



Conference Group Meeting Minutes

Friday 27th October 2023 @ 10:00 - Online

Summary of New or Outstanding Actions

ACTION: *Katie to send the list of attendees at the Mercian conference this year to Ruth J. This includes whether attendees were CG members, speaker, sponsor, or delegate.*

ACTION: *Anyone wanting to put themselves forward as Vice Chair should contact Laura and Cath about this by email as soon as possible.*

ACTION: *ALL to encourage new members to considering joining the Conference Group.*

ACTION: *Cath and Ruth J to put out a call for new members to join the CG via a news item and message to the Mercian email list.*

ACTION: *Continuing CG members to let Cath know whether they are intending to stay in their current role or would prefer to move to a different role.*

ACTION: *Chair and Vice Chair to confirm roles for existing and new CG members as soon as possible.*

ACTION: *All CG members to share summaries of timelines and pressure points for their roles as soon as possible. This is a particularly urgent action for CG members who are stepping down from their roles.*

ACTION: *Ruth J to check back through documentation from previous years to see if there is any useful information on a conference planning timeline.*

ACTION: *Laura to circulate draft Conference Feedback Analysis report to CG members by the end of the day.*

ACTION: *ALL to review draft Conference Feedback Analysis report and send any comments to Laura ASAP.*

ACTION: *Ruth J and Cath to produce a news item the celebrate the Mercian 2023 Conference, including main points from the feedback.*

1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair welcomed the group to the meeting.

Present: Laura Newman (Chair, Loughborough), Ruth Houghton (Vice Chair, Cranfield), Cath Robertson (Birmingham), Matt Cunningham (MSDG liaison, Loughborough), Chris Bradford (Warwick), Katie Abranson (Cranfield), Dave Palmer (Aston), Paul Cavanagh (Nottingham), Jodie Heap (Staffordshire), Michelle Mayer (Coventry), Andrea Kellett (Birmingham), Grace Troth (BCU), Ruth Jenkins (Mercian Collaboration Executive Officer)

Apologies: Kerry O'Brien (Loughborough), Sue Ackermann (Steering Group Sponsor, Nottingham)

2. Outstanding actions from 2023 conference

Laura started by saying thank you to everyone involved in planning and delivering such a successful conference, and Laura was thanked by everyone.

Delegate feedback survey (Laura) – first draft report completed - see item 5 for a fuller update.

Delegate analysis (Ruth J) – started work on this. Would find it helpful to have a breakdown of which delegates were CG members, speakers, or Sponsors.

ACTION: *Katie to send the list of attendees at the Mercian conference this year to Ruth J. This includes whether attendees were CG members, speaker, sponsor, or delegate.*

3. Group membership and roles

3.a. Chair/Vice Chair

Laura Newman (2023 Chair, Loughborough) is stepping down and will be leaving her current role at Loughborough in November.

Ruth Houghton (2023 Vice Chair, Cranfield) is also stepping down, so will not be taking over as Chair.

It was agreed that Cath Robertson should take over as Chair with immediate effect.

We need someone to take over as Vice Chair, and this needs to be an existing member of the Conference Group so that they have sufficient experience.

Laura invited colleagues who are planning to remain on the CG to put themselves forward as Vice Chair.

Ruth H would be happy to brief anyone considering the Vice Chair role.

Vice Chair was not in itself a particularly onerous responsibility, but the expectation would be that the Vice Chair would become the Chair for the following year.

ACTION: *Anyone wanting to put themselves forward as Vice Chair should contact Laura and Cath about this by email as soon as possible.*

3.a. Membership of CG

Conference Group members and roles are listed on the following webpages:

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

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

The following CG members confirmed that they would be stepping down with immediate effect:

- Chris Bradford (Warwick) - Programme Co-ordinator
- Dave Palmer (Aston) - Programme Co-ordinator
- Katie Abranson (Cranfield) - Delegate liaison
- Andrea Kellett (Birmingham) – Venue co-ordinator



This means that have 6 people in total stepping down from the CG at this point. Everyone was thanked for doing such a fantastic job of this year's conference and previous conferences.

We need to encourage people to replace the vacant roles on the conference group. This is a fun and interesting opportunity, and some previous CG members have found it helped with their career progression.

Fortunately, there are a few people who have already expressed an interest in joining the CG, whether via the delegate feedback form or via informal discussion.

There will also be others who could be persuaded to consider joining the CG.

ACTION: ALL to encourage new members to considering joining the Conference Group.

ACTION: Cath and Ruth J to put out a call for new members to join the CG via a news item and message to the Mercian email list.

The following individuals would continue to be members of the CG:

- Cath Robertson (Birmingham) – incoming Chair
- Paul Cavanagh (Nottingham)
- Jodie Heap (Staffordshire)
- Michelle Mayer (Coventry)
- Grace Troth (BCU)
- Kerry O'Brien (Loughborough)

The CG also includes the following Ex Officio members:

- Ruth Jenkins (Mercian Collaboration Executive Officer)
- Matt Cunningham (MSDG liaison, Loughborough)
- Sue Ackermann (incoming Steering Group Sponsor, Nottingham)

3.a. Roles on the Conference Group

There is a guide to Conference Group Roles and Responsibilities available here:

<https://www.merciancollaboration.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/Conference%20Group-Roles-V3.0.pdf>

We want to ensure that CG members are allocated to roles, with two people allocated to each role to ensure continuity and avoid single points of failure.

Continuing CG members may wish to move role and would have 'first dibs' on any vacant roles.

- **Communications & Programme Coordinator**
Both Chris and Dave are stepping down. Grace expressed an interest in doing this. We also need to find a second person, possibly a new CG member.
- **Delegate Liaison**
Katie is stepping down, so we need to identify someone to replace her. Kerry is likely to continue in the Delegate Liaison role (tbc).

- **Speaker Liaison**
If Grace switches to Communications & Programme Coordinator then we need to identify someone else who can take on Speaker Liaison. Michelle is likely to continue in the Speaker Liaison role (tbc).
- **Sponsor Coordinator**
Jodie is likely to continue in the Sponsor Coordinator role. Paul may be interested in moving to a different role.
- **Venue Coordinator**
We need two new venue coordinators, because Cath will be our new Chair, and Andrea is stepping down from the CG. It would be helpful if at least one of the venue coordinators could be employed by one of the universities based in or near Nottingham as we are looking to hold the 2024 conference in Nottingham.

ACTION: Continuing CG members to let Cath know whether they are intending to stay in their current role or would prefer to move to a different role.

ACTION: Chair and Vice Chair to confirm roles for existing and new CG members as soon as possible.

4. Role summaries/Gantt chart/pressure points etc.

Laura asked all CG members to provide role summaries of timelines and pressure points for their roles. This could be used to provide new and incoming CG members with better information about the timeline and tasks required of each role throughout the year running up to the next conference.

ACTION: All CG members to share summaries of timelines and pressure points for their roles as soon as possible. This is a particularly urgent action for CG members who are stepping down from their roles.

ACTION: Ruth J to check back through documentation from previous years to see if there is any useful information on a conference planning timeline.

5. Survey feedback

Laura gave a verbal report on the conference feedback, promising the draft written report would be shared with CG members very soon.

Laura thanked Ruth H and Cath for their help preparing the report and asked other CG members for their comments, particularly on the recommendations.

Once complete, the Conference Feedback Analysis report will be shared with the Mercian Steering Group and Directors. This will inform planning for next year, and the conference theme for Mercian 2024.

There was lots of positive feedback, including

- Keynote Speaker
- Good to be back in person.
- Helpfulness of CG on the day
- Venue and helpfulness of venue staff

- Areas for improvement/suggestions for what we could do better next year:
 - Clearer signage needed, especially for breakout sessions and catering.
 - Would be helpful to have semi structured networking/conversation starters, particularly for conference delegates who are less confident in starting conversations.
 - Would be nice to have some arts and crafts or other activities available to try out on the day.

Sponsor feedback:

- Paul and Jodie were great!
- Want to sponsor again next year
- Awareness of Mercian amongst sponsors and potential sponsors has grown.

ACTION: *Laura to circulate draft Conference Feedback Analysis report to CG members by the end of the day.*

ACTION: *ALL to review draft Conference Feedback Analysis report and send any comments to Laura ASAP.*

ACTION: *Ruth J and Cath to produce a news item the celebrate the Mercian 2023 Conference, including main points from the feedback.*

6. Date of next meeting

There is normally a CG meeting in January to start planning the next conference. We will try to get the date confirmed as soon as possible, bearing in mind that we do not know who the new members are going to be yet.

ACTION: *Chair to send out poll to find a CG meeting date in January 2024*