

CONFERENCE TIP SHEET:
SHARED VALUES AND BEST PRACTICES FOR SESSIONS

by :

The STLHE/SAPES Equity Committee, May 2022
<https://www.stlhe.ca/equity-committee/>

1) PREAMBLE

The STLHE/SAPES Equity Committee is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all participants at any event, meeting, or conference organized by the Association. To this end, we invite participants to join us in committing to putting the following actions and values into practice at all meetings and conferences.

The 2022 Equity Committee—a new standing committee of STLHE/SAPES—endorses two documents initially drafted by the 2020/21 EDI Task Force: i) the “Statement of Core Values” (<https://www.stlhe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Statement-of-Core-Values.pdf>); and ii) “Enacting Our Shared Values” (<https://www.stlhe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Enacting-our-Shared-Values-2.pdf>). What follows here reflects and expands on much that is articulated in those two documents.

STLHE/SAPES is committed to the understanding that we all play a role in ensuring that the annual conference (and all other events) is a place where we can engage each other in a community of trust and respect. To that end, to foster a just and inclusive environment for all conference participants, we uphold the following as fundamental shared values and practices for the conference, recognizing that this is not an exhaustive list.

2) ENACTING OUR SHARED VALUES

We invite all conference participants to foster an environment of trust, respect, and ethical behaviours by recognizing and committing to the following observations:

- that participants (no matter their role at an event or meeting) reflect a wide range of gender, race, sexuality, (dis)ability, linguistic, and national identities, and we all recognize that these may make a difference to how people present and express themselves;
- that the above point might mean some organizational details look different to some participants than the usual conference or event formats, and that we all welcome those changes as more inclusive and accessible;

- that different groups of people bring different knowledges and experiences to events and meetings, and we endeavour to ensure that everyone is not just listened to, but actively heard;
- that different groups of people may have different needs in the event space, and we work to make sure that those are met by conference and meeting organizers to the fullest extent possible, and are respected by all participants;
- that not all research is “comfortable” and that it sometimes challenges status quo ways of knowing and being in the world, and we frame and understand comments and questions as generative and in the spirit of scholarly inquiry and learning;
- as a follow-up to the above, that some research is more difficult for some groups of people than for others, and we consider carefully how to frame and present material in a way that doesn’t further harm those people—for instance, by unproblematically reiterating harmful stereotypes and generalizations about particular groups of people or ways of being and knowing;
- that social media formats are a part of conference and meeting processes and we are all responsible to be mindful of how we are engaging with presentations and participants via these formats—this includes being mindful of intellectual property and not taking/posting pictures/screenshots of either presenters/participants or slide decks, or screen grabs of anything on video, without the express permission of those involved.
- that we all share individual and collective responsibility to intervene—through both comments and actions—when we witness actions and behaviours that perpetuate discrimination of any kind.

Participants in STLHE/SAPES events agree not to engage in or condone others’ engagement in actions and behaviours that do not reflect the above-listed shared values of the association. These include:

- addressing participants, either by tone or content, in ways that perpetuate discriminatory, stereotypical, or harmful beliefs and statements—this includes both in sessions and in more informal encounters;
- engaging in—either through our own behaviours or by overlooking the behaviours of other participants—comments, actions, or practices that perpetuate racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia or transphobia, ethnocentrism, etc., and instead, intervening when such comments and actions are witnessed;
- disagreeing with or disrupting other participants’ presentations, comments, and questions, either by tone or content, in ways that are disrespectful or demeaning, or that suggest stereotypes about particular groups of people’s knowledges or skills;
- insisting—through verbal comment, gesture, or other body language communication—that people adhere to singular modes of thinking, acting, and presenting, recognizing instead that participants have multiple experiences and perspectives that inform their scholarship and other practices during the conference;

- bullying and harassing behaviours along any identity lines, whether physical or verbal, including racial microaggressions, gender and sexual harassment, and persistent unwanted attention of any kind, in all contexts, whether in-person or online.

The above lists are not all inclusive or exhaustive, and we encourage participants to always note how attention to inclusion and access can make us all more aware of, and more attentive to, altering our own behaviours in support of these shared values. We invite all conference attendees to enact our shared values by working together to create a more just and inclusive space, in all ways, for a greater number of people.

3) BEST PRACTICES FOR CONFERENCE SESSIONS

There are a number of ways to think about presenting our work in ways that are more accessible and inclusive for more people. Below are some suggestions; there are many such lists of ideas widely available online too.

If presenting in-person at the conference, we invite presenters also to make their comments available to others not physically there, through any of the following mechanisms:

- live streaming talks/presentations and meetings (that are advertised as such beforehand, audiences know and have consented to such);
- video and/or oral recordings of speakers then uploaded onto an online site;
- making slide decks of presentations available on that same site.

STLHE/SAPES will set up a password protected site to enable access to these materials to interested members unable to be present in person.

For in-person presentations, the following strategies can increase accessibility and inclusion for those present in the room:

- a slide deck that is not too ‘cluttered’ with texts or images, with adequate spacing between lines and a font size that is easily readable—and avoid different fonts (additionally, if loading slide deck for remote access, include text descriptions of images);
- Clear/sharp contrast of colours, ensuring that written text is easily readable on background, and consider how colour is used (for instance, are your major concepts dependent on a colour-coding that some audience members may not be able to discern);
- Avoid rapid sensory input of visuals (flickering images or flashing lights) and sounds;
- Provide access to large-font print copies of your presentation remarks for participants who may want/request them;

- Ensure that your audience knows that they can sit, stand, move, as needed during the presentations, since sitting for extended periods of time is not always possible;
- Use inclusive language throughout; for instance, avoid addressing the audience in gender binary ways (e.g., 'ladies and gentleman') and opt instead for language that includes a range of gender identities and expressions (e.g., 'welcome everyone').

