



GUIDELINES FOR SESSION CHAIRS, SPEAKERS AND DISCUSSANTS

These guidelines set out expectations for all participants (speakers, chairs, discussants and attendees) at the **ASCOLA Annual Conference 2026 in London**.

The goals are:

- To ensure sessions run smoothly and on time across all three streams.
- To foster a respectful, inclusive and safe environment for discussion.
- To maximise substantive feedback and engagement, especially for PhD and early-career scholars.

Conference Structure and Streams. Please keep in mind the different aims of each of the 3 streams when planning your presentation or chairing your session, with each having a slightly different aim/focus.

- **Stream 1:** This is the forum for the “conventional” presentation of full-length academic papers.
- **Stream 2:** The main aim of this stream is to enable PhD candidates and early career researchers to obtain more substantive feedback on their papers and to have deeper engagement with them. Stream 2 papers have each been assigned a discussant to comment, after the author has presented.
- **Stream 3:** This stream focuses on the discussion of works-in-progress that are at various stages of development. The main aim of this stream is to allow speakers to pitch and receive feedback on their ideas, plans, intended arguments, proposed methodology, etc., to help them develop their papers/projects.

Note that the panels on days 1 and 2 have a mix of stream 1 and 2 papers (usually one stream 2 paper per panel), and day 3 is for stream 3 papers.

This document is structured such that the next section is general guidance for all (which everybody should read), followed by role-specific guidance for chairs, presenters and discussants.

General instructions for all

Programme, Venues and Logistics

- Days 1 and 2 will be held at **UCL Faculty of Laws, Bentham House**, with plenaries in the **Denys Holland Lecture Theatre** and parallel sessions across designated rooms; Day 3 will be held at **King's College London, Bush House**.
- The programme specifies:
 - Room allocations and capacities,
 - Stream and panel structure,
 - Timing of each session, plenary, reception, dinner and farewell lunch.
- Participants are asked to:
 - Arrive at their rooms a few minutes before the start of each session.
 - Follow signage and any QR-code information points for last-minute updates.
 - Inform the registration desk promptly of any changes (cancellations, presenter substitutions).

Registration, Photography and Data Protection

- Registration desks **will operate at both venues**; participants should collect their name badges and check any updates to the programme on arrival.
- A **professional photographer** may document parts of the conference; photographs may be used for ASCOLA reports, websites and social media, subject to data protection requirements and local institutional rules.
- Participants **who prefer not to appear** in photographs should indicate this at registration so that reasonable steps can be taken to respect their preference.

ASCOLA Guidelines on Disclosures

- At this conference, the [ASCOLA Transparency and Disclosure Declaration \(2025\)](#) applies. **All speakers** are expected to make brief, clear disclosures at the beginning of their intervention, so that the audience can understand any interests or relationships that could reasonably be perceived as a source of bias.

In practice, this means that at the start of your presentation you should state, in one or two sentences:

- any relevant **paid work** or **financial relationships** connected to the topic (e.g. advisory work, expert testimony, funding from companies or organisations concerned by the issues you discuss); and
- any other **affiliations** that might reasonably be seen as relevant (e.g. roles in advocacy groups, think tanks, or consulting firms with a stake in the topic).

If there is nothing to disclose, please simply say so (e.g. “I have no relevant financial or professional interests to declare in relation to this presentation”). Chairs are encouraged to remind speakers to make these disclosures and may invite a speaker to do so if it has been omitted.

Feedback and Post-Conference Materials

- Organisers aim to collect feedback after the conference (e.g. via a short online survey linked through a QR code or email) to inform future ASCOLA events.
- Where possible, selected materials (e.g. slides, photos, and the conference report) will be made available to participants after the event, respecting copyright, data protection and any opt-out choices.

Instructions for chairs

The chair is responsible for the smooth running and intellectual coherence of the session. Chairs are expected to:

- **Contact speakers in advance** to introduce yourself, clarify the session's focus and confirm timing.
- Prepare a **very brief introduction** to the panel theme and each speaker (name, affiliation, and one-line topic).
- **Start and end on time**, strictly enforcing individual time limits to avoid disadvantaging later speakers and to facilitate room changes between parallel sessions.
- Use simple **time signals** (e.g. 5, 1 and 0 minutes remaining) and, if necessary, politely interrupt when time is up.
- Moderate the discussion by:
 - Taking several questions together when time is limited.
 - Ensuring questioners identify themselves.
 - Preventing "mini-lectures" in place of questions, intervening politely where needed.
- Encourage participation from early-career researchers and under-represented groups in the Q&A, consistent with the diversity and inclusion principles.

Interactions with speakers. Please contact speakers in your session prior to the conference. This allows you to communicate and set out expectations of your session in terms of its aim/focus, coverage, and time, and for you to have an idea about what speakers will be saying. It facilitates the preparation of the introduction to be delivered by the chair to the session, and to each presentation.

Starting and ending the session. Please keep an eye on the time indicated in the programme for the start and end of your session and make sure it finishes on time so that the next session may start in due time.

Slides. Please make sure all the speakers have uploaded their slides *before* the start of the session.

Introductions. Please prepare a **very short** introduction to the topic of the session and to each author. Please get in touch with each speaker in advance to ascertain how they would like to be introduced.

Timing. Keeping to the schedule is **essential**. Please make sure that the session starts on time and does not overrun. To that effect:

- **Stream 1 (full papers).** Each paper has **30 minutes in total**, including questions. Please aim for **18–20 minutes** of presentation and **10–12 minutes of Q&A**. This

timing works for both the 3-paper panels (90–110 minutes) and the 4-paper, 135-minute panels, provided that chairs keep introductions **very short** and preserve a **10–15 minute buffer** for transitions and any overruns.

- **Stream 2 (papers with discussants).** Each paper has **40 minutes in total**, including discussant and general discussion. As a guide, plan for up to **17 minutes** presentation, up to **15 minutes** for the discussant, and around **8 minutes** for questions from the floor. In both 3-paper (105–110 minutes) and 4-paper (135 minutes) sessions, this works if chairs keep introductions brief and manage the overall time strictly.
- **Stream 3 (“Pitching Ideas”).** Each project has **24 minutes in total** in a 120-minute, 5-paper panel. Please plan for about **10 minutes** for the project pitch, and about **10–12 minutes** of feedback and discussion.
- Importantly: **Please make sure no speaker exceeds his/her time.** Do not hesitate to be strict about it, as it takes away time from other speakers or the discussion. This is especially important for parallel sessions.
- It is helpful to have number signs to help the speakers keep track of time (usually 5, 1, 0 minutes).
- **Please make sure the discussion is contained within the limits agreed beforehand.**

Some tips on moderating discussions.

- Take several questions at once.
- Make sure each person asking a question starts by identifying him/her/them self.
- Make sure that the people asking questions do not end up giving a lecture. Please feel free to politely cut off those with long-winded questions, for the interest of all others.

Instructions for speakers

Speakers should review the above timing for their session, and prepare their presentation accordingly.

Presentation style

- Focus on the core contribution and key arguments; detailed material can be left to the paper.
- Speak clearly and at a measured pace; assume a mixed audience.
- If using the podium, move there as soon as the previous speaker has finished; the chair will introduce you while you are ready to start.
- Indicate clearly to the chair before the session if you have any special needs (e.g. for accessibility or format).

Instructions for discussants

Discussants (Stream 2). Discussants play a central role in Stream 2. Discussants are expected to:

- Read the paper carefully in advance and provide **structured, constructive comments**, focusing on helping the author improve the work.
- Keep comments **within the allocated time** (typically up to 15 minutes), leaving sufficient space for audience discussion.
- Prioritise **big-picture issues** (framing, contribution, methodology, structure) over minor editorial points, which can be sent separately in writing if desired.