC can facilitate the pairing of “commuting” partners to travel to and from attendees’ accommodations in company.

## 8. Support for Underrepresented Groups

### 8.1. Local Beliefs and Tolerance

List any information on host country laws, customs and local attitudes towards the LGBTQIA+ community, people of colour and minority ethnicities here, e.g., using a Stonewall report similar to this one for [the UK](#).

### 8.2. Indigenous Communities

Where applicable, clear recognition of Aboriginal Peoples, First Peoples and their territories and lands shall be included in presentations/posters. Exemplary guidance on structure for these statements can be found at

<https://www.caut.ca/content/guide-acknowledging-first-peoples-traditional-territory>.

## 9. Religious Support

- A multifaith/prayer room will be available throughout the conference for anyone wishing to use it. This room will also be kept as quiet as possible with plenty of available seating and floor space.
- Where space allows, this room should be separate to the quiet room.
- If implemented, any event dress codes will not infringe upon the freedom of attendees to wear any articles of religious dress, i.e., turban, hijab, kippah, niqab, etc.

## 10. Dietary Requirements

- All conference events including food/drink will signpost dietary/intolerance information before and at the event for each individual food/drink item.
- Prior to catering planning, attendees will be able to provide information on severe allergies via a poll so that adjustments can be made.
- Conference food choices will cover options suitable for common allergy sufferers and dietary restrictions, e.g.: vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerance, gluten intolerance, halal, kosher, nut allergy, shellfish allergy, pregnancy, diabetic, egg allergy.

## 11. Medical Requirements

- Remind attendees to make sure all personal medications are clearly labelled and check host country laws to ensure there are no issues with bringing them into the country.
- Remind attendees to bring enough medication to cover the duration of their trip and allow for unforeseen delays. Recommend attendees keep a supply of medications on them at all times in case their luggage gets lost/stolen.
- If attendees are worried that their medications may be questioned, or they are not well known internationally, consider carrying a 'travelling letter', which gives a brief description of their health needs and diagnosis, generic names for their medications, and the details of their doctor.
- Suggest attendees check all their medication is correctly labelled and in its original packaging. Make sure they bring a copy of all personal prescriptions to carry during their travel and keep them on your person at all times (i.e., not in hold luggage).
- Attendees should consider packing some extra medication in the hold luggage in case hand luggage is lost or stolen, and vice versa.

### 11.1. Mental Health Medications

Medications for mental health are more likely to have restrictions in-country or raise questions during customs and security screening. Please ensure that attendees check they are bringing medications that are permitted into the

country beforehand

([http://www.customs.gov.hk/en/passenger\\_clearance/prohibited\\_controlled/index.html](http://www.customs.gov.hk/en/passenger_clearance/prohibited_controlled/index.html)).

## **12. Safety**

### 12.1. Personal Safety

- The LOC will post a full list of presenters in the programme on the conference website prior to the start.
- Provide details on local healthcare and facilities and their associated costs.
- Attendees are highly encouraged to purchase travel insurance for the duration of their trip to the host country. All international attendees are also encouraged to purchase appropriate travel insurance in the event that a last minute illness prevents their attendance.
- In the event that any commence, all protests and demonstrations are recommended to be avoided. If attendees find themselves and others suddenly in an area where there are demonstrations, they should remain vigilant, follow the advice of local authorities and move away quickly to a safe place.
- Take sensible precautions against pickpocketing and other tourism-related crimes (e.g., scams).
- If possible, crime prevention and mitigation contacts and resources should be made available, such as:
  - Anonymous reporting systems and dedicated officers at the event for assistance.
  - On-site security and emergency response services.
  - Lists of dangerous areas and “tourist traps” to avoid.
  - Statistics on local crime rates
- The LOC may organise a number of excursions for attendees, for anyone so that they may choose to sightsee in a group or alone.

### 12.2. International Travel Requirements

- Attendees should obtain information on VISA and passport requirements for attending countries and appropriate links to applications and associated costs, well in advance of travel.
  - Passports used to travel to the conference host country should be currently valid and remain valid for a certain amount of time after the date of departure. Please check with local official authorities for specific requirements.
- Attendees from, or transiting through, high risk countries should receive required and recommended vaccinations for those and the host country well in advance of travel.

### 12.3. Considerations for Families and Children

- The LOC should list any in-country laws, regulations and customs that may be applicable to attendees travelling with family members, e.g., COVID-19 rules specific to children and the elderly.
- The LOC should outline governmental restrictions on medication and food products for children and babies. I.e., in some countries limits are enforced on the amount of baby formula that can be brought in/out of the country.
- Onsite nursing/baby changing/quiet facilities will be detailed on the onsite map.

## 13. Remedial Actions

- Every participant explicitly agrees to comply with a Code of Conduct upon conference registration.
- Anyone requested to stop unacceptable behaviour is expected to comply immediately.
- LOC staff (or their designees) may take any action deemed necessary and appropriate, including immediate removal from the meeting without warning and potentially without refund.
- The LOC reserves the right to prohibit attendance at any future events if it is felt the future safety of the community members would be at risk.

- The LOC Code of Conduct is expected to be followed by all meeting participants during presentations, webinars, training workshops and social events associated with the meeting, as well as on the internet and social media.