



Conference Group Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 14th June 2023 @ 10:00 - Online

Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

ACTION: Ruth J to produce news announcement about Keynote speaker and add information to the microsite, in consultation with Laura.

ACTION: Laura to draft blurb on keynote speaker for the programme, microsite, news item etc.

ACTION: All to suggest points for keynote speaker brief. Send to Laura ASAP.

ACTION: Ruth J to post summary of programme outline, with full programme coming soon, and news item to announce this.

ACTION: Katie and Kerry to update booking form with details and timings of breakout sessions.

ACTION: Catherine to lead on poster/display stand from Mercian Conference Group encouraging people to consider signing up for next year.

ACTION: ALL to contact Laura with suggestion(s) for another panel member.

ACTION: ALL to contact Laura with suggestions for questions to send to panel members in advance.

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea – check minimum order for lanyards

ACTION: Ruth J to share high resolution Mercian Collaboration logos with Catherine

ACTION: Laura to liaise with Steering Group to get approval for purchase of tote bags, lanyards, etc.

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to confirm times for lunch and refreshments

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to confirm Welcome desk for conference

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to ask venue to change layout of main room from theatre to 11:15 to cabaret and then back to theatre again during afternoon break ready for panel discussion. (So won't be able to have refreshments in that space during afternoon break)

ACTION: Jodie and Paul check with Sponsors as to what they need from venue in terms of power points, data, furniture, etc and then liaise with venue co-ordinators on this.

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: Chris and Dave to put draft programme together.

ACTION: Laura to provide a Welcome from the Conference Chair to include in the programme. Also check with Emma Walton whether she wants to say anything in the programme.

ACTION: Chris and Dave to include spiel about Mercian Collaboration in the programme.

ACTION: Katie and Kerry to finalise booking form.

ACTION: Ruth J to put details of breakout sessions on webpage so that booking form can include link to this.

ACTION: Matt and Jo to email Directors and MDSG reports to recommend that that they decide how places will be allocated within their institution – e.g. whether this is to be managed by MSDG Rep and/or Director or via some other arrangement.

ACTION: Laura to send out call to invite delegates to book places. This can then be shared and cascaded through the various lists.

ACTION: Ruth J to put link to booking form on microsite and publicise via a news item, Twitter, etc.

23/28 Welcome and Apologies

Chair welcomed the group to the meeting.

Present: Laura Newman (Chair, Loughborough), Ruth Houghton (Vice Chair, Cranfield), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Katie Abranson (Cranfield), Dave Palmer (Aston), Paul Cavanagh (Nottingham), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Matt Cunningham (MSDG liaison, Loughborough), Jodie Heap (Staffordshire), Kerry O’Brien (Loughborough), Ruth Jenkins (Mercian Collaboration Executive Officer)

Apologies: Jo-Anne Watts (Steering Group Sponsor, Wolverhampton), Michelle Mayer (Coventry), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham). Grace Troth (BCU)

23/29 Matters Arising from previous meetings

Chair reviewed list of actions from the meeting on 5th April and noted that most of them had been completed.

No minutes from Speaker Selection meeting on 16th May but there was a brief list of actions circulated by email by the Chair after the meeting.

Katie and Kerry confirmed that the booking form was ready to go live as soon as they had received the schedule.

Chris and Dave met with Simon Satchwell-Giles to obtain his advice on ensuring the written PDF programme was accessible. Simon’s advice was to keep it as plain as possible. Chris and Dave will produce first draft as they have received schedule.

People are sending information through to Ruth J so that she can keep the microsite updated.

Five corporate sponsors have been signed up and invoices sent. The sponsors have confirmed they will be sending 2 delegates each so 10 in total.

Paul and Jodie were passing sponsor information onto Dave and Chris for PDF programme and to Ruth J for microsite.

Catherine reported on her investigations into conference apps. Use of these apps will work best if used from day 1 of planning conference. More trouble than it is worth to start using an app at this point. This might be something to look at for next year.

Paul had produced wording for sponsors on appropriate eco-friendly freebies for exhibition stands.

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

23/30 Keynote Speaker

The keynote speaker will be Ben Davies from Chimp Management.

Laura said they would be meeting in August to finalise the brief and points to cover in the keynote. Want to focus on relevant topics for audience. She would welcome ideas from Conference Group and Steering Group. Ruth H suggested referring to initial thoughts captured on the Padlet.

ACTION: *Ruth J to produce news announcement about Keynote speaker and add information to the microsite, in consultation with Laura.*

ACTION: *Laura to draft blurb on keynote speaker for the programme, microsite, news item etc.*

ACTION: *All to suggest points for keynote speaker brief. Send to Laura ASAP.*

23/31 Draft schedule

Laura shared most up-to-date draft schedule on screen and said she was going to make some edits before sending round asap.

It was agreed that we need to allow 5 minutes between sessions so that people have time to walk between rooms in the venue. Conference Group will be there to direct people.

Also need to include tea and coffee breaks on schedule, and opportunities for networking.

Paul noted that the Platinum Sponsor had confirmed that they were taking up the option of a five-minute presentation and it was agreed that this would be slotted in immediately after Welcome.

Following the speaker selection meeting in May, Grace and Michelle have contacted all speakers to confirm details of their sessions.

It was good to see that the breakout sessions will cover a range of topics and speakers are in different roles come from a cross-section of Mercian Members.

It was noted that a couple of the rooms available for breakout sessions are smaller than we had hoped, because bigger rooms in the venue have already been booked for teaching. We will need to restrict numbers to fit the rooms.

The booking form asks delegate to state their preferences for breakout sessions but says 'While we aim to allocate attendees their first choice of sessions, due to the number of delegates, this may not always be possible.'

Ruth H wondered whether we could have posters/display in networking spaces to encourage discussions.

Catherine suggested poster/display stands from Mercian Conference Group to encourage people to consider signing up for next year. She would be happy to lead on this and can get things printed out locally.

ACTION: *Ruth J to post summary of programme outline, with full programme coming soon, and news item to announce this.*

ACTION: *Katie and Kerry to update booking form with details and timings of breakout sessions.*

ACTION: *Catherine to lead on poster/display stand from Mercian Conference Group encouraging people to consider signing up for next year.*

23/32 Round Table Panel – members and discussion points

Chair confirmed the following panel members lined up for round table.

- Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton) to chair panel
- Helen Curtis (Oxford Brookes, formerly Aston)
- Tammy Ashcroft.
- PGT student (University of Birmingham – being arranged by Catherine)
- Ruth Houghton (Cranfield)

Laura asked group for other suggestions of who else could join the panel. They don't have to be in senior leadership or middle management roles. Different universities (not Cranfield, Loughborough or University of Birmingham as already represented).

It was noted that the panel was not as diverse as we would like, but at the same time want to avoid tokenism.

We need to start thinking about questions send to panel in advance. Laura put 3 suggested questions in meeting chat. We want maximum of 5 questions in total.

These need to be open questions relevant to as many of the panel members as possible (though individual panel members may want to opt out of certain question(s)).

ACTION: *ALL to contact Laura with suggestion(s) for another panel member.*

ACTION: *ALL to contact Laura with suggestions for questions to send to panel members in advance.*

23/33 Merchandise

Andrea and Catherine obtained quotes for various options for branded items, and these options and prices had been shared with the Steering Group.

Tote bags were the first choice of the conference group based on a quick discussion in the meeting chat.

Steering Group will have the final say on this – they need to approve expenditure.

Matt confirmed that we already have nearly 100 lanyards, which will not be quite enough.

More can be ordered. They do not need to be branded. Blue for delegates. Possibly yellow for conference group members.



ACTION: Catherine and Andrea – check minimum order for lanyards

ACTION: Ruth J to share high resolution Mercian Collaboration logos with Catherine

ACTION: Laura to liaise with Steering Group to get approval for purchase of tote bags, lanyards, etc.

23/34 Update/next steps for all roles

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

Venue co-ordinators (Catherine and Andrea)

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to confirm times for lunch and refreshments

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to confirm Welcome desk for conference

ACTION: Catherine and Andrea to ask venue to change layout of main room from theatre to 11:15 to cabaret and then back to theatre again during afternoon break ready for panel discussion. (So won't be able to have refreshments in that space during afternoon break)

Sponsorship Co-ordinators (Jodie and Paul)

Paul has shared statement for sponsors on preference for any merchandise to be sustainable.

SCONUL has raised invoices as requested.

Sponsors will need a table and two chairs, each plus power and data, for their exhibition stands.

ACTION: Jodie and Paul check with Sponsors as to what they need from venue in terms of power points, data, furniture, etc and then liaise with venue co-ordinators on this.

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.

Programme Co-ordinators (Chris and Dave)

Chris and Dave working on draft programme including following information:

- Schedule - about to be confirmed.
- Breakout session details and speaker information – provided by Grace.
- Promotional information from Sponsors – provided by Paul and Jodie.
- Welcome from Conference Chair.
- Information about Mercian Collaboration.

They are simplifying the formatting as much as possible for publication, following guidance from Simon Satchell Giles.

Not having printed programmes to hand out to delegates but there will need to be signage in the venue. This could include QR codes with link to full programme online. Agreed to look at this nearer the time.

ACTION: Chris and Dave to start put draft programme together.



ACTION: Laura to provide a Welcome from the Conference Chair to include in the programme. Also check with Emma Walton whether she wants to say anything in the programme.

ACTION: Chris and Dave to include spiel about Mercian Collaboration in the programme.

Executive Officer Actions (Ruth J)

- Continuing to update microsite.
- News items:
 - Keynote speaker
 - Programme coming soon
 - Details of breakout sessions ready before booking form goes live
 - Announcing Sponsors – Platinum Sponsor

Speaker Liaison (Grace and Michelle)

Emailed all speakers to confirm. Ensuring we have all speaker biographies and photos.

Asking speakers to send slides in advance.

Speaker sessions in August.

Delegate liaison (Katie and Kerry)

Booking form to include link to details of breakout sessions so that delegates can indicate their preferences.

Careful wording to make clear that places in breakout sessions are limited and that we cannot guarantee people will get their 1st, 2nd choice etc.

Call to invite delegates to book places will be sent out. Need to put together wording to be sent out to Mercian Collaboration news and discussion list. This can also be cascaded by Directors, SDG reps, etc.

Initial allocation of 3 places per institution. Restricted to Mercian members. Will maintain a reserve list to fill places still available after closing date. Cannot exceed capacity of venue.

Allocation of places within each institution to be managed by MSDG Rep and/or Director depending on institution.

ACTION: Katie and Kerry to finalise booking form.

ACTION: Ruth J to put details of breakout sessions on webpage so that booking form can include link to this.

ACTION: Matt and Jo to email Directors and MSDG reports to recommend that they agreed how places will be allocated within their institution – e.g. whether this is to be managed by MSDG Rep and/or Director or via some other arrangement.

ACTION: Laura to send out call to invite delegates to book places. This can then be shared and cascaded through the various lists.

ACTION: Ruth J to put link to booking form on microsite and publicise via a news item, Twitter, etc.



23/35 Dates of next meeting and future meetings

Next meeting will be Thursday 20th July (13:30-15:00 online).

Chair will arrange weekly catch-up meetings in August and beginning of September. Conference group members have various holidays booked but will join in with catch-up meetings when they can.

23/36 AOB

No AOB raised.