

Australasian Neuroscience Society Annual Scientific Meeting

Guide for Local Organising Committee

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1. Expression of interest, initial booking of venue and joint meetings

Any ANS member can liaise with the ANS Secretary to express interest in hosting an Annual Scientific Meeting of the Society. The anticipated dates – determined a minimum of 18-24 months prior to the next meeting – are determined by the ANS Executive. Bids are discussed by the ANS Executive and approval of the Executive is required before proceeding further.

The LOC should liaise with the ANS Executive to organize the appointment of a Professional Conference Organiser (PCO), and arrange a booking/ tentative hold on venue for the programmed dates (determined by ANS Executive). All contracts must be signed on behalf of the Society by the Secretary of ANS.

2. Joint meetings

ANS has occasionally participated in joint meetings with other societies. The main advantage of such meetings is their large and varied scientific program. However, because different societies may have dramatically different traditions and operating procedures, compromises are often necessary to produce a streamlined, well-integrated meeting. To avoid unacceptable outcomes or misunderstandings that may emerge late in the conference organisation process, ANS members seeking to propose a joint meeting must provide the Executive with a set of formally agreed ground rules before any joint meeting will be approved. As a minimum, the ground rules should consider the following issues:

- meeting venue and dates
- which professional conference organizer will organize the meeting
- composition of the conference organizing and programming committees
- timeline of major conference planning events
- procedure and timeline for approving the conference budget
- how profit or loss will be allocated between the societies
- registration costs for the various categories of membership
- conference website hosting and design
- contents of the online registration form
- abstract format and program book format
- mechanism of sharing of registration and abstract databases between societies
- total number and selection process for plenary lecturers (will ANS will be able to hold its usual four named plenary lectures?)
- numbers and categories of symposia and how they will be selected

- funding of symposia and plenaries
- number of parallel streams and whether or not key events such as plenaries and AGMs will be held in parallel with other conference events
- numbers of free oral presentations allocated to each society
- preliminary plans for catering and social events

It will not always be practical to resolve all of the above issues in detail prior to approval to proceed being obtained from both societies. The key thing is to agree up-front on the principles and mechanisms by which decisions will be reached for each of the above points. Ideally, an itemised agreement should be formalised in a contract signed by the President of each participating society.

When organising a joint meeting with an international society, the sequence of events may be different. The first step is to bid in competition with other national societies for the right to host the joint conference. If ANS tried to negotiate the above list with the Council of an international society prior to bidding, its chances of success would be seriously jeopardised. In such cases, the ANS Executive should apply due diligence in a diplomatic manner prior to allowing any such bid to proceed, to ensure that the joint meeting will not impact excessively on ANS traditions, membership numbers or operating procedures.

3. Local organising committee

The successful bid needs to organise a Local Organizing Committee (LOC) with representation from institutions/universities that is as wide as possible. (An email list of local [State/regional] members can be obtained from the ANS Secretary or website.) LOC membership should reflect the membership of ANS in the host region, contain members of different seniority (including postgraduate students), and bear in mind the different jobs that need to be performed by the LOC (programming, social events, hosting *etc.*). A small LOC (4-5 members) that delegates roles to people with specific skills/ interests often works most efficiently and effectively. LOC membership should be organised 18 months prior to the conference.

Allocate key roles, including: Chair, assistant Chair, secretary, treasurer (this role undertaken by ANS Treasurer), social committee, local scientific programming committee, media liaison contact, student judging committee, student “helper” co-ordinator (best undertaken by a senior PhD student), fund raising committee.

4. The budget

Expenses of the ANS and the conference budget are managed separately but are both accounted for under the auspices of ANS. Ongoing liaison with the ANS Treasurer, ANS Secretary, Conference Secretariat and the PCO is essential. All expenses and income are managed by the ANS Treasurer and PCO within the existing accounts, to reduce overall workload and costs associated with managing the budget and to simplify auditing procedures.

Income

The primary forms of income for ANS Annual Meetings are:

- A. Registration fees (including cost of social events).
- B. Exhibition booths.
- C. Advertising fees (database access, registration brochure inserts and advertising, satchel sponsorship, satchel inserts, namebadge sponsorship). Advertising in the program is a Society (ANS) revenue because the Society budget pays for these publications (not the conference budget).
- D. Sponsorship. Sponsorship at the local level is organized by the LOC and can be used towards costs as directed by sponsors' wishes, those of the local committee and after discussion with the ANS Executive. Monies raised should be collected via invoice raised by ANS Treasurer or Secretariat and accounted for through the ANS Society budget or conference budget, respectively. Sponsorship raised by the conference secretariat attracts a commission that is reduced if raised by the LOC and only managed by the secretariat.

Expenses

The conference budget is organized in consultation with the Professional Conference Organizer (PCO). The conference budget is responsible for covering the costs of:

- *Venue hire and security*
- *Audio visual costs*
- *Poster boards and exhibition shell hire costs*
- *Printing of registration brochure, tickets, badges, passports, name badges etc.*
- *Postage, phone and stationery*
- *Satchels & namebadge holders*

- *Payment for student helpers*
- *Passport prize*
- *PCO fees plus their conference expenses and airfares*
- *Public Relations*
- *Insurance/ public liability costs*
- *Printing of program and proceedings*
- *Webmaster*
- *Bank charges*
- *Social events and catering. Some cost recovery is incorporated into the price of tickets, taking into account support from ANS.*
- *Dinner costs. The cost recovery incorporated into the price of dinner tickets depends upon sponsorship if available and due consideration of the balance of the budget.*

The conference budget is also responsible for the costs of the following items but are managed by the Treasurer as a direct contribution to the conference by the Society:

- *Student travel grants*
- *Plenary speaker allowance (negotiated with each speaker, includes registration fee + dinner ticket)*
- *Symposium speaker allowance (currently \$2500 towards the costs of an overseas speaker per symposium, plus gratis registration fee + dinner ticket)*
- *Monetary student prizes*

5. Initial programming

The chair of the LOC should attend the ANS Executive meeting in May/June of the year prior to the ANS Meeting in order to confirm the plenary speakers and finalise the selection of symposia and approval of satellite meetings.

Plenary Speakers

The role of selecting and organising plenary speakers is that of the ANS Executive as directed by the Editor, and invitations should have been issued 12-24 months in advance of the meeting.

Symposia

Calls for symposia are issued 12 months prior to the meeting via the ANS Executive. The LOC should be actively encouraging symposia submissions prior to this date and Executive looks favourably on supporting at least one symposium organized by the LOC. Symposia must be approved by the ANS Executive. Instructions for symposia are as follows:

It is important that those interested in suggesting items for the meeting program provide the following information, which is used by Council members and the local meeting secretary to decide on program items. Suggestions that do not have this information will be seriously disadvantaged and are unlikely to be successful. Proposals should have: (i) a working title, (ii) names/contact details of the organisers, (iii) a brief explanation of the subject matter to be covered and why it is of special interest at this time, (iv) the names of FOUR potential speakers and the topic each would address. The potential speakers should have been contacted and indicated their willingness to participate if the symposium is accepted for the meeting. This is especially important for overseas speakers, since Council needs to be confident that overseas speakers are committed to participating in the symposium before they are likely to accept it for the program.

Symposia suggestions that have multiple speakers from the one institution, have too many speakers from the one state, have speakers who have been very recent plenary or symposium speakers at an ANS meeting, are on topics that have recently been the subject of ANS symposia, or are unlikely to be of significant interest to a reasonable number of registrants, are less likely to be accepted for the program.

ANS will provide support (currently \$2500) to assist the participation of one OVERSEAS speaker in each symposium and in addition pay their registration fee. However, ANS does not waive registration or accommodation fees for Australian speakers or the organisers or chairpersons, or provide contributions to their travel costs. Anyone interested in proposing a symposium is encouraged to discuss their ideas with the ANS Secretary before they submit their proposal.

Satellite meetings

Calls for satellite meetings are issued 12 months prior to the meeting by ANS Council as directed by the Editor. Again, the LOC should be actively encouraging satellite submissions. Satellite meetings must be approved by the ANS Executive. The instructions for satellite meetings are as follows:

ANS considers endorsement of satellite meeting and workshops following submission of applications outlining the workshop or satellite meeting area of research and purpose, organizing committee, speaker list and possible level of interest to its Society members. The ANS Council consider such applications for the annual meeting in the following calendar year, and thus needs to receive these applications by the end of February at the latest. The organizers are then advised of whether endorsement has been approved as soon as practicable after this meeting.

6. Social program

The conference dinner is an essential part of the ANS annual meeting, but the type and organization of social events is at the discretion of the LOC. For the social events (including the dinner) the LOC or its delegated social committee should determine a venue and plan for the events. The LOC, in consultation with the PCO, will then liaise directly with the venue and finalise details of cost, menu, wine list *etc.* Issues such as transportation to and from the venues need to be considered, as timely and convenient travel will enhance enjoyment of events. All payments need to be approved by the Treasurer of ANS.

7. Registration brochure and website

Approximately 9 months prior to the meeting, the PCO will draft a registration brochure and liaise with the ANS webmaster for posting of the preliminary programme. It is up to the LOC Chair to determine how much of a role they wish to play in the draft/design process. It is important that a biography and photograph of each of the plenary speakers is provided for both the registration brochure and website. It is best if this is supplied directly by the speakers, with careful editing by the LOC Chair to fit the assigned space.

It is also important at this stage to confirm with symposia organizers the final list of speakers and the titles of talks.

A “welcome” needs to be written by the LOC chair for the brochure and website. See Appendix A for a suggested format.

If including logos of sponsors, it is important to ensure that public relations officers from the sponsoring organisations view the draft documents before they go to press for approval of size, colour *etc.*

8. Accommodation

Accommodation venues are organized and booked through the conference PCO. The LOC can contribute any local advice and recommendations in this process, while paying attention to the provision of accommodation to suit different budgets.

9. LOC meetings with conference secretariat

In addition to ongoing communications between the chair of the LOC and the conference PCO, two official meetings of the LOC with direct involvement of the PCO are required.

Nine Months Out: Face-to-face meeting between LOC and PCO staff. This visit will incorporate inspection of the venue to assess size of rooms, flow of traffic, location of social events, ambience of poster and trade hall, *etc.*

Two Months Out: Teleconference with LOC and PCO staff. This is the time at which the finalisation of roles and final details are discussed.

10. Local scientific programming committee

Programming meeting

Two weeks after the early registration and abstract deadline, the PCO will send the ANS Editor one set, and the chair of the local scientific programming committee two sets, of all abstracts sorted into Research Themes and then into their individual requests: poster; oral but happy to present poster; oral only (*i.e.* does not want to present if not selected for oral); invited symposia speaker and plenary; plus an electronic file and suggestions of how best to number abstracts. The LOC needs to liaise with the Editor in regards to meeting for the programming session. The Editor, in consultation with the PCO and LOC, will set deadlines as to when the secretariat requires the finalized programme but this would normally be two weeks after the abstracts have been sent.

Each abstract is first checked by the Editor for scientific merit (results) and other issues. For the programming meeting, it is recommended that each abstract is read and ranked by at least 2 members of the local scientific programming committee, and to have each person allocated to one or two of the ANS major themes (therefore the more people on this committee the better – 10 is a good number). The programming meeting typically takes ½ day to select oral presentations, grouping of presentations and posters into logical themes, and selection of Chairs for each session. Posters need to be further divided into day of presentation.

Floor Plan for posters

The timing, numbering and arrangement of posters will have been decided at the programming committee meeting. The PCO will send a draft floor plan for the posters which will need approval ~4 weeks prior to the conference

Oral Session Chairs

Chairs of all sessions should be contacted as soon as possible after the programming meeting to confirm availability and acceptance of role. Example letter to chairs and guidelines to chairs are attached (appendices B and C).

11. Student travel awards

These awards are available to all students (with a maximum of 2 per PhD candidate over their candidature) including overseas students. The travel grants are administered by the ANS Treasurer. The value of the grants is decided based on an economy fare to the ANS meeting from major capital cities 2 weeks prior to the conference, the overall budget allocated to travel grants, and the number of students who apply. Travel grants for overseas students will be limited to PhD students who are the first named author on an abstract and will be equal to the amount awarded to Australian students travelling from the greatest distance within Australia. Grants are only awarded to those who actually attend the meeting.

12. Student prize judging

An enthusiastic team of local members, led by a delegated member of the LOC, is required to organize the judging of student posters and oral presentations. With the program finalized, a list of judges from around Australia can then be assembled. The PCO will provide two spreadsheet files listing eligible students (one for orals and one for posters) detailing Oral/Poster Number, name, institution, address, email, telephone and title of abstract. This will include how many times they have entered previously and the level of study (years of PhD). There is a limit of 2 entries into the student prize competition during a PhD candidature, and the applicant must be the presenting author on the abstract. Depending on the program, the poster prizes are normally announced during the conference, while the oral prizes are typically announced at a later date, as not all sessions may have finished prior to the opportunity for announcements.

During the conference, a preliminary meeting with all judges is advised plus a strategy for handing in assessment sheets to the judging co-ordinators. Clear guidelines to marking should be provided in conjunction with score sheets (see Appendix D). Advise judges to make clear distinctions and use the full range of marks available to them to make final decisions easier.

13. Student mixer

ANS will provide funds towards a student mixer event. This should be organized by local PhD students, with leadership by a student member of the LOC, approximately 6 months prior to the conference. The venue must be handy to the conference (walking distance) and should be advertised prior to the conference by an “email out” to all registered students (the PCO can provide this list of email addresses) and advertising/handouts at the registration desk.

14. Paid student helpers

Paid student helpers are required to assist in the packing of satchels, to work at the registration desk and to assist with AV services. An email to local students at local institutions and universities 2 months prior to the conference can help with advertising the positions available. Students are not required to be registered to attend the conference in order to work the various sessions. A detailed roster should be compiled prior to the event. Training is provided by the PCO and AV services at the venue.

15. Room signs and program revisions

It is the responsibility of the LOC to organize room signs and to post notices of program revisions at the conference in consultation with the PCO. The room signs should be posted outside each of the rooms, while the program revisions can be posted on a central notice board near the registration desk. The room signage can be easily constructed from the full conference program which will be posted on the website at that time.

16. VIPs

It is a matter of judgment by the LOC as to whether they wish to meet plenary speakers at the airport and take them to their hotels. It is recommended that symposium organizers are advised that this might also be a good thing to do for their international speakers. This is a nice touch to make the speakers feel welcome.

17. The conference

Not much advice we can give you now! If the above hasn't worked it might be too late. Have a drink at the opening mixer and be prepared for anything to happen. Don't forget to thank the LOC when it is all over.

Appendix A - Invitation by local Chair

An invitation to for ANS 20XX...

The ____ Annual Meeting of the Australasian Neuroscience Society will be held at the _____, located in the heart of the city close to hotels, transport, entertainment, restaurants and shops. The _____ offers state-of-the-art facilities in luxurious surroundings.

The conference is designed to provide opportunities for both formal and informal interaction for those working in the neuroscience field. Our keynote speakers include _____. The plenary lectures will be followed by a series of concurrent symposia, free oral communications and posters which will reflect the cutting edge of neuroscience in Australia and overseas. Once again there will be a trade display and an Exhibitor Passport Competition with some very tempting prizes.

The social program will include a “mixer” on Sunday night, a on Monday night and the conference dinner on Tuesday night. Tickets for the conference dinner should be ordered in advance as numbers are limited. The dinner will be held at “.....”. A special discount is available for students. There will also be farewell drinks on Wednesday afternoon.

A list of satellite meetings is included in the brochure. There are also ideas for pre- and post-meeting activities, which we hope will encourage some people to spend some extra time in

Check out the airfares to – there are some excellent rates. We can assure you it will be well worth the visit!

.....your name and photo here

Chair, Local Organising Committee

.....

.....

Appendix B – Letter to Session Chairs

Dear Chair of an oral session

Thank you very much for serving as a Chair at the following oral session:

Session Title:

Date and time of session:

Please note:

- Arrive at your session at least five minutes before it starts and ensure the speakers are familiar with the operation of the audio-visual facilities.
- Ensure that you have read and understood all the abstracts related to your session, and are prepared to lead discussion for each presentation. The abstracts and session details will be available at the ANS website by the middle of December. Remember, you and the speakers are all responsible for the scientific success of your session! For example, if a speaker has written something you don't understand it can be a great help to ask the speaker what it means before the session - this will give the speaker a chance to clarify matters during their presentation.
- Introduce the session by reminding the audience of the title and reminding the speakers of the time available. A few sentences which bring the theme of the presentations together are always welcome by audience and speakers alike.
- An operator will be in each room to ensure Powerpoint presentations are available as speakers go to the lectern and to assist with the audio-visual equipment.
- Each oral session will have eight speakers with 15 minute time slots (10 minutes + 5 minutes question time).
- Please make every effort to adhere to the allotted time for each speaker. Timing devices will be available to help you with this.
- In the event of a speaker not appearing for their talk, DO NOT move the next lecture in the session up to fill the vacancy. This will ensure that delegates who wish to move between sessions can do so without disappointment. The spare time can be used for additional discussion or simply used as an unscheduled break.
- In the event of urgent matters relating to your Oral session, please contact the PCO representatives on the registration desk.

Thank you again for helping to make the meeting a success by serving as an oral Chair. We are very grateful for the significant amount of work this task involves.

Appendix C – Notes for Session Chairs

Before the meeting

Before the meeting, please seek out the abstracts for your session from the website, read them, and be sure you understand what they are about. If the abstract is outside your field of expertise you may find it useful to seek out and read recent reviews outlining the critical issues and their relevance to the big picture. This information is useful for comments to start a discussion, particularly if nobody asks a question from the floor after a reasonable interval. Staple any notes/comments/questions you have to each abstract and remember to bring them with you to the meeting.

Before the session

At any social gatherings, tea breaks, *etc* please take the opportunity to introduce yourself to the participants of your session. Establish the preferred form of introduction, some information regarding their abstract and whether they have organised any special requirements for their presentation such as video projection. This should already have been done but should be checked and advance knowledge will help you to make the session run smoothly.

At the session

Please arrive in plenty of time before your session. Introduce yourself to the audiovisual support person and learn about the technicalities of lights, projectors, microphone, video monitors, spotlights; especially, for instance, the necessity of pitch dark for fluorescence histology. Check also that there is an adequate system of pointers. Lastly, check that there is water and a few glasses available.

ANS meetings run up to four parallel sessions and people often move from one to another. In order for this to be possible, it is important that you should be accurate in monitoring the timing of each presentation so that the program runs to the published timetable. Nominally it is 10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for discussion. The maximum total time is 15 minutes. Ensure that there is a timer and find out how the timer works.

Allow time to make a small welcome speech, introducing yourself and naming the session and topic. Explain again the time available to the speaker, what the timer lights and buzzers mean and stress that it is the maximum allowed. Announce the papers by reading the exact title of the abstract and the names of all authors. Then say, "The paper will be presented by (normal first name, normal family name). Interjections should be discouraged unless they concern a genuine problem in understanding. As soon as the last presentation of data is complete, turn on full

lights. At the 10 minute buzzer, you should stand up. You may need to remind effusive speakers that their discussion time will be limited if they do not summarise their results promptly. If the speaker has not finished by the 15 minute mark you **MUST** stand up, explain the time limits are inviolable and summon the next speaker.

If a paper is withdrawn, the session lapses for the scheduled time in order to keep in register with other sessions. Announce the paper, say it is withdrawn and give the re-starting time. It is best not to leave the theatre but allow the audience to talk amongst themselves. It is unfair to presenters and delegates to allow extra time for other papers or to start talks earlier than scheduled.

Running a discussion

This is the most important function of the Chair. As a rule, take the first question from the first person to put up their hand and follow this order. If not audible to the whole audience, repeat the questions, and encourage short but complete answers from the speaker. If it is at all possible, a question should be able to be answered without the need to return to the presentation material.

Sometimes questions are slow to come and you can use one of the comments from notes you have prepared: comments beginning with "in my view the most interesting thing ... what does anyone else think?" may help to start things. If this fails, a direct approach such as "What do you think, Professor Smith?" should elicit comment.

Favour questions that put the findings on paper in a more general context rather than narrow specialist or methodological issues, perhaps by asking supplementary questions. If a speaker is a student or has poor English and is having trouble answering the question, you can refer to the co-author, supervisor or recognised expert in the audience for further elaboration. If you wish, you can give a brief summing up and thank the presenter as they finish. It is important to maintain the discussion until the allotted 15 minutes presentation is over.

Manners

Generally, a formal attitude should be maintained. Read the full title of the presentation and names of all the authors. Addresses need not be read out unless there is a special reason to do so, such as collaboration with an overseas lab. Announce the presenter with both first and second names and, where possible, identify questioners by their correct title and names. A lighter atmosphere will help put the presenters at ease but do not sacrifice good manners to this end. After the last presentation, thank the presenters and the audience.

Summary

The Chair's is a very important job and can make or break a session. Contribution by all should be encouraged to engender a feeling that they have contributed to a quest for new knowledge and have a collective solidarity that characterises a cooperative, community achievement. This is what a learned society is for and it can be influenced enormously by the Chair.

Thank you again for your contribution to the meeting.

Appendix D1: Student oral scoring sheet

Date: Student's name:

Session and talk title:

Judge's name:

Student Oral Score Sheet	Mark	Comment
1. Abstract – well written, data clearly and concisely presented.	/10	
2. Visual display and oral presentation – use of illustrative material, clear slides, clarity of speech, speed of presentation, within time limit <i>etc.</i>	/20	
3. Content – results, relevance of results presented/discussed in context, impact of findings.	/50	
4. Presentation and answering of questions – does the speaker “know their stuff”?	/2	
OVERALL MARK	/100	

Appendix D2: Poster Scoring Sheet

Date: Student's name:

Session and poster title:

Judge's name:

Student Poster Score Sheet	Mark	Comment
1. Abstract – well written, data clearly and concisely presented.	/10	
2. Appearance – use of illustrative material, clear & easy-to-read text, flow of information and logical presentation of data.	/20	
3. Content – results, relevance of results presented/discussed in context, impact of findings.	/50	
4. Presentation and answering of questions at poster. Does the speaker “know their stuff”?	/20	
OVERALL MARK	/100	