

How do I...

MAKE THE MOST OF CONFERENCES

CHOOSE THE RIGHT CONFERENCE

There are many factors to consider when choosing which conference to attend. Which conferences are the most prestigious? When and where is it being held? And, perhaps sadly, how much does it cost? Do you want to attend one with a larger and usually broader topic focus (these may have more workshop and training opportunities, but you may find it harder to integrate)? Or do you want to attend a smaller more niche conference? Is there a research group that you particularly want to meet? Which conferences do they usually attend?

Timing may be one of the most critical deciding factors: go too early and you might not have much to report but leave it too late and you might miss out on useful feedback and important networking opportunities that would enhance your research.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Obviously, you should prepare & dry-run your conference presentation with enough time to allow you to obtain and implement feedback. However, there are several other things you should consider doing before you arrive at your conference.

Plan your conference schedule

Many conferences have multiple sessions, numerous presentations, seminars, keynotes, and workshops. These often run concurrently. Usually the conference program is provided before the start. Spend time looking through it and highlighting the presentations you want to attend. On the day, you'll know where you need to be.

Organise to meet others

If you're hoping to connect with certain delegates at the conference, read their latest publications and social media posts. Contact them a week or more before the conference and suggest a time to meet, e.g. morning tea on Day 2.

Connect on Twitter

Follow the conversations on the conference twitter hashtag and follow the posts of certain delegates. This will help you prepare your initial questions or conversation. You can also engage in the Twitter conversations in advance.

AT THE CONFERENCE

The real point of attending conferences is **to network**. The talks and posters are the adverts or conversations starters for discussions outside the official sessions.

Be approachable

At coffee and lunch breaks, put your mobile phone away, employ subtle stalking techniques to put yourself near someone you'd like to have a conversation with, but do be careful not to latch onto one person.

Follow and engage with the conference #hashtag.

Take breaks

Conferences are exhausting. Allow time to recharge your energy levels so you can maintain engaged and intellectual conversations.

Include action items

Take notes during presentations. Include action items for later follow up. Highlight action items with an icon like a checkbox or big red arrow.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

Reread your conference notes and complete your thoughts. Follow up on your action items.

Follow-up on any connections you made by email or a LinkedIn invite. Remind them who you are and thank them for the interesting conversation.

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How Do I...? Guidelines are produced by HDR Learning Skills for HDR and MRes candidates. They provide succinct, user-friendly advice consistent with best practice and MQ Policy and Procedures at time of writing.

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