SRHE Annual International Research Conference 2021: Chairing Guidelines

As we approach the annual SRHE International Conference – which will take place entirely online – we would like to share some best practice regarding chairing online events. These guidelines are designed to support you and help you navigate managing academic exchanges in an online space, as well as provide support for those who may be new to chairing.

Before the Session

- At this year's virtual conference, all panel presentations will take place on Zoom. Whilst a staff member from the SRHE team/Nomad IT will be on hand to provide technical support, it is useful to have some knowledge regarding basic troubleshooting (how to share a screen, how to use the 'raise hand' feature, etc.) yourself so that you can direct attendees and panellists. If you are not very familiar with Zoom and would like some guidance, please register for one of our pre-conference practice sessions for chairs (on 30th November or 2nd December).

- Zoom rooms will be open approximately 15 minutes in advance of the advertised start time of the panel. Please come along during this time to introduce yourself and panellists to each other, while SRHE/Nomad IT help to test audio, video.

- Let the panellists know the order of presentations, how you will introduce them, and how you will signal remaining time during their presentations. This is also a good time to check that there are no distracting noises around any presenters.

- Ensure you are correctly pronouncing names and are using correct pronouns. Use gender neutral language throughout if pronouns are unknown to you.

During the Session

- Begin the session by letting participants know the structure and timings of the panel session. Ensure participants know how, when, or if they are welcome to turn on their cameras and microphones (do remind everyone that only the presenter(s) speaking should have their microphone on, however).

- Similarly, let participants know how to ask questions; they can type in the chat, use the "raise hand" reaction before turning on their microphone, camera, or both to ask when called on by the chair to do so (avoid asking those who have written their questions in the chat to speak it instead). It is up to the chair to monitor the various modes of interaction participants have, so do let us know if you may need support doing this.

- Make sure you can take notes as you will need to generate and guide discussion during the time allocated after the presentations for Q&A with the attendees. It is very helpful if you are able to make connections across the papers presented, and/or are prepared to bring each panellist into the discussion. The audience may need some time to gather their thoughts before the discussion or Q&A, so it is very helpful if you are prepared to ask the first question or two. This is also a good way to encourage participation.

- Keep each presenter to time, and do not be afraid to stop a speaker who runs out of their allotted time. This ensures every presenter is afforded the same level of courtesy and respect. Moreover, a presenter could have other meetings or back-to-back scheduling, so cannot afford to have their time cut into.

- During the Q&A section of a panel, the chair will be required to facilitate discussion. This will involve engaging all the panellists, monitoring the chat, making sure that the discussion does not become too niche and exclusionary, asking for comments to be rephrased as questions, ensuring all presenters are engaged, and keeping the discussion alive if attendees are reticent.

Ending the Session

- Closing the session by bringing together the multiple strands of presenters' work, and incorporating the most interesting aspects of the discussion, is an excellent way to make clear the insights the panel and discussion has generated.

- Zoom rooms will remain open even after the scheduled panel time has concluded; we have adopted this approach to ensure that presenters benefit from as much engagement as possible with their work. However, you are not required to continue chairing the discussion once the advertised panel time has concluded, and presenters will be aware of this. Should presenters/attendees wish to continue their discussion beyond the panel time, please do ensure note to the attendees that the panel has formally concluded and their continued participation is entirely optional.

- If there are remaining questions at the end of the panel, please note that there is a 'save chat' function in the chat box in Zoom (click on the three dots which appear to the right of the 'to' field when the chat is open) – you or any of the presenters can save this locally to your device should you wish to have a copy of the chat.

- Before thanking speakers and attendees, it would be wonderful if you could signpost the next session on the program, or where similarly themed panels are taking place.