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INTRODUCTION

The Geological Society of London's conferences, meetings and events are an important element of our activities. They provide a valuable and enriching experience for the entire Earth science community, promoting the latest research, knowledge exchange and networking opportunities. All of which are crucial for the advancement of our science, benefitting our Fellows and the wider community.

People come from a host of different contexts and circumstances with some individuals experiencing fewer barriers preventing them from participation and some individuals with significantly more. These barriers can be in the form of gender, financial, physical, geographical, social, gender identity and disability.

We aspire for the Earth science community to be more representative and reflective of wider society and to make all of our activities accessible to everyone. However, we recognize that there are underrepresentation concerns throughout our community. While this remains the case, we are limiting the impact of our science and the benefits to society.

We are working to create and promote an inclusive culture throughout all of our activities that inspires, attracts, recruits and supports full participation of everyone irrespective of race, gender, cultural, spiritual and political beliefs, ethnicity, age or disabilities.

We have developed this document for our community to guide them on ways to incorporate EDI into their planning. We know there is not a one-size fits all approach to this undertaking and, as such, we have developed helpful recommendations for those organising conferences, meetings, events and workshops.

The recommendations, set out below, are expected to be adopted by organizers of all event types hosted by or in association with the Society. They apply to both physical and virtual activities.

We have sought to draw on insights, and examples of good practice, from academic literature, learned societies, and initiatives aimed to improve inclusion within a particular discipline, or in relation to a particular group.

We hope that the recommendations will serve as inspiration to be adopted throughout the Earth science community. They are intended to act as a starting point for the community to continue to develop, design and facilitate more inclusive environments.

This is a living document and will evolve over time. If you have suggestions for changes or wish to discuss aspects of the document, please contact: diversity@geolsoc.org.uk

PLANNING

When planning an event, one of the earliest considerations is choosing the location and/or venue. Every reasonable effort must be made to ensure that no person with any type of disability is prevented or discouraged from attending and participating based on any accessibility issue.

Organisers should take the following considerations into account:

Access requirements

All rooms being used in a venue should be accessible by everyone. A venue should be reviewed in advance to avoid potential access issues. Organizers should check whether the venue can provide an accessibility audit. This can provide valuable information for prospective attendees with access requirements. They should cover:

- Availability of lifts, ramps or other means for participants with mobility issues.
- Allocating space for baby changing/feeding, prayers and/or the adoption of a quiet room.
- A venue's child policy – some venues have strict policies on allowing access to children on their premises. If childcare facilities are not available, consider providing a list of childcare options in the local area.

Location

Deciding on the location of the event is important, specifically taking into account the distance between the venue and accommodation. This is especially pertinent for evening events. When an event takes place in the evening organizers should:

- Collect and provide lists of recommended taxi companies.
- Collect and provide lists of recommended accommodation.
- Share closed social media / group chats to allow people to buddy up on journeys.
- Provide a detailed map of the venue which includes transport links etc.

It is recommended that proximity to public transport routes should be considered when deciding on a location as well as ensuring that the venue has parking available.

Technology

Today many people want to participate and attend events but cannot physically come to a meeting (e.g. people with caring responsibilities, geographical distance etc.). As a result, organizers should ensure that:

- Venues have the necessary facilities for livestreaming and/or video recording. This can allow people the ability to participate remotely or catch up at a later date.
 - Ensure that Wi-Fi is free and accessible in the space(s) being used.
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Choosing a date and time

We must be mindful of the date and time chosen. Generally, we avoid scheduling events on traditionally Christian holidays, although we must be mindful of other religious holidays throughout the year as well as school breaks etc.

Organizers should ensure that their chosen date/time:

- Does not overlap with key religious or national holidays.
- Allows people with caring responsibilities the ability to attend.
- Does not coincide with school holidays and mid-term breaks when childcare and travel costs can be prohibitive, especially for early career researchers or doctoral students.

Announcing the date and time as early as possible is recommended as this gives attendees plenty of time to plan accordingly. This is especially important for attendees with caring responsibilities or with accessibility requirements.

Food, drink and entertainment

Many people have made changes to their diets in recent years due to allergies, intolerances, personal choices etc. In addition, people of different faiths, people with disabilities, and pregnant women may also have specific dietary requirements.

- We must be mindful of dietary restrictions and allergies and should collect information about dietary restrictions, allergies and preferences during registration.
- All foods must be clearly and accurately labelled. Consider including the menu in promotional materials allowing attendees to plan accordingly.
- If food is not being provided, a list of dining options close to the venue should be developed and should include vegetarian/vegan/kosher/gluten-free/allergen safe, and other options.
- Alcohol should not be permitted at daytime events. Should you wish to serve alcohol at an evening event, offer a variety of non-alcoholic beverages to remove the emphasis away from alcohol. In addition, the appropriate coverage that allows you to serve alcohol must be
- Alcohol free alternatives for drinks receptions, and caffeine-free/gluten free options for refreshment breaks should be included in any offering to attendees. Ensure they are labelled clearly.
- Attendees observing Ramadan will fast from sunrise to sunset. If food is provided at an event, organisers should enquire with these attendees to discuss other options. Another option would be to discount their ticket price to allow them to make their own eating arrangements.
- There must be easy access to drinking water throughout the day in the venue.

Registration

During registration, attendees should be encouraged to declare any specific needs they might have (i.e. learning or physical disabilities, hearing or visual impairments, dietary or caring needs). Specify that you welcome all guests and outline how you will be able to support and cater for their needs. Offer the option of discussing accessibility needs over the phone.

Data Collection

Registration is the ideal opportunity to collect demographic information on prospective attendees. This information can help organisers and the Society better understand the community it serves and draw attention to areas of underrepresentation. It can help in establishing baselines, allowing organisers to set targets and monitor progress over time.

Diversity data is potentially identifiable and could breach GDPR. It is recommended that the data collected are done so in an anonymous manner.

Information can be collected on the following areas:

- Age / Age group
- Carer status
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Gender Identity / Sex
- Religion or belief
- Sexual orientation

Pricing

This is an area of inclusivity that is often overlooked. The cost of attending events can be a prohibitive barrier to some (e.g. early careers, post docs, students etc.) especially when we factor in additional associated costs (e.g. travel).

We recognize that events need to be financially viable. If possible, organizers should consider adopting some of the suggestions below to help broaden participation:

- A reduced fee for early careers, post docs and students (or a full fee waiver).
- Carers/Helpers of attendees with accessibility requirements should be offered a complimentary ticket.

DEVELOPING YOUR PROGRAMME

Conferences and events serve many important functions. They help to share and celebrate cutting edge science, build networks for collaboration or can simply be a place to meet, listen and discuss topics of interest.

As organisers begin to develop a programme and identify speakers they must try to avoid approaching the same people over and over again.

Widening our searches and broadening invites to more diverse pools of people can have profound benefits. It is not simply about giving someone the opportunity to speak or present. We must understand the transformative power visibility and representation can have and why they are so important in our commitment to diversity, equality and inclusion.

Selecting speakers

Organisers must make a commitment to ensure diversity is actively sought on panels and speaker lists. These can include career stage, race, gender, geographical representation, ethnic background and other axes of identity.

This will require organisers to go beyond their own typical networks and reach out to different institutions and networks to provide suggestions for the organisers to consider.

Additionally, organisers can use databases such as [gaze](#) to aid their search. Organisers could take this opportunity to develop their own database to use in future.

Inviting speakers

When people have been selected and are being invited to participate it is important to explain to them why and what aspects of their work is being sought for the event. It's important to remember that many people will choose to participate or not depending on how much they perceive their knowledge, experience and contributions will be valued rather than simply making up the numbers.

Personal communications to those invited can help them know what their expected role is. Offering the necessary support and providing the information on the format of the event, anticipated audience, typical expectations etc. should be included.

For less experienced speakers, organisers should consider offering mentoring or guidance on ways to improve their presentation skills.

Format selection

Events can be developed in myriad ways as the size and formats to select from can vary enormously. However, most events tend to usually have a key note speaker or a panel discussion as the headline attraction.

Below we have listed recommendations focusing on the most common formats. However, aspects of these recommendations can be applied to other formats.

Panel discussions and plenary sessions

Chairs play a crucial role in the smooth running of panel discussions and plenaries and should be selected carefully. It is important to ensure that Chairs are briefed to:

- Ensure they give panel members an equal opportunity to speak.
- Able to stop panellists if they monopolise the discussion, allowing everybody the opportunity to share their research, views or opinions.
- Acquainted with the background, field, research and expertise of participants.
- Ensure that no one is consistently last to speak.

Q&A sessions

There are many measures facilitators and moderators can consider adopting in order to make sessions more inclusive and promote a lively and informative discussion. If questions are being taken, ensure that convenors are briefed on these recommendations prior to the start of a session.

- Many important and insightful comments and questions often come from those who might take a few moments to gather their thoughts or find their voice. You should consider a digital audience engagement/interaction application option as an additional avenue for questions and comments. This will also allow virtual participants the ability to engage on the day.
- When taking questions, make a conscious effort to ensure that there are questions from a diversity of audience members. Data suggests that carefully selected first question will encourage questions from a broader range of attendees.
- If intending on only using social media as the means to actively engage with the event, please be aware that not everybody will have an account. You should inform participants that it will be used and encourage participants to register for an account beforehand. Ideally adding audience engagement software to the mix is recommended.

Networking Sessions

Networking sessions are a mainstay at most large events. They play an important role in providing opportunities for attendees to mingle with one another, build relationships, share experiences, offer professional advice etc. However, there are a number of considerations organisers should be mindful of.

- Sessions usually take place at the end of the day which can act as a barrier to attend for people with caring responsibilities. We recommend incorporating a networking session at a time during the day to ensure all can participate.
- There are a number of ways to work in the potential for the sharing of knowledge and new ideas during the day. Activities such as poster sessions, roundtable discussions, speed networking, ask an expert session, virtual groups or randomised coffee trails could take place during a break for example. These can be a fun and enlightening experience for everyone who participates.
- Although, for some people networking can be a source of anxiety. It may be worthwhile to adopt a traffic light badge system allowing people to opt out, participate or express willingness to be approached by others rather than instigating conversation.
- More experienced and established participants could volunteer to act as buddies or mentors on the day and help other less experienced attendees.

COMMUNICATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Carefully developed communication materials are one of the most effective ways to convey our commitment to improving diversity and promoting inclusion. We must be mindful that we are trying to attract and target a wide range of participants.

When selecting imagery, where possible, ensure that there is a range of people from a variety of backgrounds. It is important that all imagery and language used have been reviewed.

Organisers should make a commitment to share the event as widely as possible. Special effort should be made to identify, seek out and share with underrepresented groups.

All of the information included in your communications should be accessible on the event website, via social media, emails, newsletters etc.

Before the event

It is advised that organisers should have a clear equality and diversity statement visible for their conference or event. This should be displayed prominently on promotional materials and can also be used as a holding slide. Organisers could develop an event specific version or adopt the [Science Council Declaration on Diversity and Inclusion](#). Encourage the opening speaker to mention it.

The Society has a duty to ensure a safe, productive and welcoming environment for all participants. The [Code of Conduct for Meetings and other Events](#) is enforced at all Society events and should be referenced at the beginning of an event. It should be included in promotional materials. Participants must agree to abide by the code when registering.

Confirm with all speakers that their presentations meet current accessibility standards. For example, ensure that text is written in a colour and font size that are easier to read for those with visual impairments. The induction loop system should be in operation for those with hearing impairments. If possible, organisers should consider adopting closed captioning for those with hearing impairments and for those with English as a second language.

On the day

All venue signage (toilet facilities, fire exits, accessible routes etc.) must be clearly visible to participants. A map containing this information should be included in the promotional materials.

Make sure that adequate break periods are spread throughout the day to accommodate those with health needs. If sessions are running over time, we would encourage organisers to protect the length of breaks rather than shortening them.

If using a photographer to document an event, they should be encouraged to capture instances of equality, diversity and inclusion. Imagery collected can be used in future promotional materials.

We must remain mindful that some participants may not be comfortable with having their photo taken. Consider integrating an opt-out policy for participants (e.g. through color-coded lanyards, badges etc.).

You must ensure that participants are aware of who to approach with an access issue, a medical emergency, or in the case of violations of the Code of Conduct. Consider providing visible badges to those monitoring safety and ensure that these volunteers are fully briefed prior to the start of the event.

After your event

Feedback

Seeking the feedback of participants is a crucial step. It provides participants with the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on both the positives and negatives. Doing this can provide invaluable information on how to build on and plan more successful events in the future.

A brief anonymous online feedback questionnaire should be included in post event communications.

The findings of these information gathering exercises should be stored safely and could be made available to the relevant parties to allow further discussion and introspection.

Sharing event materials

All slides and notes should be made available to attendees via post event communications. If an event is being live streamed, a link to the recording should be included. This policy should be communicated to attendees on the day.