

Guidelines for Inclusive Chairing

Society of Christian Philosophers

Keeping the queue and managing discussion:

1. The chair rather than the speaker should field questions.
2. In order to facilitate a balanced discussion, the chair should make an ordered list of those wanting to ask a question. (S/he may do this by inviting those who want to ask a question to raise their hand and to keep it raised until the chair signals that they've been put on the queue.)
3. In determining an order for the queue, the chair should attempt to balance the discussion by making sure a range of voices are heard (female/male; junior/senior, faculty/student), including prioritizing those who have not spoken before, those who are sitting in the back, etc. Chairs should be careful not to give priority to high status members of the profession.
4. The chair should try to pace the discussion so that as many people as possible can ask questions.
5. Prior to the Q/A session, the chair may instruct audience members to:
 - a. Raise only one question at a time (so as to avoid having one or two high-status or excessively loquacious individuals monopolizing the discussion). If the questioner has a second or third question, he or she may be added onto the bottom of the queue.
 - b. Limit themselves to (at most) one brief follow-up.
6. If a questioner does not follow these instructions, the chair may remind him or her about them and/or cut off the relevant line of questioning.
7. In short discussion periods, or when audiences are large, it may be difficult to ensure that everyone gets to ask a question. In such cases, the chair may implement a 'no-follow-ups' rule.
8. If a questioner becomes disrespectful or belligerent, the chair should cut off the line of questioning as soon as possible. The chair need not convey *why* s/he is cutting off a particular line of questioning, but should move on to the next question or (if there is no time for another question) end the session as soon as possible. Session chairs should do what they can to ensure that speakers are neither antagonized nor treated disrespectfully.

In general, when adding people to the queue, session chairs should keep in mind that a substantial body of literature suggests that many people have biases of which they are unaware (e.g., implicit gender biases, implicit racial biases). Moreover, they should keep in mind that:

- Selecting those who raise their hand first often has the result of giving priority to those who happen to be the most confident and/or assertive. This result would be problematic even if it were unrelated to concerns about diversity within the SCP. However, members of underrepresented groups within the SCP tend to be less assertive than others in the context of Q&A sessions. As such, it is particularly important that session chairs be on the lookout for audience members who raise their hands after the Q&A is underway.
- It is undesirable for any individual audience member to dominate discussion, even if an audience member has a high status within the profession and/or is asking particularly good questions.

Facilitating accessibility:

1. Chairs should also work to ensure that everyone in attendance has access to what is said or presented at sessions. For example:
 - a. If there are handouts, the chair should help distribute them.
 - b. If a conference session/room has a microphone, the chair should ensure that presenters use the mic(s). Any available mics should also be used for questions to ensure that all present can hear as well as possible.
 - c. During Q&A sessions, chairs should be sensitive to the needs attendees who may have difficulty hearing questions. For example, if the room is crowded or acoustics poor, chairs might consider repeating a question or querying their audiences about whether everyone has heard what has been said.
2. Chairs should ensure that presenters who use powerpoint in their presentations provide oral descriptions of the slides, including brief and explanatory descriptions of graphics and reading text.
3. Chairs should ensure that their sessions end on time in order that participants can avail themselves of the time allotted for breaks.