

This report has two parts. The first is the transparency report from the safety officer information, as in past years; the second is a report on accessibility issues at the meeting.

Meeting Conduct Report

This was drafted by Brian O'Meara using information from Kerrell Dunsmore, our safety officer.

Virtual meeting

After the conclusion of the meeting, there was a report of a participant interrupting others and asking inappropriate questions during a mixer. The safety officer followed up with the respondent and recommended no further action.

In person meeting

There were three reports.

In distinct instances, two early career attendees experienced hostile comments at their posters, beyond the realm of normal scientific discourse. They declined to file formal reports; in at least one case, the potential complainant was concerned about possible retaliation later in their career.

In another case, an apparently intoxicated attendee was reported as making sexual and other inappropriate comments to two student attendees in a bar. There were witnesses, and there was enough information to identify the potential respondent, but no formal report was filed.

Safety officer suggestions

The safety officer noted that attendees often wore their badges outside the venue. This can make people identifiable as tourists.

Committee recommendations

It is good that (at least some) potential complainants were willing to go to the safety officer with concerns and have discussions about incidents with her. It is a problem that the system has not earned enough trust for complainants to file formal reports. Retaliation is prohibited by the code of conduct and the new codes of ethics for the societies, but "prohibited" and "won't happen" are not the same: risk to complainants is nonzero, despite efforts to minimize it. Non-actionable reports still provide information that can be used to improve the conference, but individuals who may be violating the code of conduct can continue their behavior without sanction. We need to continue to work to make a system that potential complainants can trust in using fully.

Belittling or other negative behavior directed at early career researchers at poster sessions continues to be an issue. We will be undertaking efforts to try to educate our community more

about proper conduct in this venue. The committee also seeks other ideas on how to improve this: lightning talks instead of posters, fewer posters so there are more people around each one, having posters arranged in pairs so presenters have a partner, are some ideas but there may be better ones.

Meeting Accessibility Report

Part of the goal of the conference is to have a safe, inclusive, and professional environment; accessibility is part of this. This section was written by multiple individuals; Elizabeth J. Carlen and Brian O'Meara opted into being listed as coauthors, but others participated but declined credit. We thank them all.

- One accessibility question in the leadup to the in person conference was covid policy. At the time of the conference and months ahead of time, the US CDC official recommendation for the region was not to require masking. The CDC itself had a similarly sized conference two months in advance of Evolution and over 10% of attendees reported getting covid (<https://arstechnica.com/health/2023/05/covid-outbreak-at-cdc-gathering-infects-181-disease-detectives/>); the CDC did not require masks or vaccination at its conference, though most of its attendees were vaccinated. Evolution organizers decided to make masks optional and vaccination required but not assessed, unlike 2022 when both were required and checked. There were anecdotal reports of covid spread during the conference. Very few attendees wore masks, though the frequency appeared to increase during the conference; possibly due to an email sent by meeting organizers during the meeting reporting some attendees testing positive. Masks make conferences more difficult for people who benefit from reading lips, but they do reduce spread of diseases, so it is a tradeoff for accessibility.
- The online platform for the virtual conference used Zoom; attendees could opt in to seeing captioned talks in the original language and translated. This seemed to work well, with the only exceptions being captioning where the software assumed default language (English) was not that of the used by the speaker; in such cases, changing the default to the spoken language improved captioning.
- For some of the in person talks, live captioning in PowerPoint was turned on and appeared to work well; doing this by default for all presentations in the future is recommended.
- Some external buttons for wheelchair access doors were broken; they were reported but not fixed by the conference center.
- Room seating arrangements included spaces for people using wheelchairs and good aisle access. The spacing between seats in the session rooms was well set up. There were aisles on both sides and one down the center, meaning there was easier access to the middle seats. The seats were also spaced in rows that were further apart, so it was easier to move in and out of the middle seats without pressing your body against someone who was already sitting in an aisle seat.
- Many rooms had stairs, and only stairs, to reach the podium.

- Name badges were larger allowing self-identified disabilities (hard of hearing, low vision) and pronouns to be better seen by other attendees.
- Menstrual supplies were provided in all restrooms (male, female, & all gender), restocked by the tri-society diversity committee members. Multiple attendees noted that they were extremely thankful for this service. We should continue to support this effort in the future.
- There were no single stall gender neutral restrooms available at the convention center. Gender neutral restrooms were made by turning traditional “mens” and “womens” restrooms into gender neutral restrooms. Signs were added by the tri-society diversity committee denoting which gender neutral restrooms had urinals and toilets and which restrooms had only toilets.
- The decompression / quiet room was not well marked (it was in the basement of the convention center). The convention center lacked a decompression/quiet room which is essential for many attendees who become over-stimulated during the meeting and need a place to rest.
- Gluten free and vegan options were often mixed on the same table, without sufficient labeling. During the closing reception meat was placed on the vegan table. Food should be sufficiently labeled to ensure anyone with allergies can enjoy the dining options.
- For the poster session, presenters had the option (while registering) to have chairs provided.