**Society Events and Meetings: Making EDI a key consideration**

**PROMOTION/MARKETING OF THE EVENT**

Consideration of how information regarding MinSoc and SIG events are promoted is essential, both for large and small gatherings and regardless of whether they are online, in-person or hybrid. The checklist below serves as a guide for meeting organisers to assist in promoting events which will align with the Society’s EDI goals.

Wording of event promotional materials, including announcements, registration, and information pages, together with any associated digital or printed materials should be carefully constructed to be inclusive and welcoming. The key objective is to ensure that wording does not unintentionally exclude any group/s or infer bias towards any particular group/s. Best practice is to avoid using jargon.

1. Promotional materials should include an accessibility statement, e.g. “This is an inclusive and welcoming event. If you have questions about accessibility or would like to request an accommodation, please include your requirements with your registration form.”
2. All promotional materials should be checked for accessibility during production to ensure they are suitable for immersive/screen readers and are suitable for those who are colour blind or dyslexic. A range of software is freely available for checking accessibility of print and digital materials (e.g. <https://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/>) and general recommendations for generating accessible documents are at the end of this document.
3. Events should be promoted via multiple channels, which may include Twitter/X, LinkedIn, MinSoc publications (online or print), and SIG outlets, and not merely restricted to established mailing lists. Avoid using social media exclusively, which will exclude those not engaging with such platforms.
4. Clear, unambiguous instructions regarding event location, format (e.g. hybrid, in-person, online), costs (including available waivers, bursaries etc), should be provided at the earliest possible opportunity via promotional materials (see 1 above).
5. The event organising committee should itself be diverse and inclusive of marginalized groups, providing equal opportunities for anyone to be involved.
6. Where possible, and unless there are clear justifiable reasons for not doing so, events should be offered in a hybrid format, allowing both in-person and online participation.
7. A link to the Society’s Code of Conduct (<https://www.minersoc.org/code-of-conduct.html>) should appear on registration and information pages.

**THE EVENT**

Checklist of **essential requirements** for in-person or hybrid events. With the exception of items 2-5, items are equally relevant to online-only events. Links are provided to additional information for selected items.

1. **Scheduling of the event (date and time)**
   1. International audience time-zone consideration.
   2. Religious or other holidays.
   3. Duration of ‘day’.
   4. Avoid exam periods.
   5. Clashes with conferences in adjacent fields.
2. **Venue** 
   1. Physical venue must be accessible to mobility impaired (provide accessibility map).Ramps not stairs, avoid revolving doors.
   2. Parking on site provided (not only for disabled, but those who must travel by car).
   3. Geographical location should not unreasonably disadvantage potential attendees.
   4. Ensure clear signage for everyone – well-lit spaces, clear, large font.
   5. Signage provided to toilets (including gender neutral toilets), accessible toilets, baby changing and/or feeding rooms, prayer spaces, quiet spaces (not all may be available at a given venue).
   6. Meeting space should be large enough to meet requirements and not crowded.
   7. Space for wheelchair users, assistance dogs, assistants to move about comfortably within and between rooms.
   8. Provide one or more quiet rooms for delegates (for time-outs, prayers, eating alone, taking medications, etc).
   9. Avoid fluorescent lighting and proximity to sources of constant electrical or mechanical noise (e.g., lifts, air conditioning units, construction works) which can be very distressing for neurodiverse participants. Noise issues may also impact those with hearing impairments.
   10. Poster, networking, lunch session etc, where participants may be expected to stand, should have some chairs seating provided for those who are unable to do so.
3. **Name badges and documentation containing attendee names**
   1. Consider removing titles entirely from name badges and correspondence.
4. **Alcohol-free scientific sessions** 
   1. Restrict alcohol to social gatherings only, and do not centre such gatherings around alcohol.
5. **Catering (where provided)**
   1. Ensure delegates have opportunity when booking to list dietary restrictions and allergy information.
   2. Be mindful that not everyone drinks hot beverages or can tolerate caffeine; provide alternatives (see also 4 above regarding alcohol).
   3. For attendees who may be fasting (e.g. due to Ramadan) and unable to avail of the catering provision, provide discounted registration fee or if possible, offer to arrange food to be provided to the fasting attendees at a suitable time.
6. **Speaker line-up/agenda (conferences, research meetings)**
   1. Include participants at all career stages, and regardless of location, participation mode (for hybrid events), gender, disability, and ethnicity. All persons registering to present should be given equal opportunity to be considered to do so.
   2. Provide scheduling options to speakers in a timely manner to permit planning.
   3. Breaks between speakers/sessions in schedule (avoid temptation to cram in as much as possible, to the detriment of breaks) – lengthen duration of event if needed.
   4. Remember that in-person attendees coming from abroad may require extra time to acquire a visa for travel and as such may need confirmation of acceptance for presentation before the national/local delegates to enable them to attend.
7. **Presentations (attendees and presenters)**
   1. Suitable font (sans serif) and a size permitting readability at a reasonable distance.
   2. Colours suitable for those with colour vision deficiency, e.g. avoiding red-green for contrasting.
   3. Position of important information on slides not obscured by captions.
   4. Functioning hearing loop or similar technology for hearing-impaired.
   5. Live or pre-recorded options offered to presenters – some presenters may prefer the latter (even for in-person events).
   6. Confirm accessibility needs of presenters, e.g. mobile microphone, lower podium.
   7. Order of presentation in schedule to accommodate those needing to arrive/leave around caring responsibilities etc.
   8. Provide suitable breaks during the schedule, including frequent micro-breaks between speakers.
   9. Keep presentations to schedule and ensure the micro-breaks are not used to make up time lost elsewhere in the schedule.
8. **Booking (registration) form**
   1. Reasonable/accessibility adjustments information requested.
   2. Dietary requirements.
   3. Readability of booking form.
   4. Alternative, off-line means of booking/registration.
   5. Accessibility information provided, e.g. disabled parking, map/directions to venue and of buildings (entrances, event locations, disabled toilets etc).
   6. Consider titles and pronouns – title free may be the best option, putting everyone on an equal footing and preventing mishap.
   7. Is the booking form readable with a screen reader.
9. **Platform for online attendance**
   1. Is the chosen platform restricted in certain geographical areas.
   2. Does the platform offer closed captions (for hearing impaired and those who do not have English as a first language).
   3. Users familiar with platform – explain how to use at the start of the event.
   4. Brief presenters before the event, to ensure they are familiar with the software.
10. **Sharing of presentations before the event**
    1. Screen readers do not function with shared screens.
11. **Sharing of presentations and/or recordings after the event** 
    1. Where shared after the event, any materials and links must be in an accessible format for all participants.
12. **Cost to attendees**
    1. Where fees are necessary provide bursary opportunities where possible (consider students, postdocs, those on a career break or from low- to middle-income countries, as necessary).
    2. Does registration fee include elements the attendee may not wish to participate in? If so unbundle (e.g. conference dinner, excursion etc).
    3. Free attendance for carer or helper.
    4. If delegates cannot attend all the event, e.g. due to caring responsibilities or other reasons), provide a suitable discounted registration rate.
13. **Feedback**
    1. Ensure that means of obtaining feedback is not itself inaccessible to groups or excludes groups.
    2. Implement changes during the event if possible, if early feedback highlights a need for change.
14. **Discrimination and harassment**
    1. Discrimination and harassment reporting should be encouraged and organisers active in dealing with any disclosures of such.

**Other considerations, where feasible to implement**

1. **BSL interpreter**
2. **Creche/childcare**
   1. Provide information regarding options in the local area if direct provision is not an option
3. **Networking**
   1. Consider alternative formats for networking opportunities at events

**Further information re checklist items**

**Venue**

The provision of one or multiple small rooms to be used by delegates should be standard. There are multiple reasons why delegates may require such a room, including for prayer, a calm space to recover from sensory overload (particularly important for the neurodiverse), taking medication, or merely to read, reflect or be alone.

**Alcohol-free**

During the course of the scientific sessions (and requisite breaks), alcohol should not be provided. Do not centre social gatherings at events around alcohol. Whilst the majority of attendees may believe alcohol should not be banned ([see here](https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-022-00703-5)), there are many reasons why alcohol during these events causes problems, e.g. fuels sexual harassment and other bad behaviours, may cause offence due to cultural and religious considerations, or indeed may be due to personal reasons such as addiction.

**Catering**

Provision should be made for those with particular dietary needs and organisers should be proactive in seeking this information from delegates in advance, i.e. via the booking/registration form. When served at buffets, food should be clearly labelled as suitable for the dietary group and served separately if needed. Mobility or vision impaired individuals may require assistance at buffets, or food brought to them directly at a table. Tables for mobility impaired/wheelchair users should be at suitable level for access to buffet and eating.

**Feedback**

Feedback on the event should be sought from participants as a matter of course, to enable future improvements and the sharing of best practice. Organisers should be responsive to any early feedback obtained during the event and making any reasonable changes possible as soon as is practicable. The soliciting of feedback should be not adversely time-limited, e.g. right at the end of the conference, when some people may have already left, to ensure the widest possible participation. Consider both at event and post-event feedback options.

**Discrimination and harassment**

Be mindful that harassment and discrimination can and unfortunately sometimes does happen at MinSoc/SIG events and that everyone has the right to feel safe and valued. Harassment may include but is not limited to: (i) verbal or physical abuse on the basis of a protected characteristic, the abuse violating the dignity of or creating an intimidating, degrading or hostile environment for an individual; (ii) unwelcome sexualised comments or physical contact; (iii) uninvited filming or photography. It is the organisers’ duty to ensure that there is at least one means by which attendees can report incidents and that these means are communicated to delegates during or after the event. It is advisable that attendees, particularly at larger events, be made aware of the code of conduct/expectations of conduct.

**Accessible documentation**

The following are recommendations for producing print and digital materials.

1. Size 12 font minimum (for print), a sans serif style.
2. Use italics sparingly.
3. Left aligned and unjustified text (to prevent issues with screen readers).
4. Headings, photos / illustrations, text, and captions should be clearly separated.
5. Good contrast between text and background. (Note: the best contrast is achieved through dark text on a solid light background, avoiding solid white and photographic backgrounds), and consideration given to colours which may be difficult to decipher in text or figures for those with colour-blindness.
6. Use plain English and avoid the use of unexplained acronyms/abbreviations wherever possible. Providing a glossary within a document is often a useful way of making a document more accessible when using jargon is unavoidable.
7. Photography and imagery should reflect diversity of our Society by including people of different abilities, ages, ethnicities, faiths, genders/gender-identities or expressions, sex, sexual orientations and in a range of different roles and backgrounds.
8. Use [alt text](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/content-design/images#alt-text) where you need to help users understand the visual content for people who use screen readers.