

CAS guidelines for promoting equity & diversity at conferences and meetings

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1 Motivation

One of our goals as a centre is to make sure we are adequately representing and reflecting the diverse community of astronomy and astrophysics at all levels. As a CAS representative on a conference science organizing committee (SOC) or local organizing committee (LOC), we should adhere to and promote our diversity and equity values.

In this document, we present guidelines that SOC or LOC members can follow to promote equity and diversity at conferences and other science meetings. The goals of these guidelines are:

- To promote the status of underrepresented groups at astronomy meetings including women, transgender and gender-diverse people, sexual minorities, ethnic and racial minorities, people dealing with disabilities, and those from underrepresented nationalities. Invitation to and participation in conferences are a means by which members of these groups can increase in their esteem and career standing.
- To enhance the visibility of minorities in order to foster a diverse range of role models for younger academics.
- To promote the importance placed on a diverse range of voices, ideas and experiences, as research now shows clearly that socially diverse groups are more innovative than homogeneous groups.
- To diversify the range of experts usually presenting at conferences (specially invited speakers), which has the potential to enhance the science, highlight innovative ideas and facilitate new collaborations.
- To promote a safe environment at astronomy meetings, in which attendees feel free to express themselves independently of personal status.

2 Before the conference

- Make sure that the conference SOC and LOC are diverse. For example, conference SOCs consisting of only men are unacceptable.
- Some nations have laws and customs that may be dangerous to queer people. Consideration of this should be taken when choosing a conference destination.
- Include a highly visible statement in the conference page describing commitment to equity and diversity and anti-harassment policies. Ideally the page would contain a link to a conference speaker and chair policy, and a anti-harassment policy¹
- Ensure that the list of not only invited speakers, but also session chairs, and contributed speakers is diverse.
- Ask as many colleagues as possible for suggestions of invited speakers (often the first names that come to mind are older, white male professors because they tend to be invited more often and therefore have stronger visibility).

¹A very good resource on this can be found here: http://geekfeminism.wikia.com/wiki/Conference_anti-harassment/Policy.

- Women with primary carer responsibilities are more likely to decline conference invitations. Initiatives to alleviate this known bias include:
 - explore child care options (for example, a child room with one or more carer at the conference venue);
 - make sure that the venue includes a private ‘family room’ for new mothers;
 - be mindful of how the scheduling the conference affects people with children or other family caring responsibilities (e.g. weekends, school holidays, etc.);
 - if possible, offer travel and/or accommodation support for partners.
- Ensure that the venue is accessible for people with disabilities (e.g. does it have access ramps to the stage?). For example, at Swinburne, consider booking one of the lecture theatres.
- Consider inviting and supporting participants from disadvantaged countries.
- Follow-up with invited speakers if they decline the invitation to understand the reason why people (especially those from underrepresented groups) respond negatively.

3 During the conference

- Appoint a number of ‘duty officers’ who can be contacted in the event that someone is experiencing a problem at the conference (note that these people should not just be the person organizing the conference). Make the email and phone number of these officers available to conference attendees.
- Plan the conference social events at family-friendly venues and times.
- Make sure with the session chairs ensure diversity of people asking questions (i.e. not always the same older white males asking questions and voicing their opinions).
- Have someone from the LOC keep track of the gender/seniority level etc. of people asking questions and other conference demographics².

²See example at <http://womeninastronomy.blogspot.com.au/2015/05/gender-representation-at-specialized.html>.