



## British Society for the History of Science Postgraduate Conference Organisation

### Terms of Reference

Each year, the BSHS holds a Postgraduate Conference. The conference has both an academic and a social purpose: to provide postgraduates in the history of science with an opportunity to meet each other, to share ideas and experiences, and to give what might be their first-ever conference paper in a friendly and supportive environment. 'History of science' should be broadly defined to include science, technology and medicine. It is also hoped that the postgraduate meeting will encourage new members of the profession to attend the BSHS annual conference in the summer and to join the BSHS itself.

It is intended as an event organised by postgraduates for postgraduates. It therefore provides an excellent opportunity for postgraduates to gain experience of organising a conference. The BSHS provides generous support, including subsidising the accommodation costs by 50%, providing Butler Eyles Travel grants to speakers and underwriting the event from financial loss. In addition, in January 2014 BSHS Council also approved an annual grant of £500 per annum from core BSHS funds as direct support of the BSHS Postgraduate conference. However, the conference must be organised to break-even (excluding accommodation and the annual grant), and the responsibility for the event itself rests with the organisers.

- Applicants must be current postgraduate students with a keen interest in the history of science, technology or medicine, at a higher education institution in the United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland.
- There is no nationality requirement for applicants. There is no age limit. Non-members of the Society are welcome to apply.
- Preference may be given to those applicants who study at institutions which have not hosted the conference in recent years.
- It is expected that the applicant will have sought the approval and support of the department prior to applying.
- Applications should be made on the form provided. Informal discussions can be had with the Postgraduate Representative of the Conferences Committee, Elizabeth Jones (elizabeth.jones.13@ucl.ac.uk)

Applications will be considered and determined by the current Postgraduate Representative of the Society's Conferences Committee, and reviewed by the Committee as a whole. No interviews will be held. Applicants will normally be notified by the end of March with brief details of the conference announced in *Viewpoint* in June.

Please see the 'Guidelines' following the application form for further details of the organisation process. Applicants may be invited to join the Conferences Committee as Postgraduate Representative for the academic year in which the conference is held, which may involve attending one or more meeting and corresponding as appropriate.



## British Society for the History of Science Postgraduate Conference Organisation

### Application Form

Please complete and return to the Postgraduate Representative of BSHS Conferences Committee (Elizabeth Jones – elizabeth.jones.13@ucl.ac.uk) by 1 January 2016.

#### 1. Personal Details

<b>Your name:</b>	
<b>Correspondence address:</b>	
<b>E-mail:</b>	
<b>Institution and Department:</b>	
<b>Level of study (PhD year/MA):</b>	

#### 2. Proposal Details

a) Why do you want to host the conference at your institution?

b) What facilities are available at/near your institution? (e.g. conference rooms, accommodation, catering, etc., with an indication as to costs if known)

c) What support is available? (e.g. potential funding, departmental support, fellow postgraduates with shared interest, etc.)

### 3. Declaration by applicant

I confirm that the details given on this form are correct.	
<b>Signature:</b>	<b>Date:</b>

The details you provide on this form may be stored electronically, but will be used only for assessing your grant application. They will not be shared with third parties. Signatures may be typed or scanned.

### **Guidelines for BSHS Postgraduate Conferences**

The BSHS is a company limited by guarantee, registered number 562208; charity number 258854, registered address Avalon House, Marcham Road, Abingdon, Oxfordshire, OX14 1UD, England.

**Address for communications:** PO Box 3408, Norwich, NR3 3WE, England.

## ***Organisation***

The conference is usually organised by a small committee of postgraduates from the host institution (perhaps three or four, hopefully with extra helpers on the days of the conference). It goes without saying that they should have the approval and support of their department/centre. They can also call upon the BSHS Conferences Committee (Chair and/or Secretary), Treasurer or Executive Secretary for further help or guidance.

Dates for the conference will be confirmed immediately after the decision is made in late-May to allow the BSHS to advertise details of the event. This will also enable you to book (or pre-book) accommodation and rooms for the conference. BSHS feels that it is important that the conference takes place out of term, a) so that postgrads with teaching commitments are able to attend; b) so that it will be easier for host institutions to provide rooms/lecture theatres; c) so that it will be easier to find accommodation, e.g. in halls of residence. For these reasons, the conference is normally in early January.

A call for papers usually goes out in late summer via the BSHS newsletter, the Society's website, and the history of science mailing lists (e.g. Mersenne, H-Sci-Med-Tech, various departmental lists). The deadline should be set so as to allow new research students time to write an abstract.

The conference organisers have the unenviable task of trying to arrange all the people who want to give a paper into sessions. It is wisest to delay all decisions about rejection and acceptance until after the deadline for submissions, because only then will the organisers know how many (if any) papers it is necessary for them to reject. The conference usually lasts 3 days, beginning at lunch on the first day to allow people to travel that morning. Recently the conference has utilised parallel sessions to enable more people to present. There have occasionally been tours or CPD (e.g. a careers or publishing workshop) included in the programme, but there are usually so many papers to fit in that there isn't much spare time.

Rejections are at the discretion of the committee but, for example, might be based on papers being unconnected to HSTM, or based on experience (with preference being given to those in the earlier stages of their postgraduate career). It is acceptable to notify applicants of their acceptance or rejection by email. Some applicants (often those from overseas, or those seeking travel grants from their institution) may request a hard-copy letter of acceptance, and this should be supplied. Please take care not to give any assurances that might be interpreted as implying financial support (Butler-Eyles grant applications are dealt with separately, by the Treasurer), and refer any requests for more complicated paperwork to the BSHS Conferences Committee.

Once the draft programme is complete it is possible to ask people to formally register and pay, with a deadline of, say, early December, allowing confirmation of room bookings and catering numbers. A final communication with attendees will be necessary in December, to confirm receipt of payment, accommodation details, and include the final programme along with all other necessary details.

## *Example Timetable*

**May-** Make any pre-bookings necessary to ensure accommodation is available; announce date of conference in BSHS newsletter and website (with contact details of committee)

**August-** Issue call for papers

**Early October-** Re-issue call for papers (to remind people, and to catch new starts)

**Early November** Deadline for abstracts; Update BSHS Conference Committee on progress; run proposed budget past BSHS Treasurer

**Mid November** Issue a draft programme, along with a call for registration and payment.

**Early December** Deadline for registration and payment; Update BSHS Treasurer; confirm numbers with catering and accommodation providers.

**Early January** The Postgraduate Conference!

**Late January** (Council meeting) Draft accounts presented

**Early April** (Council meeting) Accounts must be finalised by now

## *Organisation “Top Tips”*

- When planning the programme, organisers should bear in mind that a) no one really wants to start at 9am, and b) the event is social, as well as professional, so lunch and coffee breaks should be of reasonable length.
- The format is usually sessions of four 15-20 min papers with discussion, separated by coffee/tea/lunch, but alternatives such as short presentations or poster sessions can be used if the committee wishes.
- If using parallel sessions, consider which are running at the same time and try to avoid overlapping themes!
- Preventing speakers from running over is a challenge. Some ask chairs to use warning notices (e.g. 5 mins, 2 mins, STOP), and all should ask chairs to be strict with timing.
- Don't be afraid to get in touch with the programmes committee, or past organisers, if you have a question about the organisation of the event.
- When papers have to be declined, it is important to be tactful. Thank the applicant for their proposal, indicate that it is being declined with regret, and give some indication of the reason for the rejection.

## *Financial Matters*

In the past, the conference has been a shoe-string operation, trying to keep costs as low as possible to make it accessible to all postgrads. Some past organising committees have been successful in securing additional grants, which has allowed them to plan something a little more lavish, but future organisers should not feel that they are producing an inadequate conference if they do not secure such grants. The important thing is to put together a well-run event, enjoyed by as many people as possible. Like any other BSHS conference, the conference must be organised to break-even, accommodation (and annual grant from Council) excepted. [Please check with the Conferences Committee before budgeting to ensure that the annual grant remains available.] In an imperfect world, a loss may well result for a variety of reasons; this is underwritten by the BSHS, provided forward planning can be shown to give an intention at least to break even and preferably to expect a surplus. Any surplus left over at the end of the conference will be handed over to BSHS Butler-Eyles Fund, which makes travel grants to postgraduate students.

To demonstrate this, the organising committee need to submit a proposed income/expenditure schedule to BSHS Conferences Committee before the registration form goes out. This should detail the proposed registration fee, the expected number of attendees, and all the expected costs (e.g. administration, refreshments, drinks reception, room hire). An example is below. Draft accounts should be prepared as soon as possible after the event, and sent to the Treasurer (in time for the late January Council meeting); finalised accounts should be sent as soon as possible afterwards, and in any event by the April Council meeting.

The registration fee should be kept as low as possible – the main things it has to cover are photocopying, postage, name badges, coffee/tea and biscuits in the intervals, room hire, any included tours/events/receptions. Lunch is normally included, but if the budget is tight and there are local eateries then it could be omitted. Dinner is not usually included, and the conference dinner would be a separate item on the registration form. Dinner on the first night is usually organised informally. Although the list of things to be included in the registration fee may look extensive, host institutions often help with some or more of these items, e.g. by providing the seminar room for free, by allowing the use of the photocopier, and perhaps offering to pay the cost of a drinks reception. Assistance of this sort means that £5 or £10 would be a typical registration fee if lunch is not included.

BSHS will subsidise the cost of overnight accommodation for conference participants by 50%. The accommodation is expected to be in halls of residence or equivalent, although cheap commercial accommodation has occasionally been used. BSHS would prefer to pay its share of accommodation costs once an invoice has been received (i.e. once we know for certain how many person-nights of accommodation have been used). University residences are usually quite happy with this arrangement, but if commercial accommodation is being used, and requires an advance payment, this can be negotiated with the Treasurer and Executive Secretary.

## ***Example budget- 2012 Postgraduate Conference***

### Funding (all University of Warwick)- total £2770

Centre for the History of Medicine	£1920
Humanities Research Centre	£750
History Department	£100

### Expenditure- total £900 plus £45 per person

Wine Reception	£400
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*To include disposable wine glasses, nibbles, wine.*

Admin	£500
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*To include: publicity posters, name-tags, conference packs (including notepads, pencils, etc.), programme booklets, printing materials, and other sundries.*

Catering	£45 per person
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*To include: 3x lunches, all coffee breaks and snacks.*

Last year there were 70 registrants, which would give total expenditure of £4050. So assuming a similar attendance, £1280 will have to come from conference fees (£17pp). The committee has decided to make the fee £20pp, which is still very reasonable, to allow for a small contingency budget.

### Extra items:

- Accommodation- £40 per person per night B&B. Pre-booked for 50 (last year: 38), with confirmation of numbers due after registration closes (no penalty for reduction). 50% subsidised by BSHS, max. cost to the society £2000
- Conference dinner- £30 per head: silver service 3-course meal in private dining room. Pre-booked for 40 with 20 more provisionally booked (last year: 55), with confirmation of numbers due after registration closes.
- Room hire for the conference is free of charge.

## ***Financial “Top Tips”***

- Many institutions have funds available for postgraduates who are organising conferences- but deadlines can be a long way in advance of the conference, so check yours.
- Registration fees for the organising committee should be waived, and they should be able to request assistance for travelling expenses and accommodation. The decision on assistance would be taken sympathetically by the Programmes Committee, in the light of the organiser’s need and the Society’s financial circumstances.
- In many cases enquiries with the local college or university office will result in VAT not being charged for certain facilities. The principle accepted by Customs & Excise is that “internal” arrangements are not subject to VAT. Thus where a local member can make local arrangements in his or her name, that member will be billed without VAT and the BSHS will (legally) pay the bill, resulting in substantial savings.
- The precise manner of dealing with the cash flow can be decided by the organising committee to suit their circumstances. It can be done through BSHS –with all registration cheques going to the Exec Secretary – though this can slow down the process of getting money to spend directly. It can also be done through the host institution, if that institution’s administrator/secretary is willing. Some committees have even opened their own bank account.

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