

Inclusive Turntaking in Academic Events

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About this document:

Our goal is to help meeting participants who have problems speaking up to be heard at the meeting. This applies to a whole range of people, and to causes including (but not limited to) personality traits, seniority and gender. In the end, this should lead to more effective meetings benefitting from many different points of view

The problem of “making yourself heard at a meeting” has many dimensions related to speech and spoken interaction, such as voice quality, turn-taking behaviour, and floor management. We are a group of women working in speech and interactive systems, who have studied these phenomena as part of our research. We have also experienced these problems first hand during many academic meetings (as panel chair, bystander and participant).

Event Leader Instruction Sheet

This document is intended to support each and every person running a meeting, panel, discussion group, session or other event at a conference or workshop in achieving inclusion in their event. It gives guidance as to what actions can productively be taken in the event of a violation of the principles of inclusion.

- Have more than one person run the event if possible and assure that at least one is watching for inclusion issues.
- Have all people running events read and agree to this document on inclusion
- Specifically: **Decide and Act.**
- **Decide** on the rules beforehand
 - The rules may depend on how many participants there are, and whether the participants are ALL known to be cooperative – if you do not know, be sure you have rules that enable you to take control
 - Do the organizers control the microphones (in virtual meetings) or do the participants (they should be able to mute someone if they need to)?
 - Will you use raising hands to see who wants to talk – one of the organizers must be monitoring this
 - Will you use the chat window - writing “comment, please in a chat window that one of the organizers is watching
 - Be sure to announce the rules at the beginning of the event and follow through with them

- **Act** immediately to shut down any act of harassment, discrimination, ethics violation, etc.
 - Specifically, (listed by the offense and then the action you should take)
 - In general, try to call on people who have not spoken for a while to get their opinion
 - If a person tries to speak but is not recognized by the other attendees
 - Call on that person, saying, “x has been trying to say something”
 - Look for people who are trying to get your attention and call on them
 - If one person talks over another when the latter is trying to speak - everyone should be allowed to finish what they have to say. Please note that the software allocates the audio channel to the person speaking - if two people try to speak simultaneously using a normal modal voice quality, the male is going to have an advantage of $\sim 6\text{dB}$.
 - Immediately intervene and say, “Y, please let X finish what X has to say”
 - If a person speaks for an unnaturally long amount of time in a manner that hinders the participation of others
 - Immediately interrupt and tell the speaker that others must be given time to speak now “and we will let you speak again after the others have had a chance to speak”
 - If needed, mute the offender’s microphone
 - If a person unreasonably attacks another person
 - Stop this immediately by pointing out that it is offensive, harassment or unreasonable.
 - Say specifically why this is so.
 - If a person addresses another person disrespectfully, for example, saying that their research has no value
 - Intervene immediately by stating that this is offensive and say specifically what the offense is
 - If you are in charge of the speaking order for a set of participants and you know that one of them speaks for longer than their share and/or has any of the behaviors mentioned above
 - Try to avoid inviting people who are known offenders. They may learn that they will need to change their behavior if they want to be included in your events
 - If you must include such a person, put that person’s presentation at the end of the group of speakers.

Bystander Instruction Sheet

This document is intended for those who are participating in events so that they can act when they see non-inclusive behavior, thus making the event more inclusive. It can be posted on a relevant tab on the event website.

If you see behavior that is limiting the participation of some individuals, or is harassing them or offending them in some way, here is what you can do as a bystander:

- You should try to call attention to the person who would like to speak as soon as you possibly can.
- Please note that the software allocates the audio channel to the person speaking - if two people try to speak simultaneously using a normal modal voice quality, the male is going to have an advantage of $\sim 6\text{dB}$. So you should wait until there is a short silence to intervene
- If possible, tell everyone why you are intervening. Explaining your actions helps some people learn the reasoning behind your action and this may encourage them to do the same in the future.
- If you, yourself, are being interrupted, please set an example by saying “I am speaking, please let me finish”.