

# Programme Chair and Conference Organiser's Report to AGM

## March 2022

---

The Conference Committee (comprising the Chair, Programme Chair, Conference Organiser, Secretary, Treasurer, Development Committee Chair, and two Society members) have had responsibility for the 2022 conference. The Committee has been very mindful throughout the planning process of the continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, in light of the easing of restrictions in England, the Committee agreed that the conference should be fully in person for 2022, returning to New College following the online conference in September 2021.

### Submissions for the 2022 Conference:

No papers were declined without review because of a failure to anonymise. This has been an issue in previous years, but additional guidance is now having a positive impact.

### Category breakdown:

Submission Type	2022 Submissions	2019 Submissions Comparison	2022 Accepted	2019 Acceptances Comparison
Papers	39		19	35
Workshops	8		2	4
Symposia	6		3	11
Posters	11		10	10
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>64</b>	123	<b>34</b>	60

The submission and acceptance rates for the conference since 2010 are included for comparison:

	Submissions	Acceptances	%
2010	110	57	52
2011	114	61	54
2012	106	60	57
2013	110	56	51
2014	104	45	43
2015	172	73	42
2016	118	65	55
2017	134	68	50
2018	124	55	45
2019	123	60	49
2022	64	34	53

It is noted that the number of overall submissions has reduced quite significantly for 2022. This should be read in the light of the fact that, first, the 2022 conference follows on very quickly from the online conference in September 2021; second, that a number of colleagues who might normally have submitted a paper, and travelled to the conference, have been unable to do so because of the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions. However, with the availability of hybrid forms of conferencing, and the increased awareness of the environmental impact of international travel, the Society will discuss, and consult on, the options for the annual conference going forward.

**Word Count:** This has been less of an issue for reviewing teams this year, and the strengthened advice regarding word count appears to be having a continued positive impact.

**Workshops:** The revised advice to ensure that at least 200 words of the submissions should explain how the workshop is to be structured, and how it is to engage participants, is still not being fully adhered to in submissions. The number of workshop submissions has declined compared to previous years, and some discussion may need to take place about how to elicit strong workshop submissions, or to offer a different kind of presentation at the conference (such as work in progress papers).

**Conference Decisions' Meeting:** The Conference Decisions' Meeting was held online on 31 January 2022. Fewer papers were discussed at this meeting than in previous years. This was as a result clarifying the specific situations in which papers would be further discussed:

- (i) in any case where no agreement could be reached within the reviewing trio (ie the scores were 1, 2, 3);
- (ii) the majority decision on a paper was 2;
- (iii) one or more of the reviewing team felt particularly strongly that the paper should be brought to the decisions' meeting.

**Declined Submissions:** Following the release of results, one query was received expressing disappointment with the outcome, and asking for clarification of the feedback. This is a reduction in the number of similar requests made in previous years. In this case, the reviewing trio provided timely clarification, and this was well received by the authors of the submission.

**Withdrawn Submissions:**

Following the announcement of decisions from the Review Panel, some authors had to withdraw their submissions. These related to the difficulties of international travel given the ongoing pandemic. One was a health-related issue.

Withdrawn papers:	1
Withdrawn symposia:	0
Withdrawn workshops:	1
Withdrawn Posters:	2

The Conference Committee received a small number of enquiries about the possibility of hybrid presentation, or entirely online presentation. Each request was considered carefully in light of the decision to hold the conference in person, and after a detailed discussion about the impact on the experience for delegates at the conference. The Executive is planning a consultation with the membership about possible modes for future conferences. This is in light both of the success of the online conference in September 2021, and the affordances of technology in enabling delegates to attend from geographical locations which might otherwise prohibit participation.

\*\*\*

As outgoing Programme Chair, I wish to express my particular thanks to the Conference Reviewing Panel for their diligence and careful attention to the reviewing process over the last 3 years. Many of the Panel reviewed not only for the September 2021 online conference, but also for the March 2022 conference. I also wish to say thank you to the Conference Committee. During my three-year term, the Conference Committee, with the support of the Executive, has had to make some very difficult decisions: first, the cancellation of the 2020 conference because of the pandemic; second, the move to an online platform for the September 2021 conference, and then the decision to hold the 2022 conference in person. I have very much appreciated the discussion what seemed at the time to be intractable issues, and am very grateful for the unfailing support of the Conference Committee. I would also like to express particular thanks to Steph Graham, and colleagues at SAS Events for their unfailing support and friendship – it has been very much appreciated

Amanda Fulford  
March 2022

## Conference Organiser's Report

### 1. Conference September 2021

The successful online conference, held from 3-5 September 2021, received excellent feedback from delegates. SAS received 53 responses to a request of feedback following the conference. A summary of responses is as follows:

Please provide your feedback on the following elements of the event:	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Not Applicable
Networking Opportunities	21 (39.6%)	19 (35.8%)	4 (7.5%)	2 (3.8%)	7 (13.2%)
Access to content (pre-recorded presentations, full papers and live sessions)	46 (86.8%)	6 (11.3%)	1 (1.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Ease of use	37 (69.8%)	12 (22.6%)	4 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

Opportunity to engage in sessions	35 (66.0%)	14 (26.4%)	4 (7.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Accessibility for time-zones outside of UK	15 (28.3%)	8 (15.1%)	1 (1.9%)	4 (7.5%)	25 (47.2%)
Value for money	47 (88.7%)	6 (11.3%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

The qualitative comments were overwhelmingly supportive, and the following responses give a flavour of the ways in which different aspects of the conference were received:

- “Superb - I had high expectations but those were exceeded”;
- “The Research in Progress presentations were particularly good”;
- “Truly exceptional - I thought this was an excellent conference. Content was extremely easy to access. Engagement was very straightforward. Great value for money”;
- “This was my first experience at attending the PESGB conference. As I live in Japan this is usually not possible. The quality of the communication was top flight and I thoroughly enjoyed the level and topics under discussion. I hope such an e-option is available in the future”;
- “Technical support was outstanding”;
- “This was probably one of the best online conferences I have been too, it was engaging from start to finish and I really don't think enthusiasm and participation wavered at any moment”.

Feedback was also sought in relation to aspects of the conference which were less liked. These relate overwhelmingly to the different ways of interacting in an online environment:

- “I struggled socially in the online environment. So many connections made in the live environment happen serendipitously, but this is not really possible online. Also, I missed the Saturday singing and drinking!”;
- “I think stimulating networking might need more thought”;
- “I dropped into the drinks / social rooms but could not see everyone, and found it was not so conducive to chatting unless one already knew the people there. Nice try though”.
- “Sometimes half an hour felt too short for discussions”;

Of those who responded, 96.2% would attend another PESGB conference online, with only 3.8% saying they would not.

The number of sessions for conference were as follows:

- Full papers            22
- Workshops            7
- Symposia              5

In addition, we invited 13 Research in Progress submissions. These gave delegates the opportunity to record a three minute summary of their research in progress. This offered a different way of engaging with the work of postgraduate research students and early career researchers, and the Conference Committee will discuss ways of developing this aspect of the conference going forward

## 2. Conference March 2022

Prior to the Christmas break, the Conference Committee were somewhat concerned that it might be necessary to move the conference online for a second time as a result of new Government guidance/ the Omicron variant. However, by mid-January we were confident that we would be able to hold an in-person event and, at the time of writing, **125 delegates** have signed up (far in excess of the 50 delegate minimum required to proceed with our normal costs for New College).

As noted above, the Conference Committee is in discussion about how best to use hybrid options for future events and will be recording some sessions at this year's Conference as part of a pilot programme.

### **3. Disability Access and Support**

The Conference Committee has recently met with Ursula Blythe to discuss disability access and how it could be improved. As a result of this meeting, we have implemented a new policy of contacting all delegates who indicate that they have a disability/ special requirements prior to the event to establish how we can best support them. We will also allocate a named helper to any delegate with access needs who requires this during their time at New College.

Over the coming months, we also intend to put together a disability working group. Should any delegates/ members be interested in participating in this initiative, please contact [r.j.wareham@bham.ac.uk](mailto:r.j.wareham@bham.ac.uk).

### **4. Party and additional activities**

Further to requests from members for an alternative to the party, this year we are offering a quieter space in which delegates can play games, chat, read, etc. Soft drinks and snacks will also be available. As this is the first time we offered this, we would very much welcome feedback.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Carrie Winstanley and Ursula Blythe for making the necessary arrangements for all these extra-curricular activities.

Ruth Wareham  
March 2022