CONFERENCE GUIDELINES

ABOUT ACUR

The Australasian Council for Undergraduate Research Inc (ACUR) exists to ensure that a high quality international conference of undergraduate research is held in Australasia annually. It aims to support different institutions in hosting the conference and to gain support for the conference in the wider higher and tertiary education community. The ACUR Executive, led by the ACUR Chair, has the responsibility to ensure consistency and quality of conferences. An International Steering Group advises the Executive, disseminates information within institutions and encourages students' presentation and attendance. The ACUR Executive and the Steering Group communicate through electronic means but may meet at conferences. Small task groups may be established from time to time to work on specific issues.

Definition of an undergraduate research conference

An undergraduate research conference is like any other academic conference but each presentation is delivered by undergraduate, including Honours, students presenting work they have done either as part of their course or as part of an internship. As a multi-disciplinary conference, undergraduates have the opportunity to network with other undergraduate researchers from their own disciplines, and also to learn about how other disciplines approach research problems. An ACUR undergraduate research conference provides a great opportunity to meet students from other universities and share research experiences.

Why undergraduate research?

Growing interest and practice internationally in engaging undergraduates in research has led to demand from students and academics to provide similar opportunities here in Australasia. There is evidence that practice is growing rapidly. Undergraduate research addresses the need to prepare students for professional life when knowledge is uncertain and the future is unclear. It is known to have high impact in engaging students. The benefits to students are well known and include: personal and professional gains such as increased confidence; and intellectual development including critical thinking and problem-solving skills and a more advanced understanding of how scientific knowledge is built. These skills are as important in business and industry as they are in universities.

CRITERIA FOR AN AUSTRALASIAN CONFERENCE OF UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

An ACUR conference is a conference which meets the following criteria:

1. is open to all undergraduate students and recent graduates including Honours students (within 12 months of Graduation at Bachelor's level) to present research conducted during or before undergraduate studies including extra-curricular research;
2. adopts an inclusive approach to undergraduate research which encourages participation from all disciplines, all levels of study and all types of higher and tertiary education institutions;
3. involves an academic peer review process for abstracts which allows students to resubmit where appropriate;
4. is primarily a face to face conference, but may include virtual conference elements (e.g. electronic networking, webinars, Skype discussions);
5. offers a range of options for students to disseminate research (for example, through posters, oral presentations, workshops, performances etc.);
6. is cost-effective to ensure that the conference fee for student delegates is affordable;
7. has a social program to give students the opportunity to mix and debate outside of the formal presentations;
8. involves undergraduate students in the organisation and running of the conference;
9. welcomes staff, including supervisors, institutional representatives and members of the ACUR Steering Group as delegates, and includes a session or sessions for them to discuss the implementation and management of undergraduate research;
10. provides time and space for the ACUR Inc AGM.

Note: An Australasian Conference of Undergraduate Research (ACUR) is designed to complement and not compete with undergraduate research provision at institutional and state-wide levels.

THE HOST INSTITUTION

The host institution is a university or other higher or tertiary education institute in Australia, New Zealand or nearby territories.

Applying to host the conference

In the first instance, potential hosts are advised to submit to the ACUR Chair an Expression of Interest. A detailed proposal is then required. A template is available for this purpose is at: http://www.acur.org.au/about-acur/conference-hosting/

The host institution must detail how their institution will meet the ACUR criteria. This will include details of administrative support and the facilities available for the conference, an indicative budget, and a timeline, together with a signed letter from a senior officer, i.e. VC or DVC, indicating their agreement to host the conference and including a statement that the institution will carry any risks associated with hosting it.

Responsibilities of the host institution

The host institution will:

1. offer a conference that meets all of the ACUR Conference criteria;
2. fully underwrite the conference and take full responsibility for the administration and financial management of the conference; administration and use of fees;
3. create an internal conference organising committee and take responsibility for the front-line management of the conference;
4. retain any profit arising from the conference with the expectation that this will be used to further undergraduate research (profits are calculated after the student membership fees have been returned to ACUR (see point 16 below);
5. meet any losses incurred;
6. take legal responsibility for all risk management issues associated with the conference, including insurance and security, IP issues/ creative commons etc.;
7. set the fees to be charged to delegates in collaboration with the ACUR Executive and taking into account the requirement to return student membership fees to ACUR (see point 16 below);
8. maintain the focus on students, based on ACUR guidelines;
9. use the ACUR logo and advertise the ACUR website in all publicity relating to the event;
10. keep the ACUR Executive updated about the progress of conference organisation by reporting to it at least monthly throughout the year of the conference;
11. include one external member of the ACUR steering group on the organising committee in order to maintain a balanced partnership;
12. encourage academics in the host institution to send students to present and participate;
13. identify and advertise on the ACUR website low cost accommodation options including staying with local students including graduate students, and/or local colleges of residence, hotels etc.;
14. evaluate the conference and report to the ACUR Executive in a way that can be included on the ACUR website and in the ACUR Newsletter (URNA);
15. invite hosts of the following year's conference to have a dialogue and a discussion, and give a brief invitation to delegates at the final conference session in order to stimulate excitement and ensure a sense of continuation.
16. at the end of the conference, to return to ACUR Inc an amount equal to the total student membership fees for the number of students presenting at the conference (currently $10 per student);
17. within a month following the conference, provide the ACUR Executive with a contact list of all delegates.

The conference program

The host institution will take responsibility for managing the quality of the academic and social program and work presented at the conference. This will include:

1. clearly setting out in the conference hosting proposal and agreeing with the ACUR Executive, a submissions, review and notification of outcome timetable;

2. establishing and agreeing with the Executive a timetable for the management of conference organisation including marketing, website updating, and the registration process;
3. conducting a submissions and review process according to the agreed timetable, [recommendation for host to have a review/programming committee and organizing committee];
4. providing monthly updates to the ACUR executive on the progress of 1, 2 and 3 above in the six months before the conference
5. providing an opportunity for students to re-submit where appropriate;
6. including workshops, meetings or pre-conference sessions on undergraduate research by and for academic staff where appropriate;
7. scheduling time for the ACUR AGM in the program and for a short presentation by the succeeding conference hosts;
8. social activities such as: break out groups, speed networking, BBQs, dinners;
9. designating nominations for prizes and managing the prizes process;
10. disseminating the program and a record of the event on the ACUR website (www.acur.org.au);
11. arranging publication of the best papers in a local or other undergraduate research journal.

THE AUSTRALASIAN COUNCIL FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH INC:

1. decides on the hosts and venue for the annual conference;
2. permits the conference to be branded as the official Australasian Conference of Undergraduate Research and use its logos and website;
3. does not subsidise conferences; they are underwritten by the host institution;
4. provides ACUR student membership to student delegates through their membership fee being included in their conference fee.
5. undertakes to lobby for funding for student delegates;
6. undertakes to ensure a breadth of representation across the higher and tertiary education sector on the steering group;
7. advertises the conference through the acur.org.au website and through social media;
8. advises and helps the host institution team by being represented on the conference committee.

ACUR EXECUTIVE

An Executive committee comprising the Chair, the Vice Chair, The Treasurer, the serving Conference Organiser, the New Zealand Representative, the Student Representative, the Executive Officer and Co-opted Executive members act for ACUR in all matters of policy and practice. In regard to ACUR conferences, on the advice of the Steering Committee the Executive:

1. establishes, maintains and publicises criteria and guidelines for institutions wishing to host an undergraduate research conference;
2. calls for expressions of interest from institutions to host future conferences and makes decisions on hosting proposals;

3. provides guidance to the chosen conference organising institutions and revise documentation in the light of their experiences;
4. provides practical help to conference organisers as requested such as documentation, spreadsheets, pro-formas, publicity etc.
5. monitors conference organisation by representation on conference organising committees;
6. maintains and updates mailing lists including lists of student presenters;
7. assists institutions in gaining sponsorship for future conferences.

ACUR STEERING GROUP

The Steering Group consists of individuals who have influence in their institutions in terms of gaining support and funding for undergraduates to attend and present at ACUR conferences, as well as individuals who are researching, implementing or leading projects to engage undergraduates in research and inquiry. The Steering Group includes representatives from 30 Australian universities, 4 New Zealand universities and 14 other organisations worldwide. A large, inclusive, Steering Group ensures information is spread widely across institutions and ensures no particular individual is burdened with work.

In regard to ACUR Conferences, the Steering Group:

1. provides advice to the Executive regarding the ongoing reputation and progress of ACUR;
2. encourages the spread of undergraduate research in their institutions;
3. encourages institutions to host an ACUR conference;
4. assists in disseminating information about undergraduate research in general and ACUR in particular in their own institutions;
5. encourages participation in ACUR conferences and in choosing best posters for *Posters in Parliament* when appropriate.

ACUR Inc Executive

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