

## CONFERENCE GUIDELINES

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### **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 Committee advises the Executive, disseminates information within institutions and encourages students' presentation and attendance. The ACUR Executive and the Steering Committee 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 running of the conference;
9. welcomes staff, including supervisors, institutional representatives and members of the ACUR Steering Committee 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 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, and 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.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS**

We like to announce the following year's conference venue at the last session of the previous year's conference and there is quite a lot to get through before then so we encourage institutions wishing to submit an expression of interest to do so as soon as they are able. The procedure is:

1. The Institution submits to the ACUR Chair a draft expression of interest.
2. The Chair shares this with the Executive and the Steering Committee who provide feedback
3. The Institution revises expression of interest in the light of the feedback
4. The Chair normally agrees the revised expression of interest. But reserves the right in exceptional cases to refer back the expression of interest to the institution.
5. Expression of interest is signed off by a senior institutional member (usually DVC) and forwarded to the Chair or Executive Officer.
6. The Chair agrees and the conference venue is publicly announced.

Our experience is that this usually takes longer than you would think as there is usually some negotiation needed at institutional level – particularly where matters of accommodation and finance are concerned.

### **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;
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 to ACUR \$10 per student registrant (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 at least monthly throughout the year of the conference;
11. include one external member of the ACUR Steering Committee 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;
17. Profits are calculated after the student membership fees have been returned to ACUR
18. 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 an opportunity for students to re-submit where appropriate;
5. including workshops, meetings or pre-conference sessions on undergraduate research by and for academic staff where appropriate;
6. scheduling time for the ACUR AGM in the program
7. social activities such as: break out groups, speed networking, BBQs, dinners;
8. designating nominations for prizes and managing the prizes process;
9. disseminating the program and a record of the event on the ACUR website ([www.acur.org.au](http://www.acur.org.au));
10. giving consideration to 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. Conferences are underwritten by the host institution and ACUR does not subsidise it, nor does it make any claim on any profits arising from the conference;
4. Student delegates become student members of ACUR through a \$10 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 Committee;
7. advertises the conference through the [www.acur.org.au](http://www.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 and the Executive Officer acts 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 COMMITTEE**

The Steering Committee 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 Committee includes representatives from 30 Australian universities, 4 New Zealand universities and 14 other organisations worldwide. A large, inclusive, Steering Committee ensures information is spread widely across institutions and ensures no particular individual is burdened with work.

In regard to ACUR Conferences, the Steering Committee:

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;

## **FINALISING ACUR CONFERENCE ORGANISATION**

**Following an ACUR conference, Conference Organisers are expected to complete the following:**

### **Immediately after the conference:**

1. Formerly notify prize-winners and send certificates and prizemoney/vouchers to those who did not receive them at the conference.
2. Liaise with HERDSA and/or any other sponsors, regarding the recipient of their sponsored prize
3. Send delegates a certificate of participation attached to an email. Certificates of participation could be distributed at the end of the conference. However, those who have left prior to the end of the conference need to be sent their certificates.

### **Within a month of the conference**

4. Share the findings of the conference evaluation with the Executive.
5. Write an account of the conference for inclusion in the ACUR newsletter (URNA)
6. Prepare a full report of the conference for inclusion on the ACUR website. This would normally include: copy of the conference program displayed with links to abstracts and in pdf form; photographs; An account of the conference in terms of range, number and type of presentations, number of universities represented, any special features or notable events; list of prize-winners; where the best papers will be published. (An example is attached).
7. Send the Executive Officer a spreadsheet of all participants and presenters presentation titles and abstracts and information about supervisors as gathered with submissions.
8. Also send to the Executive Officer an electronic copy of the final conference program for inclusion in the ACUR archives.
9. Prepare a full statement of costs of the conference and send to the Chair.
10. No later than the end of the calendar year in which the conference is held, to transfer \$10 per presenting student to the ACUR bank account and notify the Treasurer when this has been done.

ACUR Inc Executive

Approved February 2020

Minor update 3 August