Annual Conference 2021 – invitation to bid

The Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) Annual International Conference is the largest annual academic geography conference in Europe, with over 1,800 delegates from 60 countries taking part in close to 400 academic sessions.

The Society hosts the conference in our building in London two years out of every three (hiring additional space at Imperial College London), and then every third year we take the conference out of London. The last few out of London conferences have been at Cardiff University (2018), University of Exeter (2015), The University of Edinburgh (2012), and the University of Manchester (2009). As the Society is a registered charity, the conference is a not-for-profit activity for the Society and is run on a cost-recovery basis. As a result, our budgets are quite tight, and we work very hard to make it good value for delegates.

We are now shortlisting venues for our 2021 conference, and are looking for a UK higher education institution to host. We are particularly interested in bids from HEIs based in the north of England or the Midlands.

Below, you can find out more information about the conference and our requirements. If you have any questions, please contact rhed@rgs.org for more information.

Dates
- Tuesday 31 August 2021 - Friday 3 September 2021.
- The main conference will run from 09.00 on Wednesday 1 September to 18.30 on Friday 3 September, with delegate registration, afternoon workshops, and an opening event on Tuesday 31 August 2019.

Numbers
- We expect 1200-1400 delegates to attend on each day of the conference.
- Of the c.1800 delegates we will welcome over the course of the conference, 2/3 are based in the UK and 1/3 are international.

Location
- Because so many of our delegates come from overseas, we are looking for a venue which has good public transport links across the UK, and to international airports.
- Delegates will be staying onsite or close to the conference venue. There need to be multiple accommodation options located nearby at varying price points.
- The venue should be located close (within walking distance) to a range of different restaurants, bars and cafes to provide delegates with evening options for food.

Spaces required at the venue
- Main exhibition/registration/catering space. This will host the conference helpdesk and registration, catering for lunches, and around 15 exhibitors, largely publishers. Ideally this will be located in a central space and within 10 minutes’ walk of all session rooms.
- 30-35 rooms for concurrent sessions for the three main days of conference (Weds-Fri). These should be a combination of lecture theatres and seminar rooms (min. capacity 35), plus one large lecture theatre (300+). Ideally, the rooms should all be within 10min walk of each other, and within 10min of the main exhibition/registration/catering space.
- All the rooms will be in use from 9:00am to 6:30pm on Wednesday 1, Thursday 2 and Friday September 2021. We will also require the main registration/exhibition space, 5-6 seminar rooms, and one large lecture theatre on Tuesday 31 August 2021.
- All session rooms should be set up theatre style, but with options for other set up formats (i.e. some to have moveable furniture).
- All session rooms should have (at minimum): Laptop/PC, data projector & screen, audio speakers, and internet connection. We will also require Skype or an equivalent to be installed on session room computers, to enable distance participation.
• Space on-site for a mobile crèche company to run a crèche for c.24 children of conference delegates on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, with set-up on Tuesday. We source the crèche company.
• Accommodation (if possible, from student residences):
  o Eight rooms are required for the conference team (single en-suite), to be included in conference booking.
  o A bulk allocation of rooms to be reserved for delegates with preferential booking code, but not included in conference booking.

Catering requirements
• Three servings of tea, coffee and biscuits each day (08.00-09.00, 10:40-11:10, and 16:20-16:50).
• Water fountains, or somewhere delegates can re-fill water bottles.
• Lunch
  o These should be boxed/paper-bag style ‘pick up and go’ lunches, e.g. boxed salad or sandwiches, with piece of fruit, and bread roll). Buffet-style lunches are impractical given the sheer numbers!
  o This needs to be available for delegates to collect between 11:45 and 14:15 each day from the main catering space. We usually operate a ticketing system (hand over that day’s ticket, get a bagged lunch in return) to control numbers. Delegates are particular about the quality of food.
• Evening receptions
  o We host an opening reception on Tuesday evening and a closing reception on Friday evening, each to cater for 300-400 delegates
  o On Wednesday and Thursday evening, around 5-6 receptions take place, of varying sizes (from 60 to 300 people each). These are hosted by us or by publishers.
  o Please quote for both the opening and closing drinks receptions in your bid, with additional receptions to be added at a later date.
• We are attentive to sustainability, and encourage bids which minimise packaging and source food locally and sustainably.

Other
• We will need wi-fi access for delegates on campus, including international delegates who may not have access to Eduroam.

Bidding process
Please submit your bid to Dr Sarah Evans (rhed@rgs.org) by Thursday 12 September 2019. The bid should include:
• Details of the hosting university and events team.
• Confirmation of availability of suitable rooms for the dates above.
• How your institution can meet the requirements outlined above.
• A detailed costing quotation giving indicative costs for room hire, catering and any other costs. This must be as complete as possible.

The bid should come from the hosting events team, with support from the local geography department.