SUPA is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and supports our partner universities to provide a learning, research and teaching environment free from discrimination and unfair treatment. When we provide funding for events, we recommend that the following are considered. This should ideally be done at the outset, during the planning stages.

These points have been collected from personal experiences, research papers, and online platforms. Where available, we have included references for additional information.

# Diversity

**Speakers**

* Those from under-represented groups can be less likely to put themselves forward for a speaking slot. Can you reach out to those groups in particular? Is there a ‘Women in physics’ group or similar near you, that could be used to promote the call.
* Imposter syndrome can stop people coming forward. Can you use language in your invitations that ask for knowledge and insight, rather than someone being an expert?
* Do you have a committee organising the event and/or judging applications for speakers? Is the committee representative along dimensions including career stage, race, gender, and other axes of identity?
* Do you have a blind review process for abstract submissions? Research in 2018 suggested that regardless of career stage, male committee members are less likely to select submissions from female researchers.[[1]](#footnote-1)
* How do you find speakers? Do you only tend to use people that you already know? How could you find others – can you use social media asking people to come forward? Are there particular research groups or colleagues you know at other institutions who you could ask for suggestions? Consider reaching out to different kinds of institutions (e.g. minority-serving institutions, think tanks, disciplinary associations) beyond your usual networks.
* When you email a male potential speaker, ask if they can also recommend a female speaker. They may have worked with others, networked with others, that you wouldn’t normally find yourself.
* Stick to time constraints. Ensure speakers speak for their allotted time only, where speakers run over it is often at the expense of those earlier in their career.
* Consider using an anonymous question tool such as [sli.do](https://www.sli.do/) where participants can ‘up vote’ each other’s questions, with the moderator asking all the questions, based on the top voted questions.
* Be mindful of who is chosen to ask the first question, as this sets the tone. Moderators should ‘see the whole room’ and maintain a balance of gender and seniority of those asking questions. Women are two and a half times less likely to ask a question[[2]](#footnote-2).

**Participants**

* As with the language used to invite speakers, the language used in adverts and websites for an event can be gendered and impact on those who consider attending. Try running your wording through a gender decoder[[3]](#footnote-3) to see whether your wording is inadvertently more enticing to a particular gender.
* Some conferences have provided onsite childcare, is that something that you can do?
* Can you provide funding for supporting travel and/or caring responsibilities? Is the information about that funding clear on your website?
* Where participation is competitive, make the selection criteria transparent. Consider contributions to the sector beyond an academic CV (which can reflect past privileges and inequities)[[4]](#footnote-4), such as engagement with policymakers or the public, participation in mentoring programs.
* Does your venue have gender neutral bathroom facilities?
* Does your registration system allow participants to spell their names with the correct diacritical markers (like accents and tildes) that aren’t necessarily in the English alphabet.

# Timing

* Does your event take place during core working hours?
* Have you considered what impact the timing of your event will have for those with caring responsibilities if it goes beyond core hours?
* Avoid scheduling on cultural and religious holidays.

# Accessibility

**Physical access**

* When people register for the event, include a question asking if they have any access requirements.
* Does your venue have a lift for those who can’t use stairs? Consider how your event would work if someone had a temporary access problem, e.g. if someone has a sprained ankle but still wants to come to the event, your venue may need to have a lift.
* Will you be putting up event signage, and is it suitable for those with visual impairments?
* If you’re using a stage, how will people reach it? If someone is unable to use steps how will they get up there?
* Is there a suitable space for a BSL interpreter? Have you checked your institution’s BSL plan if it is in place yet, and does your event meet their requirements?[[5]](#footnote-5)
* Arrange chairs with plenty of space/aisles so people can exit the row easily to reduce anxiety or panic, this also helps those using mobility aids to move around more easily.
* Don’t assume everyone will be able to hear at the back of the room. If microphones are available, use them.
* If fixed in position, can all speakers reach the microphone?
* If using chairs, are they suitable for everyone’s abilities? Are they skirt/dress friendly (i.e not tall stools or deep armchairs? Could you seat the panel at a table with a tablecloth? Using chairs without arms accommodates people of all sizes.
* How much movement between venues will be required? Is it far, have you factored in sufficient time for travel between venues for all? Have you made it clear to participants where the different venues are and the routes/methods to get between, as well as how accessible each venue is?
* For larger, longer conferences, provide a quiet space, where people can go and switch off and recharge. Include guidelines that the quiet space is not for phone calls, and include sufficient signage to the quiet space.

**Visible access**

* Have you given advice to both oral and poster presenters on considering those with dyslexia or colour blindness in their design?
* Will any posters always be accompanied by their authors? Consider having volunteers available to read posters to those with visual impairments.
* Provide choice for conference materials in digital and/or print format. Digital can help those with visual impairments. Print can help those with learning disabilities follow along better.

# Catering

* Buffets can be inaccessible for those with visual impairments, is it truly your only option?
* Is there sufficient seating and tables for those that need it? Think about people using mobility aids, with arm weakness for example.
* Will you have alcohol at your event? Consider opportunities for socialising without alcohol. Many people will avoid it for religious reasons, or those with mental health conditions will avoid alcohol because of medical interactions, addiction or preference.

# Follow-up

* Encourage participants to explore opportunities for post-workshop mentorships with those they met at the event.
* Getting feedback from participants as well as speakers ensures that repeat events can always improve, and organisers can learn what works and what doesn’t for your audience.
* As well as asking about content, ask about the venue, catering, sound, presentations.
* It’s a good idea to share the outcomes of the event, especially for those who had to miss it or weren’t able to attend. Consider a range of channels to do this: collating social media feeds (numerous tools available online), videos, blogs, news items, as well as slides (if appropriate).

1. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-018-03809-5> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/women-much-less-likely-to-ask-questions-in-academic-seminars-than-men> and <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2017/10/women-ask-fewer-questions-men-conference-talks-new-studies-suggest> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Inclusive Scientific Meetings, guidance from <https://500womenscientists.org/inclusive-scientific-meetings> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Under the BSL National Plan 2017-2023, all universities will be required to publish BSL plans, linked to Outcome Agreements <https://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/10/3540/6> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)