

# A guide to running inclusive meetings

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# Organising and chairing inclusive IOP member meetings

## Summary

This document offers guidelines to support IOP committee organisers and chairs in the running of inclusive meetings.

No two committee groups are the same, and as such there is no single “right way” to run an inclusive meeting. The most important thing is to communicate to committee members that reasonable adjustments can be made to the format of your meetings to accommodate any access needs they might have. It may not always be clear to members what kinds of adjustments can be made, so it can be helpful to give examples (**Appendix B**).

## Good practices

To maximise the inclusivity of meetings, the following aspects should be considered. Additional information and exemplars of these points are given in the corresponding appendices and further reading can be found in Appendix E.

### 1. Support from the IOP

Be aware of the support available from the IOP and promote relevant aspects to the committee’s membership. (**Appendix A**)

### 2. Make reasonable adjustments

Offer the possibility of making reasonable adjustments to the format of the meeting to members. Be mindful that any committee member might have visible and/or hidden constraints or conditions; it may be helpful to provide examples but do not make assumptions about possible solutions that might improve the meeting’s inclusivity for them. (**Appendix B**)

### 3. Before the meeting

Consider the timing, duration, type and location of the meeting, optimising to allow as much involvement as possible. Solicit input from members on these areas and send out documents with ample time. (**Appendix C**)

### 4. During the meeting

Allow for participation of all meeting members by chairing effectively, sharing meeting etiquette

(for example, if online to use the raise hand function), and allowing and valuing input from all  
(**Appendix D**).

All IOP meetings should comply with the IOP code of conduct. <https://www.iop.org/code-conduct>

### **About this guidance**

This document was prepared by the IOP Inclusion and Diversity Representative to Council in response to a request for guidance from the IOP Inclusion and Diversity Advocates and has benefited from input from the IOP Inclusion and Diversity Committee.

Corrections and updates to this guidance are the responsibility of the Inclusion and Diversity Representative to Council who can be contacted at [InclusionRep@iop.org](mailto:InclusionRep@iop.org).

## Appendix A

### Support from the IOP

#### Reasonable adjustments

Staff at the IOP can offer routes to reasonable adjustments such as BSL/ISL (British and Irish Sign Language) interpreters, use of closed captions where required, additional access requirements, pre-booking of travel, etc.

#### Financial support

The IOP's Carers' Fund can be used to support IOP members to access a physics-related conference, meeting or event by providing up to £250 towards the costs of additional care.

<https://www.iop.org/about/support-grants/carers-fund>

#### Inclusion and Diversity Advocate Network.

There is currently a pilot for Inclusion and Diversity Advocates across the IOP branch, nation and group committees who meet as a network. Good practice is shared through this network. The network can be contacted at [diversity@iop.org](mailto:diversity@iop.org).

#### Training

Log into the career centre at [Sign in to IOPConnect](#).

Here you will find a list of EDI related training, e.g. unconscious bias, age, disability, and gender reassignment as well as a list of culture & diversity training, e.g. neurodiversity, networks of women, LGBT+ and training on fostering inclusion.

#### Further information

Information about the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and related activities of the IOP can be found at <https://www.iop.org/about/IOP-diversity-inclusion#gref>.

## Appendix B

### Examples of Reasonable Adjustments that should be considered

The list below is not exhaustive; reasonable adjustments should be applied to any aspect of a meeting that isn't genuinely constrained by the purpose of the meeting. Specific suggestions that support reasonable adjustments can be found in **Appendix C** and **Appendix D**.

**Changing the timing.** Certain days or times of days can be difficult or impossible for members to make. These can include prayer times and religious holidays, school run times or clashes with lectures.

**Changing the venue.** This can be for a variety of reasons: the travel burden, availability of facilities (e.g. accessible bathrooms, gender-neutral bathrooms, breastfeeding rooms and prayer rooms). Some groups rotate locations to spread the travel burden between members, but when doing this it is important to consider if some members are disproportionately impacted by travel difficulties. Running meetings online or hybrid can sidestep these issues; but it is important to be aware of any difficulties members might have engaging with online meetings. Be sure to select a venue with a quiet environment.

**The duration.** It may be helpful to shorten or lengthen the duration of meetings around the needs of members, so long as it does not cause undue difficulty to the committee as a whole.

**Giving more lead time for reviewing documents.** Workloads and capacities will vary between members. It can be helpful to supply documents further in advance so that members are better able to fit committee work around their other responsibilities.

**Providing documents in alternative formats.** Members may find alternative formats more accessible than the format your committee usually uses or prefer paper copies of meeting documents. Word documents are usually a good baseline as Microsoft Office has good accessibility (e.g. Read Aloud, the ability to adjust font size, etc.); however, not everyone has easy access to a Microsoft Office installation.

**Allowing longer and more frequent breaks.** These can be used to accommodate a variety of personal requirements and help manage fatigue for everyone during the meeting. It is good practice to timetable the breaks in the agenda and ensure that breaks are not used for overrunning items.

**Providing written summaries and action points.** This can help lower the cognitive load for members and

facilitate engagement for a broad group who may find it more difficult otherwise (e.g., neurodivergent members, members with high workload, members with chronic fatigue, etc.).

**Support involvement of helpers and carers.** Access can be improved by facilitating members to bring someone to assist them to travel and/or participate in meetings, or by supporting members to be accompanied by family members for whom they have caring responsibilities.

## Appendix C

### Before the meeting

#### Timing

- Ask committee members for input on timing and duration of the meetings. Determine dates/times that should be avoided (e.g. public and religious holidays, school holidays, etc.) and agree on the best timings for all.
- Give plenty of notice ahead of the meetings, ideally setting up a schedule for the year to allow everybody to plan. Try to ensure the best possible work-life balance in drawing up the meeting schedule and be aware that short-notice changes could be extremely problematic for some members due to arrangements they would have made to be able to attend the meeting.

#### Location and catering

- Be clear whether a meeting must be in person. Consider the following: will the meeting be on-line or could it be a hybrid meeting? If held in person, is the travel time reasonable? Is it easy/possible to get to the meeting by public transport? Does a long travel time exclude some committee members or mean that they might need overnight accommodation for themselves and/or assistants/young children? Is there an option to join remotely? For hybrid meetings, ensure sufficient time to set up the IT at both ends.
- For in-person meetings, consider the venue: is it accessible and easy to get to? Are there private spaces (e.g. prayer room and breastfeeding facilities) and is it clear how to access them? Be mindful of the environment in the meeting place: is it loud and echo-y? Is it crowded? Is there space for people to move around?
- For in-person meetings where food is being provided, ensure that dietary requirements have been captured and that there is clarity over whether or not they can be accommodated, bearing in mind the seriousness of some adverse reactions to inappropriate food.

#### Communicate support

- Be clear what support is available to facilitate inclusion in meetings. This could include payment in advance of travel costs, claiming meal costs, joining with children, costs to cover childcare, etc. This

could also relate to access or communication requirements. Don't assume a solution to a perceived need. Ask committee members what support they require and encourage the use of available IOP support, e.g. the IOP Carers' Fund.

- Be mindful that some committee members may have hidden and/or visible conditions and disabilities, and there may be participants who have neurodivergent forms of processing information. Advice and guidance on accommodating some forms of neurodivergence can be found here: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20210104113255/https://archive.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=6676> .

### **Pre-meeting documents**

- Send out a draft agenda at least 2 weeks in advance, asking for any additional items at least 1 week before the meeting. Include informal meeting time before and/or after the meeting (e.g. coffee/lunch) to allow informal networking between committee members.
- Circulate the agenda and any paperwork (using an accessible font such as Calibri and colour schemes that offer good contrast) at least 1 week before the meeting. This allows everyone the time to become familiar with the items for discussion in advance of the meeting and has the added advantage of using everybody's time for discussion rather than reporting. Offer the option of inputting to discussion points in advance of the meeting, in writing if desired, and explore the option for alternative formats for the meeting material if needed.

## Appendix D

### During the Meeting

#### Introducing the meeting

- At the start of the meeting, ensure that everybody has been introduced to one another including how they would prefer to be addressed. Ensure that gender-neutral terms are used when referring to people whose pronouns are not known, e.g. prospective speakers.
- Set a clear structure, making it clear how and when everybody will have an opportunity to input (e.g. through the 'chat' or by raising hands).
- Be clear about any rules or restrictions, e.g. only speaking once on each item (to allow everyone time to contribute), mute when not speaking, no interrupting, etc.
- Make everyone feel welcome at the beginning of the meeting, e.g. by saying that this is a great opportunity to hear new ideas and/or to improve on existing suggestions.
- Be transparent about how decisions are being made. If it is a vote, consider having the voting process anonymised so that people don't feel pressured into agreeing.
- For online or hybrid meetings, be aware that the conversation is between everyone on different screens, not just between everyone on your screen and you.

#### Notes and recording

- If on-line or hybrid, consider whether a recording and/or transcript of the meeting will be made. Ensure that such activity is communicated to and agreed by all, including how the recording/transcript might be made available to committee members after the meeting. Such a record could be beneficial to those who couldn't attend or benefit from alternative formats of meeting notes.

#### Soliciting input

- Consider rotating roles at meetings if it is appropriate to do so.

- The chair should ensure that several people have spoken before the presenter/chair responds. This makes the meeting more inclusive and helps different perspectives be voiced.
- Ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be heard and that nobody dominates the discussion, e.g. by inviting input from quieter participants and being prepared to politely 'close down' participants who dominate (e.g. by saying 'I hope you don't mind if I stop you there and bring in XX to hear their view').
- Try to understand how differences (e.g. culture, language, career stage, etc.) can make some people less comfortable to come forward with ideas. Give everybody the time and opportunity to contribute. It can help to ask for input from less-experienced members directly, and calling on committee members from underrepresented groups to speak first on an item can encourage greater participation from others.
- During the meeting, use communication approaches that are as effective and inclusive as possible, bearing in mind individuals' situation and needs. This might involve offering the option of inputting to discussion points in writing in advance of the meeting (if possible), exploring the option for alternative formats for any written material, involving of assistants or supporters, etc.
- Ensure ample and frequent breaks – these can be used to accommodate those conducting prayers or other religious requirements, those with health requirements, or those who are feeding/expressing milk. It is good practice to timetable the breaks in the agenda and don't use them for overrunning items.
- Not all Committee members will agree at all times, so welcoming respectful disagreement is necessary. However, it is never appropriate to have raised voices or aggressive language. Take a break if things get too heated, e.g. by saying 'I realise that this is a passionate issue, but we need to stop for a moment. I suggest a 5 minute comfort break before we continue'.

- Be prepared to challenge anyone not acting inclusively, e.g. by signalling that their behaviour is not acceptable or having a confidential word at a break.
- Summarise important points or action points that have been agreed, both verbally and in writing if possible. Ensure that it is clear who has responsibility for each such point.

### **Ending the meeting**

- Continuing business from meetings outside of allocated time can exclude those who cannot or choose not to attend informal follow-up events. If the meeting is overrunning, check if participants are able to continue. If the meeting must end, offer the option of continuing discussions electronically or arrange a follow-up meeting.
- Ensure that any action points/written summary of the discussion are circulated as soon as possible.

## Appendix E

### Additional resources

- Rework article outlining key factors to establishing a successful team (Psychological safety, Dependability, Structure & clarity, Meaning of work and Impact of work):  
<https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>
- “How to lead inclusive meetings” guide from Development Guild:  
<https://www.developmentguild.com/dei/how-to-lead-inclusive-meetings/>
- “How to run inclusive meetings” guide from Victorian Public Sector Commission:  
<https://vpvc.vic.gov.au/toolkits/wellbeing/activities-tools/how-to-run-inclusive-meetings/>
- “5 ways to make your meetings more inclusive” guide from Google:  
<https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/future-of-marketing/management-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusion/run-inclusive-meetings/>
- “Conducting inclusive virtual committee meetings” guide from the British Medical Association aimed at chairs, co-chairs, and deputy chairs: <https://www.bma.org.uk/media/4507/bma-inclusive-virtual-meetings-guidance-for-chairs-2021.pdf>
- Suite of guides from the Royal Society of Chemistry to support member activities: “[Inclusive communications](#)”, “[Communication support](#)” (accessibility guide), “[Inclusive committees](#)” and “[Inclusive events](#)”.
- How to challenge disruptive meeting behaviours: [Put an End to These Disruptive Meeting Behaviors \(mamiex.com\)](#)
- Successful chairing: [Chairing a meeting | Resource Centre](#)
- Changing Spaces are additionally accessible toilets that have full changing tables and shower facilities. People with profound and multiple learning disabilities or with physical disabilities such as spinal injuries, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis often need extra equipment and space to allow them to use the toilets safely and comfortably. For a list of where to find these facilities and to read more about the campaign visit [Changing Places Toilets \(changing-places.org\)](#)