# Conference Group Meeting Minutes

## Thursday 29th September 2022 @ 14:00 - Online

 **Present**: Deborah Munro (Chair, Aston), Laura Newman (Vice, Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Matt Cunningham (MSDG, Loughborough), Natalie Baker-Fosker (Mercian Collaboration), Jo-Anne Watts (Wolverhampton, Steering Group)

**Apologies:** Ruth Houghton (Cranfield), Funmike Ifie (Loughborough), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Ruth Jenkins (Cranfield), Catherine Robertson (Birmingham), Adrian Clarke (Loughborough)

# Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

**ACTION:** Laura to chase Cranfield for invoice (re: financial gift)
**ACTION:** Chair to purchase and send thank you cards and gifts as applicable.
**ACTION:** Deborah to include examples of the positive feedback received in the Thank You cards to Ant Brewerton, Nina, and others as applicable.
**ACTION:** Deborah to email Ant Brewerton to obtain permission for his slides to be uploaded and request a copy of the slides.
**ACTION:** Catherine and Funmike to obtain the outstanding presentations if possible.
**ACTION:** Ruth to liaise with Cranfield studio to obtain recordings of the keynote speech, Sponsor presentation and Round-Table discussions, and then send to Natalie.
**ACTION:** Natalie to upload final recordings and slides to website as appropriate.
**ACTION:** Laura to reach out to those who volunteered for next year’s conference planning team, asking them to gain consent from their respective Line Mangers / Library Directors.
**ACTION:** Laura to put a shout out on the mailing list asking for more volunteers to join the Conference Planning Group.
**ACTION:** Laura to confirm that Ruth is still interested in progressing to Vice Chair and that Catherine and Andrea wish to continue their membership.
**ACTION**: Jo-Anne to discuss the future conference format at next steering group meeting. (At this meeting the steering group will also discuss themes and whether the next conference will be hosted online or in-person)
**ACTION**: Natalie to purchase emailable book vouchers on Newman University Library budget and arrange to claim the funds back from Sconul via expenses claim.
**ACTION**: Laura to email delegates to inform that recordings/slides are available and requesting more feedback.
**ACTION:** Natalie to send Jo-Anne the list of seniority for her to help sort out seniority into predefined categories.
**ACTION:** Deborah to ask Cranfield how many people attended the conference overall. It is believed that they can pull a Zoom report that gives delegate data.
**ACTION:** Deborah to ask Cranfield how many people attended the conference overall. It is believed that they can pull a Zoom report that gives delegate data.
**ACTION:** Natalie to send reports to Conference Group for them to proof-read and make changes as appropriate.
**ACTION:** Laura to send Doodle poll for next Conference Group meeting – likely to be in Mid November (after the Directors Board meeting).

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Group welcomed to Conference Group wrap-up session for 2022.

# 22/89 Thank You’s

Chair noted that she has already offered verbal and/or written thanks to all colleagues who helped to make the 2022 conference a success. Chair listed the formal “Thank You’s” she needs to make:

* Instead of an edible gift, Cranfield studio requested a financial contribution towards the purchase of equipment. To fulfil this request, chair asked Cranfield to issue an invoice, so that it can be paid directly from Mercian funds.

**ACTION:** Laura to chase Cranfield for invoice (re: financial gift)

* Nina (student contributor) – Thank you card and amazon vouchers via email
* Ant (keynote speaker) – Thank you card and bottle of red wine as gesture
* Ruth Houghton – Thank you card
* Tim Wales and Karyn - Thank you cards

**ACTION:** Chair to purchase and send thank you cards and gifts as applicable.

**ACTION:** Deborah to include examples of the positive feedback received in the Thank You cards to Ant Brewerton, Nina, and others as applicable.

# 22/90 Recordings and slides

Natalie has uploaded all the submitted slides to the Mercian Conference microsite and has requested the help of the conference group to obtain the outstanding 5 presentations and/or recordings.

**ACTION:** Deborah to email Ant Brewerton to obtain permission for his slides to be uploaded and request a copy of the slides.

**ACTION:** Catherine and Funmike to obtain the outstanding presentations if possible.

**ACTION:** Ruth to liaise with Cranfield studio to obtain recordings of the keynote speech, Sponsor presentation and Round-Table discussions, and then send to Natalie.

**ACTION:** Natalie to upload final recordings and slides to website as appropriate.

# 22/91 2023 Conference membership

As part of the feedback process, delegates were asked to volunteer to join the 2023 conference planning team. From the feedback received so far, four delegates expressed an interest in joining the team.

**ACTION:** Laura to reach out to those who volunteered for next year’s conference planning team, asking them to gain consent from their respective Line Mangers / Library Directors.

**ACTION:** Laura to put a shout out on the mailing list asking for more volunteers to join the Conference Planning Group.

Group discussion on the impending changes to the Conference Group membership for 2023:

* It was agreed that Laura (current Vice Chair) will step up to Chair.
* It was noted that Ruth Houghton has previously shown an interest in becoming Vice Chair for 2023 conference. There have been no further expressions of interest to become Vice Chair, and group agreed that (if she is still interested) Ruth would progress to Vice Chair.
* Catherine and Andrea have previously expressed an interest in remaining part of the Conference Group.

**ACTION:** Laura to confirm that Ruth is still interested in progressing to Vice Chair and that Catherine and Andrea wish to continue their membership.

* Deborah (current Chair) will be stepping down from November 2022 and requested to be removed from the mailing list after this time.
* Jo-Anne (current Steering Group sponsor) may be stepping down from January 2023, correlating with the time at which she will be replaced on the Steering Group. Further discussion on this is due to take place at the next Steering Group meeting in November 2022.
* Matt stated he is happy to commit to another year as a member of the Conference Group (as current MSDG sponsor) but is not sure if any other members of the Staff Development Group will want to take his place. To be discussed at next MSDG meeting in October 2022. Group collectively discussed the benefit of keeping the expertise of both Matt and Jo-Anne, as the longest standing members of the Conference Group.
* Group agreed that membership should include a representative from the host venue for an in-person conference.

Jo-Anne noted that the Steering Group have previously made the decision to alternate hosting the annual conference between University of Birmingham and University of Nottingham, as they are both reasonably central and accessible for the largest number of delegates to attend in-person. As the last in-person conference was at Nottingham, the next in-person conference is likely to be hosted at Birmingham. Group briefly discussed facilities at the Birmingham campus that may offer enough space to host a large conference, either in-person or hybrid. Suggestions included the conference centre and learning zone next to library.

Group discussed possibility of requesting further and wider feedback from all institutions on this matter, because general consensus on delegate feedback appears to favour the online format for ease of attendance, despite the general criticism being a lack of networking. Group discussed the possibility of a hybrid conference but noted that this created much more work for the conference group, both in terms of pre-planning and technical support. One option suggested was to host the conference in-person but simultaneously stream it online. This would require extra moderation to sort technical issues and to field any online questions/input.

Group briefly discussed whether there would be a need to limit delegate numbers per institution, due to the hosting venue’s maximum capacity and the cost of Mercian Collaboration catering for such a large number of delegates. These decisions would depend on the venue and format selected.

# 22/91 Feedback

Group briefly recapped positive feedback from the **36 responses** received so far:

* Good variety of sessions
* Keynote speaker received lots of positive feedback
* Having a student perspective was very useful – lots of positive feedback on Nina
* Positive feedback about the Cranfield studio setup
* Round table session was very well attended with approx. 50 people watching the discussion at the close of the conference.
* Pre-event info was good, but room for improvement
* Conference booking process was good
* Feedback on the platform stated it was excellent
* Views on the time allocations were overwhelmingly positive
* Overall, the feedback was largely positive

Negative feedback included:

* Lack of networking opportunities
* Accessibility requires improvement. E.g., transcripts from discussions in breakout rooms
* Suggestion for longer Q&A sessions

It was noted that feedback relating to the format of future conferences suggested that the delegates prefer to attend online.

**ACTION**: Jo-Anne to discuss the future conference format at next steering group meeting. (At this meeting the steering group will also discuss themes and whether the next conference will be hosted online or in-person)

## Feedback incentives

As an incentive for feedback, the conference group has offered a prize draw of £50 worth of book vouchers.

Group discussed ways to purchase the prizes, as there is no way to draw on Sconul funds to make such ad hoc payments. Therefore, it was decided that Newman University would purchase £200 (4 x £50) National Book vouchers and claim the money back from Sconul. Permission to do this, was sought from Chris Porter, Mercian Chair ahead of the meeting.

**ACTION**: Natalie to purchase emailable book vouchers on Newman University Library budget and arrange to claim the funds back from Sconul via expenses claim.

Group briefly discussed how to get around this issue next year, but it was agreed that if next year’s conference is in-person, there would be no need to incentivize the feedback, as feedback session could be built into the conference activities.

In the interest of fairness, it was agreed that members of the Conference group and Steering group should be EXCLUDED from the prize draw.

## Feedback analysis report

It was agreed that once the keynote slides/recording are uploaded to the Mercian website, a message will be sent to all delegates, with a final push for delegates to complete the feedback form.

**ACTION**: Laura to email delegates to inform that recordings/slides are available and requesting more feedback.

After more feedback is received, Natalie, with the help of the Conference Group, plans to make a start of on writing the Feedback Analysis report.

In the meantime, Natalie informed the Conference Group that she has made a good start of the Delegate Analysis report - a draft copy was sent to the group prior to today’s meeting. Natalie requested assistance from the Conference Group to complete the report.

**ACTION:** Natalie to send Jo-Anne the list of seniority for her to help sort out seniority into predefined categories.

**ACTION:** Deborah to ask Cranfield how many people attended the conference overall. It is believed that they can pull a Zoom report that gives delegate data.

**ACTION:** Natalie to send reports to Conference Group for them to proof-read and make changes as appropriate.

Group briefly discussed the findings of the Delegate Analysis in relation to which institutions did not engage with this year’s conference; This is likely to be discussed in more detail at the Directors Board meeting in November.

# 22/92 AOB

The conference team thanked Deborah and Laura for their efforts as Conference Group Chair and Vice Chair respectively and commented that the 2022 conference was successful as the most attended Mercian conference to date.

Deborah reiterated that she would remain in post as conference Group chair until November, at which point, she will hand over to Laura as her successor and step down.

**ACTION:** Laura to send Doodle poll for next Conference Group meeting – likely to be in Mid November (after the Directors Board meeting).