



POLICY

Hosting of Annual Congress

Policy Number: MACE003
Date Approved by the Board: 09-06-2015
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Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the general guidelines that govern the hosting of the Annual MACE Congress.

Scope of Application:

The policy applies in general to the Board of Directors (BoD) of MACE and in particular, has bearing on the activities of the member institution that hosts the Annual Congress (AC) of the organisation in any particular year. The policy should also be read in conjunction with the Memorandum of Incorporation (Mol) of the organisation.

Context:

The Annual Congress (AC) represents the highlight of the organisation's calendar of activities in any given year and the event embodies the most "tangible benefit" that is accorded to its members. The AC brings together all the major elements of the organisation's mission, incorporating the components of creating a networking platform for members, facilitating professional development/information-sharing and research opportunities, as well as promoting best practice and providing recognition for excellence among MACE practitioners in the HE and TVET sectors.

As such, the AC programme also accommodates the Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Excellence Awards (EA) gala event every year. This policy should hence also be read in conjunction with the policies on conducting the AGM (MACE004) and on managing the EA process (MACE005).

Each congress is hosted by a member institution of MACE that is appointed at the preceding AGM to this role for that particular year. Such host institution is then required to collaborate very closely with the BoD in order to successfully implement the event to high standards of quality and cost-effectiveness, following the guidelines as contained in this policy document.

Process and Guidelines:

The AC process is planned, implemented and annually assessed as follows:

1. Appointment of the Host Institution, Representation on the BoD and Regular Feedback

Just prior to the AC actually being undertaken in any year, the BOD initiates the process of soliciting interest among member institutions that might be willing to host the congress during the following year. This is done by means of a formal invitation being extended to prospective host institutions as part of the Secretary/Treasurer's notice of the imminent AGM that is to form part of the current year's AC. It is vital to ensure that the institutional representative who proposes their nomination has secured his/her institutional Executive Management support for undertaking a national event of this magnitude, prior to making the submission. During the Board meeting that is normally conducted directly prior to the commencement of AC, the Board finalizes their selection of the next year's host institution and then proceeds to announce the host as part of the AGM agenda. The institutional representative from such host institution will then automatically be co-opted onto the national Board in the capacity of Director: Annual Congress from the date of the current AGM and he/she will serve until the conclusion of the AC during the following year.

The Director: AC will now be required to plan and obtain approval from the BoD for all aspects of the next congress and to give formal feedback to the Board during the three quarterly Board meetings that will be scheduled en route to the next AC. The Director will also be required to report on progress being made informally between Board meetings. In practice, the director also consults regularly with the host institution of the previous year's congress and the Secretary/Treasurer on matters related to costs/budgeting, etc.

2. Major Responsibilities of the Host Institution

The major responsibilities of the Director: AC and his/her host institution include the following:

- developing a theme/branding of the planned congress
- scheduling an appropriate date and selecting/securing the congress venue(s) and accommodation
- designing the programme, along with its speakers/presenters/trainers/facilitators/panelists
- drafting and obtaining approval for the congress budget
- arranging all the required logistics to ensure a high quality, cost-effective and professionally coordinated event
- marketing the congress and facilitating the registration process
- producing a branded congress "gift pack" for the delegates
- managing the AC process and resolving any problems/special needs/requests/crises on site
- managing the financial matters and relevant deposits/payments related to the event (where appropriate)
- hosting the first evening's "welcome dinner"/social event
- accommodating the AGM and the annual EA gala ceremony
- obtaining funding/sponsorships along with the BoD for the annual event
- optimizing media exposure during the AC
- assessing the AC on a number of dimensions, predominantly focused on determining the satisfaction levels of MACE members
- finalizing the administration after the closure of congress and reporting back to the BoD
- being available to provide information and to guide the following year's host institution.

3. The Host Institution Organizing Committee

The Director: AC usually establishes an Organizing Committee (OC) at his/her institution or within that region that will plan and implement the congress schedule and its many activities during the months

leading up to the actual event. Its members also typically act as the event managers/coordinators during the actual congress process, mainly focusing on managing the logistics, supporting the programme and controlling the quality of the process.

4. The Congress Main Objectives, Theme, Branding, Programme Design & Logistics

The main objectives of the AC include the following:

- creating an opportunity for networking among member institutions and enhancing a motivational environment for sharing and joint learning
- facilitating professional development by means of capacity-building/training/development sessions, information-sharing and gathering, research interventions, discussion forums, etc.
- promoting best practice benchmarks, celebrating and providing recognition for excellence in a variety of categories – predominantly through the EA programme.

A newly appointed host institution is expected to creatively design the conceptual theme for the AC, as well as to brand the event in an integrated manner. Host institutions should take care in ensuring that it is indeed the MACE branding that takes precedence over the promotion and positioning of the host institution and they should also be mindful that no conflict of interest arises in this regard. Practically, the OC next scouts for a suitable congress venue(s) and sufficient accommodation for the delegates at a reasonable price.

This is followed by programme design. In general, the programme is required to be balanced with regard to “professional development/conferencing activities” vs “social/networking opportunities”. It is furthermore important to bear in mind that the programme content should include sessions of interest to a variety of professional disciplines – including those of marketing, advancement/development, alumni relations, communication, branding, etc. and that the delegates are furthermore likely to represent both advanced and junior practitioners from both the HE and TVET sectors. Above all, the quality of presenters and relevance of the topics should remain first priorities in show-casing best practice standards. The OC’s should not hesitate to invite some MACE members (practitioners) to make peer-to-peer presentations in addition to inviting external experts onto the programme.

5. AC Costing, the Budget and Funding for the Congress/Sponsorships

Once the programme has been agreed upon, the Director: AC finalizes the costing/registration fees per delegate and tables the AC budget for approval by the National Board. The budget should include both the projected income and expenses components. As a broad principle, congress is expected to show (even a modest) profit, or to break-even. The Secretary/Treasurer will make agreed-to payments to the OC (where required) in order to pay deposits/secure venues and services, but the host institution normally operates its own cash-flow with regard to the many (smaller) payments to be made prior to and during the event. Where necessary, the relevant reimbursements are made by EXCO to the host institution for expenses incurred and approved up-front by the BoD.

Traditionally, the BoD – along with the OC – secures funding for the AC from a grantmaker(s) in South Africa. The Director: AC is strongly encouraged to commence with this important task timeously. The funding, along with the registration fees payable by delegates, as well as the sponsorships secured by the OC (often in the form of pro-bono services and goods-in-kind donated by the host institution) can be further supplemented by means of sponsorships and fees generated by advertising/promotional/exhibition opportunities for vendors at the congress.

Congress host institutions should bear in mind that, should they exceed the congress budget as

approved by the Board, they will attract liability for settling the short-fall or those expenses that actually exceed the agreed-to budget.

6. Marketing the Congress and Registration Process

The AC programme is marketed both on the MACE website, as well as by institutional representatives at regional events in order to promote maximum attendance by delegates.

The process begins with announcing the AC theme, dates and venue and this is followed by congress “teasers”/save-the-date reminders, supported by incentives for early registration. Registration fees are differentiated for members versus non-members, along with an incentive for early registration. Delegates register by means of a central registration process and pay their fees through electronic banking facilities (properly referenced) to the MACE national bank account, invoiced and receipted by the Secretary/Treasurer, assisted by the National Office.

7. Managing the Programme, Logistics, Audio-visual Support, Meals & Refreshments, Entertainment, VIP Guests, Support Functions, Media and Special Requirements/Needs

Once the congress date has arrived, the OC will be required to manage the smooth implementation of the AC schedule under the supervision of the Director: AC. The process is normally preceded by conducting the “fourth” quarterly meeting of the BoD, which also represents an opportunity to clarify roles/contributions during both the AC and the AGM, as well as to ensure that all the arrangements are in hand. The OC will welcome and register the delegates, providing the AC programme, gift packs and general directions/assistance to the guests.

The programme is opened by the National Chairperson, while a word of welcome is typically extended by the Vice-Chancellor of the host institution.

The coordination of the programme necessitates a dedicated support team – often requiring simultaneous implementation in concurrent venues and hence it is advisable to select these venues in close proximity, if at all possible. OC’s should also bear accessibility for people with special needs in mind when selecting both congress venues and accommodation.

Support services in the area of audio-visual media are an inescapable requirement. With regard to meals and refreshments, OC’s at host organisations are reminded of the need to heed the special dietary requirements of delegates who would have registered these specific needs during the registration process, as well as to ensure high standards of quality for both suppliers of meals and of entertainment.

All speakers/external “non-members” who are invited as guests are to be treated as VIP’s and presenters are normally introduced, as well as thanked by a member of the Board, along with a MACE-branded gift being handed-over as a token of MACE’s appreciation for their input. It is strongly recommended that the media practitioner/spokesperson of the host institution should make every effort to create opportunities for media exposure of the AC event.

Finally, host institutions are reminded that the congress inevitably also provides an opportunity to show-case the abilities/performance of the institution itself and to do so with the very best of professional hospitality being extended to its guests.

8. Provision for the AGM

The OC should ensure that the AGM is provided for on the first afternoon of the AC programme and in

accordance with the relevant policy on conducting the AGM (MACE004).

9. Incorporating the Excellence Awards Gala Event

The OC is required to collaborate closely with the Director: EA in making the appropriate arrangements and facilities available for the highlight on the congress programme – that of the EA gala ceremony, in accordance with the relevant policy that governs the EA programme (MACE005).

10. Congress Assessment and Financial Management/Accountability

Each AC is assessed at two levels. Firstly, during the presentation/facilitation of the various programme activities, delegates are given the opportunity to evaluate the particular activity by rating

the experience on a number of predetermined criteria. Secondly, the OC undertakes an anonymous (electronic) survey at the end of/directly after the congress in order to ascertain the satisfaction levels of the delegates. The results of the latter are then used to provide feedback to the Board in closing the involvement of the OC, as well as for the purpose of providing input (in the form of “lessons learnt”) to the next host institution.

It is most important for the OC to retain accurate records of all financial transactions related to the AC. As a final step, the Director: AC closes the financial accounts once all outstanding financial transactions have been completed, whereafter the final financial outcome of the year’s AC is determined along with the Secretary/Treasurer, which is then provided to the BoD at their first meeting following the recently completed congress.