ADM+S Accessible Events, Meetings and Presentations Policy

ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society

OVERVIEW

The ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society (ADM+S) is a cross-disciplinary, national research centre, which aims to create the knowledge and strategies necessary for responsible, ethical, and inclusive automated decision-making. Funded by the Australian Research Council from 2020 to 2026, ADM+S is hosted at RMIT in Melbourne, Australia, with nodes located at seven other Australian universities, and partners around the world.

The ADM+S Policy on Accessible Events, Meetings and Presentations supports the ADM+S Strategy of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility.

CENTRE OBJECTIVES

- Generate an integrated understanding of the evolution, distribution, dynamics and potential of ADM
- Formulate world-leading policy and practice in responsible, ethical and inclusive ADM, for governments, industry and the non-profit sectors;
- Enhance public understanding, and inform public debate on ADM; and
- Educate and train researchers and practitioners in this challenging new field.

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SCOPE

This policy sets out the ADM+S Centre's approach to accessible events, meetings and presentations, including the Centre's expectations of its members including staff, students and affiliates.

POLICY

Equity, diversity and inclusion is fundamental to the ADM+S Centre's strategy. All our efforts are guided by our values: automated decision making that is responsible, ethical, and inclusive.

For our purposes:

- Responsible decision-making is informed and alive to its social consequences;
- Ethical decision-making is governed by clearly defined rules and principles; and
- Inclusive decision-making engages the public and delivers broad social benefits.

We will use these signature attributes to guide our work as a Centre community to continue developing a Centre culture that embeds principles of equity, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility in our activities and ways of working.

We aim to create an inclusive environment where all students and staff are valued. Our goal is to make the Centre a progressive organisation that enables all members, regardless of background, to do their best work in a professional and compassionate environment.

Our members are expected to:

- promote diversity and inclusion through visible commitments and actions, and through communications, events, panels, and staff development;
- implement leading practice in the equity and inclusiveness of policies, facilities, services, and workplace culture and behaviours;
- improve access to education, employment and enterprise for diverse students by enhancing access schemes, pathways, scholarships, preparatory programs and career employability.
- ensure an equitable and inclusive experience for all students and staff by providing targeted support, policies, initiatives, services, and career development for identified groups, and ensuring inclusive research and training design in research projects and educational activities.

1. Centre accessibility implementations for online meetings

1.1 Meeting length

As a policy, Centre meeting will be no longer than 60minutes (as default) to limit time spent in meetings.

1.2 Meeting invitations

Communicating importance/ target audience of meetings, events, workshops, webinars etc. To ensure invitation recipients understand the importance of meeting participation, Meeting requests (or calendar invitations) should specify who the target audience are for the meeting, (or event, workshop, webinar), and whether attendance or participation is compulsory, encouraged, or voluntary. This will enable recipients to weight up participation in accordance with their existing workload and priorities.

1.3 Live captions

All Centre online events, webinars, workshops, panels are required to enable Live Captions (Zoom and Teams) at the beginning of the session to enable audience members to follow captions on their devices

2. Centre accessibility and safety implementations for in-person meetings

2.1 COVID safety protocols for in-person meetings, presentations and events

Where possible, any in-person meetings, presentations and events should be planned as hybrid events with all attendees able to watch and participate in the proceedings online via livestream links.

For those attending in person, the following protocols are designed to ensure that Centre meetings presentations and events can be carried out safely and prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Nodes should also refer to their institutional policies for guidance on planning safe in-person meetings. All ADM+S meetings must comply with the COVIDSafe guidelines and protocols in place at their node or at external venues and these protocols should be aligned and compliant with all relevant Government health advice at the time of the event.

Attendees are reminded not to attend meetings, events or presentations if:

- they are feeling unwell and displaying COVID-19 symptoms (loss or change in sense of smell or taste, fever, chills or sweats, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath and runny nose),
- are a household contact with a person with COVID-19 (with a positive test) within the last 7 days

2.2 Face mask requirements

The Centre strongly encourages the use of face masks at in-person meetings and events, even if masks are no longer necessarily mandated by university or government requirements. Masks are still highly recommended in indoor settings, and at major events such as Centre symposiums, retreats, and summer schools, N95 masks should be provided to all attendees.

2.3 Ventilation

Where possible, meetings should be held in spaces that have well maintained and operated air conditioning and ventilation systems to help reduce the risk of virus transmission (ideally with HEPA filters). If this is not possible, organisers should consider using spaces where doors and windows can be opened to increase fresh air intake.

2.4 Air quality monitoring

Most universities have initiated indoor air quality (CO_2) monitoring programs to monitor each of the indoor spaces across campuses. Where possible, meetings should be held in locations where the indoor air quality is monitored and can be remediated promptly in the event of any adverse readings.

2.5 Room capacity limits and physical distancing

All room capacity limits should be observed and where possible, venues should be accessible via both lifts and open stairs. Members are expected to adhere to good hygiene and physical distancing practices wherever possible.

2.6 Sanitiser and cleaning

Meeting organisers should ensure sanitiser and regular cleaning is in place for any meeting venues.

2.7 Rapid antigen testing

At major Centre events or meetings such as symposiums, retreats and summer schools, Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) should be made available to anyone who feels unwell or who is concerned about being exposed to a positive case.

2.8 Travel

If you are travelling to an ADM+S meeting or event, members are strongly encouraged to wear an N95/P2 mask at airports and during airplane travel and in shared spaces such as lifts, vehicles, taxis, buses and other ground travel.

3. Resources

In the following pages we have outlined some key integrations as well as links to further resources to ensure we are mindful when setting up and running meetings as well as in the preparation and distribution of key documentation to parties or audiences.

3.1 Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) is an internationally recognised standard created by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C). ADM+S will strive to implement these standards in our everyday practice to ensure our meetings, presentations, documentation, and content are accessible.

The twelve WCAG 2.0 guidelines are as follows:

1. **Perceivable**
    - 1.1 Provide text alternatives for any non-text content so that it can be changed into other forms people need, such as large print, Braille, speech, symbols or simpler language.
    - 1.2 Provide alternatives for time-based media.
    - 1.3 Create content that can be presented in different ways (for example, simpler layout) without losing information or structure.
    - 1.4 Make it easier for users to see and hear content including separating foreground from background.

2. **Operable**
    - 2.1. Make all functionality available from a keyboard.

2.2. Provide users enough time to read and use content.

2.3. Do not design content in a way that is known to cause seizures.

2.4. Provide ways to help users navigate, find content, and determine where they are.

3. Understandable

3.1. Make text content readable and understandable.

3.2. Make Web pages appear and operate in predictable ways.

3.3. Help users avoid and correct mistakes.

4. Robust

4.1. Maximise compatibility with current and future user agents, including assistive technologies.

WCAG 2.1 also features the following additional guideline:

2.5 Pointer Accessible: Make it easier for users to operate functionality through various inputs beyond keyboard.

4. Important Accessibility Guides

4.1 How will people with disability engage with my content?

This guide describes types of Assistive Technologies (AT) as well as common access issues for people with disability such as vision, hearing, mobility, and cognitive impairment. This guides also provides you with ways in which you can consider how you prepare content and how you can make it available. There is also the opportunity to undertake a practical exercise in using a screen reader to aid in your understanding on how this AT is used and to help you understand how people with disability will engage with your content.

https://www.accessibility.org.au/guides/how-will-people-engage/

4.2 How does digital access apply to my role?

This guide provides tips for addressing digital access issues and processes, as well as a focus on digital producers, marketing and communications and social media content creation.

Essential reading on how WCAG applies to documents in relation to The Microsoft Office Suite (Microsoft Word, Microsoft Power Point, Microsoft Excel), Microsoft Outlook and PDF files. Examples of WCAG in documents can include alternative text, captioned video and good colour contrast, and the use of/ and distribution of Microsoft office files instead of PDF files.

https://www.accessibility.org.au/guides/how-does-digital-access-apply-to-my-role/

4.3 How do I check if my work is accessible?

This guide provides several links and resources to check whether your existing content is accessible, these include information on website auditing to find out where adjustments can be made to make your website more accessible. Additional links to free online tools TAW, WAVE, aChecker are also provided, which can scan a webpage to see if it is WCAG compliant.

https://www.accessibility.org.au/guides/how-do-i-check-if-my-work-is-accessible/

5. The Centre for Accessibility Australia (CFA) website

The Centre for Accessibility Australia (CFA Australia) is an award-winning not-for-profit organisation that promotes accessibility throughout Australia. Our current focus is the incorporation of digital accessibility, so that people with disabilities can have equal access to technology and the internet. Founded in 2018, the Centre was established to promote the accessibility movement through advocacy, research, training services, auditing services and celebrations such as the Australian Access Awards.

https://www.accessibility.org.au/

6. Inclusive events, meetings, and committees, developed by The University of Queensland

The University of Queensland have developed resources to enable organisers to ensure their event, workshop or meetings are accessible. Please view the attached PDFs guides which provide some helpful tips in the preparation of your next event.

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UQ GUIDE TO

Planning an inclusive event

The University of Queensland (UQ) values equity, diversity, and inclusion, and is committed to supporting our people. A key aspect of this is applying a diversity and inclusion lens to everything we do, including event planning. Planning an event with diversity in mind, and with the aim of being inclusive of all people, is one of many ways to build an inclusive workplace, where people of all backgrounds and abilities feel they can be their whole selves at work and participate fully.

This guide has been developed to assist individuals and work areas to plan an inclusive event. This guide is by no means an exhaustive list of all possible considerations, and some may be more relevant than others; however, it is designed to be a helpful starting point.

Aspects of diversity to consider when planning an event?

- Age
- Gender, sex and sexuality
- Culture and religion
- Accessibility
- Caring responsibilities
- Geographic location

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Seven Principles of Universal Design

The Seven Principles of Universal Design may assist you in planning your event. The framework was initially developed to inform the design of environments, products, and communications, and refers to design that is useable by all people of different ages and abilities over time, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design. As such, it can be helpful when choosing a location for your event, and when designing the content and communications for your event.

1. **Equitable use**
   The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities

2. **Flexibility in use**
   The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

3. **Simple and intuitive use**
   Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

4. **Perceptible information**
   The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

5. **Tolerance for error**
   The design minimises hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

6. **Low physical effort**
   The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

7. **Size and space for approach and use**
   Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

http://universaldesignaustralia.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Accessible_Events_Guide.pdf

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Inclusive design considerations

Planning an Event

Create a diverse team to plan and organise your event. A diverse team reduces the risk of unconscious bias and is more likely to consider various perspectives, experiences and viewpoints.

Taking time to think through the purpose of the event and who you want to be included is important to be as inclusive as possible in planning, promoting and holding your event.

Date of event

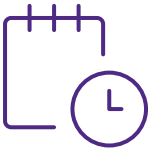
Does your event coincide with any major religious holidays or festivals?

If you are unsure, you can check the Interfaith Calendar.

Is your event during school holidays?

If you are unsure, you can check via the Queensland Government website.

If possible, try to select a date that does not clash with any of the above and therefore will not inhibit select groups of people from attending.



Time of event

Does the time of your event cater to attendees who work remotely, part-time, or have caring responsibilities?

Arrange events between "family-friendly hours" (i.e. 10am and 2pm) if possible.

Does the time of the event preclude attendees who use public transport?

Will sufficient public transport services be running at your selected time (especially for evening events)?

If you are unsure, you can check transport timetables here.

Other considerations

If you host periodic events (e.g. for your team or work area), consider varying the time of the events so that (hopefully) each colleague has the opportunity to attend at some point.

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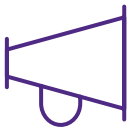

Location of event

Is the venue accessible?

Are there ramps and/or elevators where there are stairs?

Is it convenient for all people to get to? For example, within close proximity to public transport, has parking with accessible drop-off areas.

Does it have accessible and gender neutral bathrooms?

Are quiet spaces available nearby?

Does it have a hearing loop?

Is the design of the room inclusive?

For example, does the physical layout of the room allow for attendees to hear and see presenters, is there certain imagery in the room that might make certain people feel excluded?

Will it feel like a safe space for neurodiverse people?

Does the venue have any historical significance to certain groups of people that might make them feel unwelcome?

Venues such as bars, licenced premises or clubs could exclude participants whose cultural beliefs prohibit or make uncomfortable their attendance.

What does the location of the event mean for attendees who work remotely or who are unable to physically attend?

Is it possible to offer some sort of e-attendance (e.g. Zoom, video conference) at your event?

Is it possible to record the event?

Communications about event

Is the communication clear and easy to understand?

How far in advance do I need to communicate about my event so that people who might need to make arrangements to attend have enough time to do so?

Can the written communications about the event be read by a screen-reader?

This includes ensuring that alternative text is developed for any images used.

Will my communications about the event appeal to a diverse audience?

Seek input from a diverse group who can provide different perspectives.

Do all event communications use inclusive language?

Please see UQ's Guide to Using Inclusive Language for more information.

Are translated versions of communications available if required?

Do all event communications use inclusive imagery?

That is, ensure a diverse representation of people are used for promotional materials.

Does my event website adhere to the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0)?

Is there a clear structure/schedule that can be accessed prior to the event so that attendees know what to expect?

Have I included an option for gender neutral titles on the registration forms?

Identify any culture bound terminology

Check the use of words used in any communications, that they are respectful, non-offensive and inclusive, ensuring meanings are consistent across cultures.

Avoid using jargon or slang

Be mindful of the use of humour in presentations; particularly culturally-specific jokes.

Other considerations

Include a method of contacting the event organiser so any attendees who require adjustments can request these with ease and without feeling embarrassed to do so. The following template can be used:

> *"If there is anything else we can do for you to enable you to participate fully at this event, please do not hesitate to contact *name of event organiser* on *insert phone number/ email address* by *insert date*."*

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Event speakers

Does the opening speaker know to do an Acknowledgement of Country?

Is there a diverse representation of speakers?

"You can't be what you can't see", so ensure that there is representation of minority groups. Seek to have:

- Gender representation (as close to equal representation as possible)
- Cultural diversity
- Age diversity
- Seniority distribution
- People of diverse abilities
- People of diverse genders/ sexualities

Have your event speakers taken The Merle Pledge?

The Merle Pledge is a UQ initiative to substantially improve women's representation in public and professional forums. UQ work areas, academic and professional staff are encouraged to commit to requesting gender equity as a condition of hosting or participation on any panel, speaking event or conference.

Is an Auslan interpreter required?

Are language interpreting services required?

- The UQ Institute of Modern Languages may be able to assist with interpreting services.
- Australian Government Translating and Interpreting Service

Will a speaker gift be required?

Do I need to find out more about international etiquette (if there are international speakers) to find appropriate gifts to avoid causing offence?

Ask your speakers what their personal pronouns are and if they comfortable with you including this information when using their name for introductions and/or event communications.

For example, first name last name (she/ her) or first name last name (they/ them).

Does the Chair/Moderator know the correct pronunciation of names of guests, speakers or performers?

Other considerations

Diversity efforts should be genuine, so be mindful not to "tokenise" speakers. That is, check that speakers from under-represented groups aren't simply playing administrative and/ or limited roles in the event e.g. only introducing other speakers.

Speakers should be mindful not to simply say "as you can see on the slide", but instead always describe what is on the slide when discussing it. This assists attendees who may have difficulty viewing the slides to participate fully.

Catering at event

Do the attendees have any dietary requirements?

If so, what have you done to cater to these?

Be mindful of common dietary requirements: vegetarian, vegan, Halal, Kosher, gluten/dairy/nut/shellfish allergies, etc.

In your event RSVP section, ensure there is an 'open text box' for dietary requirements

Is all food labelled so that attendees can make informed choices about what they want to eat?

Will the event include alcohol?

Be mindful that not everyone drinks alcohol and that prior approval is required for events on UQ campuses where alcohol will be served. If alcohol will be served, have you ensured that a range of non-alcoholic beverages will be available?

Are there any cultural considerations that may prevent people from sharing a meal together?

For example, holding lunch meetings (with food) during Ramadan may exclude some staff and students.

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Content of event

Does the event include bright strobe or flashing lights?

If so, be mindful that you will need to let attendees know in advance as this can trigger seizures and other reactions for people with certain mental and/or physical conditions.

Does your event include videos?

If so, use captions.

Does the event need to have a dress code?

Dress codes can be challenging for gender diverse individuals. If it is necessary for the event to have a dress code, ensure it is inclusive. For example, using the term 'formal wear' instead of 'black tie', or 'business attire' rather than 'coat and tie'.

Will the activities planned for your event be restrictive to certain groups of people?

Does the event discuss topics that require a content or trigger warning or the provision of referral information for those needing additional supports?

PowerPoint slides, handouts

Is the content of the slides/handouts in any way offensive to certain groups of people?

When using images in presentations and promotional material and in general ensure there is a diversity of images of people and places from different cultures and backgrounds.

If there are images of people, do the slides/handouts reflect the broader community?

Are the slides clear and easy to read?

Review and Reflection

Ensure event participants know where and how to contact the event organisers after the event for feedback, comment or follow up. Invite feedback from both those who are part of planning the event and those who attended the event.

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Inclusive meetings and committees

What do we mean by meetings?

For the purposes of this guide, a meeting is considered any activity where a number of attendees formally come together to achieve a particular outcome. Meetings may be 'one off' activities to deliver a particular outcome (for example, a recruitment activity or awards selection panel) or a recurring activity (for example, a committee or regular team meeting of work colleagues). The practices in this guide are applicable to all types of meetings at UQ.

What is an inclusive meeting?

UQ aspires to having a culture where all participants in a meeting feel welcome, valued and free to openly express their views. A meeting or panel is considered to be inclusive when:

- everyone is actively encouraged to participate;
- everyone has an expectation of being heard and feels comfortable sharing their views;
- measures are taken to reduce power/seniority imbalances;
- there is representation by different diverse groups (particularly marginalised or under-represented groups);
- the possibility of unconscious bias is actively considered/addressed; and
- voting or decision-making practices enable all participants to have an equal voice in meeting outcomes.

Why do meetings need to be inclusive?

There are numerous benefits from ensuring that all meetings are as inclusive as possible. Some of these include[1]:

- more innovative outcomes through reducing 'group think';
- fostering genuine inclusion of all participants, which reduces the exclusion and/or marginalisation of certain groups;
- maximises all available expertise, not just the expertise of the 'loudest voice' or most senior participants;
- reduced opportunity for unconscious biases to impact meeting outcomes;
- improved decision making; and
- improved alignment to UQ values and strategic objectives.

1 The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths (Deloitte); Inclusive Teams Playbook (Atlassian); How to Lead Inclusive Meetings (Forbes); How to Run More Inclusive Meetings (Thinkgrowth.org); Run Meetings that are Fair to Introverts, Women and Remote Workers (Harvard Business Review); Let's Get Practical: A Checklist for Inclusive Meetings and Events (The Inclusion Solution)

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Attendees

The impact of unconscious bias

Unconscious biases are learned, social stereotypes that are formed outside of our conscious awareness, and which stem from our tendency to organise the world into categories to make sense of it. Our unconscious bias may **not** correlate with our conscious values.

We all have unconscious bias and may be familiar with the way this might play out in the workplace, particularly around the recruitment and promotion hotspots where certain groups may be overlooked because of assumptions made based on their social identity.

This unconscious bias can also manifest in meetings, minimising or erasing the contribution of introverts, or other groups who may not feel comfortable offering their opinions or actively participating, even when they have relevant experience. Over time, this can lead to feelings of demoralisation and disengagement by those groups, which can have flow on effects to the broader workplace.

By making conscious steps to mitigate exclusion, including that which is caused by unconscious bias, meetings can provide a more productive space where all employees can thrive. Inclusive meeting practices require equitable measures to be put in place to ensure that all voices have equal opportunity to contribute and be heard.

All staff are encouraged to complete UQ's Unconscious Bias training.

Power Imbalances

Power imbalances and decision-making inequities, particularly between committee and panel members where group decisions are the objective, are heightened in collaborative spaces.

For example, if the only 'women' representative on a committee/panel is the most junior member (student representative), they may not feel as empowered to influence decision-making processes. Likewise, the only woman on a committee/panel may feel reluctant to speak up due to being outnumbered (irrespective of seniority).

Similarly, attendees in a more senior position may feel empowered to offer opinion or comment, regardless of whether they are most qualified in the area under discussion.

Chairs may be unaware of their role in mitigating potential power imbalances, and ensuring all members have an opportunity to inform decision-making.

What the research says

It has been well documented that some groups are routinely overlooked in workplace meetings: women, remote workers, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and LGBTQIA+ attendees, and introverts, among others. A Harvard Business Review study found that just over a third of all employees felt comfortable regularly speaking up in meetings. In meetings of ten people, that means only three or four people may contribute. However, a greater variety of perspectives can be drawn upon when all participants actively contribute, protecting against "group-think" and increasing innovation.

Research has also shown us that women are twice as likely to be interrupted in meetings. Men from CALD communities experience similar circumstances and CALD communities in general may need more time to process what is being said before they feel comfortable to participate. Other groups who are typically marginalised or sidelined in everyday life, such as the LGBTQIA+ communities, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, also may not feel comfortable contributing in meetings.

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Accessible and inclusive meetings

Some meeting attendees may face additional challenges when attending or participating in meetings due to disability. These challenges may prevent access to the physical environment where the meeting is held, or they may relate to accessing information or communication methods. Other barriers may be connected to invisible disabilities, such as anxiety or chronic health conditions, which may prevent a participant from engaging in the way they would like.

Staff who work remotely, for various reasons, may also face challenges when participating in meetings. COVID-19 changed the way that many teams and individuals work, and mainstreamed the use of online meeting technology. Prior to social distancing restrictions, remote workers were vulnerable to being spoken over or dominated by meeting participants who were physically present. However, as usual meeting practices have been disrupted to accommodate the global pandemic, so have these dynamics. UQ seeks to ensure that the inclusive meeting practices adopted through necessity during COVID-19 continue beyond the subsequent social distancing requirements.

UQ aims for all meetings to be as accessible as possible. An accessible meeting is one where:

- participants are proactively asked if they require additional supports or adjustments to maximise their attendance and participation in meetings;
- there are options for attending both virtually or physically, or just virtually; including options to attend virtually with camera off
- non-physically present attendees are proactively invited to join the conversation/discussion;
- all participants have an equal voice in decision-making/voting, irrespective of location;
- reasonable adjustments are provided for attendees with differing communication needs due to disability (for example, providing written transcripts for attendees with hearing impairment); and
- the physical access needs of attendees are accommodated to every extent possible.

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Inclusive dates and timeframes

Some meeting attendees may feel excluded or unwelcome if meetings are planned at times when they are consistently unavailable to attend. For example, care-givers or part-time workers may find it particularly difficult to attend meetings held outside school/respite care hours or during school holiday periods.

A highly effective mechanism for maximising attendance and showing consideration for all attendees' preferences regarding times/dates is to run a word poll which enables participants to indicate their availability for particular windows of time. The poll results enable meeting coordinators to select dates/times which maximise participant attendance.

Whenever possible, committee meetings and selection panels should not:

- be conducted during school holidays;
- be conducted during periods of intense activity as indicated on the UQ calendar (for example, Graduation week, research week etc.);
- occur prior to 9am or conclude after 3.30pm; or
- be allowed to run over-time.

Establishing a diverse and inclusive committee, team or panel

There is significant research confirming that diversity of thought, experience and background leads to improved organisational performance, decision making and innovation. All meetings, committee or panels should seek to be as diverse as possible, to maximise outcomes.

UQ supports the following principals to ensure diverse and inclusive meetings:

- Gender representation of 40:40:20 (40 percent representation by men, 40 percent representation by women and 20 percent representation by either/other gender identities).
- Gender sharing of key roles: To mitigate the situation where most UQ committees are chaired by men and most secretariat roles are fulfilled by women, UQ has mandated that the person selected to fulfil a key committee role should have a different gender identity to the previous incumbent.

Beyond meeting those principles, the most effective method of ensuring a diverse team/committee is to use an expression of interest (EOI) process where diversity information is captured in the EOI documentation (ensuring the reason behind the requirement for this information is clear). The EOI information enables the committee/panel to be constructed in a manner that maximises diversity and inclusion outcomes.

To build diversity in meetings/committees/teams where attendees are selected on the basis of their position or role (for example, a Direct Reports meeting where all positions are held by men), consider inviting additional (diverse) staff as meeting participants, 'leadership shadows' or 'active observers' to ensure a range of different perspectives are factored into meeting outcomes. This also helps to build capability across the next generation of leaders and supports proxy attendance when the principal attendee is unavailable. While they may not hold formal voting rights, additional participants should be actively engaged throughout the meetings and their opinions and ideas listened to and valued.

There is significant research confirming that diversity of thought, experience and background leads to improved organisational performance, decision making and innovation

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Practical tips for inclusive meetings

Before the meeting

Time and date

- **Be considerate**: Consider attendees who may have caring responsibilities when setting the date and time, avoiding school holidays and prioritising "family-friendly" hours.
- **Offer flexibility**: If you always host a regular meeting at a time that is good for one location, consider alternating to accommodate remote team members.
- **Meeting length**: Long meetings can be challenging, in particular for staff who are neurodiverse, have physical disabilities or for whom English is not a native language. Consider shorter, more frequent meetings and avoid scheduling back-to-back meetings. Ways to make meetings more accessible include offering movement breaks, encouraging the use of sensory or fidget devices and allowing camera off virtual options.

Agenda

- **Acknowledgement of Country**: Embed an Acknowledgement of Country as the first item on any formal meeting agenda. Incorporating this item into official meetings recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as First Australians and Traditional Custodians of the land where the meeting is taking place.
- **Provide detail**: Send out a detailed agenda, at least 48 hours in advance. This will allow time for all participants to know what to expect.
- **Invite adjustments**: When sending out the agendas, ask if any participants will require additional adjustments in order to actively participate in the meeting.
- **Allow time**: Consider the available time before setting the agenda and ensure there is enough time for everyone to share their opinions. Time pressure can overwhelm or obscure less vocal participants.
- **Be selective** with meeting invitees, ensuring diversity of opinions while prioritising participants whose contribution is relevant.
- **Welcome input**: Let participants know ahead of time that their opinions and thoughts are welcomed and will be asked for. This will allow time for introverts and less-vocal participants to mentally prepare.
- **Indicate value**: Specify what you're expecting to get from participants and how their contribution will add value to the task.

Venue

- **Make it accessible**: Ensure that the venue is accessible for all participants. Consider both physical access requirements (such as ramps and lifts), as well as barriers to those with invisible disabilities (such as external noise and poor lighting). Consider holding a mixed-mode meeting which facilitates both physical and virtual attendance.
- **Clarify options**: Allow participants the opportunity to join virtually or in person. Make it clear that the mode of attendance is optional, as is the use of cameras if joining virtually.

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During the meeting

Room layout

- **Consider layout**: Space chairs evenly around the table and avoid having people in the back or along the walls. Equal seating implies equal value.
- **Ensure engagement**: If participants are typically distracted on laptops during meetings, consider specifying that all participants are expected to be actively engaged to maximise involvement, or even consider having a "no laptops or phones" rule to maximise active listening.
- **Consider visible symbols of inclusion**: Signage, posters, flags etc. can send very strong messages of inclusion within a meeting/panel context.

Allocating roles

- **Rotate roles**: If one person or location is always presenting, consider asking another employee to drive the presentation.
- **Shift responsibilities**: If you always have the same person taking notes, consider asking someone different to do so[2].
- **Recognise everyone**: If one group or person usually dominates the conversation, considering asking a quieter participant to Chair the meeting and encourage them to alter the format of the meeting.
- **Positive Participation:** All participants should recognise that a positive meeting is not just the Chair's responsibility, and as such make every effort to engage and contribute towards positive meeting outcomes.

2 Some Secretariat or Chair duties are written into some position descriptions, so these roles will have less flexibility to alternate.

Inclusive decision-making techniques

Without pre-defined and consistently applied decision-making techniques, decisions within a committee or meeting context may be based on:

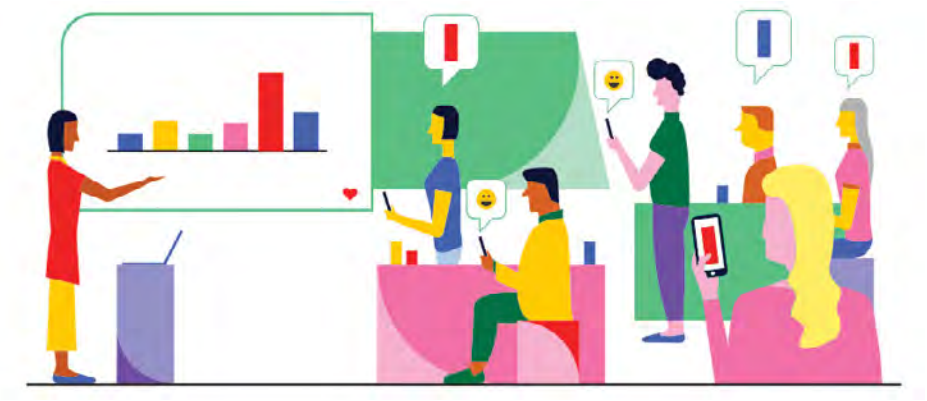
- the loudest voice/s
- the most senior person's views
- group-think
- 'assumed consensus'.

If the Chair uses phrases such as 'I think we all agree that ...' or 'we all appear to be in agreement regarding ...' without voting or another formal decision-making process, the decision may be based on one of the aforementioned tendencies.

For this reason, decisions should be made, to every extent possible via a motion which is then either agreed or disagreed by all attendees. In situations where the attendees have a similar level of seniority or influence, open voting via a show of hands may prove effective. However, where there are significant differences in seniority or power imbalances, voting via anonymous ballot (via voting software such as **Mentimeter**, pen and paper or another voting mechanism) may be more equitable.

Inclusive chairing techniques

- **Be welcoming**: Introduce everyone by name and briefly introduce why each person has been invited. This diffuses tension and helps everyone feel valued and included.
- **Break the ice**: Commence a new committee or the introduction of new members with a short 'getting to know you' activity.
- **Use Pronouns**: Introduce yourself with your pronouns, which will indicate that the meeting is a safe and inclusive place and will normalise the process for activities beyond the meeting itself. Do not expect all participants to be comfortable introducing themselves with pronouns, as this should be a personal choice.
- **Speak last**: The Chair's role is to facilitate the meeting, not to dominate discussion or be the primary decision-maker. If the Chair is in a position of power or seniority, expressing their views at an early stage of discussion may influence the thinking of the group or even silence those wishing to express a different view. For this reason, Chairs should seek the views of group members, before expressing a personal view.



where there are significant differences in seniority or power imbalances, voting via anonymous ballot may be more equitable.

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During the meeting

- **Maintain order**: Set clear 'ground rules' at the start of the meeting and consistently refer to them if people break them (for example, applying a 'no laptops' rule). This includes specifying how decisions will be made.
- **Address potential conflict**: Conflict in meetings can be productive, but if left unchecked it can be destructive and derail meetings. Let people know they can speak openly and offer disagreements without fear of retribution. Be proactive – if you know there are conflicting views in the group, surface them early in the discussion and explore the differing points of view. Watch for conflict clues such as body language, facial expressions and tone of voice. Be fair and impartial by avoiding assumptions and being curious about the differing views presented. If emotions rise, consider creating a 'parking lot' for the issues that can't be readily resolved and move back to the agenda. Come back to the issues at the end of the meeting (if time allows) or reschedule a following meeting/discussion.
- **Include all participants**: Remind the room to include remote attendees (or in-person attendees if there is imbalance towards remote participants) and regularly check that they are able to follow the conversation.
- **Silence aggressors**: Discourage participants talking over each other and call out interrupters. If you observe someone being silenced, make a point of giving them the floor.
- **Encourage involvement**: Provide space for everyone in the meeting to participate. Individually call on less dominant participants and try using closed-ended questions like "do you agree with ….?" This will give introverts an opportunity to expand upon their answer or not.
- **Give credit**: When a participant has a good idea, acknowledge their contribution and give them credit.
- **Draw conclusions**: Clarify action items as you go and repeat them at the end to make sure everyone is on the same page.

After the meeting

- **Follow up:** Promptly circulate follow-up notes or minutes that capture action items and key points of discussion.
- **Invite feedback**: Consider inviting feedback on the inclusivity of the meeting. You can use wording such as: "Today, you may or may not have noticed, but I tried out something to make our team meetings a bit more inclusive for everyone. If you have feedback on how it went or something else we should try to make our meetings more inclusive please feel free to let me know after the meeting."

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Tips for Inclusive Selection Committees

- **Diversity on the panel**. Ensure that there is a diversity in panel members, particularly gender diversity but also with consideration to cultural background and seniority. This is particularly important in relation to ensuring interview candidates feel supported and included (for example, would candidates benefit from having an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative on the panel?).
- **Pre-agreed questions**. Develop and co-design pre-agreed questions for all candidates and ensure these are followed to every extent possible.
- **Scoring against criteria**. Use pre-agreed scoring against interview questions. A more objective, evidence-based approach can assist with reducing the unconscious bias that may impact decision making.
- **Equitable experience**. Aim to ensure that all candidates are afforded a similar interview experience. For example, if one candidate can only attend virtually (via Teams or Zoom) ensure all candidates are interviewed virtually.
- **Complete training requirements**. Ensure that all mandated University training has been completed prior to taking a spot on a panel, as well as Unconscious Bias and other diversity trainings to ensure sensitivity towards diverse groups is maximised.
- **Consult with HR**. Consult with HR to confirm whether any requests have been made for reasonable adjustment to the interview process and how best to support the equitable needs of all candidates.
- **Signal inclusion**. When choosing a location, consider using visible indicators of inclusion such as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag and/or a UQ Ally poster.
- **Address power imbalances**. Consider any power imbalances that may be at play and address them early on to ensure equitable decision making power among participants.

Additional UQ resources

UQ Guide to Inclusive Events

UQ Staff Guidelines: Effective Student Representation on UQ Committees

Welcome to and Acknowledgement of Country Guidelines

UQ Guide to Inclusive Language

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Checklist for inclusive meetings

- [ ] Set a time that is inclusive of carers
- [ ] Accommodate participants who may not be on-location
- [ ] Chose an accessible venue
- [ ] Consider visible symbols of inclusion in the meeting venue (Ally posters, flags etc)
- [ ] Include the Acknowledgement of Country in the agenda as well as speaking it verbally at the beginning of the meeting
- [ ] Send out a detailed agenda two days in advance
- [ ] Ask whether participants require additional adjustments in order to meaningfully participate
- [ ] Allocate appropriate time for the agenda
- [ ] Consider diversity of opinions when choosing participants
- [ ] Inform participants that their opinions and ideas are welcomed and will be asked for
- [ ] Inform each participant about how they will add value to the task
- [ ] Consider rotating the role of Chair, Secretary or presenters
- [ ] Ensure that chairs evenly spaced around the table
- [ ] Welcome everyone by name
- [ ] Introduce yourself using personal pronouns
- [ ] Set clear ground rules at the start of the meeting
- [ ] Set a no laptops or phones rule
- [ ] Create space for quieter participants to engage
- [ ] Clarify and seek to resolve any conflict throughout the meeting
- [ ] Give credit when a participant has a good idea
- [ ] Clarify actions throughout the meeting
- [ ] Ask for feedback at the end/following the meeting

Checklist for inclusive committees

- [ ] Ensure that the panel is diverse, including gender, cultural background and seniority
- [ ] Develop and co-design pre-agreed questions
- [ ] Use pre-agreed scoring against interview questions
- [ ] Aim to ensure that all candidates are afforded a similar interview experience
- [ ] Ensure that all mandated University training, as well as other diversity trainings, have been completed
- [ ] Consult with HR to confirm whether any requests have been made for reasonable adjustment
- [ ] Use visible indicators of inclusion such as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flag and/or a UQ Ally poster.
- [ ] Consider and address any power imbalances that may be at play