

	Policy Main Title	Community Engagement	Effective Date	1/06/2024
	Policy Subject	Conference Management and Organization	Last Review date	16/10/2024
	Policy Number	CE-08	Next Review date	10/09/2025
	Responsible Entity	Conference Management Center	Approved By	Chancellor

## Overview

UoS organizes and manages academic, professional, and specialized conferences that engage scholars and specialist from all over the world to discuss new research findings and exchange their experiences and ideas. These conferences handle the most recent topics and issues related to the community and industry in different fields and sectors. The intent of the Conference Management (CM) Policy is to define the types of conferences, set the scope of the governing policies, define the roles of each stakeholder, introduce well defied processes and procedures that are required for the management of conferences at the University of Sharjah.

## Scope

The guidelines that are stated in this policy reflect the way the University of Sharjah manages conferences, which are of an academic (scholarly) nature. This policy shall be applied to all conferences that are approved by the University whether they are held inside or outside the University campus. This policy applies to all departments/units and individuals in the university who are involved in the organization of the conferences (at any capacity) as well as the external partners who are part of organizing conferences on campus. President, Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, Deans, Directors of research Institutes, Department Chairpersons, Directors of Units, Faculty, Employees, Students may concern to this policy.

## Purpose

The aim of the policy is to:

- Provide a clear framework for organizing conferences to be held by (or at) the University either inside or outside the University campus.
- Introduce the relevant regulations and requirements needed to support all aspects of operations of the conferences, defining the role of each administrative and support units, and ensuring that the conferences are delivered successfully with high quality along with minimization of the associated risks at all levels.

## Abbreviations and Definitions

**CMC: The Conference Management Center** is An independent administrative entity that reports directly to the Chancellor. It manages conferences that are defined in this policy and coordinates the participation and involvement of each academic colleges and support and service units (e.g., IT, FMPD, etc.) or individual who are taking part in the organization of the targeted event.

**Conferences:** Any non-teaching activity that is organized centrally by the CMC or by one of the VC Offices, college Deanships, departments, and units at the University of Sharjah. Any scholarly activity that is attended by guests from inside and outside the university, including academics, scholars, students, parents of students, student representatives, members of industry, commerce or the

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community, dignitaries and invited guests who are gathered for a specific purpose. These conferences Hold significant importance and support the University's strategies.

### Policy

- Before a conference is being announced, it must seek the required approvals in accordance with the event policies and procedures.
- Conference Booking timeline:
  - o Major Conference: 12 months prior to the starting date of the conference.
  - o Minor Conference: 6 months prior to the starting date of the conference.
  - o Hosted Major Conference: 3 months prior to the starting date of the conference.
- Concurrent Events
  - o Major Conference: No major conferences can be held concurrently.
  - o Minor Events: up to 2 conferences can be held simultaneously.
- Conferences must:
  - o Be in line with the University strategy.
  - o Comply with the conference policies and any other institution's conditions, restrictions, constraints, and regulations.
  - o Not be in time conflict with other major conferences or major events.
  - o Be self-funded through registration fees or/and sponsorships.
  - o Have a risk assessment plan.
  - o Identify any unmanageable associated risks with the conference.
  - o Clearly state any conflict of interest posed by the event at the local or national level.
  - o Have a designated website in the conference portal
  - o Have a designated email address ending at @sharjah.ac.ae
  - o Have conference proceedings with at least 2 blind reviewers for each conference paper.
- The Owner of the Conference is required to submit a "Conference Proposal", which includes the scope of the conference, objectives, the proposed time(s), resources and budget. The proposal must highlight the purpose, rationality, benefits, and alignment with the University Strategy.
- Upon approval, a conference chairperson shall be appointed by the chancellor. The conference chairperson, in coordination with CMC, is responsible for:
  - o Submit the detailed plan and road map of the conference.
  - o Ensures and prepares the budget allocation and plan: income vs. expenditure.
  - o Prepares the draft of the three central committees which will run and manage the conference, i.e.: the Higher Committee, Scientific Committee, and Organizational Committee.
    - o The roles and responsibilities of each committee are highlighted in the Procedures' Document.
    - o A Conference chair, the chairs and members of each committee shall be proposed by the event owner and must be approved by the chancellor.
- The CMC prepares the procedures' document, with milestones for the event.

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- Every conference must have Conference program, book of abstracts, Conference Poster, Conference website and Conference email.
- When applicable, the submitted manuscripts must be peer-reviewed and published in a SCOPUS indexed proceeding, Journal special issues in the designated field of the conference, or edited book by a world-renowned publisher.

## Procedures

### 1. Responsibilities of CMC

- The Conference Management Centre (CMC) is responsible for:
  - o Overseeing and following up on the required approvals for conferences.
  - o Serving as the custodian of material, documentation, devices, and equipment used during and after events.
  - o Marketing conferences through various available outlets.
  - o Providing the necessary forms and requests along with coordinating with any of the support services and administrative units that are involved in organizing the conference.
  - o Providing consultations to the conference owners, event chairperson and various committees.
  - o Acting as the “first party” to sign the contracts with external entities who are seeking to hold a “hosted conference”.
  - o Revising and approving the budget of the conference.
  - o Preparing the “Sponsorship Letters” and following up with donors and sponsors.
  - o Preparing the invitation letters to “dignitaries” and keynote guests and speakers.
  - o Preparing the program skeleton to be used for logistics.
  - o Coordinating with the Chancellor’s Office to prepare the Official Opening Ceremony.
  - o Approving the Conference registration fees.
  - o Creating a Cost Center for the conference/event in coordination with the Finance Department.
  - o Maintaining and archiving the conference databases, including creating a UOS conference distribution list.

### 2. Classification of Conferences

Conferences are classified into the following 3 types:

#### 2.1 Major Conferences:

- Formal in nature and involve external guests.
- Must be approved by the Chancellor.
- Serve the strategy of the University.
- Managed by the central Conference Management Center (CMC).
- Held under the patronage of HH, the President of the University.
- Involve the participation of the Senior Executives of the University and other dignitaries.
- Include participation of multiple support and service units & departments within the University.

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- Cannot be held concurrently with any other event in the university.
- Budget and resources are secured through internal and external sources.

## 2.2 Minor Conferences:

- Utilize the University resources, services, and infrastructure.
- Organized by a specific College/Department/Unit in coordination with the CMC.
- Does not conflict with any “Major Conference”.
- Can be held concurrently with other “Institutional Events”.

## 2.3 Hosted Conferences (non-university events):

A conference that is organized by an external entity and is being hosted at the university. The organizers of such conference may utilize the University resources (infrastructure, resources, service, etc.) through the CMC only. This category of conferences includes but is not limited to exhibitions, competitions, meetings (national, regional and international), symposiums, workshops, etc. However, the organization of this type of event must go through the following procedure:

- Submission of a cost-recoverable proposal.
- Submission of a detailed contract that requires signature of all involved parties.
- Mandatory approval of all programs (technical and social) of the event by the CMC.
- A compulsory assignment of a liaison person from the University in the Organizing Committee of the event.
- In addition, the event must not be held during the university’s critical academic calendar events as add/drop week, final exams, etc.

## 3. Dignitaries and Distinguished Guests

Guests of any conference that holds a high-ranking position in the government or senior executive officer (CEO) in the industry, including but not limited to the members of the Ruling Families, Ministers, Deputy Ministers, Directors at the government’s offices, and world-renowned scholars.

## 4. Conference Owner

The head of the unit organizing the conference, i.e., Vice Chancellor, Dean, Director, etc. shall be the owner of the event.

## 5. Conference Proposal

A conference proposal is the initial document to be prepared by the owner of the event and it includes:

- Title and themes
- Milestones and important Dates
- Purpose, scope, and objectives
- Possible and potential partners
- Clear alignment with the university strategies
- Benefits and expected outcomes.
- Detailed proposed budget, cost, revenues, and allocated resources.
- Proposed committees, sub-committees, and taskforces along with the corresponding members and roles.

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## 6. Conference Chairperson

The person appointed by the Chancellor to act as the chairperson of the event. S/he is responsible and will be held accountable for the organization of the event, starting with the initial proposal until submitting the final report of the event to the CMC.

## 7. Conference Website on UOS Conferences Portal

A self-service e-portal, where all conferences must be managed. The portal includes the details of the registration and paper submission workflow with proper approval. The portal shall be linked to the University calendar.

## 8. Conference Higher Committee:

The conference higher committee shall be formed by the chancellor according to the conference committee template, Appendix I.

The mandate of the higher committee includes:

- Approve the conference proposal including the conference objectives, themes and the accompanying activities (exhibitions, etc.) of the conference.
- Approve the budget proposal for the conference.
- Approve the marketing plan, conference sponsors, and list of strategic partners.
- Approve the names of the invited guest speakers.
- Approve the final report and recommendations of the conference.

## 9. Conference Scientific and Organizing Committee

The Dean of the college or institute organizing the conference, in consultation with the Director of the conference center at the university, shall form the scientific, technical, and organization committees of the conference and specify their tasks, considering the following guidelines:

- Scholarly and scientific background and expertise in the themes and topics of the conference (Scientific Committee)
- Academic experience in publication, auditing and reviewing scientific research papers (Scientific Committee)
- Previous experience in organizing scientific conferences
- Distribution and diversity among male and female colleagues within the college without any bias or differentiation
- Interest, desire and willingness to actively take part in organizing the conference and contribute to its success.
- Has excellent relations and network with relevant organizations and institutions working in areas relevant to the conference themes to contribute to bringing sponsors and key speakers
- Have high organizational skills and work in a team spirit
- That s/he has a clear and important role in organizing the conference

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- Commitment to be present and attend all preparatory meetings and carry out the role and tasks assigned to her/him.

### 10. UOS Conferences Global Calendar

An e-calendar is used to include all events that will be held in the University during the academic year. It also includes the “closed dates”, during which conferences cannot be scheduled.

### 11. Procedure Document

A document that includes:

- Responsibilities for each committee
- Tasks and the role of each committee member of each committee
- Timeline and event milestones
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### 12. Petty Cash

Petty cash is approved under the following conditions:

- The maximum petty cash amount is 5,000.00 AED.
- It must be spent in accordance with the Finance Department's policies (e.g., original receipts must be provided).
- Requests for petty cash must be submitted by the conference chair to the Director of the Conference Center for approval.

### 13. Travel Tickets and Accommodation:

For travel tickets and accommodation requests are generally restricted to keynote speakers attending various conferences, the following controls are applied:

- Keynote Speaker must be approved by the Scientific Committee
- Tickets for keynote speakers must be economy class
- Tickets must be covered by the budget allocated for the conference, the generated revenue or sponsorship.
- Tickets must follow procurement policies, e.g. the lowest fare possible.
- Economy tickets are approved by the Dean of the College organizing the conference and processed through the Conference Centre and Procurement Department.
- In some cases, cash refund for pre-paid tickets is permitted after the approval of the Dean and the Director of the Conference Center.
- For business class and first-class tickets for distinguished speakers and invitees, the chancellor's approval is required.
- Accommodation for general guests (non-keynote speakers) must be approved prior to the start of the conference. It must be covered by the budget allocated for the conference, the revenue generated or sponsorship.
- Accommodation for guest speakers is approved by the Dean and the Director of the Conference Centre. It can be covered by the main budget allocated to the conference.

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#### 14. Safety and Security

- All conferences must comply with the safety and security measures stipulated at the University of Sharjah. Such measures include information and cyber security, access to information, health and environmental hazards, and fire safety. Information Technology and Facilities Management and Planning units have the right to cancel any event (even after it has been approved) if it deems to pose any major security and safety risk or does not fully comply with the health and safety and security regulations. Additional security measures for any event can be imposed by the University.
- Reporting incidents: Organizing Committee is required to prepare and submit to the concerned parties and CMC incident reports in case of physical damage or malfunctions of equipment during the event. The main purpose of the incident report is to identify causes and raise the appropriate corrective actions and recommendations.

#### 15. Sponsorship

- Conference owners must submit a list of possible or targeted potential sponsors, with the focus on entities that are relevant to the event.
- All sponsorship letters must be signed by the chancellor, sent and followed up by the CMC.
- Categorization of the sponsorship levels (platinum, gold, silver, bronze) must be set by the CMC.
- Sponsors' benefits and recognitions must be decided by the CMC.
- Logos and themes of sponsors are subjected to the approval of CMC.
- Income from sponsors is deposited in the event cost center.
- The surplus is transferred to the main budget of CMC.
- Relocation of the surplus to another event must be approved by the chancellor.
- In-kind contributions and gifts are accepted as sponsorships. Their values and categories are determined by the CMC.

#### 16. Conference Logistics

Conference logistics must follow the procedures document.

#### 17. Conference Marketing and Promotion

Promotion for the conference must be handled exclusively by CMC in coordination with Media Center in accordance with the following guidelines:

- Printing material must be designed by following the University branding.
- Promotion must be done but not restricted through university social media outlets (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)
- The even owner is responsible for all of the contents of the event at all levels including any promotion material.
- Press releases, interviews with local media outlets must be organized by the Media Center of the University.
- Any newspaper articles must be reviewed by the Media Center of the University.
- If needed, the event website is managed by the IT Center.
- Communications and correspondences with event participants are done by the event owner. A UOS- designated email must be used when communicating with event participants and stakeholders.
- Any organization wishing to display or exhibit their products/systems must attain approval from the EMO. Additional fees might be imposed on such beneficiaries.

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#### 18. Event Evaluation:

- At the end of every Major Event, the CMC will conduct an event satisfaction and evaluation survey.
- At the end of each Major Event, a standard report will be required by the event owner. The report included outcomes and recommendations. Such reports must be submitted to CMC within two weeks after the conclusion of the event.
- The CMC is required to prepare (in coordination with the event owner) a full budgetary report.

#### 19. Approval and Authority:

This policy and accompanying procedures are developed by an appointed committee, reviewed, and endorsed by the Deans Council and approved by the Chancellor.