TIPS FOR ATTENDING CONFERENCES
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The deadlines for proposals for the major 2021 conferences are early this year. Some of these conferences will be held in virtual form as the situation permits. It is important to submit your proposal as soon as possible. Be sure to read the instructions carefully.

The conference of CIESC/SCÉCI, a society in the federated societies of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE), will take place at the University of Alberta from May 29 to June 3, 2021. Their deadline for submissions is October 1, 2020. Check their website at [https://csse-scee.ca/conference-2021/](https://csse-scee.ca/conference-2021/). They are working toward an in-person conference but are exploring virtual options.

The 65th CIES conference will take place in Seattle WA, USA. The in-person conference is from April 25-29, 2021. The virtual conference is from April 25- May 2, 2021. The deadline for proposals is October 14, 2020. The portal is already open at [www.cies2021.org](http://www.cies2021.org). The theme is “Social Responsibility within Changing Contexts”. Be sure to check out CIES New Scholars activities, including mentoring workshops.

The OISE Dean's Graduate Student Research Conference is held annually in March. It is a one-day conference open to all OISE graduate students. See the OISE website for announcements from the Dean's office.

The XVIII Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies will be held on July 18-22, 2022 in Bangalore, India. The theme is “Educating for Sustainable Water Futures: Comparative Perspectives”. See the website at [https://wcces-online.org](https://wcces-online.org) for details. CIESC members/students are eligible for reduced registration rates.

Four different types of presentations

A paper
- Individual submission
- Conference organizers will group these submissions by theme/topic

A panel
- You and at least 3 of your colleagues organize your papers on the same theme/topic and then apply through one submission

A roundtable
- Sitting at a large table, after each presenter gives a short presentation on their study, collective discussion by presenters and attendees follows, providing an interactive setting for those who seek to engage in discussion about their work.
A poster

- You prepare a visual representation of your paper/study. There are set times for poster sessions when several posters are mounted on bulletin board type stands and you speak with conference attendees as they look at the posters.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

Starting to prepare: Look carefully at the conference website and register early. Decide if you wish to participate in person or online. Pay close attention to the instructions about how to submit your application and the deadlines for deciding in which format to participate. Check out accommodation and travel arrangements early and look for cheaper alternatives.

Conference theme: Try to fashion your presentation in at least a vague way related to the conference theme. These themes are usually very general. If there are choices of Thematic Groups or sub-themes, situate your topic properly and apply to the correct group or special interest group. Otherwise your abstract may get rejected or shifted to another group.

Writing abstracts: As a general rule, in a 100 word abstract, use one sentence to situate your topic, one sentence to state the goal of your research, one sentence to outline your methodology and theoretical framework, and one sentence to summarise your findings. For a 200-250 (or more) word abstract, keep this same proportion of sub-topics. Recently, abstracts are longer and more detailed. Abstracts will be reviewed by volunteer reviewers. Check the conference website for review criteria and use this to guide how to write your abstract. For example, the CSSE General criteria for review for CIESC is as follows:

1. Significance to the field
2. Relevance and soundness of theoretical rationale
3. Rigour of methodology
4. Trustworthiness of results and conclusions
5. Appropriateness of citations grounded in the relevant literature
6. Clarity of proposal

(Please refer to the conference website for the full list of abstract review criteria.)

CIES Abstract review criteria:

1. RELEVANCE: Relevance of topic as related to comparative and international education, conference theme and/or SIG
2. THEORY/CONTEXT: Strength of theoretical framework or contextualization
3. INQUIRY: Strength of critical analysis or research methods (including design, data collection, analysis)
4. FINDINGS: Clarity and coherence in the presentation of findings or argument
5. CONTRIBUTION:
   A. Scholarly originality or contribution to existing knowledge
   OR
B. If this submission is a project report or a practice-oriented presentation, please evaluate its application of existing scholarly knowledge. (https://cies2021.org/review-criteria/)

Do not leave submitting your abstract until the deadline day as there may be technical hitches or an overload on the system and you will miss the deadline.

Presenting a panel: Make every effort to find other researchers on the same topic and offer to present a panel with them. Use this as an opportunity for networking before you even participate in the conference. If you are organizing a panel, be sure to get all the abstracts in good time and submit the panel as a package online. If you are the panel chair, it will be your responsibility to keep in touch with the panelists and even relay information to them. Get all the contact details correctly from the panelists. Arrange to meet them at the conference before your session to go over last-minute details. Or in a virtual conference, contact them by email and discuss the order of speaking and other details. Use this opportunity to play a leadership role.

Financial Assistance: Attending conference away from your home location are costly. Be sure to check the following website well in advance to see if you are able to get some financial assistance:
- OISE Graduate Student Association (GSA) Conference Funding Assistance Program
- OISE Associate Dean Research, International & Innovation Graduate Student Conference Travel Program
- Check conference website for possible awards or financial assistance

Registration: Be sure to register in time for the discounted rate. Associations require you to be a member in order to register and to present at their conferences. Try to get all the details correct on your application. It is a great nuisance for organizing committees to have to correct your errors.

Accommodation: The conference hotel is usually expensive, but often four students may share a hotel room. Cheaper accommodation or dorms are often available nearby. University dorm rooms are available for early registrants at the CIESC conferences.

Passports, visas etc.: Check in plenty of time that your travel documents are up to date. Passports usually need to have six months validity remaining on them. Check the Canadian government website for virus updates, border crossing to the U.S., travel tips and advisories, and even advice on weather and suitable clothing: http://www.voyage.gc.ca/countries_pays/menu-eng.asp

Telephones, i-phones etc: Set your phone for roaming and check with your mobile carrier to avoid expensive charges when using your phone in other countries. A phone card is often much cheaper. Changes are happening so fast that I cannot give firm advice
on this topic. Most people seem to be communicating electronically at conferences almost all the time. I suggest spending more time there meeting people you do not know rather than communicating with your social networking friends. Naturally it is nice to send some pics of your conference experience.

It used to be impolite to be keyboarding during a presentation, but it may be that the person is just taking notes. Or not. As a speaker, I have found it very irritating to have folks tweeting their reactions to my speech while I am talking but not having the courtesy to come and talk to me after the session. It is better to have authentic interaction with real people. They will not remember you from a tweet. At virtual conferences, seek out opportunities for social networking. Sometimes the Chair will allow for extra time at the end of a session, and there will be socializing opportunities online specially organised.

PREPARING FOR THE CONFERENCE

Preparing your paper: Even if your paper is much longer, rewrite it as a 7 page document for your oral presentation. Don’t just highlight your longer paper with yellow or pink. It does not look good to be flipping through pages you do not need. Seven pages will fill a 10-15 minute presentation slot. Prepare PowerPoint, overheads or other aids for material that illustrates your points. Make sure that the font is of a size that the audience can see in a large room and that there are not too many points on one page. Unless you are a great speaker already, I suggest using Power Point very sparingly. If you do use Power Point, use it to present your outline or to show material (pictures or maps) that you are not going to read verbatim to the audience. To prepare for emergencies, it is better not to rely on AV equipment. Be prepared to speak even without aids in case anything goes wrong. If the conference is virtual, make sure you run through all the technical details ahead of time. Prepare a suitable background behind you for your presentation.

Sending your paper to the panel discussant: Make every effort to get a draft copy of your paper to the named discussant. You can mark on it that it is not for quotation and is in draft form only. Even sending it a few days before the conference is better than not at all. Sending it at the very latest moment (e.g. 24 hours before the conference) when they may have already left home is impolite, even though they may get it on their iPhone at the airport.

Handouts: The most economical approach is to prepare a 1-2 page summary of your paper with any tables etc. on one sheet of paper. Put the title of your paper at the top in large font. Add your name, institution, and contact details. Do not include any scholarly ideas that you plan to pursue in future studies, just the ideas in the present paper. Take about 25+ copies with you to hand out to those present at your session and keep any others to give out to any others who inquire. Have business cards made showing your contact details. **Pack these and all presentation and conference materials in your carry-on luggage.** For virtual conferences, you may find other inventive ways to send out handouts online.
**Contacting your session Chair and fellow panelists:** It is a good idea to contact them and arrange to meet at the conference before the session. The Chair should do this, but make sure it happens if the Chair does not. Go and check out the assigned room at least the day before you present. You will feel less nervous and sleep better if you know what the room looks like. You should do the same with the panelists on your virtual presentation.

**Improve your presentation skills:** UofT School of Graduate Studies, through its Graduate Centre for Academic Communication, offers workshops for students such as oral presentation skills and how to prepare poster presentation. See https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/resources-supports/gcac/workshops/

**What to wear:** At CIES and conferences in large urban hotels, dress is fairly formal, especially on the day you present your paper. At CIES, the Washington crowd is out in force in dark suits. International visitors are almost always very well dressed. You can be more casual on your days off. Take something nice to wear to the banquet if you are going. Cultural dress is often seen at these events. At CIESC, which is held in late May on a university campus, dress is more casual. My thinking is that you do not want your audience to remember you negatively more for what you wore than what you said in your paper. For virtual conferences, you should dress professionally from the waist up.

**Packing for the conference:** Take your papers, USB keys, and any important files in your carry-on luggage, as well as a spare shirt or top, underwear, and socks, toothbrush etc. Think about what you would do if your check-in luggage were lost, and pack accordingly. I have seen many distressed people whose luggage got lost on the way to a conference, especially those who are presenting soon after arriving.

**Items not allowed on planes:** Do not pack any knives, sharp objects, or liquid or gel, or fruit in your carry-on luggage. Take an EMPTY water bottle to the airport and refill it AFTER you have passed through Security.

**AT THE CONFERENCE**

**Travel from airport to the conference site:** This is usually the most difficult part of getting to any conference. Check carefully before you leave home what the surface transportation is. The websites usually give directions, so print out maps etc. You can often book ahead for limos. Do not rely on GPS if you do not know the city at all. Take small change and small bills in US or other currency for travelling. **Photocopy your passport and credit cards twice.** Leave one set at home and take one copy with you in another part of your luggage.

**Registration:** Try to get to the registration desk in good time, as soon after you arrive as possible. Sometimes registration lines are long. **It is now no longer usual to be able to pay by paper cheque.**
Networking: Try to find your fellow panelists first. Leave messages for them via email or at the hotel or on the message board near the registration desk. Go to other sessions where the people you want to meet are presenting and after the session introduce yourself and congratulate them on their presentation. Summon up the courage to go and talk to people whose work you have admired. Go to the receptions and work the crowd. Hand out the cards you have had printed before you left home. Keep them handy in a pocket, not at the bottom of your bag. Always hand over your card with the right hand, and if in an Asian setting with both hands at once. Try to take in at least one panel session on what is new to you so that you get out of your academic “bubble”. Attend plenary sessions with keynote speakers to expand your knowledge of the field.

Supporting your fellow students and colleagues: As a matter of courtesy and solidarity, always attend the sessions of your fellow students or colleagues, even if they are not speaking on your specialty. You may be the only person they know in the room. You can also ask an intelligent question if no-one is asking them one in the Q and A session after the speeches. Then it looks as if someone was interested in their topic. Always be constructive in your comments. It does not reflect well on you to be nasty in public. This practice of supporting your colleagues is a good one to keep up in the coming years. You will appreciate their support too.

Presenting: Abide by the time limits! Do not read your paper but speak to it! Look at the audience! Be courteous to your Chair and fellow presenters! Pay attention when they are presenting! Do not chat with other panelists during the presentations and never chew gum! Resist the temptation to text but give people your full attention as a fellow presenter, as an audience member and as a colleague in conversation.

Apologising: It is a temptation to start off by apologising about your topic, your research or your progress. Or that you have changed the title slightly. Do not do this!! You have as much right to be there as anyone else. So start off by saying what you plan to do in your presentation in a firm and confident voice. Then proceed to keep to the time limits and present your work in a firm and confident way. In the question period, do not lose your confidence and answer clearly and unwaveringly. Never apologise about your work– the audience does not know what it is that you do not know!

IF THINGS GO WRONG EVEN IF YOU ARE NOT IN CHARGE: If the room is already occupied, politely ask the late group to leave, or if they do not move, announce loudly that their session is over. If the AV/IT equipment is not there or does not work, start the panel and present the papers anyway. Do not waste time waiting for AV/IT technicians to turn up. If the Chair lets the first speakers go on too long, tap your pen politely and then speak up. If the Chair never shows up, chair the session yourself. Try to make the session a success by solving problems quickly and non-frantically, no matter what your role is. Since many of you are former teachers, step out of the passive student role and into the teacher-in-charge role.
Stay calm. Thank everyone at the end of the session for helping to make it a successful event.