



RCP equality, diversity and inclusion policy for speakers

Speaking at a conference or event is one of the most visible aspects of a doctor's job. As an organiser of events the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) has a valuable opportunity to promote equality, diversity, and inclusion through selection of a balanced programme of speakers, presenters, and chairs.

In addition, speaking invitations, particularly at high-profile RCP conferences and events, contribute importantly to a person's profile. By extending more invitations to people from under-represented sections of our medical community, as well as to doctors early in their career, we can boost the visibility of speakers.

Here are the steps we take at the RCP to produce a fairer and more balanced programme. Note, our focus here is solely on measures designed to achieve a balanced programme of speakers with respect to gender, ethnic background, and other protected characteristics.

- > We establish a diverse, informed, and balanced programme organising committee. This committee generally comprises a small number (1–6) of people who will make key decisions about the organisational structure of the meeting. A minimum target is that there should be at least one person, and ideally at least two, of different gender among the organisers, and with similar representation of people from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- > We develop a speaker policy that sets out to achieve equal numbers of men and women or, alternatively, no more than 60% of speakers of any one gender. The policy also seeks to achieve balance and representation with respect to ethnicity, geographical distribution, level of seniority, scientific approach, and other characteristics. While some fields have a strong gender and ethnicity bias in their audience, the aim should be (if parity is not feasible) to reduce the field-wide bias in the balance of speakers.
- > We announce the speaker policy prominently, for instance, posting it for everyone to see on the conference or workshop website. The policy should also be made visible at the time of the meeting. All session chairs should be familiar with the policy, and given guidance to promote equality in questioning, thereby preventing senior or dominant figures from monopolising the question sessions. A 'code of conduct' statement can also be added to the conference literature, stating explicitly that

inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated and providing a procedure for the reporting of incidents. Providing a strong chair/moderator who is prepared to shut down aggressive questioners, may be reassuring for some (eg early-career) speakers.

- > We compile a database of potential invitees with a broad range of candidates for each role.
- > Throughout the process of sending invitations, and receiving acceptances, as far as possible we keep a running total of the diversity (eg gender balance, ethnicity) for each speaker, chair, or panellist.
- > We are family and carer friendly. Women often have primary caring responsibility for children, older people, or sick and disabled people, which can limit their ability to travel and to attend conferences. We can offer support for partner travel, or pay for childcare, for attendees who would otherwise not be able to accept conference/workshop speaking invitations. We also provide a space for breastfeeding parents.
- > We aim to ensure an accessible, inclusive, and welcoming space for speakers, providing flexible recording options. We will provide subtitles on all audiovisual content produced by the RCP from 2022.
- > We replace like for like. Usually, some offers of speaking opportunities will be declined, and invited women may be more likely to decline than men. Likewise, individuals from other under-represented areas may experience high demands on their time as perceived 'representatives' of various groups. In order to maintain a balanced programme, as far as possible, we aim to select replacement speakers on a like-for-like basis (ie replacing a woman speaker who has declined with a woman, early-career for early-career etc)
- > We report on the number of speakers and participants in each role on the conference website and on our social media channels.

Email conferences@rcp.ac.uk

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