

IN A NUTSHELL: GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING A DIVERSE & GENDER-BALANCED CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP

Equality and Diversity Committee, School of Biology, University of St Andrews, U.K.

- 1. Establish a Gender-Balanced Organizing Committee.** The program committee should be diverse, informed and gender-balanced, ideally with at least two persons of each gender.
- 2. Develop an Overt Speaker Policy.** Make a balanced program an explicit target. The aim should be to reduce the field-wide bias in the balance of speakers.
- 3. Make the Policy Visible.** Announce the speaker policy prominently. Gender balance is not inconsistent with a high-quality program. Give session chairpersons guidance to promote equality in questioning. Develop a 'code of conduct' statement for the conference, ensuring zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour and a procedure for reporting incidents.
- 4. Compile a database of potential invitees.** Ensure invited slots are gender-neutral. Brainstorm to invite suggestions, and engage with (especially female) colleagues for nominations. Writing down all the roles that require filling (including session chairpersons), and compile a list of candidates for each. Consider early career women for gaps: they typically do a fantastic job and will benefit from the opportunity and exposure. The same holds for other protected characteristics.
- 5. Collect the Data.** Keep a running total of the gender balance for each role. Collect data during abstract submission on gender, and other relevant protected characteristics (e.g. ethnicity, disability), to use in the selection of the program. Provide a safe and welcoming event for all attendees.
- 6. Grade the abstracts blind.** Anonymize abstracts. Ensure a gender-balanced pool of reviewers. Use ranking as a guide (recognizing that the grading process is imperfect), balanced with gender, career stage, geographical location, etc. Select top-ranked submissions from each minority group. Be explicit about selection procedures, posting this information on the conference/workshop website.
- 7. Replace Like for Like.** When speakers decline, select replacements on a like-for-like basis (i.e. replacing a female speaker who declined with the next ranked female).
- 8. Be Family (and Carer) Friendly.** State explicitly that the conference is 'family friendly' and that participants' children are welcome. Resources permitting, offer support for partner travel, childcare, a crèche or a family room, and a space for breastfeeding mothers. Provide a means for attendee carers to connect, gain and share advice (e.g. a Facebook group).
- 9. Report the Data.** For each protected characteristic, summarize the numbers of speakers and participants in each role on the conference website or booklet.
- 10. Make a Stand.** When you are invited to help organize, attend, or speak at a conference, ask to see the list of invited speakers, and make your acceptance conditional on the gender-balance problem being addressed.