



## Notes for Symposium Chairs

Thank you for agreeing to be a Symposium Chair. Chairs provide an important role in facilitating the scientific element of EECERA Conferences.

These notes are meant to be a helpful guide for Symposium Chairs. They are based on feedback about successful chairing at recent EECERA Conferences.

The function of the Chair is to support the contributors and to facilitate their communication both with the audience and between each other. Remember that it is an aim of EECERA to support and develop research in the field, internationally. Many contributors (and many in the audience) will be talking and listening in a language which is not their own. Conference participants come from a wide range of professional backgrounds, too. Some contributors will be highly experienced but there will be many who are not. These colleagues may have something interesting to say but be not used to presenting, particularly to international audiences. The development of contributors both as researchers and presenters is one of the aims of the EECERA Conference.

The following suggestions are to help maximise opportunities for as many people as possible to communicate effectively about their research. Inevitably, many parallel concurrent symposia will be running. In some sessions there will be more participants than others as symposia are offered on the basis of free choice to delegates. Special Interest Groups often arise from quite small numbers in a themed symposium, so even the smallest group can have a long term impact on knowledge in the field.

### **The Preparatory Meeting**

The Conference Scientific Committee will have collated individual paper proposals into symposia using the abstracts submitted during the 'Call for Papers'. We will inform you of the presenters in your symposium, their abstracts, their institution and their emails. We would recommend that the Chair and all the symposium contributors have contact by email, discuss abstracts, look for possible links and if needed exchange power points or full papers. The conference has Twitter, Facebook and other electronic networking possibilities as well.

It's good to have a preparatory meeting or discussion before the session. Many contributors are fairly tense immediately before their sessions and when initial meeting is left until the last minute, contributors are less open to suggestions and less likely to make adaptations. If possible, have a meeting in the room you will be using for your symposium so everyone knows where it is. Check the layout of the room and the equipment that each contributor needs. Get the contributors to try their PowerPoints (contributors have been advised to bring their

presentations with them on a memory stick) and sit at the back of the room and comment on readability. A screen, LCD Projector & laptop/ PC will be in each of the presentation rooms.

Agree on a timetable: how long each is to have, the order of appearance and whether questions and discussion will be allowed at the end of each paper or at the end of the session. Symposia presentation time is very short and really their allotted 20 minute presentations are to communicate the essence of their paper. Further communication can often take place after the session with those who express an interest. Agree on the time signal to be used notifying contributors that they have 2 minutes remaining and confirm that, to be fair to all, agreed times will be strictly enforced. At the end of those two minutes the Chair will rise and walk to the front and the contributor must close immediately.

Discuss possible strategies to save time and remain within the time limit. Suggest that they might time themselves doing a dry run. Suggest that they try not to just read from a text and that they should not just speak quicker in an attempt to get in all they wish to say. Recommend that, if necessary, they restructure their text, focus on essentials, see what they can cut and that they focus on key words on overheads to support those in their audience who are not as fluent in the language as they are. Suggest they have an emergency procedure prepared to curtail their talk at the two minute warning if they are over running e.g. mark paragraphs on their paper that they could skip or prepare a conclusion that captures the essence of what they wish to say. Each symposia set has a total of 1 hour & 20 minutes for all presentations & questions.

Discuss the above points and check that everyone involved feels comfortable about it.

### **During the Session**

Check the room, equipment, that there's a table for speakers, layout, lights, chairs and that water and glasses are available for the speakers. A member of the EECERA team will be on hand to deal with any queries. Try to save a few chairs near the door so that late arrivals are not disruptive in searching for a place to sit.

Begin on time and be as brief in your introduction as you can. Start with the theme of the symposium and its number (some might be in the wrong room!). Explain the format you have agreed regarding the timing of presentations, questions and discussion. Inform the audience of the order (it might be different to the printed programme) and introduce the first speaker paraphrasing the title. Write down before your symposium the time each presenter: (a) starts, (b) has 2 minutes left and (c) must finish. Keep a close eye on your watch.

Be attentive to the content, take short notes and intervene briefly if you think something needs clarification. During the discussion, try not to dominate but facilitate. Be ready to formulate a question or remark that might stimulate debate particularly to break the initial ice. Invite questions or comment. Make sure questions are understood by both audience and respondent. Don't let one person dominate the debate.

Requests from the audience for copies of papers are the responsibility of the presenters. If they have not brought sufficient copies then participants who want a copy of their paper should make individual arrangements with each contributor, such as leaving their name and email address on a sheet and receiving an email from the contributor after the Conference.

Thank all the contributors and participants at the end and invite applause.

### **After the Symposium**

Have a personal word with each contributor but make sure that members of the audience have access first.

Give each of the presenters private, positive, constructive but critical feedback on content and on presentation and communication skills (pace, quality of PowerPoint, key messages communicated etc.). This can be left until later in the conference, if necessary. Ask them how they felt it went and respond.

Remind them about the possibility of submitting their paper to the journal for consideration for the EECER Journal, which is now included in the prestigious ISI Social Sciences Citation Index (R). They may do so online at: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/1350293X.asp>. If their paper is successful in going through the formal peer review process, it may be accepted for the Journal, but presentation at Conference is no guarantee of that happening. All their abstracts will however be published in the Conference Abstract Book online after the conference.

Make sure the room is left tidy and ready for the next session.

Enjoy chairing your symposium session and thank you for helping facilitate the Conference programme.

**EECERA Trustees**

May 2019