

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR SESSION CHAIRS AND DISCUSSANTS

What if there is both a chair and discussant assigned to the session?

The session chair would act as an emcee, manage logistics such as introductions and time keeping, while the discussant would guide the content of the session.

How should I keep the presenters on time?

There are numerous ways to politely keep presenters on time. You could hold up your fingers or use a piece of paper to provide 5-, 3-, and 1-minute warnings and/or use an audible timer (perhaps on a smart phone). You may also want to stress the importance of staying on time as a housekeeping item before the session starts.

What is the best format for the sessions?

As chair/discussant, there are various ways you could run the session. We recommend allowing each speaker to present for 10 minutes and holding questions to the end to ensure each presenter gets equal time to discuss his/her paper.

What if there are more than 4 papers in my session?

It is important to review your session details in advance. If you have more than 4 papers in your session, you will need to adjust the time of each presentation accordingly.

What if the author/presenter told the chair/discussant they weren't attending the session in advance?

If that is the case, it is important to maintain the same order of presentations and skip that discussion. You may also adjust the time each presenter is provided, providing them a few additional minutes to discuss their paper.

What if the author/presenter doesn't show up?

If the author/presenter did NOT give you advance notice, it is still important to maintain the same order of presentations and just skip that discussion. You may choose to adjust the time of each presenter or maintain the standard 10 minutes and just allow for more time at the end of the session for discussion and Q&A.

If an author/presenter can't attend, should I change the order of presentations?

No, the order of presentations should not be changed. Instead, maintain the same order and just skip that presentation. The order of the presentations is published in the program and attendees may choose to attend part of a session based upon the order in which the papers are expected to be presented.

What if the paper is not available online and I cannot review it prior to the session?

It is possible that the author chose to remove the paper from the online program. If this is the case, you may email the author directly for the paper, explaining that your role as chair/discussant requires you to review and understand the overall theme of the paper in advance. (The author's email is available through the online program, as long as you are signed in.)

What if the conversation goes over the allocated time?

This is often a concern for the chair/discussant. However, in your role it is imperative to politely inform the group that you need to move to the next presentation. You may also choose to remind the group that questions and further discussions may be held after the presentation but that it is important to give equal speaking time to each presenter.

What if the audience is argumentative?

Although this is not common it is a risk when you have a group of different personalities and various perspectives on topics. Politely intervene and recommend to take the conversation outside of the session.

What if the audience is not responsive?

Although unlikely, this could be a possibility as well. In promoting conversation, try to avoid yes or no questions. Below are some sample questions to encourage the audience's interaction:

- What motivated your interest in this subject?
- If you had a two-minute pitch to sell this idea, what would it be?
- Can you identify any pitfalls in the argument or improvements to strengthen it?
- What ideas do you have to help the author get published?
- Ask if the audience can identify a specific theme.

Should I ask the audience to help lead the session?

This is not suggested as you may not be prepared for the response you will receive. Instead, if you get stuck, try to ask open-ended questions about a common theme or topic you noticed throughout the presentations.

What if there is a paper that is designated as a “Best Paper” on the program, should I highlight it?

You may identify that it is designated as a “best paper” in a positive manner but try not to detract from the other papers within the session.

Can an author presenting in a session also be designated as the chair/discussant of the session?

Yes, this is a common practice for many divisions. In this case, it is important to be prepared in advance for the session and ensure you provide equal time to all presenters, including yourself.

What if no one is prepared for the session, doesn't read the papers in advance, or you can't reach the author prior to the session to review his/her paper?

Unfortunately, this type of situation can occur for various reasons. If you find that is the case for your session, you can always ask the presenter to provide a small introduction of the paper, which would provide a brief background on the topic.