

MES Principles and Guidelines

Draft 9 (to be discussed at MES Agora, 2015)

1. MES Aims and Purposes

MES was established in 1998 to satisfy the need for a wider discussion of the social and political dimensions of mathematics education, for disseminating theoretical frameworks, discussing methodological issues, sharing and discussing research, planning for action, and developing a strong research network. In addition, MES encourages classroom teachers to share their praxis.

The MES Conferences aim to bring together mathematics educators from around the world to provide such a forum as well as to offer a platform on which to build future collaborative activity. It is expected that topics discussed at MES Conferences will be wide-ranging. It is also expected that all issues will have clear and underpinning social themes. The general topics of the conference have been:

- **Politics of Mathematics Education**
- **Cultural and Social Aspects of learning Mathematics**
- **Sociology of Mathematics and Mathematics Education**
- **Alternative Research Methodologies in Mathematics Education**

Future conferences may devise other, but related themes.

2. MES Organisational structure

2.1 International Committee

The International Committee is set up to ensure democratic engagement of the MES community within the organisation and its decision making. The IC is composed of those who volunteer at an MES conference, and whom the Agoras approve (Sec 2.4). The IC as constituted may then invite others to join.

The role of the MES IC is to manage MES between conferences and to communicate the purposes of MES.

2.2 IC Convenor

The International Committee will nominate, and if necessary elect, one of its members to serve as the Convenor. The role of the convenor is to oversee the decisions made by successive Agoras. The convenor does not speak on behalf of the organisation. The position of Convenor will be up for nomination immediately after each MES Conference. The Convenor will communicate with the IC and the membership to further MES activity and recommendations made at Agoras.

2.3 Structure of the IC

Apart from the convenor the IC will identify other members to carry out the following roles:

- Treasurer
- Webmaster

Other roles may be considered from time to time for permanent or temporary inclusion

2.4 Agoras

The Agora is a public meeting of all MES conference participants held on one or more evenings at each MES conference. The Agoras discuss and develop consensus on policies and strategies for MES and the MES community. The Agoras will be chaired by the Convenor or someone else chosen by the Agora."

3. MES Finances

MES will gradually work toward a financial stability by imposing a levy on conference participants. This will be used to maintain the website, to subsidise some individuals to attend MES Conference, and to support the work and administration of MES.

4. MES Conferences

4.1 Location and administration

Decisions on the location of future MES conferences will be taken by the Agora and the IC. Consideration must be given to the accessibility of the venue, and any political issues underpinning such a decision.

4.2 Proceedings

MES produces printed conference proceedings for all conference participants and for others who may purchase. This decision will be considered at the Agoras for each conference.

4.3 Choice of plenary speakers, forms of responses

The following criteria can be used for selecting the plenary speakers:

- There are usually four plenary speakers, one to start off each day;
- Plenary speakers should address themes that are of interest to the MES community (and may include a theme that is of particular relevance to the host country), one theme per day;
- There should be a North-South spread, and a spread across continents and countries;
- There should be a racial and gender spread;
- There should be at least one speaker from the host country;
- Plenary speakers usually come from within the MES community, with possibly one or two from outside;
- People who have been plenary speakers previously do not normally speak again.

If the Local Organising Committee (LOC) wishes to deviate from these, then agreement need to be sought from the IC. The LOC draws up a list of recommended plenary speakers, and submits this to the IC for comments and final approval.

Two respondents will be selected to respond to each plenary paper. Choices are made by the LOC. All written responses should be submitted in time for a review by the LOC and the final version should be included in the proceedings.

4.3 Structure and procedure for plenary working group discussions

4.4 Guidelines and criteria on paper reviewing

Reviewing of all papers at MES conferences is seen as critical community scrutiny. As such the reviewing process will be transparent and open. Papers will not be anonymised, and reviewers will not be blind. We are aware that some funding institutions still insist that only blind reviewing is appropriate scrutiny. MES recognises that whilst blind reviewing is contrary to MES principles of collegiality and community there may be participants attending the conference where funding will only be approved if papers have been so reviewed.

1. We make it very clear in publicity and announcements why we adopt an open reviewing policy, and at the front of all MES proceedings we describe the process that has been

adopted. We especially make the point that those well established in the field may find their papers reviewed and rejected by someone less well-established.

2. Invite those who are not comfortable with the MES policy to reconsider submission to MES.
3. We clarify very carefully the criteria for reviewing and make these widely available to remove some element of individual responsibility for a judgement.
4. We work hard to support reviewers in the review process to ensure reviews are highly professional; this may mean LOC/IC mediation of reviews before they are sent out.
5. Where colleagues submitting a paper are from an institution which, in spite of MES policy will only fund/ support attendance if reviewing is double blind, we allow a request to withhold a) author, b) reviewer names. This does not of course stop individuals making personal contact should they wish.
6. If a potential reviewer does not wish their reviews to be open, they may want to reconsider their offer to review.

MES will provide support for early career writers and second-language English writers through an early bird system, with experienced MES participants acting as mentors in the writing process. Hence the LOC should plan the submission and review time to allow for people to resubmit.

The criteria for acceptance of full papers is included below. This will be reviewed at each conference.

It is crucial that careful decisions are made on who reviews and the quality of reviews. Reviewers need a good sense of the purpose of MES and how MES "works" both in terms of the issues of interest, but also the supportive nature of the community.

4.5 Criteria for reviewers

The LoC/IC will draw up a list of potential reviewers from participants at previous MES conferences.

A reviewer should have ideally attended at least two MES conferences, or have attended once but have submitted a paper for the current conference. This shows that the individual feels that MES is a place for him/her.

Each paper will initially have two reviews. If the responses are both accept or both reject this will be the decision. However, if a paper receives one accept and one reject it should go to a third person from the LoC or IC who has attended at least one conference.

All papers that initially come out as "reject" will be looked at by a member of the LOC/IC to confirm rejection due to the implications for participation.

4.6 Criteria for reviewing

The criteria for evaluating submissions for MES conferences are?

1. Are the aims of the paper clearly stated and are they compatible with the aims of MES (refer to statement of aims at the end of this document)?
2. Does the author make clear how their work is situated in relation to other relevant literature in the field?
3. Where relevant - Is the methodology clearly explained and justified?
4. Are the discussion and conclusions well founded?
5. Is the paper clear and coherent in both content and form?
6. Any general comments including reasons for the recommendation.
7. Any suggestions for the author regarding the presentation of the paper.
8. Do you think that the paper requires language editing by the program committee? (If you wish, you may edit the paper yourself using the tracking option.)

4.7 Procedure for chairing paper sessions

a. Role of chair/facilitator

In paper and project presentation sessions the role of the chair is to facilitate presentations and discussions. This includes helping presenters with time keeping and regulating the session so that all papers and/or project descriptions are discussed and that all participants are invited to take part.

The chair/facilitator has both the authority and responsibility, together with presenters and participants, to facilitate the session so that there is space for addressing all papers and project descriptions, as well as a broad range of themes relevant to the specific papers in discussions where all participants are invited to take part.

b. Participants' roles

Responsibility for the conduct of sessions is not only the facilitator's. All participants are part of the community of MES, and hence all have a joint responsibility for taking part in sessions in the spirit described here. If the facilitator finds it helpful, this can be said in the beginning or during the session.

c. Structure of sessions

- The facilitator starts the session and describes the session structure, at least if it is in the beginning of a MES conference.
- Because MES participants are expected to read the papers before attending the sessions, presentations are short. Each paper is presented for 10 minutes. The presentation is a reminder of the main points of the paper and of the questions that the paper raises. The presentation is then followed by 10 minutes of questions and discussions in the whole group on the specific paper. If presenters agree, the facilitator can help with time keeping during presentations by indicating, for example, when there is 5 minutes or 1 minute left.
- Discussions in small groups for 5-10 minutes with 2-4 participants per group on the three papers aiming at identifying possible questions to address all three papers, or at least two, and to find interesting commonalities between papers as well as important critical differences to bring to the larger discussion.
- Discussions in the whole group based on the small group discussions. These can include questions posed to all three paper presenters, as well as discussion among the entire group. The chair at first invites such discussion, and then intervenes as necessary to focus the discussion on issues related to more than one of the presented papers.
- Ending the session. This can be done in different ways depending on what the chair and group find most appropriate. One option is to give the presenters two minutes each to sum up the session from their point of view. Another option is to finish without any summing up and thereby provide maximum time for discussions.
- The chair of a paper session is responsible to connect with the presenters before the session to clarify timing and order of presentations. Because MES participants are expected to read the papers before attending the sessions, presentations are short. The presentation is a reminder of the main points of the paper and of the questions that the paper raises. The chair facilitates the timely completion of the presentation by signalling when the time is nearly complete and when it is over. The chair allocates for each paper a short time to present and a short time for discussion. After all the papers in the session are presented and discussed, the chair invites discussion that makes connections across the papers. The chair at first invites such discussion, and then intervenes as necessary to focus the discussion on issues related to more than one of the presented papers.

5. MES Special Interest groups

Members of the MES community may – with the approval of the IC - set up MES Special interest groups which may communicate or even meet locally or virtually between conferences. Such groups will allow members of the MES community to consider and work on more specific

issues, questions, themes, or tasks. MES SIGs may also meet at conferences. MES SIGs need to be consistent with the aims and purposes of MES as set out above.

6. Criteria for deciding the location of MES conferences

The location of MES conferences is both a practical and political decision for MES.

There are several principles the IC will apply when considering proposals for future conferences:

- The MES moves around geographically giving people the opportunity to participate without any geographical groups repeatedly facing high transport costs;
- Proposals will be preferred favouring locations that will make it easier to attend for participants from under-represented communities;
- All proposals will need a confident logistic and financial plan, with a clear risk strategy;
- Proposals should come from hosts with a knowledge of MES history and values;
- Proposals should demonstrate adherence to the MES Principles and Guidelines;
- Where possible the conference venue and accommodation should be co-located to support and facilitate a community feel for MESW. Where this is not possible or advisable any proposal should make a case demonstrating how the split will not reduce opportunities for a strong MES community feel;
- Costs should be kept low. MES does not has a culture of excursions;
- Discussions on potential locations should be discussed at an MES agora, but a final decision rests with the IC.