



Association of Paediatric Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland

Annual Scientific Meeting

Guidance for Local Organising Committees (LOC)

The requirements for the meeting

Meeting Format

The format for the Annual Scientific Meeting (ASM) is all day Thursday and Friday. There is an expectation these days that two streams will run in parallel for some (much) of the time, with one stream being of greater interest to a majority - perhaps more general, as opposed to more specialised. However, the main theatre needs to be able to accommodate plenary sessions, such as the Jackson Rees lecture, and therefore needs to be able to comfortably accommodate around 400 (350 is the minimum we could take a chance on).

Scientific Programme – this is ultimately the responsibility of the meetings committee and the scientific committee, via the meetings secretary. However, the LOC is encouraged to suggest topics and local speakers, particularly where there is expertise in a particular area or service. Speaker invitations should be issued by the meetings sec, although LOC can approach speakers they wish to sound out, after discussion with the meetings sec. This is purely to avoid a situation where an individual thinks they have been, or will be, invited, but they may not be, depending upon programme changes etc.

There is an expectation that workshops will also be staged parallel to the two lecture streams - these could be practical (such as TIVA, difficult airway), or a symposium (such as chronic pain). A nominal fee is usually charged for attendance at a workshop. While desirable to avoid further charges for delegates who have already paid the conference registration fee, there are good reasons not to make most workshops free. In general, workshops on the Friday afternoon are not so popular, so essentially these are potentially provided all day Thursday and Friday morning. Workshops need to be ready to advertise, with some description of the content, in time for the website to go live (6 months ahead), and registration to open. It is useful to stipulate maximum capacity, and also minimum numbers for viability of the session if applicable.

There is also usually a satellite half-day meeting on the Wednesday afternoon beforehand. It doesn't have to be at the same venue as the ASM, but it should be able to accommodate up to 200. The Wednesday half-day generally alternates year on year between an update for generalists, which may also be appropriate for trainees, or a more specialised session, usually to showcase local expertise. This is not a rule, however, and any idea will be considered.

Facilities

Useful to know for the conference venue(s) - is A-V provision in-house or external contractor? Is there a list of preferred providers? Similarly catering - in-house or external? Preferred provider? Is there wi-fi for delegates, and is it included in the cost of venue hire, or otherwise?

A meeting room where the APA can hold its Council Meeting (around 20-30 attendees) in the morning at the venue for the Wednesday half-day meeting would be really helpful. Also desirable is the possibility of a room where an AV link can be provided for a parent to attend with a child in tow.

Social programme

Reception Wednesday evening – recommendations for the venue are from LOC - usually around 70-80 paying guests, but faculty and local organising committee might expand attendance to 120. If your Wednesday afternoon is an attractive meeting, you never know if people might continue from the pre-meet to the reception, so the venue should be able to cater for over a hundred. Think about the distance from pre-meet to the reception, bearing in mind that out-of-townies might want to check in to their hotels and perhaps get changed. Food and entertainment is subsidised to try and make this an attractive event, and encourage delegates to attend.

Similarly, Thursday night dinner - travel time from conference bearing in mind that it's usually after 5 before the Thursday breaks up and people want to get to their hotel and freshen up before going to the dinner. Avoid the requirement for having to provide mass transport if you possibly can. We attempt to hold the cost of the dinner ticket to a reasonable price, again to attract delegates, and we aim to keep the evening quite informal and not too starchy.

Scheduling of the meeting

Dates wise, May if possible avoiding the weeks that involve bank holiday weekends, so not the first week, and not the weeks up to and after the spring bank holiday at the end of the month - which probably leaves you with a choice of two. Take the first of those if you can. If May simply not possible, first full week in June that doesn't have the spring bank holiday in it.

Don't commit to any money until we've involved the professional conference organisers, but if you can make provisional bookings without costs, go ahead and get your name on anything you think might be suitable.

Timeline

Before bidding to host, gauge the strength of local support for hosting the event, have an idea as to the membership of the Local Organising Committee (LOC), and establish who will be the lead and contact for correspondence. It's also worth identifying a co-lead to cater for the event of the intended lead having to take a step back. The PCO can help with compiling a bid.

Get any conference venue that you're particularly keen on provisionally booked at the earliest opportunity, bearing in mind that we (the APA) would usually try to avoid placing a deposit more than two years ahead.

It's never too early to start thinking about potential content for the scientific programme, especially playing to the potential strengths of the local departments. It's obviously helpful to review the topics

that have been covered over recent years at the ASM and also any suggestions from delegates for future topics. A review of the previous 12 months for new topics arising in the published literature should also be conducted, in conjunction with the meetings committee. However, as a guide:

In the September of two years before your meeting i.e. 20 months ahead, you will be invited to attend the Meetings Committee Meeting (London, most likely), which will be your introduction to the APA Meetings Committee and the Professional Conference Organiser (if you haven't already been in contact with them). This is an opportunity to present your vision for the meeting, and also to discuss potential Jackson Rees lecturers.

January of the year before your meeting i.e. approx 16 months ahead: you will be invited to the Meetings Committee Meeting (again, London, most likely). The aim of this meeting is to lay down the first draft of the scientific programme, with suggestions for themes, topics and potential speakers. It is most helpful all round if the LOC have already created some proposals for the content of the scientific meeting. The Meetings Committee can help with refining the proposals and with suggestions for speakers.

The Meetings Secretary would usually endeavour to have an initial walk through your proposed venue at some point between these two committee meetings.

In March of the year before, you would be asked for suggestions for a logo, and you may want to have a colour scheme in mind as well for this purpose. The logo would normally be launched at the ASM before yours to make the delegates aware of the dates and venue. Therefore the logo needs to have been designed and agreed upon in advance of the ASM the year before.

At the ASM the year before, there would be a meeting between the Meetings Secretary and any of your LOC attending. (It's obviously a good idea for at least one of you to attend in order to get first hand exposure to what position you'll be in in a year's time.) At this meeting, the programme would potentially be developed further.

June the year before - the time is approaching for the trade prospectus to be produced. This is a brochure to inform industry of the date and venue of the coming ASM and the opportunities for exhibiting and sponsorship. The logo that you developed 2-3 months previously would feature on this, and there will be a requirement for a short description from the lead of the LOC on the virtues of the meeting and your great city, helping reinforce the idea that no ambitious commercial partner would want to miss out.

July the year before - there is another opportunity for discussion of the scientific programme at the so-called wash-up meeting, usually held 6 weeks after the most recent ASM. The wash-up meeting is worth your LOC attending because there you will hear the feedback from the ASM just gone and be aware of what was well-received and what was less so. Your programme should be mostly settled by this time as formal invitations to speakers will go out around this time, if they have not already done so.

September the year before i.e. 8-9 months ahead - Meetings Committee Meeting (almost certainly London). Most of the groundwork is completed by this time and it's a case of reviewing the plans and filling any blanks.

November the year before - website launch, registration opens, abstract submission process opens. All of these are the responsibility of the PCO and the Meetings Secretary, but you might be asked for contributions to the welcome statement and help with editing and proof reading. The PCO

should have identified a conference hotel for the speakers by this stage, but if you have valuable local knowledge on the matter of accommodation, please share it.

January of the same year i.e. 4-5 months to go - Meetings Committee Meeting (London) one last time to dot the i's and cross the t's.

February of the same year - abstract submission process closes, with submissions directed to the APA Science Committee for review and short-listing.

6-8 weeks to go - walk-through venues with Meetings Secretary and PCO to check details.

In conclusion

APA Council would very much like you to enjoy your conference experience, to provide a national and international meeting with a local accent that provides a showcase for what you provide in your area. Staging the ASM is very much a team event, and the APA Meetings Secretary is always available for support and advice.

Karen Bartholomew and Colin Dryden
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