

Academic Conferences

Once a scientist or researcher conducts their research and writes a paper, all that remains is to expose their findings to the scientific world. Academic conferences provide a platform to accomplish this and serve as a means for researchers to present and discuss their work through a series of presentations.¹ They go by many different names, including research conference, academic congress, academic meeting, or symposium.¹ These conferences are an interactive form of scholarly communication, as they allow researchers to exchange information and findings with professionals in their respective fields. After presentations, members of the audience are free to share opinions, reactions, and feedback and ask the presenter questions.²

Academic conferences can range from small meetings between researchers to large global events. Smaller or specialist conferences often maintain a sharp focus on specific topics. In comparison, larger panels are more general and interdisciplinary, meaning they bring together professionals from various backgrounds and unique perspectives.¹ Also, the types of meetings can be further subdivided into professional and undergraduate—professional conferences gear towards professors rather than students. Of course, some undergraduate students will be present, but solely as co-authors contributing to a larger piece of work.³ Undergraduate conferences are open primarily to university students, and more oriented towards the workshop style, discussed below. Undergraduate students usually lack much of the necessary experience to be a successful researcher, so these conferences provide career and research advice through interactive and engaging material.³

Currently, conferences are to adapt to the online COVID-19 world in web conferences. Some advantages of these types of meetings are easy accessibility and the negation of travel-related costs.²

Types of Presentations

Academic conferences typically have packed schedules filled with several presentations. These presentations provide an excellent opportunity for scientific researchers to discuss their latest work, leading to new developments and providing inspiration for like-minded academics.¹ In larger conferences, multiple presentations often run simultaneously due to the number of topics to cover. A single panel typically consists of a wide variety of exhibits, of which the main types are described below:

1. **Keynote Sessions:** These sessions are run by speakers that are specifically placed to inspire and set the tone for the entire conference, and they are usually scheduled at the beginning of the event.¹ These speakers are professionals or scholars in fields that align with the overall theme of the conference.²
2. **Panel Sessions:** These sessions are usually more of a discussion or debate-style presentation between multiple researchers. The audience will also have ample opportunity to pose questions to the researchers regarding their work or opinions. Panel sessions are designed to provide a

platform for the exchange of viewpoints between the panellists, who are typically experts in different areas of the topic being discussed.¹

3. **Oral Sessions:** Academic conferences almost always have oral sessions, in which several presenters will speak on their research and findings for a short amount of time, followed by an audience question and answer portion.¹
4. **Poster Sessions:** These are the most common sessions in scientific academic conferences. Prior to the conference, presenters would have created a physical or digital poster to display their research to the audience.¹ Multiple poster sessions can take place simultaneously, and they allow for close examination and interpretation by the audience. The audience is free to engage in dialogue with the presenter after the research has been introduced, as the poster will usually be enough for the audience to understand the key points and discuss the information with the presenter.¹
5. **Workshop Sessions:** This special type of session is targeted towards new researchers, usually undergraduate students, looking to gain both advice and experience. Workshops serve as a means to educate budding researchers on subjects that will be useful in future research endeavours.¹

Reasons to Attend

Academic conferences are the perfect opportunity to present research to experts in similar fields and advise how to strengthen work. They also allow academics to stay up-to-date with the latest findings and trends in their areas of interest.¹ Along with this, attending conferences is extremely useful for students and new researchers. By following these prestigious events, students can be immersed in other researchers' work, and professionals will surround them. Conferences allow students to build valuable relationships with professionals that can facilitate future research and enable students to gain helpful experience if they are interested in applying to a graduate school.³

Submitting Work

Researchers who are interested in presenting their work at academic conferences are required to submit a short abstract of their research.² Please refer to our guide titled "[Abstracts: What They Are & How To Write Them](#)" for further information on how to write a useful abstract.

Conferences will put out notifications called a "Call for Abstracts," They will specify a period for abstract submissions.⁴ The conference committee will ultimately decide whether or not a particular abstract is of the expected quality and fits within the conference theme's scope. It is typical for the novel or unusual submissions to be accepted, as they tend to inspire opportunities for new research avenues.⁴ For students interested in presenting at a conference, they should contact professors or other faculty members at their institution, as they will most likely be familiar with any local opportunities to submit

abstracts. If students know of any organizations that run regular conferences, signing up for their newsletters and checking their websites must stay on top of deadlines.⁴

In terms of choosing a conference to attend, for first-time participants, it is smarter to submit an abstract to a smaller local forum in which the selection process is less harsh. Once a student has acquired substantial experience, larger international conferences are a great option as they are usually more prestigious due to the amount of academics that attend and the funding required to hold the event.⁴ When attending international conferences, personal financing may be an issue. However, many universities or other institutions usually have an option for their students to apply for funding. If budget is an issue, local conferences are much more feasible to attend.³

References

1. McCurry, D. (2020, November 24). *A Complete Guide to Academic Conferences*. <https://www.exordo.com/blog/guide-to-academic-conferences/>
2. *Academic conference*. (2019, November 03). https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Academic_conference
3. Buddie, A. M. (2016, September). *Academic conferences 101: What they are, why go, how to present and how to pay for it all*. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2016/09/academic-conferences>.
4. *How to Get Accepted to an Academic Conference*. Conference Monkey. (2018, October 8). <https://conferencemonkey.org/advice/how-to-get-accepted-to-an-academic-conference-813610>.