

## Dear competitive session chair

Thank you for agreeing to serve as an in-person competitive session chair at the upcoming AIB-UKI conference. The participation of yourself and other volunteers is critical for the conference's success. The purpose of this briefing is to offer suggestions on how to chair your session, based on the experience of past meetings.

Session chairs are particularly important as they function both as chairs and discussants, under the title of 'Session Chair'. Some sessions have dedicated 'Discussants'. While the session chair is not expected to act as a pure discussant, it helps if you can initiate discussion and provide some integrative or manuscript-specific comments following the session presentations. This can be done effectively by directing the conversation to common themes that cut across the individual presentations while encouraging the audience to formulate their own questions.

Below are some key recommendations:

### 1 Get acquainted ahead of time with the people in your session

As session chair, you should contact everyone in your session well in advance of the conference. For a listing of the participants in your session, please see the conference website: <https://www.conftool.org/aibuki2024/sessions.php>

Please check the date and time of your session and make sure you save it in your calendar. As a registered ConfTool user, when logged in, you can save the session under 'My Agenda' and/or export it to your mobile calendar.

### 2 Encourage the circulation of the papers in your session ahead of time

Please encourage everyone in your session to circulate the papers to each other and read them before the conference, at the very latest, on the flight to the conference. This way, each participant can attempt, in their presentation, to link their papers to the other presentations for a more cohesive and stimulating session. Separate guidelines to the authors for all the sessions are available at the AIB-UKI conference website <https://www.aib-uki.org/conference.html>, but feel free to email them any additional or specific instructions, as the sessions do differ in length, numbers of participants, purpose and content.

### **3 Order of presenters**

Unless there is a problem, please keep to the order of papers, as outlined in the official programme <https://www.conftool.org/aibuki2024/sessions.php>. We ask that each presenter remain in the session in which they are presenting for the entire scheduled time, in courtesy to the other speakers and to ensure a more coherent session.

### **4 Manage the session time**

All sessions are one hour and thirty minutes (90 minutes). Most sessions have 4 presenters, some have 5 presenters. If each presenter prepares to speak for 10 minutes and indeed takes only 15 minutes max., there will be 15 minutes left for discussion. The session chair may offer integrative comments at the end of the presentations, some of the sessions have dedicated discussants who will kick-start the discussion. Please give the audience sufficient time to ask questions as well.

Therefore, for competitive sessions a good general rule of thumb:

- Five papers: 12 minutes per paper
- Four papers: 15 minutes per paper
- Three papers: 20 minutes per paper

Timing will be tight. Please enforce the time limits we have proposed. Do not allow a speaker to run on and take time away from the speakers that follow, or from the feedback that they themselves will receive. Please avoid a situation in which the session time has expired, but your session has not ended yet (the session will time out automatically). Watch the clock to ensure that everyone gets their fair share of the time and that the session can be concluded in good order.

Carry your watch with you or use your mobile phone timer and two or three single sheets of paper. You can flag up when speakers have 5 minutes left, when they have 2 minutes left, and when their time is up. Tell the speakers ahead of time to watch for these sheets, and that we absolutely expect them to stop when the STOP sign is held up. When in doubt about the time, err in favour of Q&A from the audience.

Finally, if a presenter becomes defensive about the comments they receive, try to intervene and move the discussion in another direction. The presenter's defensiveness adds little to the discussion and only reduces the time available for feedback to the authors, which is the purpose of the session. If they wish to continue the discussion, invite them to do so informally following the session or during one of the breaks.

### **5 How to start a session**

As chair, it is up to you to start the session. There are two basic tasks:

- Start on time. This can be challenging, especially when participants may arrive late. But it is important to start on time, even if others join the session late.
- Introduce the topic and the speakers. The whole introduction should take no more than 2 minutes. Aim to set an informal first-name tone from the start of the session.

### **6 Audio-visual equipment**

Computers and computer projectors will be available in all rooms. Therefore, authors need to bring their presentations in the form of a PowerPoint file on a USB Memory Stick. Authors have

been told to divide the number of minutes they have by two to work out how many slides they can manage in the time available (so no more than 7 or 8 slides). We have advised them of this, but it wouldn't hurt if you were to remind them.

## **7 Other suggestions**

Meet the participants of your session 10 minutes BEFORE the session starts so that everyone can be introduced, the equipment can be checked, handouts can be distributed, and most importantly of all so that presentations can be uploaded onto the computer in the room ahead of the start of the session, to avoid having to do this in the time of the session itself. You may wish to also use this time to remind them of the time limits they have, and what your role will be in maintaining order in the session.

It also helps to give your session members your email/mobile telephone number where you can be reached should an emergency occur. If that unwelcome emergency does occur please let your session members know as soon as possible, and make other plans. Please be prepared for the unexpected!

## **8 No shows**

AIB-UKI follows the AIB world “no show” policy, to maintain the integrity and quality of the conference. This policy requires that at least one author of each manuscript listed in your session must register, attend, and present at the designated session. You can find more about this policy at <https://www.aib.world/events/2022/resources/policies/>. Therefore, we would like to ask for your help in informing us if a paper was not presented at your session. At the end of your session, please report any “no-show”s via an email to [aibuki2024@aston.ac.uk](mailto:aibuki2024@aston.ac.uk).

Similarly, if for any reason you cannot present your paper, please inform both your session chair and the AIB-UKI admin team in advance of your session.

We hope you find the above recommendations useful and look forward to seeing you in Birmingham!

AIB-UKI 2024 Conference Organisers  
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<https://www.aib-uki.org/conference.html>  
<https://www.conftool.org/aibuki2024>