**Guide to organising your conference or symposium at Leeds Arts University:  
hints and tips**

Conferences and Symposia are complex events to plan and coordinate. To assist Leeds Arts University staff in managing these events, the Research team have collected together some helpful hints and tips to guide those wanting to write a proposal for a conference or symposium.

To apply for funding and approval for your conference or symposium, please fill out a [Conferences and Symposia Funding Request Form.](https://portal.leeds-art.ac.uk/content/conferences-and-symposia-funding-request-form)

# **Make decisions about the following:**

There are several decisions you might want to make to begin your planning process. You may wish to use the table below as a tool to help plan these decisions:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Consideration** | **Decision** |
| **Who is part of the proposing/managing team?** |  |
| **What is the title of the event?** |  |
| **What are the aims of the event?** |  |
| **What audiences will it address?** |  |
| **What format will it take?** |  |
| **When will it take place?** |  |
| **Where will it take place?** |  |
| **Who needs to be aware that the event is  taking place?** |  |
| **Who in the university needs to be aware that the event is taking place?** |  |
| **What capacity room is required for the event?** |  |
| **Will there be refreshments provided?** |  |
| **What will the duration be?** |  |
| **Will there be any event materials produced?** |  |
| **What are the timescales for producing the materials? Who is responsible for that?** |  |
| **Will there be a peer review process for selecting contributors?** |  |
| **Who will be involved in the peer review process?** |  |
| **What resources will be needed from the university in terms of student ambassadors, estates, and IT?** |  |
| **Who will be responsible for updating the conferences and symposia risk assessment?** |  |
| **How will you address or communicate with the expected audience?** |  |
| **Will there be keynote speakers, if so how many? How will they be funded?** |  |
| **How will the group will make decisions/who will make decisions?** |  |
| **Think about how the conference schedule will be communicated to the audience, will there be a conference booklet or online?** |  |

# **Assigning roles and planning a timetable of actions**

As a group, you may wish to consider giving people working on the project roles and responsibilities. The following table suggests some roles which may be appropriate for managing your event:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Role:** | **Assigned to:** |
| **Liaising with university facilities and resources** |  |
| **Managing social media and networking communications** |  |
| **Managing the peer review process for abstract proposals (if appropriate)** |  |
| **Creating and managing the Eventbrite and news pages** |  |

After making the key decisions, a good next step is to plan a timetable of actions. Many of these actions will vary depending on the nuances of your conference/symposium. However, one essential action would be to complete and submit the [Conference and Symposia Funding Request Form](https://portal.leeds-art.ac.uk/content/conferences-and-symposia-funding-request-form) and associated risk assessment.   
  
Other actions could include:

* Meeting as a team to establish a schedule and an overall rationale for the event for the intended audience to read.
* If your conference/symposium is going to be an open call for papers, a call for abstracts should be developed. Things you may want to consider at this stage include:  
  + The criteria through which abstracts will be selected.
  + If there will be a keynote speaker.
  + Timescales and deadlines.

A good platform for creating a call for abstracts is Eventbrite (which could be advertised through the university Marketing news pages). A good tool for collecting abstract submissions through your Eventbrite page is [Microsoft Forms](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=V6OSmINmz0eagsgPkNl79a8hcdJT7UBOoXxUNPeACCpUMTlLSkdGSFVYOUtENEk1MDkxWDBPWDJFRS4u).

# **Mechanism for conference/symposium registration**

Once an Eventbrite page has been created, this can be shared with interested networks and appropriate social media. Things to consider include:

* When creating your Eventbrite page, ensure that there are appropriate disclaimers or permissions sought for photographing attendees or recording people’s responses present in the ticket reservation process.
* The registration stage may be a good time to collect any accessibility or dietary requirements from delegates.
* Set the number of attendees on Eventbrite to make sure that the room capacity numbers are not overreached, and monitor to ensure that this does not get exceeded.
* Set email reminders to send before the event to ensure maximum participation.

You may wish to think about is whether the event is designed to capture impact. If so, a mechanism for collecting numbers of attendees and their comments needs to be designed. This mechanism must comply with the university’s [Data Protection Policy](https://portal.leeds-art.ac.uk/data-protection-policy) and the [Guidance on Anonymisation and Pseudonymisation](https://portal.leeds-art.ac.uk/content/guidance-anonymisation-and-pseudonymisation-research).

You may also wish to seek the assistance of the Leeds Arts University Marketing team for promoting your event. A good selection of items to send to marketing could be:

* A press release
* Text for a webpage on the university website
* Text for an internal email invitation
* Text for external invitations to appropriate external organisations/individuals

It is worthwhile getting in touch with Marketing once you have completed your Eventbrite page.

# **Peer review and contributors**

Peer review is an important stage in assuring the quality, validity, and rigour of any research project. Therefore, if you are creating an open call for abstracts, you should consider embedding peer review in your selection process. Here are some things you should think about when planning your peer review process:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Consideration** | **Decision** |
| If abstracts are required, is there an email that can be used to send the abstracts to? Who will monitor this email address?  *(You may wish to use* [*Microsoft Forms*](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=V6OSmINmz0eagsgPkNl79a8hcdJT7UBOoXxUNPeACCpUMTlLSkdGSFVYOUtENEk1MDkxWDBPWDJFRS4u) *as a means for people to submit abstracts. If using Microsoft forms, the form should be created using the user account for the person assigned to monitor the abstracts email so that they receive the notifications for completed forms).* |  |
| Have you decided on criteria for abstracts that will be accepted or declined? |  |
| Have you identified who the peer reviewers will be?  *(these could be the organising team or people outside the team)* |  |
| Will feedback be given to improve the abstract? |  |
| Will feedback be given to those whose abstracts are declined? |  |

Peer review should be carried out within clearly defined timescales and feedback as quickly as possible to the authors so that there is time to prepare their contributions and register to the event.

Once you have selected your presenters, you should communicate with everybody accepted to find out what their presentation requirements are. Different formats and options sometimes help if anything goes wrong.   
Ensure that the presenters/contributors understand what is expected of them in terms of times (eg. going to the room 10 minutes before the start of their presentation).

# **Examples of things to consider when running a Conference/Symposium in person:**

* Have a clear plan for setting up your space(s) in good time before your delegates begin to arrive.
* Be present when Estates are setting up the space to ensure that it meets the requirements for the event.
* Meet with any Student Ambassadors you have booked to discuss how people will be guided to the event space, and briefing them on any additional duties they need to perform (eg. overseeing the refreshments, helping to facilitate any accessibility requirements etc).
* Test out any IT/AV equipment well in advance. Providing alternative solutions in case of technical issues.
* Receive the presentations from your presenters beforehand (this will make the event run smoother).
* Make sure there is a waiting space for people arriving, and that they are taken as efficiently as possible to the space where the event is going to happen.
* Begin the event promptly.
* Have the chair of the event welcome people and go through housekeeping (information about fire, first aid, photography during the event, and refreshments). They should also recap the aims and themes of the conference, go through the timeline, and introduce the Keynote.
* Make sure the keynote speaker is well prepared and supported.
* As much as possible stick to the published times in the schedule.
* Ensure that there is a mechanism for the delegates to ask questions of the keynote and for the keynote to respond at the end of the talk. Give enough time for this, as the keynote sets the tone of the conference.
* Plan questions to ask in case there are none coming from the floor.
* If there are breakout rooms, assign chairs for each room who will manage the contributions that are presented in each space.
* Give the chairs guidance about sticking to allotted times and giving people time for questions.
* Be strict with times. This is because it can be unfair to other presenters who do stick to times, and can have a severe knock-on effect if somebody runs over their allotted time.
* Give enough time for breaks and lunch if being provided so that people can network.
* Think about having a plenary session and an ending speech where next steps are discussed. Next steps could be setting up a research group, developing the themes into a publication, creating an annual or biannual conference, keeping the conversation going on social media by setting up a special interest group.
* Stick to the end time because people may need to travel to return home.

# **Examples of things to consider when running a Conference/Symposium online:**

* Ensure everybody has the correct links well in advance.
* Give presenters an opportunity to test their contribution with the organising team 30 minutes before the event starts.
* When the event is due to start, it’s good to have a landing page for delegates to see whilst they are being let into the room.
* Ensure that there is enough time for delegates to be let into the room, and assign someone to be responsible for that.
* When people join, ensure that they all have their microphones switched off.
* Have a chair of the event, a technical support assistant and someone who will manage the chat (for Zoom, there is an option for “chat” and “Q&A” – the chat manager should look after the Q&A).
* If the event is recorded, ensure that everyone is aware and gain permission beforehand in Eventbrite and remind them throughout the event.
* Have the chair of the event welcome people and go through housekeeping. They should also recap the aims and themes of the conference, go through the timeline, and introduce the Keynote.
* Instruct people to use the chat and/or the Q&A and keep reminding them.
* If there are breakout rooms, these should be managed by the technical support assistant and there should be chairs assigned for each room.
* If there are links to online platforms that allow participatory work, ensure that everyone has access to these and that they are as simple as possible.
* Have plenty of breaks as sitting in front of a screen can be tiring.
* Have the chat manager reading aloud questions from the chat/Q&A to the presenter when they have finished their contribution.
* Have a clear ending time and ensure that presenters do not exceed their allocated time slots.

**If you require any further advice or guidance, please contact the LAU Research team through** [**research@leeds-art.ac.uk**](mailto:research@leeds-art.ac.uk)**.**