L-Università ta' Malta

THINK.CHECK.ATTEND.

Conferences Checklist

THINK: Is This a Credible Conference for Submitting Your Abstract?

Conferences provide valuable opportunities for researchers to share their work, exchange ideas, and establish professional connections. However, with new conferences emerging regularly, it can be challenging to assess their credibility and academic quality.

Always consider whether a conference is reputable before submitting an abstract or registering. The checklist below highlights some of the red flags to look out for.

CHECK: The Official Think. Check. Attend. Categories

The four categories and their official sub-questions below are reproduced from the current Think. Check. Attend. checklist. Red flags and verification tips are added by the Library to help you answer each question.

1. Organisers & Sponsors

Official checklist questions

- Are you aware of the society or association organising this conference?
- Can you easily identify the venue of the conference?
- Is it the first time this conference is being held?
- Have you or your colleagues attended this conference before?
- Is it clear what fees will be charged, and would these be waived if you are accepted as a speaker?
- Do you recognise any of the sponsors involved in the conference?

Red flags

- The organiser is unknown in your field, or falsely claims support from a known university or society.
- The organiser runs various similarly-named conferences throughout the year.
- Unclear or hidden registration fees, or no waiver for accepted speakers.

How to check

- Verify organisers, sponsors and institutional partners by checking their own websites, rather than clicking the logos or links on the conference website.
- Ask colleagues in your field whether they have heard of the conference or organiser.
- Search for past editions of the conference and check whether they have credible programmes, speakers, and proceedings.

2. Conference Website & Information

Official checklist questions

- Have you checked the conference website carefully? Is key information clearly presented, including registration fees, submission deadlines, conference date/s, editorial committee, programme details, venue?
- Have you read any papers from previous editions of the conference's proceedings?

Red flags

- There is very little detail on the programme, speakers, organising committee or venue.
- Heavy promotion of the destination (resorts, tourist attractions) over the academic programme.

How to check

- Search for past conference titles and papers via Google Scholar and your library's databases.
- Check for past proceedings through Crossref and Elsevier's conference listings.

3. Scope & Content

Official checklist questions

- Do the scope and objectives of the conference fit your field and core academic interests?

Red flags

- The title is unrealistically broad, covering many unrelated disciplines or subject areas at once.
- The same or very similar “conference” runs in several cities on the same or overlapping dates.

How to check

- Compare the stated scope with the actual programme, speakers and past editions. Do they genuinely align?

4. Editorial Control, Peer Review & Proceedings

Official checklist questions

- Is the committee clear about the editorial control over presentations and the type of peer review used?
- Does the organising committee clearly state where the proceedings will be published?
- Does the conference clearly specify which indexing services it guarantees and which indexing databases it plans to submit the proceedings to for consideration?
- Is the publisher of the proceedings a member of a recognised industry initiative such as COPE, DOAJ, or OASPA?

Red flags

- Guaranteed or unrealistically fast abstract acceptance, with little evidence of meaningful peer review.
- There is no transparent information about where the proceedings will be published, and any claims about indexing cannot be independently verified.
- Past proceedings are missing, hard to find, or clearly poor in academic quality.

How to check

- Read past proceedings, if available. Do the papers look like real, peer-reviewed scholarship?

ATTEND: Only If You Can Answer ‘Yes’ to most of the questions above

Complete the checklist and attend the conference or submit your abstract only if you are satisfied and can answer 'yes' to most or all of the questions (Think. Check. Attend.). If you cannot verify the organiser, the review process, or where proceedings will be published, treat that uncertainty as a reason not to register.

Think. Check. Attend. also recommends applying the Think. Check. Submit. Checklist to any journal linked to the conference proceedings.