



Conference Group Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 5th April 2023 @ 15:00 - Online

Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

- **ACTION:** Chair to send around proposed timeline to group ✓
- **ACTION:** Ruth J to facilitate access to the mercianconference@gmail.com account for Kerry and Michelle ✓
- **ACTION:** Ruth J to add details for Kerry and amend details for Michelle on the relevant Conference 2023 webpages ✓
- **ACTION:** Chair to email members of the group asking them to send confirmation of whether they are attending the meeting on 16th May, and any dietary requirements, to Andrea as soon as possible ✓
- **ACTION:** Chris and Dave to ensure that programme is accessible, based on advice from Simon Satchwell-Giles.
- **ACTION:** Paul to draft and share a form of words for sponsors on appropriate eco-friendly freebies for exhibition stands.
- **ACTION:** ALL to encourage potential speakers to submit proposals.
- **ACTION:** Speaker Liaison – keep an eye on submissions and promoting the opportunity. Also running the next 'Top Tips' session, advising on submissions and answering queries.
- **ACTION:** Speaker Liaison – look at whether the submissions received can be grouped into themes before the speaker selection meeting on 16th May.
- **ACTION:** Venue Co-ordinators to confirm room capacities of the rooms we will be using in The Exchange, ready for the next meeting.
- **ACTION:** Venue Co-ordinators – talk to The Exchange about AV kit. Handheld microphones, etc.
- **ACTION:** Catherine to obtain quotes and lead times for purchasing lanyards, badges, etc. Will also check whether speakers and conference group members could have different coloured lanyards, to distinguish them from ordinary delegates (who can use blue lanyards).
- **ACTION:** Delegate Liaison – prepare booking form so that it will be ready to go live as soon as possible after we have our list of speakers and sessions.
- **ACTION:** Delegate Liaison - collate information to go on the Conference microsite: venue, hotels, travel, parking, restaurant recommendations. Venue co-ordinators and other people who are Birmingham-based may be able to help with this.
- **ACTION:** All to review Conference microsite and advise Ruth J on any changes required at this stage, and over the next few weeks.
- **ACTION:** Sponsorship Co-ordinators - get more sponsors signed up, aiming for at least two more Gold Sponsors.
- **ACTION:** Sponsorship Co-ordinators – ask confirmed sponsors how many delegates they are planning to send. Ask Browns whether they will take up the option of a 5 minute Gold Sponsor spot at conference.
- **ACTION:** Sponsorship Co-ordinators - get all relevant info from sponsors for conference programme and microsite and pass this info to Dave and Chris for the programme and to Ruth J for the website.
- **ACTION:** Communications and Programme Co-ordinators – have the programme template ready so that the session and speaker details can be slotted in when confirmed. Liaise with Ruth J to get the programme outline added to the website.



- **ACTION:** Catherine will investigate whether there is a suitable free app for the conference.
- **ACTION:** Chair and Vice-Chair to approach both potential speakers to check whether one of them is available and interested in being our keynote speaker.
- **ACTION:** ALL - to consider who else might be good to invite to join the conference panel.
- **ACTION:** Catherine and Andrea to identify a student representative for the panel.

23/17 Welcome and Apologies

Chair welcomed the group to the meeting, with a particular welcome for new member Kerry O'Brien, and asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

Present: Laura Newman (Chair, Loughborough), Ruth Houghton (Vice Chair, Cranfield), Grace Troth (BCU), Katie Abranson (Cranfield), Dave Palmer (Aston), Michelle Mayer (Coventry), Paul Cavanagh (Nottingham), Emily Wild (Worcester), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham)

Apologies: Ruth Jenkins (Mercian Collaboration Executive Officer), Jo-Anne Watts (Steering Group Sponsor, Wolverhampton), Matt Cunningham (MSDG liaison, Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Jodie Heap (Staffordshire), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham).

23/18 Rejigging of member roles

Chair noted that Funmike and Emily will both be stepping down the Mercian Conference group and thanked them both for their contributions.

To cover the gaps, member roles have been rejigged as follows:

- Kerry has now joined the group to take on the role of Delegate Liaison alongside Katie.
- Michelle is now taking on the role of Speaker Support alongside Grace.

Emily clarified that she would be able to continue to contribute to conference planning activity during May, before leaving her current role at Worcester University.

ACTION: Ruth J to facilitate access to the mercianconference@gmail.com account for Kerry and Michelle.

ACTION: Ruth J to add details for Kerry and amend details for Michelle on the relevant Conference 2023 webpages, including:

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/conference-2023/contacts-help-2023>

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/cg-current-members>

23/19 Matters arising from previous meeting held on 27/02/2023

Chair went through the summary of new or outstanding items from the previous meeting held on 27/02/2023.

Chair noted that she still needed to send proposed timeline to the group, and she aimed to do this as soon as possible after the meeting.



Nearly all the other actions had been fully completed. A small number of actions not yet completed were in hand.

Other matters arising and actions were discussed as part of the relevant agenda item as noted below.

23/20 Top Tips for A Successful submission - feedback on first event

Grace reported that the first 'Top Tips' event on 27th March went well. 11 people signed up and 10 attended. It was helpful to be able to use a couple of example submissions from last year.

A reminder will be going out before the next 'Top Tips' event on 18th April.

Two submissions for this year had been received so far. We would like to encourage more, from a diverse range of speakers.

The call for papers has been shared via the Mercian website, email and Twitter. The deadline for submissions is early May. Reminders will be sent out nearer the time.

23/21 Confirmation of attendance for May meeting/catering (Chair)

The next meeting will be held in person on Tuesday 16th May 10:30-13:00, at The Exchange in the Benjamin Zephaniah room. Meeting up in The Exchange will give us the opportunity to inspect the conference venue.

The Exchange is reasonably close to Birmingham New Street. Lunch will be provided.

The focus of this meeting will be speaker selection. There will access to view the submissions in advance of the meeting. Those unable to attend the meeting on the day can send their feedback in to the Chair before the meeting so that this can be considered.

It was noted that we still needed confirmation of numbers attending the meeting and their dietary requirements for lunch.

ACTION: Chair to email members of the group asking them to send confirmation of whether they are attending the meeting on 16th May, and any dietary requirements, to Andrea as soon as possible.

Catherine offered to provide an informal tour of the University of Birmingham Library in the afternoon after our 16th May meeting if this would be of interest. It was agreed that people should contact Catherine directly to discuss this option.

23/22 Image/logo/programme structure planning

Dave had previously shared three conference image suggestions via email on 20th March, and now shared them again on screen for comment.

Following a vote, it was agreed to use the paper planes image.

Once speakers have been selected, the details can be added to the programme. The template for the programme can be based on that used in previous years, however there is scope to improve the accessibility.



Dave and Chris will be meeting Simon Satchwell-Giles, Chair of the Mercian Disability Forum, to get advice on making sure the programme is accessible.

Grace confirmed that it had been decided to use Google forms for speaker submissions and delegate bookings. This decision had been made based on advice that Google forms and Microsoft forms were equally accessible for people completing the forms.

ACTION: *Chris and Dave to ensure that programme is accessible, based on advice from Simon Satchwell-Giles.*

23/23 Sponsorship update (Paul/Jodie)

Paul was pleased to report that the following sponsors were confirmed:

- Platinum Sponsor: Brown's Books
- Gold Sponsors:
 - Taylor & Francis
 - Mark Allen Group

Paul said they were also waiting to hear back from other potential sponsors and he was hoping they would have a 'full house' of sponsors by next meeting.

It was agreed that it would be good to have as many sponsors as we can get, so that money is available to spend on delivering the conference.

The current sponsorship policy was shared on screen by Paul in the meeting, and is available here:

<https://merciancollaboration.org.uk/sponsorship-policy>

This policy shows what sponsors can expect based on Platinum, Gold and Silver levels.

Ruth H noted that the recent JISC DigiFest event had an environmentally friendly policy which discouraged sponsors from handing out free items on their exhibition stands. It may be worth considering our policy on this.

Following a brief discussion, it was agreed that sponsors should be advised that they should only hand out recycled and/or eco-friendly items to delegates.

ACTION: *Paul to draft and share a form of words for sponsors on appropriate eco-friendly freebies for exhibition stands*

23/24 Update/next steps for all roles

The Chair outlined some next steps and actions for members of the Conference Group:

ACTION: *ALL to encourage anyone in the library to be a speaker, particularly if they are doing a project or piece of work or new practice or policy or new way of doing things that would fit in with 'putting change into action'. We particularly want people who have never spoken at a conference before, as we welcome new voices, and this is a good development opportunity for them.*

ACTION: *Speaker Liaison – keep an eye on submissions and promoting the opportunity. Also running the next 'Top Tips' session, advising on submissions and answering queries.*



ACTION: *Speaker Liaison – look at whether the submissions received can be grouped into themes before the speaker selection meeting on 16th May.*

ACTION: *Venue Co-ordinators to confirm room capacities of the rooms we will be using in The Exchange, ready for the next meeting.*

ACTION: *Venue Co-ordinators – talk to The Exchange about AV kit. Handheld microphones, etc.*

ACTION: *Catherine to obtain quotes and lead times for purchasing lanyards, badges, etc. Will also check whether speakers and conference group members could have different coloured lanyards, to distinguish them from ordinary delegates (who can use blue lanyards).*

ACTION: *Delegate Liaison – prepare booking form so that it will be ready to go live as soon as possible after we have our list of speakers and sessions.*

ACTION: *Delegate Liaison - collate information to go on the Conference microsite: venue, hotels, travel, parking, restaurant recommendations. Venue co-ordinators and other people who are Birmingham-based may be able to help with this.*

ACTION: *All to review Conference microsite and advise Ruth J on any changes required at this stage, and over the next few weeks.*

ACTION: *Sponsorship Co-ordinators - get more sponsors signed up, aiming for at least two more Gold Sponsors.*

ACTION: *Sponsorship Co-ordinators – ask confirmed sponsors how many delegates they are planning to send. Ask whether Browns will take up the option of a 5 minute Gold Sponsor spot at conference.*

ACTION: *Sponsorship Co-ordinators - get all relevant info from sponsors for conference programme and microsite and pass this info to Dave and Chris for the programme and to Ruth J for the website.*

ACTION: *Communications and Programme Co-ordinators – have the programme template ready so that the session and speaker details can be slotted in when confirmed. Liaise with Ruth J to get the programme outline added to the website.*

It was decided not to hand out printed copies of the programme to all delegates at the venue as this would waste paper. However, it would be helpful to have posters and signage at the venue showing which sessions will be taking place when and in which rooms.

It was noted that apps had been used for some recent conferences, for example UKSG and JISC DigiFest. However, these apps might be too big, complex and potentially expensive for us.

ACTION: *Catherine will investigate whether there is a suitable free app for the conference.*

23/25 Keynote speaker and conference panel

Suggestions for possible keynote speakers had been shared on a padlet for consideration before the meeting.

It was agreed that there were two preferred options for keynote speaker. We would like to get the keynote confirmed so that we can publicise this and encourage delegates to register for conference places.



ACTION: Chair and Vice-Chair to approach both potential speakers to check whether one of them is available and interested in being our keynote speaker.

We then discussed the format and membership of the conference panel. This will take place early afternoon. A 45 minute slot would allow for 30 minutes for the panel members to talk plus a 10 minute Q&A.

The panel will consist of 5 panel members, one of whom would lead the session. We want to include a student on the panel.

We received good feedback on last year's conference panel session, especially having a student on panel.

Catherine asked whether we should offer an incentive (for example, an Amazon voucher) for to encourage a student to join this year's conference panel. It was recommended that this should not be offered as part of the initial conversation, but it might be worth keeping this option in reserve.

It is helpful to brief the panel members in advance on the themes to focus on and some initial questions to consider. This will also depend on the people we have on the panel and what they would like to talk about.

Helen Curtis has indicated that she would be happy to be on the panel. Helen would have some interesting things to say about 'management and leadership', diversifying the workforce, moving into management, staff recruitment, etc.

The student member is likely to have a different perspective. We would need to have another strand as well, perhaps asking them to talk about 'driving change by trying something new'. It will depend on the student we get and what they are interested in.

We would like to have someone from the University of Birmingham as a panel member. Catherine noted that there are a few potential people who could do this, but it would be worth seeing who else is on the panel first to get a good mix.

Laura is going to ask Emma Walton if she can chair the panel.

Paul asked about level/range of other people to involve in the conference panel. It was agreed that we want to include a diverse range of voices and perspectives. It is not necessary for every panel member to be in a senior role or have years of experience, but all panel members will need to be reasonably confident to speak in front of director(s) in the audience and on the panel itself.

ACTION: ALL - to consider who else might be good to invite to join the conference panel.

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to identify a student representative for the panel.

23/26 Next meeting and future meetings

The next meeting will be held at The Exchange, Birmingham on 16th May - 10:30-13:00.

Doodle polls will be used to decide dates for monthly meetings in June and July.

02/05/2023 – Ruth Jenkins, Executive Officer



We will aim to have weekly catch-up meetings in August, but due to holidays not everyone will be expected to attend all meetings.

23/27 AOB

No AOB raised.