

# Guidelines for Session Chairs



## Your role as session chair

First of all, thank you for your time to make ESERA 2025 successful! As a chair, you are leading the session, and your leadership directly impacts the quality of dialogue and learning in your session. So take on your session leader cap with confidence.

## Before your session starts

### Familiarise yourself with your session

- Be in the room 10-15 minutes before the session starts.
- Review the contributions in your session – identify common themes or connections.
- Know who your presenters are and greet them when they arrive.
- Confirm how presenters prefer to be introduced.

### Set clear expectations

- Explain the session format and timing to presenters.
- Stress the importance of keeping to the schedule.
- Show presenters how you'll signal time remaining (5 min, 1 min, time up).
- Explain the Padlet system and its role in the session.

### Handle practical preparations

- Assist with room setup (seating, projector, materials).
- Request conference volunteer help if needed (they wear red university T-shirts).
- Ensure you have a working watch or phone for timekeeping.

### Critical: monitor room capacity

For fire safety compliance, room capacity must not exceed the maximum occupancy displayed on the room door. As session chair, you are responsible for monitoring attendance levels throughout your session. If too many people arrive, you must, unfortunately, turn away latecomers.

## During your session

### Opening (2 minutes)

- Welcome the audience and presenters.
- Outline the session agenda and theme.
- Emphasise the importance of dialogue and Padlet participation.

### Time management

- Give clear time signals: 5 minutes left, 1 minute left, time up.
- Stick to the schedule regardless of early finishes.
- Remember: participants move between sessions and depend on consistent timing.

### Moderate Q&A sessions

- Open the floor for questions after each presentation.
- Keep discussions focused and moving.
- Feel free to kickstart the discussion by asking a question yourself; if no questions arise, move to Padlet time.

### Use the Padlet

- Give the audience 1 minute to provide feedback via Padlet after each presentation.
- Encourage both presenters and the audience to engage with this tool.

### Managing Your Dual Role as Chair and Presenter

When it's your turn to present, you have several options:

- Ask another presenter in your session to keep time for you and give time signals.
- Set a phone timer and keep it visible during your presentation.
- Ask a trusted audience member to help with time signals.

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## Session-specific guidelines

### Oral presentations (90-minute sessions)

- The last presenter acts as the session chair for the entire session.
- 4 presentations per session
- Timing per presentation: 15 min presentation + 5 min Q&A + 1 min padlet + 1 min transition
- Wait for scheduled start times even if presentations finish early.

### Interactive posters (90-minute sessions)

- Up to 10 posters per session
- Format: 2-minute introductions by each author, followed by informal small-group conversations
- The session chair organises small group discussions at their discretion.
- Encourage participants to provide written feedback at the session end.

### Workshops (45-minute sessions)

- Workshop facilitator manages their own session and timing.
- Focus on participant engagement and hands-on activities.

### Exploratory seminars (45-minute sessions)

- The session organiser acts as chair for their session.
- Focus on facilitating dialogue around the stated question/dilemma.
- Aim to achieve the expected outcomes outlined in the proposal.

### Symposia (90-minute sessions)

- Timing and structure determined individually by symposium chairs
- May include 3-4 related presentations plus a discussant contribution
- Flexible structure to encourage reflection and discussion
- Ensure the discussant has adequate time for their contribution.

## If issues arise

### Technical difficulties

- Ask conference volunteers for assistance (they wear red university T-shirts).
- Contact the help desk or tech support if you cannot find a volunteer – each room will have contact details on a dedicated conference handout.
- Have a backup plan for continuing without technology.

### No-show presenters

- Wait 5 minutes past the scheduled start.
- Use extra time for extended Q&A or early break.

### Code of conduct

Our ESERA community members are wonderful, respectful colleagues, and we fully expect everyone to abide by our conference [code of conduct](#). However, in the unlikely event that inappropriate behaviour or disruption occurs, follow this step-wise response:

1. Verbal warning from you as session chair
2. Remove participant from session (request help from volunteers or security if needed)
3. Report to LOC representatives for follow-up meeting

## After your session

- Thank presenters and audience.
- Ensure the room is left in good condition.