



AAB Organisers' Pack for Scientific Conferences

"The principal services provided to members of the Association of Applied Biologists are the high quality scientific publications and series of Conferences, which covers a wide range of topics. Approximately, 12 conferences are arranged each year and require much careful planning and interactions between the Association's office staff and the voluntary conference organiser(s) who give so generously of their time. The scientific reputation of the Association and its financial security both depend on the success of the conference programme. All successful conferences require careful planning. This Conference Pack has been put together as a guide to help to make the job of the Conference Organiser as easy as possible whilst ensuring that the tasks required are completed on a timely basis and that the communications between office staff and conference organisers run smoothly and efficiently. The information presented has been put together after much discussion amongst colleagues with considerable experience in conference planning and it represents best practice. On behalf of the AAB I would like to thank you most sincerely for your voluntary inputs that are so vital to the work of the Association."

-Graham Russell, Former AAB Programme Secretary

This is the area for Organisers of AAB Scientific Conferences and Workshops

This area is designed to assist you when organising a conference. It explains AAB procedures and provides guidelines. In recent years there have been a number of cases where conferences have run at a significant loss. By following the procedures and guidelines you will minimise the risk of this happening in future.

A draft title for a conference, its type (day meeting or residential meeting) and timing is first brought forward to a Council meeting by the Convenor of one of the Specialist Groups. If the concept is approved it goes onto the forward meetings programme but marked in italics to show its provisional status. It is confirmed once AAB Council has approved the business plan at one of its meetings.

Preliminary planning

To get the ball rolling, a preliminary planning meeting of the organisers of the conference is necessary to gather the information needed to produce a business plan. Out of pocket expenses can be claimed for planning meetings, using an [AAB expense claim](#).

The AAB Office staff will fill in as much of the [Conference Proposal](#) as possible and will provide advice about how to complete the rest. Your task

is to focus on the scientific content of the meeting and so the preliminary planning meeting should outline the programme, particularly the component sessions, consider the length of the meeting and identify potential invited speakers. A request for either a book of abstracts or a volume of *Aspects of Applied Biology* should accompany the business plan. Please note that 1-day meetings usually do not warrant an *Aspects*. You should also consider whether CPD points should be applied for BASIS or Institute of Biology – although applications generally depend on a full programme being available. The office will advise.

Other items to be discussed at this first planning meeting include assessing how many paying participants there will be – this strongly influences the registration fees. Also concessions can be decided here – the norm for residential conferences is:

- Session organisers Free registration – conference board to be discussed. Travel to the conference is not included unless agreed within the budget.
- Invited speakers Free registration and conference board; travel expenses to be agreed (you can also apply for an overseas speaker grant – applications have to be made via your Convenor to Council at least 2 weeks before a June or Nov Council meeting)
- Offered papers An agreed discount on registration fee (not all Groups – some offer no concessions)
- These will have to be covered within the registration fee for paying delegates
- Chairmen No concessions – we often use other Session Organisers.
- Members of the AAB and any other collaborating organisations normally get a reduction on the registration fee and it may be prudent to budget on the basis that all participants are AAB members.

Experience has shown that many organisers, in their enthusiasm, overestimate attendees at conferences – often by as much as 100%! Please remember when deciding concessions, that these expenses have to be covered by paying delegates and can make a large difference to the registration fees.

The office will provide figures for the following costs which form part of the budget:

- Printing and stationery, including delegate badges
- Office costs (time for taking bookings and preparing conference publication)

- Office organisation and accounting time
- Fixed costs for the venue, e.g. room hire, poster boards, projector, microphones, etc.
- Coffee, lunch and tea costs (these are normally included in the registration fees)
- Planning meeting costs

Budget

Ultimately, the **budget** has to be agreed by the conference treasurer, who is a member of AAB Council. He/she gives the final approval for this. However, you will send a preliminary budget for the conference before it is sent for approval. Where there is evidence that there will be a high registration fee, we have to discuss how costs can be reduced elsewhere or extra funding can be found. Donations/sponsorship can certainly make a lot of difference to the registration fee!

When inviting speakers, please note that you are not able to make a firm offer of financial assistance until the conference and budget have been approved. This is also applicable to other items within the budget, or not, as the case may be!

Although organisers can suggest venues for a conference, the Office, on behalf of AAB Council, will have the final say in where it will be held, based on experience and the possibility of running multiple conferences at the same venue either at the same time or back-to-back. This saves on organisation costs and thus leads to lower registration fees. Council has decided that we will no longer book accommodation for conferences unless we have guaranteed numbers, but will supply delegates with a list of local hotels and boarding houses. Alternatively, we will aim to hold the conference at a venue where delegates can book their accommodation directly.

The organiser will be issued with a **Conference Timetable** showing key dates and deadlines. Once this has been agreed by everyone, you will then be sent a much shorter list, showing only the items which you are responsible for (only about 20% of the items on the full list!). At this stage, you will also be asked to contribute to a **marketing plan** for the conference. This will identify key organisations and participants at previous relevant conferences so we can target potential attendees for the conference. We will give you a **list of the current groups we have on our database**, which you can tick so that publicity material can be sent to them. Once this has been done, the AAB Office will undertake the marketing for the conference. You may have contacts in other

organisations that can be contacted. The office can do this for you. If you do this yourself please let the office know what you have done.

Please estimate the number of postgraduate students who will attend. We aim to keep registration fees to a minimum for AAB student members, with a supplement equivalent to the student membership fee for non-AAB students (on a residential conference). This supplement may be less for a 1-day conference. The Office will deal with any [student travel applications](#), so you don't need to be concerned about this, however you may be consulted in connection with non-UK applications.

Conference committee

The conference committee normally consists of session organisers (who do not all need to be members of the Association). The committee members need to keep in regular contact with each other, and this will usually be informally by phone or e-mail. This is particularly important when working with another organisation, e.g. SEB, BSPP, IOH, etc. There have been occasions in the past when things have gone terribly wrong because of lack of communication between organisations and vagueness on the input required by each party. It is important to decide right at the start who is taking the leading role and crucially who is the major partner in the organisation of the conference when dealing with other organisations. The President will write to the collaborating organisation to confirm their participation as we need to know that the representative has the full backing of their organisation, and we are not liaising with an individual who is working on their own.

Conference publicity

Once the conference has been agreed, the Announcement & Call for Papers will be sent out by the office and details of the conference put up on the AAB web page. The information you put in the Conference Business Plan will be used for these. Knowledge transfer is given a high priority by the Research Councils. Conference Organisers are encouraged to check the websites of BBSRC and other funders for opportunities to give additional funding for such activities including, where appropriate, dissemination of information to the public.

Planning the programme

Following the [Call for Papers](#), there will need to be a second planning meeting to finalise the programme. Any further communication after this should be able to be done by e-mail or telephone. Unfortunately, it is sometimes the case that last minute changes to the programme have to be made due to cancellations. Please ask the office for advice as soon as possible if this is the case.

Your role within the conference organisation is an important one and much appreciated by the Association so we do not want to overburden you with responsibility. Please remember that after giving us the details for marketing, etc. you just need to concentrate on the science of the conference and we will deal with all the administration – dealing with speakers, delegates, venue, etc. By approving the business plan the AAB Council takes responsibility for the meeting.

Once the programme has been decided and the budget approved, the **Programme and Booking Form** is sent out to members and all those ticked on the marketing list.

The Office will then send Presenters [Instructions](#), either for [Abstracts](#) or [Aspects of Applied Biology](#), together with a sample paper and the Programme and Booking Form for the conference. You will be regularly updated on the progress of the business plan including the names of the delegates who have registered.

When the papers have been sent in by presenters, edited and approved, they will be sent to the AAB Office who will prepare the publication. Deadlines will depend on the type of publication and whether or not it will be produced in-house. The publication needs to be complete in time to be given to delegates at the conference in their delegate packs. Presenters will receive a CD-Rom containing a PDF of the publication. Presenters will also be asked to send an e-mail or CD-Rom containing their Powerpoint® presentation to the Office a couple of days before the conference, so that they can be loaded onto the conference computer to avoid delays at the venue.

At the conference

The Office will deal with delegate registrations at the conference, together with any administrative problems. You should only have to deal with the scientific programme.

After the conference

After the conference, you will be asked to provide a report for council for the conference and for the Newsletter. These can be the same report, or if you prefer, you can outline any problems you encountered, lessons learnt, in the one to the Council, which will be taken on board for future conference organisation. We are planning to ask delegates to complete a feedback form, outlining their response to the conference, including asking if the registration fee was appropriate, choice of venue, etc.

It is important to make the most of the opportunities to disseminate the results of the conference. Organisers are asked to consider producing a 1-page position paper or press release where there are policy or public

interest implications. As these matters may be considered contentious, you should discuss actions like this with the Programme Secretary.

You should also consider whether there is an opportunity to produce a paper for the *Annals of Applied Biology*. This should be discussed with the Chairman of the Editorial Boards.

All the necessary forms needed for the conference will be given in the attached Appendix – and can be accessed through the AAB web site. These will also include sample letters to sponsors, presenters and exhibitors. Any problems at all, please do not hesitate to call us – that is what we are here for!

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Appendix
[Sponsorship Letter](#)