

## Conference Organisation Info Sheet

### Be aware that

- Organising a conference involves a great deal of administration, diplomacy, correspondence, and many long hours before, during, and after the conference. In return for all the long hours, it is a great way of networking and you will meet many lovely people.
- Timelines may be scaled up or down depending on the individual conference.

### c1.5 years before the conference: First steps

- Find a mentor (someone experienced and willing to advise you).
- Mention plans within the Department (lecturers, other students, Head of Department, etc.).
- Confirm dates (avoid clashes with other relevant conferences/events).
- Form a committee (a few people who will help make decisions, and share the workload).
- Set up an e-mail address and perhaps a website, Facebook, Twitter etc.
- Book venues *provisionally* (consider venues for keynote(s), concert(s), lectures, meals, etc.).
- Make a plan with *realistic* timelines; revise as you go, but stick to it.
- Aim for *everything* to be done one week before the conference, because:
  - You need to make time for final briefings, meetings, phone calls, putting up signage.
  - You may wish to welcome some of your delegates/keynotes personally.
  - Delegates may wish to schedule tech testing sessions or rehearsals.

### Call for Papers

- Keynote speaker(s): Consider options, discuss with mentor and committee. Issue invite(s); keynote speakers will expect to be reimbursed for travel and accommodation; make clear that you can't pay an honorarium. Once confirmed, include keynote(s) in CfP.
- Set the deadline for submission of abstracts (follow tradition or seek advice from mentor).
- Publicise your CfP *early* (see appendix for possible websites/ mailing lists).
- Circulate a CfP reminder, perhaps 3 weeks before the deadline.
- Upload CfP to university website (consider creating own website, Twitter, Facebook etc.).

### Funding

- Ensure that there is a clear funding plan, with realistic balance of revenue & expenditure. Also know through what account the transactions will be processed.
- Consider funding (see appendix for ideas): seek out funding opportunities and make contact with funding institutions early, as there may be long periods to process admin.
- Contact businesses, community centres, CMC etc. closer to the date.
- If you wish to invite international scholars or performers, write to their Embassies to request funding; if the Embassy can fund them, invite the scholar(s) to submit an abstract.

### While the CfP is out, consider all the other things which you can do now

#### Printing and Advertising

- Get quotes and deadlines for printing (posters, booklets, badges).
- Get quotes for stationery (paper, envelopes, plastic badges etc.); the Department may be willing to provide.

- E-mail posters and leaflets; ask Departments/ SMI Council members etc. to print them off and display them in their colleges.
- Posters should include logos of sponsors; you might need to update as you go.

### **Programme**

- Create a general schedule of the conference: start time, sessions, breaks, estimate how many papers you can accept.
- If necessary, invite more experienced scholars to review abstracts; give plenty of notice.
- Is it possible to embed keynote or concerts in regular departmental events, e.g. Research Seminars, Recitals etc.? This may enable you to get extra funding.

### **Catering**

- Consider different catering options (get quotes), including teas/coffees and wine reception. If lunch is not included in the conference fee, ensure there are options available nearby.
- Consider cost and venue for conference dinner.
- Consider special dietary requests, vegetarian, allergies, intolerances etc.

### **Other**

- Based on estimated number of papers, funding, quotes from catering and other costs, calculate conference fee.
- When emailing delegates ask for any food requests, vegetarian, allergies, intolerances etc.
- Talk to admin officers in the Department (piano tuning, room issues, PR, timetable etc.).
- First contacts with the Conference Centre.
- Consider accommodation for guests. You could contact local hotels and negotiate a special rate, with rooms held provisionally until about 4 weeks before the conference.
- Decide what sort(s) of registration you want (online/e-mail/register on the day).
- Contact people who you would like to give a speech (President, Dean, Head of Department, President of SMI, etc.); also plan for closing remarks.
- Do you need to hire a piano?

### **Once you have your abstracts (c6–7 months before the conference)**

- Confirm receipt of abstracts with all applicants; if possible send individual e-mails.
- Collate all abstracts in a word file.
- Make an excel sheet outlining all applicants in which reviewers can mark the abstracts. Send abstracts and excel file (within the programme committee); give a deadline, c. 3-4 weeks.
- Notify accepted applicants (c5–6 months before conference). They will respond with many requests: timing, written letters of acceptance. etc.; be prepared for much correspondence!
- Ask for a brief confirmation that the delegates are still planning to come.

### **Once you have accepted your applicants (5–6 months before the conference)**

- Create a programme: delegates will request this, as they need to make travel plans.
- Budget: You should now know the conference fee; over-budget everything.
- Find chairs: once programme is drafted, e-mail potential chairs. (These could be: organising committee, departmental staff; SMI Council; PG students if it's a PG conference; delegates)
- Draft the programme booklet; proofread (this will take at least 5–6 weeks and may involve several people; this process won't be finished until shortly before the conference).

### **3 months (and less) before the conference**

- Open online registration (if applicable): think about ‘early bird’ rates.
- Write to people who might want to include info for conference packs or maybe paid advertisements: relevant publishers (catalogues/brochures) and journals (e.g. JSMI, Ashgate, OUP, CUP, UCD Press, Cork University Press, etc.). Give a clear deadline (c. 4 weeks before the conference) by which everything needs to arrive. Consider including material from other conference organisers, also free CDs from CMC. Get local maps from Tourist Office.
- Draft conference booklet. Do generic pages as early as possible (places to eat, emergency numbers, maps, wifi info etc., see appendix).
- Write to people who you would like to contribute to your conference booklet: opening remarks (President, Head of Department, President of SMI etc.).
- Draft catering plan: what is needed/when/how much? Finalise numbers later, but have a plan.
- Send out invitations: sponsors, VIPs etc.; ask for confirmation by a certain date.
- Publicise your public events (concerts etc.).

### **1 month before the conference**

- Close early bird rates (if applicable).
- Look for assistants (ask volunteer coordinator to do this, see appendix for template).
- Make lists: reg desk (see appendix), important contact numbers, rates, desk opening hours, things that go up on the notice board (maps, rehearsal plans, conference programme, title of the conference etc.)
- If you plan to present your own paper, it should be ready by now! Also plan your opening/closing remarks if applicable. You may also be chairing a session – be prepared.
- Confirm all your orders and arrangements (piano, rooms etc.).

### **2 weeks before the conference**

- Conference booklet should be ready to print. Send to printers 10 days or less before the conference so you can collect 7–8 days before the conference. If there are late cancellations, you can announce on the day and do up an errata list.
- All badges should be prepped (there will probably be last-minute additions). Don’t forget your own committee, departmental staff, etc.
- Call in a meeting of all the assistants; brief them carefully.
- Finalise your catering plan. Consider feeding volunteers.
- Have a clear plan for distribution of refreshments so volunteers know what to do and when.
- Signs: print, laminate, think about where to put them (university, local businesses, etc.).
- Biographies of delegates: print, put in envelopes, label.
- Finalise assistant schedule.
- Organise everything for registration desk.
- Arrange taxis for keynotes (if relevant).
- Send delegates relevant information: travel info, directions, etc. technology testing, registration desk opening hours etc.

### **1 week before the conference**

- Put together conference packs (get volunteers to help).
- Make schedules (rehearsing/ tech testing schedules).
- Give finalised catering plan to catering staff.

- Assign committee members to look after special guests (e.g. Ambassadors/other VIPs).

### **The week leading up to the conference**

- Last-minute problems will come up; there will still be a lot of correspondence.
- Put up signs one day before the conference.
- Sort out all accessibility issues (keys, security?).
- Be at registration desk when it opens, but *do not* schedule yourself to work at the desk.
- Ensure someone with technical expertise is present when technology is being tested.

### **After the Conference**

- Write up reports, send thank yous, put up pictures on social media.
- Follow up on post-event funding.
- Pay bills.