

Review of the AMSI Workshop Program

Women in Mathematics Special Interest Group

30th April 2015

THE PROGRAM

1. Should AMSI broaden its current workshop policy of funding the travel and accommodation of eminent speakers?

The travel and accommodation costs should also include childcare expenses. This has been done for some speakers to some AMSI sponsored events, eg Winter School 2014. That AMSI permits event funding to be used for childcare expenses of speakers should be made clear to potential event organisers.

2. Keeping in mind the limited amount of available funding, should AMSI consider re-allocating funds to activities other than 2-5 day workshops?

The funding of 2-5 day workshops seems to be a good use of funds.

3. The program has always insisted on wide geographic participation and national benefit, how could benefit be improved?

Diversity Diversity of participants is important. We note that AMSI has been proactive in discussing gender diversity with workshop organisers. We have heard from several event organisers that AMSI's commitment to gender diversity is more than just a formality. Discussions around diversity of participation being instigated by the AMSI Director show leadership. This policy of proactively discussing diversity of participants should continue. WIMSIG has developed an advice sheet with some simple suggestions for encouraging female participants to events. Available in the 'For Conference/Workshop Organisers' section of the Women in Mathematics Website <http://www.austms.org.au/Women+in+Mathematics+group> This advice sheet may be used in addition to any materials AMSI has developed.

Another way to encourage diversity is to include a standard phrase in event publicity materials (website, email announcements etc) to the effect that “Participants who require assistance or adaptations in order to take part are encouraged to contact the organisers.”

Good Practice Guidelines for organisers could include some “good practice” advice (if they don’t already). Recommendations could include time scheduled for informal interaction, late starts to help people who live in a different part of the host city, social events for ECRs early in the event, hosting a Women’s gathering, and hosting a public lecture.

A variety of other suggestions can be found in the article “Addressing the underrepresentation of Women at Mathematics Conferences” by Greg Martin <http://arxiv.org/pdf/1502.06326v1.pdf> and the blog post “Attending conferences with small children” by Matilde Lalin <https://terrytao.wordpress.com/2014/08/20/matilde-lalin-attending-conferences-with-small-children/>

4. Is there any bias, real, perceived or inadvertent, in AMSI’s funding program?

There is an issue with the structure of the funding requirements. For AustMS to support a workshop, they require a registration fee to be charged for the workshop. Meanwhile, some universities require a venue hire fee to be charged if the event has a registration fee, but not if there is no registration fee. Thus imposing the registration fee requirement can substantially increase the cost of running the event. This inconsistency can bias against hosting events on campuses where this rule is in place.

PROCESS

5. How would you improve AMSI’s application and reporting processes? In your answer to this question you could provide successful international examples.

There is ambiguity surrounding the idea that AMSI workshop funding is for ad hoc events, and not events that are part of a series. This rule is not written down but has become ‘folklore’ around the AMSI workshop program. Potential event organisers would like this rule made transparent.

6. Is AMSI’s decision-making process effective, i.e. does it achieve the objectives of the program, and does it do so in a timely manner?

The decision making processes seem to be effective.

OTHER

7. Other comments

Childcare funding A major barrier to attending conferences for many researchers is the the management of caring responsibilities. Whilst AMSI cannot alleviate the burden of effort and family management from the mathematician, funding for caring expenses would alleviate the added financial cost of traveling whilst maintaining caring responsibilities. Currently AMSI Member Travel Funds funds are available to support travel to conferences. These travel funds could also be made available to cover caring expenses. The eligibility rules could be similar to those fro the Australian Mathematical Society Anne Penfold Street Awards <http://www.austms.org.au/Street+Awards>

Provision of Childcare Every workshop should address the provision of childcare. Large events may be able to offer onsite childcare. All events can liaise with nearby childcare providers to ascertain their suitability and availability, and then provide this information to potential participants. Information about childcare options should be provided along with all other local information about transport, accommodation, etc. There may not be many participants who take it up, but it can make a huge difference to those who do.

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