



SoGE | School of Geography
and the Environment



INCLUSIVE ACADEMIC EVENTS TOOLKIT

A practical checklist for planning inclusive events

This toolkit provides a practical checklist to support organisers in planning inclusive academic events. The actions are grouped chronologically: Before the Event, During the Event, and After the Event. The aim is to reduce barriers to participation, broaden representation, and create welcoming environments where all participants can contribute meaningfully.

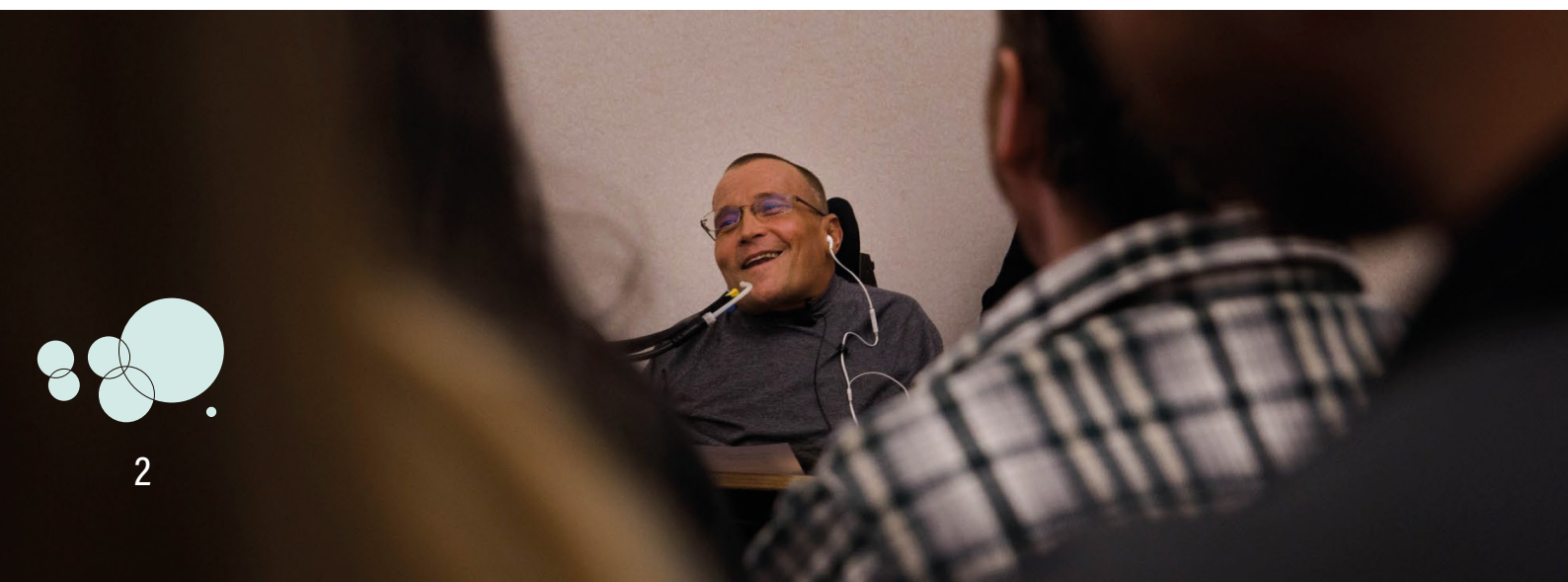
1. Before the Event

1.1 Event Design and Purpose

- Clarify the purpose of the event to inform decisions around target audience, format and marketing/promotion.
- Identify potential barriers to participation (e.g. accessibility, time, location, childcare, cost).
- Consider the most inclusive format achievable for your audience: in-person, hybrid, or online.
- Walk through the event from a participant's perspective to identify logistical challenges.
- Consider including structured networking activities or discussion prompts to promote participant interaction.
- Ensure the organising committee itself is diverse and representative.

1.2 Venue and Accessibility

- Confirm step-free access to all rooms, including networking and catering areas.
- Check availability of lifts, ramps, and accessible toilets.
- Ensure adequate space for wheelchair access and stage approaches.
- Confirm hearing loops, microphones, and appropriate sound systems.
- Avoid venues with excessive fluorescent lighting or constant mechanical noise.
- Provide clear signage for rooms, lifts, toilets, and exits.
- Identify additional rooms for quiet space, prayer, breastfeeding, or private breaks.
- Ensure seating is available in spaces where people may otherwise be standing.
- Verify accessibility of historic or older buildings in detail.



1.3 Timing, Scheduling and Participation

- Avoid scheduling on major religious or national holidays.
- Be mindful of school holiday dates including half terms.
- Provide early notice of event dates to allow planning for care or travel.
- Consider later starts and earlier finishes to accommodate caring responsibilities.
- Schedule regular breaks to reduce fatigue and allow networking.
- Include at least one networking session during daytime hours.
- Plan shorter sessions with time for Q&A and informal discussion.

1.4 Programme and Speaker Selection

- Ensure diversity across panels, keynote speakers, session chairs, and organisers.
- Avoid “all-male” or otherwise homogeneous panels.
- Include early-career researchers alongside senior scholars.
- Actively broaden speaker searches beyond usual networks.
- Personally invite contributors from under-represented groups.
- Offer training or mentoring for less experienced speakers.
- Encourage collaborative abstract submissions where appropriate.
- Provide speakers with clear expectations about timing and accessibility of presentations.



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1.5 Registration and Participant Information

- Provide an open question on registration forms to allow people to explain their access or participation needs.
- Collect dietary requirements and allergies early.
- Offer optional pronoun fields or flexible name badge formats.
- Allow participants to opt out of titles if preferred.
- Include guidance on name pronunciation where possible.
- Provide a contact person for accessibility queries.

1.6 Financial and Practical Inclusion

- Offer bursaries, scholarships, or tiered ticket pricing if possible.
- Consider free or discounted places for carers or helpers.
- Allow participants to opt out of optional paid activities (e.g., dinners).
- Recruit volunteers or helpers who receive free event access, but bear in mind implications for visa requirements for international participants.
- Consider offering childcare support or information about local childcare services.



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1.7 Catering and Social Activities

- Ensure meals accommodate diverse dietary requirements.
- Clearly label allergens and ingredients.
- Provide alcohol-free options at social events.
- Avoid making all networking events alcohol-centred.
- Provide quiet or alternative spaces for participants who prefer not to attend social events.
- Consider ethical, sustainable and locally sourced catering where possible.

1.8 Communication and Information

- Share accessibility information, venue maps, and travel guidance in advance.
- Provide a clear equality, diversity, and inclusion statement.
- Share programme details and speaker information early.
- Ensure presentation materials are accessible (readable fonts, colour contrast).
- Provide clear information about hybrid or online participation tools.

1.9 Safety, Conduct and Reporting

- Publish a clear code of conduct for attendees.
- Provide multiple reporting routes for concerns (online, email, in person).
- Identify trained staff responsible for handling reports.
- Communicate behavioural expectations before the event.



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2. During the Event

2.1 Welcome and Event Atmosphere

- Open the event with a brief statement reinforcing inclusivity and respectful behaviour.
- Provide clear signage and printed maps where needed.
- Ensure helpers or “meet and greet” staff are visible and identifiable.
- Communicate housekeeping information (breaks, note-taking expectations (ie. use of laptops), how to get information and assistance).

2.2 Inclusive Facilitation and Chairing

- Brief chairs to ensure equal speaking time across panellists and leave ample time for questions.
- Encourage chairs to invite questions from diverse participants.
- Prevent dominance by individual speakers or audience members.
- Clarify or rephrase questions where necessary for accessibility or language clarity.

2.3 Q&A and Participation

- Allow a mix of spoken and written questions.
- Offer anonymous question tools (e.g., QR codes or apps).
- Allow multiple participation formats (microphone, written, chat).
- Encourage inclusive participation from early-career and quieter attendees.



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2.4 Networking and Interaction

- Provide structured networking activities (e.g., themed tables or discussion prompts).
- Offer alternatives to traditional networking formats (e.g. world cafés, “ask-the-expert”, “green room” opportunities for ECRs to talk to senior panellists).
- Ensure some networking opportunities occur during daytime hours.
- Provide quiet spaces for participants who prefer less intensive social interaction.

2.5 Accessibility and Comfort

- Ensure accessibility features are functioning (hearing loops, microphones, captions).
- Provide seating options and quiet/rest spaces.
- Ensure clear pathways and accessible catering areas.
- Ensure hybrid participants can participate meaningfully.



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3. After the Event

3.1 Feedback and Evaluation

- Collect feedback specifically about accessibility and inclusion.
- Provide anonymous response options.
- Offer feedback forms in multiple formats (online and paper).

3.2 Reflection and Learning

- Review participation data and diversity of speakers.
- Identify barriers or challenges raised by participants.
- Document lessons learned for future events.

3.3 Communication and Accountability

- Share key outcomes and insights with participants where appropriate.
- Publicise commitments to improving inclusivity in future events.
- Update event planning guidelines based on feedback.



Inclusive academic events toolkit


This toolkit was created in collaboration with participants in the SoGE Inclusive Events Workshop (March 2026), building on earlier work by the REACH Water Security programme to [influence change on inclusive conferences](#). Additional sources of guidance include:

- Chautard, A. & Hann, C. (2019). [Best Practice Guide: Developing inclusive conferences](#). University of Oxford.
- [University of Oxford Communications Hub Guidance for making events accessible](#)
- [Accessible and Inclusive Events Guide: National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement](#)

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