

Running a....

college HE Scholarship conference

An annual conference is a perfect chance to get people together to talk about and more formally present their scholarly activity. Teachers and students welcome the opportunity to meet colleagues and peers whom they otherwise have little chance to connect with. Conversations at conferences can open doors to new opportunities for collaboration. You will need to decide who you are running the conference for: staff? students? both? If this is the first time you've run a scholarship conference it might be easier to have delegates and presenters just from your own college.

However, there are lots of advantages to holding a regional conference. Firstly, other colleges may agree to share the costs and help with the planning and organisation of the event. Most significantly, HE teachers can meet other teachers in their field. If you run a conference annually you could rotate hosting the event between the colleges to keep costs down; however, if you are not comfortable with this you might need to choose a 'neutral' venue, which will inevitably cost more.

PROCESS

1. Decide whether to go it alone or collaborate. Working with other colleges = shared costs/resources and networking opportunity.

2. Choose date and book venue. When is best for staff and/or students? If a multi-college event, is a 'neutral venue' best?

3. Decide the format of the day. An inspiring keynote followed by breakout sessions works well.

4. Put out a call for content - consider the breadth of contributions (eg paper/poster presentations; performances; exhibits).

5. Choose a keynote speaker - do you have a theme? Are you looking for someone who will appeal to both staff and students?

6. Look at expressions of interest and finalise format of event - how many breakout spaces? Do you need exhibition space?

7. Set interim deadlines for contributors and offer or signpost support. Advertise. Consider using online booking platform such as Eventbrite.

8. Design and produce materials - programme, door signs, evaluation forms. Bear in mind that last minute changes are not uncommon!

9. Conference day - see conference day checklist. Make sure you have enough help. Enjoy!