



Guidelines for Organising IAG Conferences

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1 Introduction

Two of the aims and objectives (see Appendix 1) of the International Association of Geoanalysts (IAG) are:

- To organise conferences and meetings and to act as the main sponsor of the Geoanalysis series of conferences
- To encourage younger scientists in the profession and their participation in meetings

These guidelines are principally designed to assist the organisers of the IAG's main triennial conference, but it is hoped that the advice given here will also be helpful to organisers of smaller scientific meetings held under the auspices of the IAG.

Typically, the location of Geoanalysis 20XX conferences should have been decided in principle up to six years ahead. Groups of scientists in different countries will have indicated to the IAG their wish to host a forthcoming Geoanalysis 20XX conference and their proposals will have been considered by the IAG Council. Successful bidders will have been notified at least three years in advance of the proposed date. Ideally, the IAG aims to keep a rolling programme of agreed venues covering at least the next two Geoanalysis 20XX conferences.

Organisers of other meetings seeking IAG sponsorship or endorsement are encouraged to contact the IAG – via the President or Secretary – at a very early stage in their planning process. This will enable the IAG to offer the maximum assistance with, for example, publicity.

2 Venue

Geoanalysis 20XX conferences typically attract between 100 and 200 delegates, although there is no policy on limiting the maximum number of participants. The venue therefore needs to accommodate comfortably the organisers' target attendance. There is no restriction on the type of venue that can be used for Geoanalysis 20XX conferences. For example, they could include urban or rural conference centres, university campuses or resort hotels. However, the following features are desirable:

- Good international travel links into the host country
- Efficient travel facilities to the venue from the host country's international airport(s)
- A range of accommodation close to the lecture facilities, including some at the lower end of the price range suitable, for example, for student participants
- Good lecture theatre facilities suitable for parallel sessions, at least one of which can accommodate easily the maximum number of participants expected. Appropriate audiovisual equipment including computer projection facilities should be available. It will thus be essential that a realistic estimate be made at an early stage of the number of people likely to attend.
- A range of smaller meeting rooms suitable for workshops and *ad hoc* discussions
- Space for one or more poster sessions, depending on how the meeting is structured
- Space for an instrument manufacturers' exhibition
- Adequate social space where participants can converse informally, e.g. during coffee breaks
- Efficient catering facilities for lunch close to the lecture theatres

- Appropriate security
- Facilities for accompanying persons and families
- Internet access
- Banking and foreign exchange facilities nearby

Traditionally, Geoanalysis 20XX conferences have been held at venues where the conference facilities and participants' accommodation are in close proximity. This maximises the opportunity for discussion outside the formal conference programme during the brief few days of the conference.

3 Conference title

The main triennial conference of the IAG should be entitled: Geoanalysis 20XX and have the subtitle: *The ...th international conference on the analysis of geological and environmental materials.*

Other meetings should have a suitably descriptive title compatible with the aims of the IAG.

4 Organisation

Organising a major international conference is a challenging task. Experience shows that the organisers' workload can be minimised and the likelihood of success maximised if the planning of a Geoanalysis 20XX conference is undertaken by an Organising Committee composed of several individuals with well defined and coordinated roles, rather than by one or two people trying to shoulder the whole burden.

Other keys to success include a well thought out schedule of key milestones covering the two to three year run up to Geoanalysis 20XX and especially the early and continued promotion of the conference, e.g. through flyers and circulars, advertisements in appropriate journals, Internet mailing lists and a dedicated web site. It is particularly important to have some promotional material ready for presentation at the preceding Geoanalysis 20XX conference.

Most organisers of Geoanalysis 20XX conferences will have attended similar scientific conferences themselves and some may have prior experience of organising such meetings. The IAG policy is to give the Organising Committee wide latitude and autonomy over the way each Geoanalysis 20XX conference is planned and executed, recognising that it is the local organisers who can best judge what is most appropriate for their particular environment.

The Chair of the Organising Committee of a Geoanalysis 20XX conference will normally be co-opted on to the Council of the IAG for the preceding three year period, if they are not already a member. This is to ensure that there is effective information flow between the Organising Committee and the IAG Council.

4.1 Organising Committee

The structure of the Organising Committee will depend partly on the professional and cultural context in which it is operating, but it is recommended that consideration be given to adapting the following roles to local circumstances:

Chairperson

Chair of the Scientific Programme sub-Committee

Secretary
Treasurer
Conference facilities coordinator
Publicity coordinator
Web site coordinator
Registration coordinator
Accommodation coordinator
Sponsorship coordinator
Student awards coordinator
Instrument manufacturer's exhibition coordinator
Social programme coordinator
Field trip coordinator

Some of these roles may be combined, but it is important not to overload individual members of the Organising Committee.

4.2 Scientific Programme sub-Committee

A small Scientific Programme sub-Committee should be given the responsibility of developing the programme of papers and posters presented at the conference, including:

- Deciding on the main themes of the individual sessions, having regard for the latest developments in Geoanalysis, the range of interests of typical participants in Geoanalysis 20XX conferences, and the geoanalytical priorities in the host country or region
- Recommending how many plenary and parallel sessions are needed
- Suggest plenary speakers and solicit papers
- Recommending the timetable for submission and assessment of abstracts
- Considering the balance of oral and poster presentations
- Appointing chairs for individual sessions
- Assessing and accepting abstracts and assigning to sessions

Typically, the Scientific Programme sub-Committee will consist of some members of the Organising Committee plus other scientists, including international members, chosen for their knowledge and expertise in particular fields.

5 Finance

A major responsibility of the Organising Committee is to arrange and administer the finances of their Geoanalysis 20XX conference. These are to be completely autonomous and separate from those of the IAG itself. It must be emphasised that the IAG will not accept liability for any losses incurred by the Organising Committee.

Bearing in mind that one of the aims of the IAG is to encourage younger scientists to participate in meetings, the Organising Committee should aim to keep costs to delegates as low as possible

commensurate with a successful and vibrant conference. In order to minimise the risk of financial deficit, it is recommended that the initial budget be planned on a conservative estimate of the likely number of participants, i.e. at the lower end of the expected range. It should be borne in mind that global economic factors or international geopolitical events occurring shortly before the conference can have dramatic and adverse effects on attendance, despite all the best efforts of the Organising Committee in the preceding couple of years. Depending on the liabilities taken on at an early stage, the Organising Committee should consider taking out cancellation insurance to indemnify themselves against any losses associated with the conference.

Strenuous efforts should be made to attract additional sponsorship as a means of minimising registration fees.

A major strategic decision that will need to be taken early on is whether the cost of accommodation is included in the registration fee. This will depend largely on the nature of the venue. For example, if the conference is being held at a university campus out of term time, it may be very cost effective to utilise on-site accommodation. For some venues, hotel accommodation may be the only option. If the cost of accommodation is additional to the registration fee, every effort should be made to negotiate discounts with local hotels and to provide a variety of accommodation including some at the lower end of the price range.

Events such as the initial conference icebreaker and the conference dinner should be budgeted for in the basic registration fee. It is recommended that participants registering after a certain date – typically one to two months before the conference – are charged a slightly (5-10%) higher fee. This is to encourage attendees to book in good time so that the Organising Committee can have a realistic estimate of likely numbers as early as possible and fine tune their arrangements accordingly. A small reduction in the basic registration fee, e.g. \$20-30, should be available to IAG members. It is recommended that the Organising Committee consider setting a reduced registration fee for *bona fide* students.

5.1 IAG support

Although the finances of each Geoanalysis 20XX are quite separate from those of the IAG, the Association recognises that the local Organising Committee may need to incur costs, e.g. deposits on conference facilities or printing publicity material, early in the initial planning stages of the conference and long before any income is generated. Accordingly, provided there are no foreign exchange restrictions that would hinder its repayment, the IAG may be prepared to advance the Organising Committee a small amount of seed corn funding, typically of the order of \$5,000 to \$10,000. The precise terms associated with such funding will be set out in a letter of agreement made between each Organising Committee and the IAG. These funds are typically made available on the understanding that they will be repaid after the conference, so that money will be available to future Organising Committees. Moreover, the tradition has grown up with succeeding Geoanalysis 20XX conferences that, subject to the conference being financially successful, the Organising Committee will aim to donate an additional sum to the IAG, e.g. similar to the seed corn funding. This will be used by the IAG to fund its activities for the benefit of geoscientific science generally and, in particular, to offer a limited number of bursaries to younger scientists wishing to attend future Geoanalysis 20XX conferences.

5.2 Additional sponsorship

In order to keep registration fees as low as possible, it is strongly recommended that additional income be sought in the form of sponsorship.

Organisations that should be approached include national and international funding bodies, government departments, environmental agencies, scientific instrument manufacturers, mining companies and regional agencies in the vicinity of the venue.

Sponsorship can take many forms and organising committees are encouraged to be creative in the way they approach this important task. Some sponsors may be persuaded to donate money to the conference generally, others may wish to be identified as sponsoring particular activities, e.g. the conference dinner, or refreshments at the opening icebreaker. Smaller, but cumulatively significant sums can be sought from several companies in exchange for including their product literature in delegates' conference packs, on the basis that it provides them with a valuable international marketing opportunity to a targeted audience of decision makers. Companies may wish to donate pens or note pads bearing their logo as a form of advertising.

Companies and organisations that provide sponsorship in any form should be acknowledged, along with the IAG, in conference publicity leaflets, the web site and the conference handbook.

6 Publicity

Early, widely distributed and continuing publicity **is vital** to the success of any Geoanalysis 20XX conference. A common trap that an organising committee must avoid falling into is assuming that, just because this splendid conference they are working so hard to set up looms large in their lives a couple of years ahead, everyone else is aware of it too!

As soon as the dates and venue have been decided, the Organising Committee should mount an initial publicity campaign to alert the geoanalytical and the wider scientific community to when and where their Geoanalysis 20XX conference will be held. It is vital to give potential attendees plenty of time to plan their work and travel schedules and to begin to consider, for example, how they will raise the necessary funds to attend. Routes that should be used to publicise the conference include:

- A planned schedule of mailings of first, second and third circulars. Entries in the diary sections of relevant journals giving the dates and location of the conference, together with a contact telephone number, email address and web site URL where further information can be obtained
- Notification of similar information on relevant Internet discussion groups and electronic mailing lists
- Advertisements in relevant journals and instrument manufacturers' newsletters

Members of the organising committee should take advantage of every opportunity to publicise their conference, e.g. taking leaflets or a poster about it to other conferences they attend in the couple of years prior to Geoanalysis 20XX, including information about it in regular mailings from their organisation if this is permitted.

The IAG will, of course, provide continuing publicity for each Geoanalysis 20XX conference through its newsletter *The Geoanalyst*, *Geostandards Newsletter* and the IAG web site which will give a link to the conference web site.

Three of the golden rules for the success of any Geoanalysis conference are: publicity, publicity and publicity!

6.1 Conference circulars

It is recommended that the first circular be sent out as much as two 2 years in advance of the conference. It should include:

- Dates and location of the conference
- A brief description of the scope and objectives of Geoanalysis 20XX
- General information about the venue, e.g. historical and cultural
- Contact information for the Conference Organising Committee
- A reply slip and email address for expressions of interest

6.2 Web Site

This should be set up in a simple form at an early stage in the conference planning and then expanded as more information becomes available. It should be logically designed for easy navigation. It should include a means whereby people can register their interest and contribute their details to a database of likely participants. It should provide travel information and links to other sites relevant to the venue.

7 Conference handbook

The handbook is important because it is the participants' main reference document during and immediately after a Geoanalysis conference. Together with the Conference Proceedings, which will be published later, it forms a lasting record of the conference.

It should contain abstracts of all the oral and poster presentations plus other information that will be essential or helpful to participants, including:

- A welcome message from the Chair of the Organising Committee
- Details of the Organising Committee and Convenors of individual sessions or workshops
- Acknowledgement of sponsors
- General information about the conference, including times when the registration and information desk will be open
- Maps of the venue and the local area showing the location of the conference accommodation
- Local telephone numbers that will be helpful to participants
- Details of the catering arrangements, e.g. location and timing of lunches and coffee breaks
- Details of the social programme, including the Conference Dinner
- Information for speakers and presenters of posters. Much of this will have already been sent to participants in earlier circulars and as part of the registration process, but it is important to include it in the conference handbook for reference
- A detailed programme showing the times of all oral presentations and poster sessions and related events such as workshops and meetings of special interest groups. A diagrammatic overview of the programme showing the main sessions and social events on a daily basis is very helpful to participants, especially if the conference has parallel sessions
- Information for authors about the subsequent publication of the Conference Proceedings
- A contents page and author index

Although the handbook cannot be produced until quite close to the date of the conference, indeed it is suggested that the final printing be left as late as is reasonably practical to ensure it is as accurate as

possible, it is recommended that work on its design and contents is begun at an early stage in the conference planning.

8 Publication of the conference proceedings

The Organising Committee are strongly encouraged to arrange for papers presented orally or as posters at Geoanalysis conferences to be published in an appropriate scientific journal, such as *Geostandards and Geoanalytical Research*. Issues that need organising at an early stage are:

- Appointment of guest editors and their duties
- Timetable for the submission, editing and publication of conference papers with clear and realistic milestone dates, in particular the deadline by which manuscripts must be submitted to guest editors
- Arrangements for the appointment of referees, the revision of manuscripts and who has ultimate authority to accept or reject a paper for publication
- Active encouragement by guest editors for contributors to submit by the deadline
- Style of publication, e.g. a separate conference issue or a special section in regular issue
- Arrangements for reprints of papers (pdf or printed) to be made available to contributing authors and whether the conference issue will be made available to conference delegates
- Any financial arrangements on behalf of conference organisers, publishers or contributing authors
- Any issues concerning the established scope of a journal in relation to the scope of the Geoanalysis conference that might affect the acceptability for publication

The overall aim should be the prompt and timely publication of primary research papers presented at the conference to form a permanent record of the high quality of work presented at Geoanalysis.

9 Accommodation

The type of accommodation made available to attendees depends to a certain extent on the conference venue. For example, if the conference is to be held on a university campus out of term time the best option may be to use the student accommodation or the purpose-built conference facilities that some universities have developed. This will help to keep the conference attendees together and create a good atmosphere. University accommodation may also be a relatively low cost option.

If accommodation is not available as an integral part of the Symposium venue, a good range of local hotels and guesthouses will be needed. These should cater for those attendees who wish to pay for a higher grade of accommodation as well as those on tighter budgets, including students. It is important that the accommodation is as close as possible to the conference venue – preferably within 10 minutes walking distance – as attendees may wish to return to their rooms during the day.

If the accommodation is attached to the conference venue, the cost should be included as part of the registration fee; this is always the preferred option. However, if a range of accommodation is offered it would be more difficult to offer an all-in-one fee and the accommodation costs should be separately identified on the registration documents.

Whatever accommodation strategy is chosen, as much information on travel and accommodation as possible should be included in the early circulars and on associated web sites.

10 IAG general meeting

A period of one hour should be allowed for this during the conference, preferably no later than the second day. It should be arranged so as not to clash with any of the scientific sessions, but may be run in parallel with a coffee break or poster session if the schedule is tight.

11 Social programme

The ice-breaker reception and the conference dinner should normally be regarded as integral parts of the conference. If possible, other optional social events for participants should be organised for other evenings. A social programme, typically taking in sites and events of local cultural or historic interest should be planned for accompanying persons

12 Conference dinner

This is traditionally the major social event of a Geoanalysis 20XX. It is normally held on the evening before the close of the symposium.

13 Workshops and field trips

A Geoanalysis conference often gives a participant with a unique opportunity to visit a country that might otherwise be inaccessible. In addition, there may be geological or environmental field areas that are of significant scientific interest within the region that the conference is being held. The Organising Committee should therefore consider arranging some or all of the following activities:

- Geological or environmental fieldtrips to areas of particular scientific interest, led by local experts (Duration: 1 – 3 days)
- Visits to research laboratories or scientific facilities of relevance to the scope of the conference, (Duration: one half to one day)
- Pre- or post-conference workshops or demonstrations of instrumentation or techniques on topics of relevance to the IAG and the Geoanalysis series of conferences, particularly where these workshops or demonstrations can be organised and led by local experts

In all cases, the following criteria should be addressed:

- These activities should be optional extras to the main conference programme that delegates may choose to take part in
- An appropriate fee should be charged in addition to the conference registration fee to cover the cost of these optional activities
- It is usually necessary to set a minimum – and sometimes maximum – number of paying participants and also to set a date by which the minimum number of participants must register, if the event is not to be cancelled

14 Appendix 1. Aims and objectives of the International Association of Geoanalysts

MISSION

To serve as an international forum for the advancement of geoanalytical science and to promote the interests and support the professional needs of those involved in the analysis of geological and environmental materials.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To serve as a forum for the advancement of geoanalytical science
- To promote the interests and professional standing of members
- To promote research into new methods of sampling and analysis
- To organise conferences and meetings and to act as the main sponsor of the Geoanalysis series of conferences
- To encourage younger scientists in the profession and their participation in meetings
- To improve and promote the assessment of measurement uncertainty and data quality as fit for purpose through proficiency testing and the development and use of reference materials
- To encourage and facilitate the publication of members' contributions in the Journal of Geostandards and Geoanalysis and elsewhere
- To disseminate information of interest to members using appropriate media