



Mercian Conference Group

Tuesday 16th November

Minutes

Present: Deborah Munro (Chair, Birmingham), Laura Newman (Loughborough), Nial Halford-Busby (BGU), Ruth Houghton (Cranfield), Christine Bradford (Warwick), Jo-Anne Watts (Steering Group, Wolverhampton), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration) Page | 1

Apologies: None

1. Loose Ends from 2021 Conference

It was confirmed feedback incentives had gone out as planned. Nial also confirmed he was working on the last video, and GJJ had already made all the other recordings available on the website.ⁱ

2. Group Membership and Roles

A number of members had stood down from the group, but all those present today had agreed to continue on serving. As previously noted, Deborah is now Chair, and Laura has been nominated to serve as Vice Chair. As no other nominees came forward, this was agreed. While the new members would move into roles once they join, for now the post-holders were agreed as:

Communications & Programmeⁱⁱ: Chris + new member

Venue/Platform Coordinator: Nial + new member

Speaker Liaison: Ruth (TBC) + new member

Sponsor Coordinator: New members (x2)

Delegate Liaison: New members (x2)

Where roles will be filled by new members, existing group members would offer support and mentoring. GJJ would continue providing marketing and evaluation support, although he welcomed involvement from other committee members in supporting these activities. As the sponsor role required some considerable longer-term effort, it was agreed the chair would seek input and advice from the former role holder. This was noted as a priority as the prior sponsor role holder was approaching retirement.

The potential for a technical support role was discussed, but it was agreed it was better to buy this in locally from the institution (physical or online) hosting.

ACTION: Ruth to confirm if she wants to continue in role or switch to another

ACTION: GJJ to update role documentation on Group pages

ACTION: Deborah to speak to past-Sponsor Coordinator re-handover notes on sponsorship role

3. Nominations for New Membership

A request to the Directors for nominations to the group had been distributed, with a deadline of Friday 19th November to respond. Two potential additional members from Loughborough and three from Birmingham were under consideration, although the group would like to ensure some other institutions were also represented. As previously discussed the group would like to expand its membership numbers to permit at least two people to take on each of the five roles. It would also allow for more session moderators at the conference itself.

This would make a committee comprising twelve members, with the Chair and Vice stepping back to coordinate activities and act as event 'hosts' on the day. Matt, Jo-Anne and GJJ, would continue to provide their various support in addition to this.

GJJ would remind the Directors of the deadline, and Deborah and Laura would review the nominations and make the invitations to join the group. It was expected new members would join for the January 2022 meeting.

ACTION: GJJ to remind Directors of call for Group members deadline

ACTION: Deborah and Laura to review nominations and formally invite new members to join

4. Survey Feedback

GJJ reported thirty people had already responded, ten more than the conference feedback. Some outline figures so far:

- 50% of respondents had never attended a MC conference.
- 48% had found the date problematic and a disincentive to attend.
- Hybrid or physical events seemed more desirable (although Teams/Zoom fatigue might be a factor here).
- Speakers from the Academic library community, academics or Non-HE workers were identified as most favoured keynote speaker types.
- A variety of potential event themes were identified including EDI, collaboration vs competition, and digital delivery.ⁱⁱⁱ

The survey would remain open until early December, and then would be analysed and reported to the group ahead of the January 2022 meeting.

5. 2022 Conference Format

In the light of the feedback, the format of the next conference was discussed. It was agreed, no matter the format, recording sessions was desirable as a way to better propagate and expose the conference content to a wider audience; along with attending delegates.

Taking into account factors such as COVID uncertainties, limited staff development budgets, potential delegate numbers and planning efficiencies, it was agreed to plan for an online only event for the 2022 conference. GJJ proposed and it was agreed to account for either a hybrid or return to physical event in 2023, and each planning meeting will now include discussions around the event after next.

Given the delegate feedback had identified a weakness in the networking arrangements, revitalising this for 2022 was a priority. Various options were discussed, and the group would consider these more at the next event.

The platform was likewise discussed, and while Teams was familiar and reliable for many delegates, some explorations of other options were possible. This would be revisited at the next meeting.

6. Initial Theme Ideas: 2022

GJJ would feedback on the results of the survey to the group in January. In the meantime, Deborah would set up a feedback padlet for all group members to suggest and comment on potential themes. Steering Group would be also asked for any suggestions to feed into the group's thinking. It was intended a recommendation on a theme and outline title for the 2022 Conference would be made to Steering Group by the Conference Group Chair following this meeting.

ACTION: Deborah to set up theme feedback padlet

ACTION: All to contribute and comment on potential event themes

ACTION: GJJ and Jo-Anne to update Steering Group on Group plans

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting would be held in January, and would act as a kick-off for the year's event planning. GJJ would also bring the results of the survey to the meeting to inform planning. All new members would be invited to attend and begin their work for the group too.

ACTION: Deborah to set date for Jan 2022 meeting

8. AOB

a. Potential Hosts for 2022

Ruth noted the potential for Cranfield to host, given the availability of their TV suite facilities and briefly demonstrated these to the group. These would also be able to offer sponsor branding as a backdrop.

b. Sponsorship

GJJ noted the sponsorship policy would need revisiting in the light of the ALN's approach, and the potential for increasing our event income. It was also noted a consideration of what tangible value sponsors could receive for their investment would also need to be addressed.

ACTION: Chair, Vice and GJJ to revisit sponsor policy ahead of January meeting

c. Flowcharts

GJJ noted he had been developing some decision flowcharts to assist the group in their planning, and would share them for information and discussion ahead of the January meeting. It was hoped these would help codify the key decisions and dependencies for conference planning.

ⁱ <https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/conference-2021/recordings>

ⁱⁱ A revision in name to reflect GJJ's role as de facto marketing lead

ⁱⁱⁱ GJJ notes: A very surface reading, a fuller content analysis will be conducted on the themes as part of the report.