Rethinking Conferences

A guide to hybrid conferencing – sustainable and inclusive

Please note: you are reading the digital version of our guidelines. For a clear-text version, optimised for text-to-speech software, please download the version available [here](#).

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed a multitude of aspects in our daily lives. In academia, as elsewhere, one significant change concerns how we communicate our research to each other. Prior to March 2020, small and large conferences were organised around the globe, offering junior and senior researchers the possibility to present their work, discuss their research and network with each other. With international travel restrictions as well as limits on the size of events in place, such gatherings were no longer a viable option. Instead, online conferences replaced the in-person events and were also introduced into our teaching and the general outreach to a broader public. With restrictions easing, we are now at an inflexion point: some in-person conferences resume as before the pandemic, with more and more being planned and scheduled in the upcoming months.

With this guide, we want to offer an alternative to simply going back to the old 'normal'. Of course, there were various downsides to the switch to online conferences. Many complained about insufficient tech support, missing out on networking opportunities, and more. However, considering remote conferences as a serious option also offers opportunities. The most basic reason to oppose going back to normal is, of course, the sustainability aspect. Large scale conferences are estimated to have a carbon footprint that is about 3'000 times bigger compared to an online-alternative (Cohnitz *et al.* 2020, 148).

However, there is more to be said for rethinking our way of communicating our research than 'just' the environment. After all, previous conferences were not ideal. Events were practically limited to local attendees or those who could afford travel costs, but even for those the venues themselves were oftentimes inaccessible. Conferences were often organised in ways that prevented disabled people from participating in equal standing as their disabilities were not accommodated and networking sessions reinforced existing power structures rather than helping junior researchers to get a foothold in academia.

With all of this in mind, we suggest hybrid conferences in which locals can convene physically with others joining remotely as the preferred mode of conferencing. This guide is a step-by-step guide to organise such a conference that is environment-friendly, inclusive

and accessible. The guide is organised in three main parts, each divided into sub-topics, reflecting the chronology in which decisions need to be made in a conference organisation's timeline. The first part focuses on organising and deciding on the basic structures and conditions of an event: We look at choice of topic, considerations regarding the invitation of (keynote) speakers, choice of venue and funding options. Our main focus in this part is on inclusivity and the ways in which a hybrid format can help increase it – from the early stages of planning on. (We assume that the organisers are aware what size and format of an event (workshop, conference, parallel sessions, …) they want to organise.) In the second part, we look at calls for speakers and the reviewing process of both paper and abstract submissions. Our main focus here, too, is on inclusivity, and its interaction with hybridity and sustainability. The third part of our guidelines concerns organising a hybrid conference on site. While the first two sections are structured as a timeline and have a checklist at the end, the third part is a hands-on guide of how to take your hybrid conference to the next level. Our main aim is to ignite a change of paradigm. Hybrid conferences too often are understood as in-person-conferences *plus* some online participation as a (often technologically overwhelming) add-on. But in order to use hybridity not only as a more sustainable but also more inclusive mode of conferencing, we need to change our focus away from in-person participation and instead towards blending online and in-person participation such that hybrid events can become a joyful and worthwhile experience – for *all* participants! Among other things, we discuss technological issues and how to rethink presentation modes, chairing, structures of Q&As, and breaks between talks. While hybridity offers great opportunities to increase accessibility – for instance, hybrid conferences allow (just like online only conferences) for talks and Q&A sessions to be captured and captioned –, one of the biggest challenges is to create enough opportunities for networking – especially across the online/in-person divide. We discuss some ideas in the last section.

While we are aware that there are many more aspects to be considered (and we welcome any and all feedback on this), we hope that this guide provides a starting point for a more mindful organisation of conferences in our profession!

In putting together this guide, we have benefitted immensely from the comments by Lara Jost and Derek Ball of the *University of St Andrews*, thanks a lot!

Nick, Katharina & Francisca, St Andrews, September 2022

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Section 1: Structuring the Conference

Disclaimer: For the purposes of this guide, we are focusing on a medium-sized conference, i.e. any event between a one-day workshop and a four-day conference *without* parallel sessions, however, similar considerations carry over to bigger conferences.

Topic

1

When choosing a topic, consider which demographics will be attracted most by your topic and use this insight to guide (further) steps to diversify.

Make sure that the topic allows for a plurality of perspectives. Make sure there is enough expertise on the topic on the organisational board. Watch out for similar events on similar topics to avoid overlap in your institution and/or beyond.

Invited Speakers

2

Highly and widely credited speakers can be a pull factor, but you don't always have to invite the biggest name. A diverse list of invited speakers is arguably one of the best means to diversify and attract submissions from diverse speakers.

Make sure to have a good mix of online and in-person invited and/or keynote speakers. This sends a clear message that remote participants are included as well (it also lowers costs).

Venue

3

When choosing a venue think about the following factors:

- Is the venue hybrid-ready (see section 3)?
- Is the venue easy to reach by public transport (this may be limited by the location of your department)?
- Does the venue meet requirements of accessibility?
- Does the venue allow for green events, in particular when it comes to catering?
- Is affordable accommodation available nearby?

Funding

4

Some essentials will often be covered by the organising institution, but usually additional funding will be required. Usually it will be easier to get funds for keynotes' travel expenses than it is for those who need it most. To support their costs, look out for EDI related funding.

1

Inclusivity

There are several means to ensure your conference is inclusive – or rather to ensure that it is not unduly excluding traditionally underrepresented groups. Choosing a topic wisely is one of those means, and arguably one of the most important ways to ensure your event is committed to EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity). Philosophy has a tradition of being exclusive, in parts due to homogeneous communities occupying certain (niche) topics, cf. for example the research by "Data on Women in Philosophy" (Hassoun *et al.*, 2022).

The minimum aim should be to reduce those mechanisms that traditionally exclude underrepresented groups from debates. Committing to EDI does not mean you need to organise a conference on, say, Epistemic Exploitation when, in fact, you would like to organise a conference on Plato's *Politeia*. Classic debates and niche debates are often worthwhile going back to and to discuss further. But you can do so while ensuring that the topic you chose can "keep up with the times" and give opportunities to researchers, including junior scholars, to challenge dominant conceptions and push the debate forward.

If you choose a more traditional or niche topic, pay additional attention to who your traditional target audience is and try diversify your event other than by means of choice of topic (cf. the guidance on choosing speakers).

Expertise

Sometimes a topic will be predetermined (e.g. in case of an event that is part of a broader research project). In such cases sufficient expertise should be available for evaluating submissions and deciding on the details of the topic. If, however, you have the choice of a topic, make sure that there is sufficient expertise in the organisational board to process and evaluate the submissions.

Funding

In addition to the usual funding, check with your institution for additional funding for junior speakers, EDI related funding and funding dedicated to sustainability (train/bus instead of travels by plane where possible).

Avoid overlap

It happens at times that a topic is picked up on by more than one group organising a conference. Keep track of what is going on in the research community of the potential topics of your event.

Size Fit

Make sure that the size of your conference fits the expected turn-up given your chosen topic.

Deciding between junior and senior faculty

While widely accredited speakers can be a good pull factor for high-quality submissions (and funding), unfortunately such 'big names' are all too often only members of dominant social groups (often men, often *white*). A common situation is having to choose between a 'big name' who is a member of a dominant social groups and a less renowned speaker of a historically marginalised group. If at all possible: avoid this choice and invite both.

Methodological and general research background

Speakers may work on the event's topic, but have used different methodologies (more or less formal, more or less analytic ...) than the methods you are used to. Inviting speakers with pluralistic perspectives has been shown to have epistemic benefits. (Anderson 2004, Fazelpour and Steel 2022).

> **Tip:** Make sure that the speaker you invite is *currently* working on the topic of the event - most speakers prefer to work on their more recent research.

Lived experiences and diverse philosophical view

Speakers coming from diverse backgrounds will likely have different lived experiences, which may inform their methodology and even the content of their views. Providing a platform for a diverse group of speakers in terms of their views and their lived experiences can lead to fruitful exchange and discussion within a diverse framework, benefiting each speaker and participant.

Order of sending out invitations and time limitations

Reaching out to speakers is a time-sensitive issue. Reaching out to speakers one after the other and waiting for a reply before contacting the next person is often unrealistic due to time constraints. Moreover, coordinating dates that make everybody happy is a difficult task (it often works best to organise the event around invited speakers' schedules) – remote participation can make this coordination effort easier. Finally, because it is very difficult to "uninvite" a speaker, the order in which you contact speakers is crucial. Especially if you want to square finding a date and order of invitations with ensuring a diverse group of invited speakers, both with respect to demographics and methodology.

> **Tip:** One way to ensure both methodological and demographic diversity of keynote speakers is to divide the set of potential speakers into ranked sub-groups. These subgroups can be divided along the lines of both methodological diversity and demographic diversity. So if the first ranked speaker in a sub-group declines, you can move on to the second on the list in that subgroup. This way, you cannot end up in the uncomfortable situation of accidentally having a too homogeneous line up.

3

Accessibility

Make sure to book a venue that meets as high accessibility standards as possible (given the constraints of funding and, perhaps, location). Universities, as well as most institutions with facilities suitable for conferences have assessed their venues for accessibility. Make sure to seek out this information. Remote participation may, indeed, be one way to make events accessible for a plurality of disabilities – a perk of hybrid conferencing. But a venue should still meet accessibility criteria and allow for individuals with disabilities that require easy access or special technology (to connect to a hearing aid, for instance).

Technology

Make sure that the technology available at the venue is not only streaming-ready, but is equipped with as good technology as possible. For a hybrid conference, flawless streaming is, of course, essential. For what technology you might require and what to consider, cf. section 3. Roughly, you want to make sure that you have a good connection (to stream the content you create), good audio quality, to make sure that your speakers voice carries over flawlessly to those joining remotely, as well as a good camera.

Size and cost of Venue

This might sound obvious, but make sure to book a venue that has the appropriate size for the event and make sure that you have a date soon enough to book a venue (remember that it can take a while to coordinate dates). Things might change and the size of the event may too, but it is important to book a venue as early as possible after a date has been set. If applicable, always make sure to check the cancellation policy.

Infrastructure, atmosphere, and availability

Is there a hallway or second room that could be used for coffee breaks? Is there, perhaps, some outside space? Does the venue offer catering (and how good and/or affordable is it)? If so, does it accommodate various dietary requirements and preferences (e.g. vegan, gluten-free and kosher)? Further, providing vegan catering at your conference makes it more sustainable. Does the venue allow for a sound check prior to the event (this is essential for planning a hybrid event)? Is it nice? Keep in mind that the nicer and more ideal a venue the more likely that it is booked and/or more expensive – so make sure to reach out in time to potential venues.

Rehearsal for Remote Participants

It is good to have a rehearsal with those joining remotely prior to the conference to allow for a sufficient check of the technology involved – on both ends! Be prepared to assist those who, for some reason or other, do not (yet) have the required equipment to get access.

4

Funding sources

If you are lucky, there might be some default funding allocated to the event you are organising. However, oftentimes you will have to chase after additional funding sources. While existing "default" funding can provide some security in planning your event (e.g. in promising keynotes accommodation and travel reimbursements when inviting them and booking a venue early enough...) in its early stage, such funding usually is not enough to cover all relevant costs, especially not those that are important for a diverse and inclusive event. Navigating the jungle of applications for funding would justify a separate guide. If you are unfamiliar with the available funding and application procedures at your HEI, do ask your colleagues – they may have expertise that could prove invaluable.

The Basics

For most conferences, you will need to think at least (see more below) about covering the following costs:

- Venue
- Keynote speakers' travel and accommodation
- Coffee for the breaks
- Conference/workshop dinner

Fairness in Funding

Ideally, the above list should be longer and in particular include covering for participants' child-care as well as travel and accommodation for *all* speakers, not just the keynotes. Unfortunately, many funding bodies are only happy to cover the costs for keynote speakers (who in turn often expect having all their costs covered) while accepted speakers (often PGR students or early career researchers) have to pay for their accommodation and travel.

This is a barrier that unfairly limits who can participate and that interacts with other forms of power imbalances not just due to wealth and age, such as those due to gender and race. Even though it is difficult to get the kind of funding that would fix this, we encourage you to try your higher education institution's EDI group and see if there is funding available. Some universities also have sustainability related funding that can be used to encourage travel by trains where possible. Note that inviting some keynote speakers online allows you to free up some funding for more local accepted speakers.

Structuring the Conference - Checklist

Topic 💡

❏ Make sure to find ways to be inclusive (topic-choice is one possible means for that)
❏ Make inclusivity a goal
❏ Have enough people with expertise on the organisational board
❏ Avoid too much overlap with other events
❏ Make sure that the topic of the conference fits its size

Speaker 🔊

❏ Make sure to choose methodological plurality
❏ Invite speakers from diverse backgrounds
❏ Try to strike a good balance between junior/senior and less/more renowned scholars
❏ Be aware of the difficulty of coordinating speakers.

Venue 📍

❏ Ensure accessibility at the venue, both for in-person and remote participants
❏ Make sure that the technology required for a flawless hybrid conference is available. More on this in section 3
❏ The venue should fit the expected size, don't book something too expensive
❏ Consider which rooms you have available apart from the actual conference room to facilitate breaks, etc.

Funding ⚪

❏ A minimum funding should be guaranteed (to pay basic costs)
❏ Make sure to look out for EDI and sustainability related additional funding

Section 2: Filling the Structure with Life

Most importantly: Make sure that the call for submissions gives everybody involved enough time to plan and process. A call for submissions should go out ideally no later than four months prior to the event.

Review Process

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The reviewing process is the key internal process to be handled by the organisational board.

Handle sensitive data with care throughout the process. Agree on a reviewing procedure, especially on a ranking system, and how many reviewing steps you will require (this will depend on the amount and type of submissions). Assign one person to handle the data and anonymisation process.

Be sure that every reviewer understands their role and what kind of assessment is required of them. Provide them with a form to fill in their ranking and comments. This may also contain a reminder of what is required of them.

Set clear deadlines, give each reviewing round at least two to three weeks – make sure to consider this before sending out your call.

Call for Speakers

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The Call for Speakers is not only there to get submissions, it is the main outreach tool you have to advertise your event and target good diverse and good quality submissions.

Thus, be sure to go through the checklist of what your call should contain before sending it out.

You will have to decide whether you want to go for a submission based on an abstract or a paper and on what the word limit for each is supposed to be. Deciding between paper and abstract submission may also depend on the degree of expertise (and the number of experts) available on your organisational board.

Not all things that should be settled before the call goes out might be settled in time – especially regarding funding. In such cases be transparent and state a clear intent rather than making an empty promise.

5

In reaching out to your potential speakers, the two standard formats are a call for abstract or a call for papers. The former is requesting a short document (often between 500-2000 words) while the latter is a longer document (often between 4000-6000 words). Usually, the shorter the requested submission is, the more speakers will feel comfortable to submit (leading to more material to review), and the material is shorter and easier to review. The reverse applies for longer documents: fewer speakers will apply, but each review will take longer and will require more expertise.

Your call for speakers does two things. First, it collects the submissions and data of your potential speakers. Second, however, it also communicates something *about the conference* to the potential speakers. Standard platforms to post calls for speakers are philevents.org and the email list Philos-L by the *University of Liverpool.*.

Collecting submissions and data

You will require an anonymised version of the submission to allow for an anonymous review of the material as well as an (optional!) possibility to enter any demographic data (such as race, gender, etc.). Collecting this data allows you to evaluate the submissions on a fair basis while ensuring that your conference also allows for a fair representation. More on this below.

> **Tip**: Think about the formats you want to allow for the submissions. You want to choose a format that is freely accessible to all operating systems. It might be good to ask for an editable format so that you can bring them all into the same style before sending them to reviewers (e.g. ODT definitely fulfils these requirements).

Presenting your event publicly via a Call for Speakers

With your call for speakers and/or participants, you not only want to attract many submissions, you want to attract high quality and diverse submissions. To ensure that everyone feels welcomed to submit their material, it is important to be very clear about the procedure of submitting as well as the the details of the event. In addition to *dates*, *keynote speakers* (if there are any), *topic* and a brief *summary* of which subtopics are welcome. Definitely be explicit about the following points:

- how you want the submissions to be anonymised (e.g. cover sheet or separate file)
- how the review process will be organised, for instance whether you will use a platform like EasyChair to manage submissions and anonymous reviewing
- that precautions you took to ensure accessibility at the venue as well as online and what they are
- whether and to what extent you will or intent to cover the speakers' travel and accommodation costs (sometimes this funding is not yet guaranteed, but showing a clear intent goes a long way)

- that you intend to ensure that everyone's travel needs can be met appropriately
- that and which modes of transportation you will cover, e.g. not covering flights where other means of transportation are available
- that remote participation is at an equal standing to participation in person (with there being a mix of remote talks and in-person talks)
- whether there will be childcare support during the conference (this is of particular relevance to in-person attendees but you may think about financial compensation for childcare at the speaker's venue as well)
- whether there is a fee associated with the conference (try to do without if possible at all!)
- academic affiliation of the conference and contact email address in case any questions on the side of the potential speakers arise
- commitment to good practice guidelines (by, for instance MAP (Minorities and Philosophy), SWIP (Society for Women in Philosophy), etc.)

Furthermore, it is helpful to acknowledge that, due to past trends in philosophy, dominant groups will often feel the least hesitation to apply to conferences – the structures we currently have in place usually mean that they will be confident about their work and willing to share it. Hence, it is good to be explicit about your welcoming submissions from members of underrepresented groups.

> **Tip**: Your institution might give you an email address specifically for the purpose of the event. This can help you keep everything in one place and manage large numbers of submissions. Make sure to not share access to this address and the sensitive data though.

Timing and coordination

You may get into timing troubles at this stage: The call for speakers may be overdue at a point where some key information relevant to the call are not settled (esp. funding-related issues). In such cases, a clear statement of intent can go a long way.

Review Process

6

Prior to any reviewing process, you need to have established who is willing to participate in the reviewing and assign a moderator, that is, someone who has access to all of the data submitted and oversees the anonymisation (and best also the whole reviewing) process. This person is therefore not eligible to actually review any of the submissions. The role of the moderator covers the following:

- They ensure that all received submissions are completely anonymised (an easy way to do that is assign numbers to submissions and keep a separate list that associates those numbers with names). Note that even if the text itself is anonymised, some meta info about a file (or just the name) can contain identifying information.
- They ask the reviewers to give an estimate of the quality of the submission, usually on a scale from "Definitely accept" to "Definitely not accept" with a varying amount of steps in between - make sure that there are at least three options (often, it is not helpful to have more, unless you choose scoring rules with numerical values). Be sure to have at least two reviewers per submission.

   In case of large amounts of (especially paper-) submissions, consider two or more rounds of reviewing (by different pairs of reviewers). The first round may decide between "not acceptable" and "all else". This reviewing step should be fairly quickly. It can save time and effort further downstream, especially in case of paper submissions. 'Quality of submission' is vague, so you should be explicit about factors that should *not* factor into the assessments. These are:
    - **Language** (in order to ensure that there is no bias towards native speakers)
    - **Presentation** (you can rule this out by reformatting every submission into the same format)
    - **Hedging**, since this often tracks the experiences of the person who submitted the abstract/paper (members of dominant groups tend to boost their assertions).

   Tip: Be nice to your reviewers: prepare an editable ranking sheet for reviewers to fill out that also contains an explanation of the ranking system, what they should focus on and what to ignore in their assessments. Give them a warning a week before the reviewing starts and send a reminder a week before their reviewing deadline.

- Once all reviews are in, determine the average score for each submission.

Review Process

If, after this process, the review process moderator can tell that the conference will feature a diverse group of speakers (based on the demographics data they have), you're good to go. If not, consider the following steps in order to ensure a fair representation:

- In borderline cases where one submission was initially selected even though it received just a slightly higher grade, check the demographics data for both submissions. If the initially selected paper is not from a member of an underrepresented group while the closely not selected paper is, consider reassessing the two.

- If you are inviting submissions from distinct groups (e.g. undergraduates, graduates, postdocs, etc.), you might think about creating different pools of submissions such that you can ensure to have a certain number of speakers from each group. If this does not work either, think of extending the deadline for submissions.

> **Tip**: You can assign the task of a moderator to someone who is not particularly knowledgeable on the event's topic. Alternatively, you can outsource the anonymization process only to someone external. This would allow the moderator to double as reviewer.

Filling the Structure with Life - Checklist

Call for Speakers

5

- ❏ Send Call for Speakers in time (paper submissions take longer to process!)
- ❏ Plan for a potential extension of the deadline for submission.
- ❏ Does the call include all of the following information?
  - ❏ Venue
  - ❏ Affiliation of event
  - ❏ Topic
  - ❏ Dates of event
  - ❏ Type of event
  - ❏ Form of submissions
  - ❏ Details on submission process
  - ❏ Target audience
  - ❏ Main organisers
  - ❏ Contact details
  - ❏ When decision will be made
  - ❏ Potential fees
- ❏ Equally important is information on the following:
  - ❏ Remote participation
  - ❏ Accessibility
  - ❏ Funding opportunities
  - ❏ Child care options
  - ❏ Guidelines for Good Practice
  - ❏ Encouraging under-represented groups to submit
  - ❏ Some details on the reviewing process (optional).

Review Process

6

- ❏ Ask potential reviewers well ahead of time and give them a warning a week in advance before submissions come in
- ❏ Assign moderator, compile moderation file and anonymise ahead of time
- ❏ Compile a reviewer form, be clear about deadlines for reviewing.
- ❏ Match submissions to reviewers
- ❏ Be clear to reviewers about what to focus on and what not
- ❏ The moderator should have an eye on matters diversity of the submissions being accepted or rejected

Section 3: At the Conference

A hybrid conference is not an in-person event in which the online component is just an add-on. Indeed, the aim should be to create an event in which both in-person participants and online participants are being served equally well. To achieve this, do not shy away from resorting to infrastructures that may be somewhat to the disadvantage of the in-person participants. (The importance of) creating a good atmosphere for remote participants is often invisible to in-person participants; explain to the in-person audience why you take certain steps and measure (e.g. breaks to correct for audio quality, muting and unmuting, etc.)

Whatever hybrid style you choose, make sure you spend a significant amount of time planning it. What you can do will be determined by several factors, among them:

- the software you use
- the size of the event (in smaller settings an ordinary group call might do, for bigger events with an anonymous online audience, a webinar structure allowing questions only when authorised by the organiser might be advisable)
- the hardware at the venue and the availability of hardware to online participants – for the venue, consider in particular clip-on mics for the speakers, and handheld mics for the audience in Q&A sessions, as well as cameras capable of recording *both* the speaker and the audience
- how tech-savvy the conference participants are

Here, we have assembled some ways of promoting a more fruitious blending of online and in-person participants (this list is not exhaustive!).

Know Your Technology

The main challenge for organisers of hybrid conferences is handling technology. This regards both: choosing a venue adequately equipped for the purposes of hybrid conferencing, and familiarity with using said equipment. The organisers must be ready at all times to assist all participants in all matters technology.

Audio

Make sure the microphone setup can clearly and loudly catch speakers (both those standing close to the mic and those who might have a tendency to walk around the room) *and* audience questions. Clip-on mics work well for the former while handheld mics work better for the latter. Another benefit of using microphones is that hearing aids might be able to connect with them allowing for better understanding for persons with hearing impairments.

Video

Think of ways to include the online audience as visibly as possible. We recommend two screens (one for presenting, one for showing remote participants). Make sure to have the remote audience permanently visible on the second screen, perhaps set on the side of the room. Online participants, moreover, need to see not only the speakers, but also the audience during the Q&A.

Connection

Establish chat-stations, i.e. permanent connections with online participants especially for coffee breaks. Consider having one dedicated place with a dedicated device (or devices) and dedicated accounts which keep a permanent connection open to the online audience. This allows any in-person participant to easily get in touch with the online crowd.

Technological Skills

Because of the additional technological demands of hybrid conferencing, even in fairly small-scale conference or workshop situations you will need more than one organiser who is very familiar with the technological aspects of a hybrid conference. This includes:

- Great familiarity in handling the communication software of your choice (Zoom, Webex, Teams, ...), including the ability to troubleshoot any issues, and awareness of what the technology used by an online participant can and can't do.
- Skills in chairing online events in an engaging and inclusive manner. Think about whether you want a double chair (one online, one in-person), or one chair plus a (technical) assistant. This will in part depend on what resources you have and on who among the organisers brings what skills. Often, it helps to have an online chair who is physically present at the conference - they can easily intervene if there are issues for the online audience.

> **Tip:** Choose your venue according to the technological demands and, if possible, book the room for a rehearsal (most venues allow for rehearsals without extra charge). Give yourself enough time to test the setup and consult the house technician if you have questions or are unsure about how to use a device. Think about allowing participants (both in-person and online) to have a test run as well if they want to and if feasible.

> **Tip:** There might be hiccups on the way. Don't worry if that happens: being transparent about mishaps in using technology can create group coherence. Do *not* just carry on and hope for the best when things are not working smoothly, but communicate when things go wrong. Plan sufficiently long breaks for setting up the technology. Five minutes breaks between two talks most likely won't do!

Vary the format of the talks, mix formats that are more in-person-friendly with more online-friendly formats.

- Synchronous and asynchronous presentations. Not all talks must have the same format. Some might be synchronous (i.e. live talks with live participants locally or online), some might not (e.g. pre-recorded talks). Mixing the format can send a signal to online participants that they are being included properly, and it will remind in-person participants that there are participants outside the event's venue.

- Synchronous and asynchronous Q&As. Often, live Q&A sessions feel the most challenging for online participants. While the main reason for this pertains to the technology being employed (lousy microphone, accidentally being muted or muting, ...), another reason is that online participants literally do not take up space in the room and thus may feel less present. While having some live Q&As will be both desirable and unavoidable, asynchronous modes of presentation *and* Q&A can be used for at least some talks to side step it all together.

> **Example:** Consider the setting of a prerecorded talk plus forum discussion (both talk and Q&A are asynchronous in this example). Here, online participants would watch the talk and comment in a forum prior to the in-person participants' engagement. In-person participants would watch the recording together and would be given the time to consult the existing online forum discussion. They would then be able to discuss the recording following on from the forum discussion and record their input (which can then be fed back to the online participants). This requires a moderator/chair who blends the forum content with live discussion.

Make live Q&A sessions more inclusive

Even if mixing presentation modes, the classical Q&A format (with online live participants) will still be common. Here are some ideas of how to integrate online participants into a live Q&A session.

- **Make sure you have enough breaks before and between the talks and Q&A to allow for checking the tech setup.** A break between talk and Q&A of five minutes moreover is best practice for inclusive conferencing – so there are two reasons now!

- **Have an organiser in the room who is constantly connected to the online participants.** It's often not enough to just ask online participants whether the audio is okay because they will often say that it is even if it's just barely okay, and having a member of the conference organisation always online can help ensure that does not happen.

- **Consider having in-person participants walk to a fixed camera plus microphone setup.** Be aware, however, that this might create accessibility issues – a handheld microphone that's passed on plus a moving-head camera (which follows the speaker) are a good alternative.

> **Tip:** When chairing a live Q&A session in an hybrid setting, there are unique challenges and ways of moderating the discussion that you should be aware of and should act in accordance with.
> - Online participants are not likely to follow up on their questions if not explicitly asked if they have a follow up. If time permits, ask them if they are satisfied with the speaker's answer.
> - It's easy for online and in-person participants to feel disconnected from each other, especially online participants when the speaker is giving the talk in-person. Alternate between questions from the in-person and online audience during the Q&A so both are kept engaged.

Accessibility

More generally, you should strive to have a conference that is as accessible as possible for all participants, whether they're attending the conference in-person or online. Consider:
- Having live captions during talks. This can prove essential for participants with hearing disabilities and could be a helpful resource for non-native participants as well.
- Choosing audio equipment supporting hearing aid technology and transcripts of the talks.
- Record the talks (and live Q&A sessions) for the participants that cannot join live for the entirety of it. This might be especially helpful for online participants in different time zones and/or who have caring duties.
  - For this, get the explicit permission of the presenter (and, if you choose to record the Q&A, every other person appearing in the recording). Make sure your written permission includes: context and date of the occasion, whom the recording will be made available to and how (university server, public server, etc.); the same applies for pre-recorded talks in an asynchronous format.
  - The advantage in terms of accessibility might come at the cost of a disadvantage in terms of the audience's willingness to participate in the Q&A. One work-around is to only record the talk (with permission), but leave the Q&A undocumented.

Note that different modes of presentation have different advantages and disadvantages when it comes to accessibility and inclusivity. Forum discussions might work well for those with caring responsibilities, but participants with visual impairments might prefer a classical Q&A. Using different presentation formats and methods can be preferable to meet different needs.

> **Tip:** The perfect presentation format that would be maximally accessible unfortunately doesn't exist. Make sure that you attune the presentation format options not only to your participants but also to the venue's available infrastructure. Most universities have an accessibility team that will be most happy to assist you.

Informal Gathering and Networking

One of the main purposes of conferences in philosophy is to get participants to chat with one another, usually in an informal setting. Online participants, however, cannot participate in conference dinners or participate in lunch breaks during this informal networking. Hence, it is important to have an infrastructure available that includes online participants and allows them to interact with in-person participants. Here are some ideas of how to achieve that (again the list is most definitely non-exhaustive):

- Have a gathering with online and in-person participants using the software of your choice with breakout rooms or on more socialising-focused software like "Gather". If the conference spans over more than one day, consider a conference breakfast or lunch online on one, and a classical conference dinner on the other day.
- Consider having one of the meals completely online (perhaps utilising the infrastructure at the venue for in-person participants) such that everyone is on an even playing field.
- Little gestures can go a long way! If budget allows, why not send a little food basket of local specialities to the speakers participating online in advance?
- Make sure that there is an online infrastructure for breaks for online participants. Having some breakout rooms named "coffee corner 1" and "coffee corner 2"is easy to set up and creates options for interaction. Just like organisers will be around in breaks for speakers in classical settings, so should an organiser be around in breaks for online participants.
- Match in-person participants and online participants randomly at least during one of the breaks.
- Promote the usage of chatting stations for individual in-person participants to join the online crowd.
- Have a list of all the participants with short descriptions available to all participants. This way, asynchronous participants can be more easily integrated. In this vein, make sure to still have name tags for in-person participants, stating their name, pronouns and affiliation.

Extra Guidance

Plan for extra guidance and careful communication of timetables, talk formats and what is required of participants (both online and in-person)

Conference participants will need a lot more guidance through a hybrid event than through an in-person event or online-only event. This is so in part because there is not yet any agreed upon routine for hybrid events; and in part because there are more things to consider when it comes to making a hybrid event work.

> **Tip:** Think about how to provide the programme and how to make it readily available throughout. It should not only contain the speakers but also the mode of presentation. Physical copies of programmes work for real life participants only, of course (although have in mind sustainability considerations). Websites or PDF documents work better for online participants.

Inclusivity

Of course, all rules of good practice for inclusive conferences apply to hybrid conferences as well. Note that hybrid formats can aid with diversity and inclusiveness in several ways:

- Different formats have different strengths, and so using different presentation and participation modes can increase the quality of the participants' experience at least with some of the talks (those that meet their needs particularly well)
- Having an online and in-person audience can calm discussion down. It is more difficult to talk over one another when there is an in-person/online gap bridged by a chair
- Hybrid conferencing requires more breaks and more active planning of the time spent. This can help with engagement and create a more inclusive atmosphere for everybody
- One restriction is that every person needs to meet some minimal requirements with respect to tech and the ability to use it. Having appropriate support is thus a necessity!
- The advantages of hybrid conferencing regarding sustainability are obvious, but it is worth highlighting them: having online keynote speakers will reduce emissions for said speaker to practically zero
- The same that goes for any in-person only conference goes for hybrid conferences (for a good source on this point, see the MAP UK Inclusive Events Guidelines)

Accessibility

Moving to a hybrid format allows you to take matters of accessibility into account very well. Make sure to meet the needs of your participants, including e.g. live captions and equipment supporting hearing aids. Recording individual talks (or having them delivered pre-recored) can further help in reaching a wide audience.

Due to the additional technological demands of hybrid conferencing, you will need more than one organiser who is very familiar with the technological aspect of a hybrid conference. This includes skills in chairing online events in an engaging and inclusive manner. Think about whether you want a double chair (one online, one in-person), or one chair plus a (technical) assistant.

Audio

Make sure the microphone set-up can clearly and loudly catch speakers (a clip-on mic is ideal) *and* audience questions (here, a handheld mic is usually the best solution).

Video

For the in-person side, we recommend two screens (one for presenting, one for showing the online participants). Make sure to have the online audience permanently visible on the second screen, perhaps set on the side of the room.

For the online side, make sure that online participants not only can see the speakers but also the in-person audience, especially during Q&A.

Presentation Modes

In a hybrid environment, it is often useful to consider different modes of presentations. Including both in-person and online presentations (especially keynote variety) is a good first step towards signalling that everyone is included in the discussions.

Further, some presenters may present live with others presenting asynchronously. Similarly, Q&A's can be conducted asynchronous as well. Such decisions further signal that you are open to everyone joining the conference.

Informal Gatherings

Conferences are a hub for networking. Establish chat stations serving as a link between online and in-person participants to enable everyone to participate in this networking. Consider having a place with a dedicated device and dedicated accounts which keep a permanent connection open to the online audience. This allows any in-person participant to easily get in touch with the online crowd.

Schedule and Communication

In scheduling the various elements of your conference, make sure to include sufficient breaks for technical check-ups with online participants.

Also make sure to communicate your schedule effectively to all participants, including information on the mode of each element.
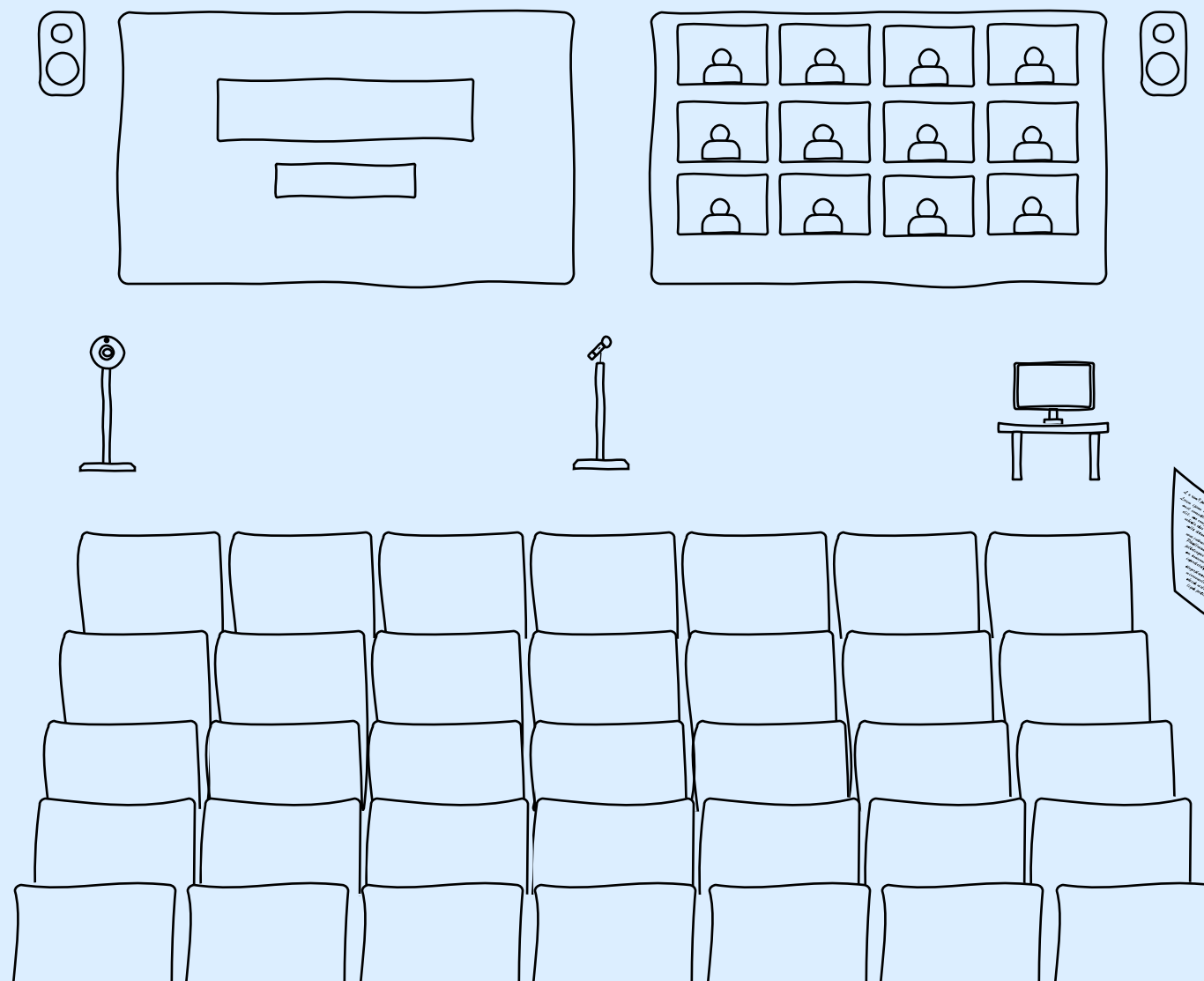
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Literature

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MAP UK Inclusive Event Guidelines:

Available online at: https://www.mapforthegap.org.uk/inclusive-event-guidelines

Data on Women in Philosophy:

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More data available online at: https://women-in-philosophy.org/data

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