



# **Guidelines for MGMS Meetings Organisers**

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## Table of contents

Table of contents	2
Guiding Principles	3
Scope of these guidelines	3
A suggested timetable for meeting organisation	4
Introduction and Historical Background to MGMS meetings	5
MGMS Meetings – general description of the meetings held and supported by the Society	5
Deciding Meeting Topics, Venues and Timings	6
Affiliated Societies.	7
Organising Overseas Meetings	7
Inviting Speakers	8
Categories of Registration	9
Finances	9
Conference Web Pages, Generating a Registration Form and Advertising	12
At the Conference Venue	14
Annual General Meeting of the MGMS society	17
Following the meeting	17
Special editions of the Journal of Molecular Graphics and Modelling	17

## **Guiding Principles**

The objectives of the MGMS when organising and supporting conferences are:

- To promote and advance education and research into the science of molecular graphics and related topics
- To support and encourage young scientists (usually students and post-docs with limited income) in their research and enable them to present their work at these meetings
- The MGMS is a non-profit making organisation. Hence organisers should aim to break even or make a small surplus by keeping costs to a minimum. It is standard practice now for the local organiser (if academic or from a non-profit making organisation) to retain 25% of any profits from the meeting for their research group.

## **Scope of these guidelines**

A summary of our recommended timetable for organising a meeting is supplied below. In the full document, we have attempted to give a comprehensive review of the things you would need to consider in undertaking to organise a conference either on behalf of or in affiliation with the Molecular Graphics and Modelling Society. The MGMS committee would be most grateful if following your meeting you would give us any feedback or suggestions on how we could improve these guidelines based on your experiences.

Supplementary information including a database of sponsors, sample budgets, letters and certificates and web pages are available in the appendices and from the meetings secretary.

## A suggested timetable for meeting organisation

	<b>Tasks List</b>	<b>Timetable</b>
1	Decide topic. Reservation of lecture theatre, rooms (e.g. for posters and for and MGMS committee meeting if coincides with April AGM meeting) and accommodation. University conference organiser company involved. For larger meetings, a venue for a conference dinner, a reception and/or a suitable conference excursion should be considered at this time	24-12 months in advance
2	Preparation of provisional list of speakers	24-12 months in advance
3	Discussions with MGMS Committee concerning scientific contents, speakers and budget outline. Nomination of an MGMS link person(s) if the meeting is being organised in affiliation with another group. Check for clashes with other meetings.	24-12 months in advance
4	Preparation of speakers list and of provisional budget	18-12 months in advance
5	Approval of provisional budget by MGMS Committee	12 months in advance
6	Formal invitation of speakers (key speakers first)	12 months in advance
7	Fund-raising by writing to sponsoring organisations	12 months in advance
8	Detailed preparation of programme, conference web site, advertising material, talk titles, deadlines for abstracts catering, poster sessions, transport. Setting of registration fee and of 'late registration' fee deadlines. Agree number/recipients of MGMS funded student bursaries. Hire poster boards.	Begin 12-6 months in advance with detailed updates closer to the time of the meeting
9	Announcement of meeting via the MGMS mail-list, diary section of the MGMS web page and elsewhere	12 months in advance with reminders closer to date
10	Approval of budget, agreement of Treasurer, evaluation of fund-raising and liabilities.	6 months in advance
11.	Appoint session chairs and poster judges (and after dinner speaker for conference dinner). Prepare name badges and Registration packs.	3 –1 months in advance
12	MEETING	
13	Presentation of final accounts	Within financial year

## **Introduction and Historical Background to MGMS meetings**

In 1981 a meeting about molecular modelling was organised by AIOPI (the Association of Information Officers in the Pharmaceutical Industry), which was held in Hatfield. It was afterwards in a local hostelry that some of the attendees got together and asked why such a conference had been organised by a group whose aims were rather different from the topic of the meeting. Furthermore, would it not be possible to get a group of people together who worked full time in the field of modelling and who, therefore, could further promote interest and work in the field through the formation of a society dedicated to the study and development of computational chemistry and its various applications. It was thus that night that the Molecular Graphics Society (later renamed the Molecular Graphics and Modelling Society) was formed. The name arose through recognition of the fact that computational chemistry was intimately linked with and could be enhanced by, the then emerging techniques of computer graphics. The first meeting of this group was held late that year in Leeds and it was agreed that two main ways of promoting the science of molecular modelling could be used. One was by the publication of a newsletter, largely through the efforts of its editor, Andy Morffew. This newsletter was the forerunner to the Journal of Molecular Graphics - the first journal dedicated solely to the field and also one of the first journals to provide colour graphics free of charge to the authors. The second way of promoting the field was through the organisation of meetings dedicated both to computer graphics as applied to chemistry, and to the whole broad field of molecular modelling and its applications. The group worked diligently in organising the first meeting of the Society, which was held in April 1982, in Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. This meeting was a resounding success and since then, the Society has gone on to organise close to 100 meetings.

### **MGMS Meetings – general description of the meetings held and supported by the Society**

Generally speaking, the Society organises 4 meetings each year. Traditionally, one of these is a one-day meeting held in December in London. In recent years this has transformed into the "Young Modellers Forum" where graduate students get an opportunity to present their work. There are also meetings held in the spring and autumn which are usually timed to coincide with university "out of term" periods. These can either be one day meetings or more commonly 2-3 day residential meetings, with one major overriding theme or topic. The AGM of the Society is always held during the spring meeting. The Society also organises or co-organises (see Affiliations) an annual international meeting, which is held over a 3-5 day period, with a broader subject matter. This has traditionally alternated between the UK, continental Europe and the USA, although in 1995 a joint meeting with the RACI was held in Cairns, Australia. The 2003 international meeting is also being held in Australia (Lorne). The Society in the past has sponsored an annual course in molecular modelling, held in York University. It now sponsors an annual practical course on an "Introduction to Cheminformatics" which is held in Sheffield and supports a summer school on molecular simulation methods organised by CCP5.

The Society actively encourages scientists either from the committee or outside to organise these meetings. Those scientists from outside the committee are co-opted for a one-year term so that they can report regularly on progress of the organisation and the final outcome. As the Society is a non-profit organisation, meetings are low cost to encourage wide participation; students are helped by low fees and bursaries, and members of the Society also benefit from a reduced registration fee.

### **Deciding Meeting Topics, Venues and Timings**

The MGMS committee meets holds several committee meetings per year and discusses the “pipeline” of meetings to be organised on behalf of the Society. Topics for the meetings are usually decided at least a year in advance. At this time likely venues for the meeting will be discussed and a meeting organiser will be elected.

It is the responsibility of the organiser to:

- design the programme
- select likely speakers
- issue speaker invitations
- work out budgets and sponsorship
- reserve the lecture room(s)
- organise registration and advertising (including web page design) and
- handle other general matters

If the meeting is residential, then a second local organiser may also be involved and it is the responsibility of this person to handle the day-to-day registration and to liaise with the local venue regarding accommodation and meals.

In selecting a venue for the meeting, it must be remembered that the Society is a non-profit organisation and that registration and accommodation/meals costs for the meeting should be kept to a minimum. It is, therefore, not usual to make use of a professional organiser for the meeting. In the past, particularly with our international meetings, the use of such organisations has resulted in potential substantial debts to the Society. A particular such problem here is the choice of an expensive hotel venue for the meeting where the Society is required to guarantee a minimum number of attendees for a block booking (especially true in the USA). The generally accepted venue for the Society's meetings is a university campus which has associated halls of residence and the full normal conference facilities already available such as lecture theatres, appropriate audiovisual equipment, room for posters, exhibitions etc. Ease of access to public transport or by car and access for disabled delegates for both accommodation and presentations should also be taken into consideration. A list of appropriate facilities, which have been used in the past, together with appropriate contacts, will be available through the meetings secretary.

An important aspect in selecting a date for the meeting is to ensure that no other related conferences are occurring at the same time, organised by another society or group. Again a list of relevant meetings will be available through the meetings secretary.

### **Affiliated Societies.**

Although the Society will normally work alone in organising its meetings, we have frequently held symposia in association with other societies, particularly for our annual international meetings. In the past, meetings have been held with the British Biophysical Society (BBS), the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) molecular modelling section, the Chemical Structure Association (CSA), the Royal Australian Chemical Institute (RACI), the US chapter of the MGMS (currently dissolved) and the recently formed MGMS German Chapter. When such meetings are organised, it is normal to share both the upfront costs (but limiting our potential financial losses - see below) and the organisation of the meeting. Sharing meetings with profit making organisations is not normally encouraged. Information about these societies may be found in the group section of the MGMS web site (<http://www.mgms.org>).

### **Organising Overseas Meetings**

When the Society is associated with a meeting at an overseas location, two possible scenarios can be envisioned. Occasionally we are simply asked by the organisers to allow the name of the Society to be associated with their meeting. In this case we would have no say in any aspect of the meeting, especially in the programme. At the same time we will have no financial responsibilities to the overseas organisers. The more common scenario is where the Society has a direct connection with the meeting in every aspect. Here the committee will appoint one (or more) of its members to liaise with the local overseas organiser on a regular basis. The appointed person(s) for example may make suggestions on aspects of the programme and suggest appropriate speakers. They may also help in arranging sponsorship for the meeting through outside contacts with appropriate bodies (a database of potential sponsors is held by the MGMS Meetings Secretary). The Society is also committed to some form of financial support for the meeting. The committee will agree on an appropriate sum which can be paid up front to help with the organisation, e.g. for payment in advance for accommodation, etc. It should be understood that, while this money may be (partially) forfeited if the meeting makes an overall financial loss, the whole sum will normally be returned together with a prearranged share of any surplus, when the final accounts are settled. All financial commitments between the Society and the overseas organisers should be arranged beforehand and agreed in writing (see sample letter in Appendix B) before any payments are made. As with its local meetings, the Society may also choose to offer and fund a number of student bursaries for the conference. The committee will agree the appropriate sums in advance. It should be remembered that bursaries are only available to those students who are submitting a poster or talk at the meeting. In choosing recipients for bursaries therefore, the local organising committee should include the appointed Society liaison person(s) in these decisions.

## Inviting Speakers

An important principle of the MGMS is that experienced practitioners in our field are encouraged to mentor and guide young researchers at the outset of their careers. Hence speakers are encouraged to participate fully in the entire conference and it is against the spirit of the Society for them to simply deliver their own presentation and leave. Nor should they (be funded to) stay in expensive hotels separate from the “budget” conference accommodation.

The conference organiser has overall responsibility in drawing up a list of speakers for the meeting. This will be presented at the appropriate MGMS committee meeting, where they may wish to approve it, although this is not normally the case. The MGMS committee at this time may also wish to suggest alternative/additional speakers. While the Society will strive to host the best possible conference, costs should always be kept in mind, as they will eventually be reflected in the registration fee. It would be inappropriate therefore to invite a large number of speakers from the USA for a 1 day UK meeting! In drawing up a list of speakers some other points should be kept in mind. One of these is timing; no invited speaker will want to travel a long distance to give a 15-20 minute talk, 30 minutes + questions should be the absolute minimum, although 40-45 minutes (or even 55-60 minutes) would be preferred.

Unless it is a one-day meeting, appropriate time should be allowed for poster sessions or for a selection of short oral presentations from non-plenary speakers. Another point to bear in mind is that not all speakers on the original list may be able to come. A number of reserve speakers should also be added to the list prior to invitation. For the same reason it is a good idea to draw up the list as early as possible - even up to a year before the meeting - because people's diaries do fill up quickly! Finally it should be kept in mind that the Society's membership is a large mix from both academia and industry. The list of speakers should, therefore, include representatives from both. There is often a tendency for academic organisers to include only academic speakers in their conferences. Similarly it should be stressed to commercial (usually software) vendors that their talks must be scientific and not sales-pitches.

To maximise on the cost effectiveness of the meeting, it is often helpful to invite speakers who are known to be in the UK at the time of the meeting. **When speakers are invited, it is most important to state clearly the maximum travelling expense that will be reimbursed** (otherwise some will try to come by Concorde using their mobile phone all the way).

For UK speakers (at a UK meeting), the Society will normally reimburse the standard second-class return rail fare plus local expenses such as taxis or buses where appropriate. We do not have a set mileage allowance so those speakers who choose to travel by car should still get the equivalent rail fare. For especially long rail journeys within the UK, air travel may be considered as an alternative, but this should only be by a budget priced airline ticket if available and should not (greatly) exceed the standard rail fare or rail fare plus a reasonably priced hotel. Overseas speakers may require extra nights to fit their travel plans and to avail



themselves of the cheaper airline fares. On no account should the Society agree to business or first class travel for speakers. Within Europe both Ryanair and Easyjet/Go operate regular scheduled low cost flights which often go between smaller airports and hence may be easier to get to than one of the major hubs. Low cost transatlantic or intercontinental flights are now readily available on the Internet (directly from the airlines or through web based travel companies such as Travelocity) or through specialist travel companies such as Trailfinders. Speakers should be encouraged to use one of these forms of travel wherever possible, but it must be remembered that the conference is inviting them to come and so must make some allowances for the convenience of the speaker in agreeing travel expenses.

The Society will also normally include the costs of registration, accommodation and meals in the speakers costs, including days either side of the conference where appropriate; this should be stated in the invitation letter. A typical invitation letter format is attached in Appendix C. Finally it should be noted when inviting speakers, one should not assume that those from an industrial background will be able to cover their own costs. The days are long gone since companies were willing to pay expenses for those employees invited to speak at meetings. Although it would be preferable for commercial organisations to pay for the costs of their speakers, the Society should offer to pay in the first instance. High profile speakers may be going to several conferences in the one trip, in which case some agreed split of the travel costs might be appropriate.

It is usual to ask the speakers to present receipts for their travel costs and in some cases one might also specify a deadline for abstracts and ask them for a copy of their talk either before or after the meeting.

### **Categories of Registration**

The Society usually operates the following registration categories (in descending order of cost) non-members, members and students. We do not differentiate between commercial and academic backgrounds when setting registration fees. The Society will consider reduced registration fees (usually the student rate) for example from retired people paying their own costs and this will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

The difference in cost between non-member and member categories should be the annual subscription fee for ordinary membership and we usually offer automatic membership of the society up until the end of the current membership year (which runs from 1<sup>st</sup> May – 30<sup>th</sup> April) for those paying the higher rate. Following the conference, organisers need to send details of these people to the Membership Secretary and a cheque to the Treasurer for their subscriptions and account for this in the final accounts for the meeting.

### **Finances**

Once the speaker list has been agreed it will be necessary to set up a budget for the meeting. The overall financial aim should be to break even and one should attempt to keep the

registration fees as low as possible. The safest thing to do is to aim for a small surplus to cover unexpected costs and to enable larger numbers of students to attend. A small loss is acceptable and can be covered by the society but in **all cases** our financial liabilities should be limited to a maximum figure (currently in the region of £5000) that is pre-agreed by the MGMS committee.

The budget can be one of the most difficult things to work out. Sample budgets for

- a one day “free” meeting
- a UK based conference held over several days
- a European international meeting and
- a “far flung” international meeting

are available in Appendix D

The following points should be considered when setting up the budget:

- **General.** Remember to include in your calculations
  - speakers’ travel, board and lodging, local transport,
  - student bursaries
  - poster prizes
  - theatre hire, audio visual hire,
  - publicity and printing,
  - name badges and registration packs
  - poster board hire and exhibition space.
  - the organiser(s) may wish to pay for local secretarial and/or technical support. One should also reward people who have provided significant assistance with an appropriate gift or arrange a “celebration” dinner following successful completion of the meeting.
  - the conference dinner if applicable (this will probably incur VAT (see Appendix E) even if other things don’t)
  - for larger conference one might also organise a formal reception and/or a conference excursion
- **Receipts.** With these and all other expenditure, remember to obtain receipts.
- **Registrants.** Probably the most difficult thing is to estimate the number of attendees. Remember that this estimate should be divided between members, non-members and students as the registration fee for each of these will be different. Adjustments should be made to the overall estimated costs, for any expected industrial sponsorship you can raise.
- **Sponsorship.** It is not always essential or even desirable, to obtain industrial sponsorship for every meeting. Companies can be very generous with donations (£100-£500 is the norm) for expenses or for a named lecture. However they will not want to be approached 4 times a year by the same society so requests for sponsorship should only be made where it is deemed most appropriate. The MGMS Meetings Secretary holds a database of sponsors (shown in Appendix A) who are normally approached by the Society. An example of a sponsorship package for an international meeting is given in Appendix F

along with the letter that has been used to raise sponsorship for the Young Modeller's Forum. You could also consider asking for sponsorship of a conference dinner, receptions and conference excursions.

- **Vendors.** Vendors may wish to have a stall at the conference. The usual practice is for each delegate from the commercial vendor to register for the meeting (including paying for their accommodation and costs of meals). An additional charge would be made if the vendor is exhibiting at the meeting and/or circulating material and promoting any products. Again, sample rates are included in the example sponsorship package in Appendix D. The MGMS recommends that a suitable cost for a commercial booth be in the region of £1000 for a major international meeting and £500 for a one-day meeting. The MGMS Meetings secretary holds a list of potential vendors.
- **Local accounts.** The Society's preferred procedure with residential meetings is for the local organiser to set up an account with the appropriate university (or other organisation) department. All registration, accommodation and meals, lecture theatre hire, etc. should be handled through this account, with the Society making an upfront contribution to enable initial costs to be met. If finance is provided through a local account, the institution may want to charge a percentage ("overhead"). Organisers should make sure that they are aware of this from the outset and negotiate to minimise this (either zero, overhead only on a profit or a reduced rate). The local organiser should enquire if the university (or other hosting organisation) can accept credit card payment. Currently, the MGMS cannot accept credit card payments for conference registration fees directly through the Society's bank account (although the Treasurer is working on a solution to this issue at the time of going to press!). The university or hosting organisation will normally provide bed & breakfast, other meals and tea and coffee as part of the service. It is suggested that the fee structure and registration form for accommodation and meals be kept as simple as possible. As stated above, the usual registration categories are member, non-member and student and, since delegates are encouraged to participate in the entire meeting, day rates and separate accommodation costs are discouraged. The costs of tea and coffee are usually factored into the registration fee. It may be necessary to divide accommodation costs into those having en suite versus those having shared bathroom facilities. It may also be necessary to have a few rooms set aside on dates either side of the meeting for speakers and delegates travelling long distances. Meals are usually included in the overall registration fee (again to encourage participants to mix; unless the costs are deemed exorbitantly high in which case they should be billed separately and a meal ticket system operated). However, the conference dinner is usually optional. The organisers may also wish to charge a late registration/payment fee in order to encourage people to register for the conference as early as possible. It is standard practice now for the local organiser (if academic) to retain 25% of the profits from the meeting for their research group.
- The MGMS is a registered charity and as such, should not pay VAT, particularly for non-profit conferences. When meetings are organised by, and within educational institutions, it may be possible to avoid VAT payments; ask your institution about this. Appendix E contains more details on VAT implications.

- **Bursaries.** The Society will normally agree to fund a number of student bursaries, to be agreed with the MGMS committee prior to the meeting. The value for these will vary depending on travel considerations. It will not however normally be for the full amount of the costs. MGMS bursaries are only available to people who are presenting their work at the meeting, either as a poster or as an oral presentation. The decision as to who should receive an MGMS bursary will be proposed by the conference organiser(s) and ratified by the MGMS committee. Requests for bursaries are not limited to student members (the MGMS will consider applications, on a case by case basis, from young academics who have not yet established themselves, or people from new R&D led SMEs, or retired-but-active scientists). Student requests should be accompanied by a signature from their academic supervisor, verifying their student status. This form is included in Appendix G.
- **The conference organisers may increase the number of bursaries from other funding sources.** This could, for example, be done from sponsorships, or by increasing the full registration cost to allow subsidies to other categories of attendee.
- **Bursary payment** – could be either by offering reduced fees (more complex fee structure but less repayment complications) or by reimbursing by cheque from MGMS after the conference. The latter method is preferred to ensure that the recipient does attend the meeting. Certificates of attendance are also available upon request (see Appendix H).

### **Conference Web Pages, Generating a Registration Form and Advertising**

Once the list of speakers has been decided, they have agreed to attend the meeting, the venue arrangements etc., are in place, it is now the time to start advertising the meeting. Nowadays, the main source of information regarding the meeting is via a conference website, and it will be the job of the organiser to design, maintain and monitor this website. If you need any help putting together the conference web site, then please let the MGMS meetings secretary and the MGMS web master know. The overall design is largely up to the organiser but some aspects should be remembered.

- Frames are the logical way to organise the main page but not all browsers support them. This however is unlikely to be a problem in the future.
- The web site should contain:
  - details about the meeting title and subject matter,
  - the speakers and their affiliations,
  - the conference programme & timetable when available,
  - abstracts if and when available,
  - details of how to register (electronic registration is desirable – see below)
  - details of the methods of collection of payment
  - accommodation options & meals costs, if separate
  - travel to the venue,
  - details of any sponsors, often with their company logo
  - details of other meetings, for example if it is backing onto other meetings of interest to MGMS members

- any relevant background and local information about the venue such as nightlife, restaurants, etc.,
- a link to the MGMS home site and the sites of any co-hosting organising bodies.
- a contact telephone number for a local organiser

With regards travel, make sure that delegates are aware of any car parking problems that may exist at the site. Most modern universities have adequate facilities, but some older colleges are notoriously bad (especially Oxford).

- On-line registration is desirable. If credit card details are being provided, it is important that online security is ensured. An ongoing problem that we have encountered is incompatibility between browsers, particularly with "mailto" facilities in the HTML script. CGI-BIN facilities are often non-compatible. The advice is to keep the script as simple as possible and test it out with a number of browsers before releasing it. A downloadable registration form should be provided at the first possible opportunity on the web page. Some feedback to the registrant should be provided at the earliest opportunity so that he/she will know that the application and/or payment have been received. A typical set of HTML source codes for an MGMS conference web page is provided in Appendix J. When the full web pages have been tested, details should be sent to the MGMS webmaster for our home site (<http://www.mgms.org>), for inclusion in the diary section.
- After the conference is over, it is still highly desirable to keep the programme and the talks (or at least the abstracts) available on the web site for the MGMS archives.

As soon as the website is set up, information should be passed to the MGMS membership secretary who will distribute the announcement in the regular electronic news bulletin to the Society membership. This is the main source of our advertising. Some other possible sources should also be considered. These include:

- Providing a slide to other meetings organisers so that your meeting can be advertised at other MGMS meetings and those of other societies such as the CCP5, ACS, RSC, BBS.
- Encouraging the speakers to contact their students, colleagues etc to attend the meeting.
- Associated society mailing lists should be available from the meetings secretary and maintained on the groups section of the MGMS web page
- Computational Chemistry bulletin boards
- Sponsors mailing lists
- For meetings in honour of retired scientists etc, it is worth checking which societies they were particularly involved in
- Direct poster advertisements through university departments, etc.
- Adding an advertisement to your e-mail signature
- Previous conference attendees
- Society "What's On" pages (*e.g.* RSC and API have lists of conferences to which you can add your own for free)

The registration form will need to contain certain information, which usually includes:

- name and title
- affiliation
- address, telephone number, fax and e-mail
- membership category,
- gender (e.g. might need this if allocating rooms on a shared basis)
- registration and accommodation / meal details
- special dietary requirements
- details of conference dinner and/or other social programmes
- student status and bursary requirements
- poster or oral presentation details including title and abstract
- if/when late registration fee come into operation and how much it is
- total amount due and how to pay.

A typical MGMS registration form is included in Appendix K. If electronic registration is not available, it is recommended that you try to ensure that all information on the forms is typed (as much time can be spent chasing delegates if their handwriting is illegible and they give incorrect information). Another suggestion is that if delegates request written confirmation of receipt or payment, it is easier to administer this by giving them as a batch at registration unless they request otherwise.

As the organiser, you will probably find it useful to keep an up-to date email list of all registered participants and speakers and have an easy-to-use system to send them emails.

### **At the Conference Venue**

This final section deals with some useful tips to bear in mind during the course of the conference. It is at this stage that most of the problems occur, although thankfully they are usually minor, e.g. attendees decide that they are suddenly vegetarian although they did not order special meals, delegates assume they have en-suite facilities when none are available, etc. We have even had students turning up demanding bursaries, which they were not offered, or worse still when they were not even students!

- As the organiser, keep records of all correspondence between speakers, delegates, etc and the organisers.
- Where travel to the final conference venue is awkward, it is courteous to arrange local transportation for speakers, especially those travelling long distance. It is much appreciated by the speaker to be picked up at the airport after a long haul flight.
- For longer conferences consider organising some associated events such as a tour of local historic sites of interest, visits to museums, vineyards or even pubs, etc. It may be necessary to arrange separate travel for such events. The cost of such events should not be forgotten in your early budgets.
- Appoint a chairperson for each session as soon as possible (preferably before the meeting) and ask them to introduce themselves to each speaker and ensure that they have enough

material to introduce each one before their talk. The chairperson is also responsible for ensuring that the speakers in their session keep to time. They might also request that mobile phones (and other devices with audible alarms) be switched off during the presentations.

- Delegates often appreciate being given a registration pack. Don't underestimate how much time it can take to produce this. This will normally include:
  - a printed programme,
  - abstracts,
  - list of attendees and sponsors
  - any meal tickets that might be required and a timetable for the meals (especially time when breakfast starts)
  - some local information about the venue, in the registration. This could be for example, a list of local alternative restaurants or bars within the area and a map of the facilities of the venue (e.g. location of poster rooms, dining area, computing rooms...).
  - a notepad and pen.

The latter can often be obtained free of charge from a sponsoring company. Delegates should also be supplied with a name badge and if possible collect badge holders after the meeting is finished as these may be used again at a future conference.

- If possible recruit help of local students (and reward them with free registration and meals) and ensure that they are familiar with their responsibilities, particularly the audiovisual equipment. Identify the mechanisms available for internet access, and publicise these to the registrants (e.g. in the registration pack).

Depending on how much local help you have it is still important to take personal responsibility. Some ideas follow:

- Find out beforehand what audiovisual equipment, the speakers will need. An increasing number of lectures are now given as laptop presentations and it is common for several speakers to appear in one session with their laptops. For this situation, a multi-port display adapter is very useful as are high quality video cables. Alternatively it is often useful to request that speakers bring their presentations on CD / floppy so that they may be loaded and tested beforehand on a local PC. If you wish to impose this solution, be aware that fonts are not always stored with the file itself, and so special characters may not display correctly. Ensure that facilities are available for both PC and Apple Mac machines
- Ensure that pointers and microphones are available and working properly. Ensure that you know how to adjust the microphones properly.
- Verify at least a quarter of an hour in advance of each session that the building and the lecture theatre are unlocked, and that the necessary equipment is in place and works.
- Not all facilities have access to an outside phone line so having use of a mobile phone is nowadays often essential.
- Where there is any organised transport, telephone the bus company at the start of each day, and go through the detailed schedule for the day ahead. A 24-hour emergency

number should also be available, so that any non-appearance of buses can be promptly (and confidently!) dealt with.

- Check at least a quarter of an hour in advance of each refreshment break that there are at least signs of the imminent appearance of coffee. Similar checks should be made in respect of lunches (make sure you allocate enough time for the break) and any other social functions, such as a reception.
- Check with the registration desk at the start of each session that all the speakers and the chairpersons for the session have arrived, so that if not contingency plans can be prepared.
- Know where to refer any medical emergency and ensure that emergency evacuation procedures are explained at the start of the meeting.
- Ensure well in advance of the meeting that poster facilities are available. Not all universities provide their own boards so it may be necessary to hire these). A list of companies who rent these out is available in Appendix L. It is often useful to have the posters in the same area as the tea and coffee breaks, as this is an ideal time for delegates to look around at them. For raising funds from exhibitors, it is often useful to confirm that the vendor stalls will be in close proximity to the tea and coffee area.
- Take care to ensure appropriate fixing materials (Velcro/tape/pins) are readily available to put up posters and, if at all possible, try to arrange to have people available to assist.
- Consider providing copies of the posters and talks on a CD before or after the meeting.
- Traditionally a prize(s) is given to a student(s) presenting the best poster. Appoint several judges well in advance of the first poster session and ensure that they have time (and are willing) to read all the posters. Ensure that there is an appropriate time and place to present the prize (eg. the conference dinner or at the end of the meeting). It is often appropriate at this time for the Society president or the organiser to present a certificate and/or letter of congratulations to the recipient of each prize (see sample in Appendix I).
- Know what to do when non pre-booked accommodation is sought at the start of the meeting.
- Delegates may need to give a telephone number where they can be contacted and it is useful to identify this number (for example the porter's lodge of a college) prior to the meeting.
- If a conference dinner is being held, you may want to have an after dinner speaker. Choose carefully !! - and make sure that this person knows well in advance that he/she is taking on this role and has time to prepare.
- At the end of the conference, several events should occur. Somebody such as the final session chairperson or Chairperson of the Society should thank the organisers, the local & technical help, the speakers and of course the delegates. If there has been considerable secretarial help in the organisation of the meeting it is usual to present a gift to that person at this time.
- At the end there is often a rush for taxies, etc. Make sure that you have the numbers of any local taxi firms who may be used in this role. If many people are travelling by train or bus, it is a good idea to have available a timetable of trains, etc. so that people will be able to plan their departure times. People can often share rides to a station or airport so provide a poster board where delegates can put down their names and the time they want to leave. If



sufficient numbers allow it, it is often economical to hire a bus for travel to a final common destination.

- Before the final day of the meeting, make sure that delegates know what time they must check out of their rooms and arrange for a room to store luggage if necessary.
- Participants at conferences like to be able to access the Internet. In order to avoid problems with “hackers”, it is recommended that terminals should only allow access via a web browser and so that users can set up a secure shell connection to their home machines.

### **Annual General Meeting of the MGMS society**

The MGMS will usually hold its AGM at a conference in the spring (usually in April). The meeting organiser will need to ensure that a room is available for an MGMS executive committee meeting and then that time is set aside for the AGM and that this is factored into the conference programme.

### **Following the meeting**

You will need to present the final accounts to the MGMS Treasurer within an agreed deadline and certainly within the financial year (which ends on 31<sup>st</sup> December) (a sample of these is given in Appendix D).

Please supply details of the attendees to the MGMS membership secretary. For MGMS run meetings, it is usual to offer those who have paid the full non-member registration fee, free membership of the Society up until the end of the current membership year (each membership year runs from May 1<sup>st</sup> until April 30<sup>th</sup>).

Please give your comments on how helpful these guidelines have been to the MGMS meetings secretary along with any suggestions as to how they could be improved and any sample letters and documentation, details of suppliers and other information that would be helpful to future conference organisers

Finally, the Chairperson of the MGMS should also remember to write a letter officially thanking the organisers (for example see Appendix M).

### **Special editions of the Journal of Molecular Graphics and Modelling**

For some meetings it might be appropriate to feature conference presentations in a special edition of the journal. The conference organiser should liaise with the editor of the journal (and the MGMS link person for the meeting if appointed) regarding this matter.

If you are reading this guide without the Appendices, they are available from the MGMS Meetings secretary, Dr. Frank Blaney, email: frank\_e\_blaney@gsk.com