

Experiencing higher education: Global Trends and Transformations

Guidance for session Chairs for individual presentations and discussion workshop and groups.

Thank you for taking on the role of session chair at this year's SRHE Conference. This really is a key role and the overall measure of success of the conference is highly weighted towards participant's experience of the individual presentation and workshop sessions.

This year we are appointing session chairs for all presentation sessions so some sessions will be one paper in 30 minutes and some will be briefer presentations from more than one presenter although the papers have been matched to relate as close as possible to similar themes. Symposia sessions have their own chairs and discussants.

The individual paper presentations are scheduled in 30 minute sessions and presenters have been asked to ensure that they allow good time for discussion and to take no more than 20 minutes for their formal presentation.

Papers are allocated to a session time coded A-R and a strand number 1-12, which relates to the research domain under which the paper was submitted.

There are 12 breakout rooms in total, all within the Celtic Manor Convention Centre, and the final version of the timetable includes room allocations so you will know the "what, when and where" for the sessions you are chairing.

Good chairing ensures that presenters have a decent opportunity to present their work but also allows time for questions and some discussion and interaction for all delegates. It is also really important to ensure that question/discussion time is not dominated by a few individuals. If this happens it makes other people feel excluded and they always seem to assume that those people dominating a session are closely linked with the Society even though this is often not the case.

Here once again are our usual guidelines for session chair as an aide memoire;

- Open each session on time and introduce the presenter and their paper title so everyone knows that they are in the place they want to be before the session starts
- Define the timetable for each session at the outset;
- each individual paper presentation session is for 30 minutes and there is only one paper per session. With one paper scheduled in the session we can allow a max of 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for Questions. Some papers have a co presenter and chairs should discuss at the outset how the presenters wish to muse the time available

- discussion workshops include varying numbers of papers according the way the reviewers and lead assessors grouped them so it will n be necessary to work out a rough schedule and agree this with different presenters. For workshops it is suggested that a couple of questions might be taken after each presentation but the main discussion reserved until all papers in the session have been presented
- Agree timings with presenters at the outset and how they wish to be reminded of the time remaining. For example do they want verbal reminders or prefer to be passed a piece of paper?
- Make sure the presenter stops speaking after the agreed amount of time for their paper. If it is obvious that they are nearly finished and need a last few minutes to wrap up properly let them do so but insist on some time for questions
- Give a 5 minute and ,if necessary, 2 minute reminder of time left
- Chair the Question and Answer session firmly. Try to start the question time by getting a show of hands for everyone who has a question and try and make sure everyone gets a chance to speak who wants to. Taking more than one question before the presenter responds can help in making the best use of the time available.
- It is fair to adopt a rule which allows one question per person and to say this.
- Try to stick to one question per person before giving someone the opportunity to ask a supplementary or second question
- Start Q&A time by inviting questions and ask all questioners to start by saying who they are and where they are from and avoid if possible addressing the people you know well by name but not others as this also creates an illusion of exclusivity.
- Have a broad question available to ask yourself in case no one else is ready to start. If you do not have a specific question try something along the lines of “ I would find it helpful if you could elaborate on /say a little more about X”
- Bring the session to a close preferably a few minutes before the end of the session time. We have allowed 15 minutes between each session but this is to allow for people top move between different sessions so please try and end each session on time.
- Thank the presenter(s) for their presentation. If summing up comes easily to you this is excellent but if not a straightforward “thank you” is fine. If it has been stimulating and thought provoking say so, if not stick with warm thanks for their contribution. Thank the participants also especially if it has been a lively session.

- Try to avoid proposing to mark thanks “in the usual way” and just lead a simple hand clap of appreciation
- This year we are not asking chairs to complete a formal report on each session but any feedback is very welcome and there will be cards at the conference registration desk for you to provide any comments you think we should take on board and a secure “ballot box” to put them in.

Finally just a really big thank you. **THANK YOU**