**Supplementary Material**

**Moving conferences online: lessons learned from an international virtual meeting**

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## **S1. eDSBS Code of Conduct**

The eDSBS organising committee adopts the Code of Conduct developed by the organizers of the 4th International Marine Conservation Congress (published by Favaro et al. [1]) and followed during the 15th Deep-Sea Biology Symposium and the 7th International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals. The Deep-Sea Biology Society has traditionally been a friendly, professional, respectful, and inclusive environment, and we want to keep it that way. All virtual meeting participants, including presenters, organizers, and volunteers must agree to this Code of Conduct in order to be allowed to be part of the meeting.

Any behaviours that violate this code should be reported to meetings@dsbsoc.org. We commit to respond to reports in a respectful and timely manner, while ensuring privacy.

**Examples of Acceptable Behaviours**

* Treating everyone with respect and consideration, including meeting participants, presenters, organizers, and volunteers.
* Communicating openly and thoughtfully and being considerate of the multitude of views and opinions that are different than your own.
* Being respectful and mindful in your critique of ideas.
* Being respectful and ethical in your use of the ideas of others
* Being mindful of your fellow participants.
* Maintaining a safe and appropriate emotional distance in all interactions.
* Maintaining a professional and friendly but non-sexual dialogue at all times with all participants.

**Examples of Unacceptable Behaviours**

* Discriminating based on gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, religion, national origin, language, or culture.
* Disrespectfully disrupting presentations.
* Recording presentations.
* Posting via Social Media about a presentation that a presenter has indicated cannot be shared.
* Sharing conference access credentials with a non-registered person.
* Stealing intellectual property and project ideas from presenters.

**Consequences of Violating this Code of Conduct**

* Anyone requested to stop unacceptable behaviour is expected to comply immediately;
* eDSBS staff (or their designee) may take any action deemed necessary and appropriate, including immediate removal from the meeting without warning and potentially without refund.
* The Deep-Sea Biology Society (DSBS) reserves the right to prohibit attendance at any future DSBS-organized meetings if it is felt the future safety of DSBS members would be at risk.
* The Code of Conduct is expected to be followed by all meeting participants during

presentations, webinars, training workshops and social events associated with the meeting, as well as on the internet and social media.

**References**

1. Favaro, B., Oester, S., Cigliano, J.A., Cornick, L.A., Hind, E.J., Parsons, E.C.M. and Woodbury, T.J., 2016. Your science conference should have a code of conduct. Frontiers in Marine Science, 3, p.103, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fmars.2016.00103>.

## **S2. Pre-meeting questionnaire**

Prior to the meeting a questionnaire was sent to the Society membership to gauge interest and help inform our decisions on the meeting format. The list of questions below is by no means comprehensive, and only serves as an example.

* Would you be interested in attending a virtual meeting organised by the Deep-Sea Biology Society in August 2020?
* Which of the following describe your potential level of engagement in this meeting?
* What type of format would you prefer for the meeting?
* What is your current career stage?
* What is your time zone?
* What area does your research fall into?
* Would you be interested in any of the following activities (select all the apply)?
* Would you be willing to help in organisation? If so, which of the following (select all the apply):
* Do you have any other comments or suggestions to make?

## **S3. Post-meeting questionnaire**

The following questionnaire was sent out to all meeting participants in order to receive feedback. Participants were informed about the purpose of the questionnaire and how the data collected would be included in a peer-reviewed publication. Participants were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. Responses to this questionnaire were anonymous. A few demographic data were requested in the last section, but this was optional and participants could choose not to complete it. The majority of the questionnaire items were statements that participants had to rank, using a scale from 1-5 corresponding to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, respectively. In some, participants had to select an option from a drop-down menu or type their response. All questionnaire items involving rated statements were compulsory to complete although the option of selecting “not applicable” was always given.

Q1. Which of the following describes your level of engagement in this meeting?

* Presenter of either poster or talk
* Attendee only

### Format of the Conference

These questions are about the general format of the conference.

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q2. Live talks (i.e not pre-recorded) with live Q&A were an essential part of the virtual conference to create an online event atmosphere

Q3. Pre-recorded talks were essential owing to occasional technical issues with the live presentations and issues with internet

Q4. Pre-recorded talks, or live talks recorded during the events, were needed only to enable those outside of conference time-zones or with poor internet to watch talks after the live sessions

Q5. I watched a large number (>5) of recorded talks on the Thinkific platform and found it useful

Q6. I watched only a small number (<5) of recorded talks on the Thinkific platform and found it only useful for posters

Q7. I viewed online content (recorded talks and posters) on the Thinkific platform post-conference (Note: the content was available for up to 14 days post-conference)

Q8. In the future I would prefer online content to be available >14 days post-conference

Q9. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Duration of the conference

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q10.I found the duration of eDSBS (1 day of pre-meeting events plus 2 days of talks) sufficient

Q11. I found having 2 long days of talks without many breaks better than 3 days with longer breaks

Q12. I would prefer 3 days of talks with longer breaks

Q13. I would prefer 2 days of talks but with parallel sessions and longer breaks

Q14. I generally prefer to attend / present at online meetings later in the evening of my time zone rather than earlier in the morning

Q15. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Platforms

These questions are about the platforms used for eDSBS 2020.

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q16. The live Zoom talk sessions were the most important and useful part of the conference

Q17. The recorded talks on Thinkific were the most useful part of the conference

Q18. Slack was the best way to get in touch directly with other speakers and ask questions of the organisers

Q19. Email communications prior to the meeting were clear and sufficient

Q20. The eDSBS page of the Society’s website was helpful

Q21. I found the number of platforms used for the meeting too many and hard to follow

Q22. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Format of oral presentations

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q23. 10-min-long presentations followed by 5 mins of Q&A was sufficient

Q24. All talks should be live where possible, pre-recorded talks should only be used when live talks are not possible

Q25. In the future I would prefer to do a live talk

Q26. In the future I would prefer to do a pre-recorded talk

Q27. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Format of poster presentations

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q28. Having posters available on Thinkific throughout the meeting in addition to a 2-hour poster browsing slideshow session on Zoom was sufficient

Q29. Posters should not use any audio or video narration and stick to the traditional format.

Q30. Posters for online meetings should opt for a landscape layout and not a portrait layout.

Q31. I would like to see the addition of live lightning talks that link to posters

Q32. I would like to see live Q&A sessions with the poster presenters

Q33. Dedicated Q&A channels (e.g. in Slack) should be set up for each poster presentation

Q34. A dedicated link for poster browsing should be available throughout the duration of the meeting

Q35. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Data Protection

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q36. I felt comfortable sharing my presentation (oral and/or poster) during the meeting

Q37. I was more careful with data I presented compared to an in-person meeting

Q38. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Pre-meeting professional events

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q39. I found the early-career event on “Enhancing opportunities for early-career scientists” a valuable addition to the meeting

Q40. I found the two student panel events on “Life beyond graduate school in the world of deep-sea science” a valuable addition to the meeting

Q41. I found the two student panel events on “Life beyond graduate school in the world of deep-sea science” a valuable addition to the meeting

Q42. In the future I would like to see more of these pre-meeting events

Q43. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Networking

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q44. I was able to connect to people whose research was of interest to me and vice versa.

Q45. I received more than usual number of questions for my work compared to past in-person meetings.

Q46. Overall, I had more engagement at this online meeting compared to past in-person meetings

Q47. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Social Events

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

On a scale from 1-5 how would you rate the following social activities

Q48. I liked the Icebreaker event (Swag share)

Q49. I liked the Social event after the Annual General Meeting, where participants were randomly assigned to a different breakout room every 10mins, and were given pre-determined discussion topics

Q50. I liked the Social following the closing ceremony

Q51. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Overall experience

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q52. Overall, I found eDSBS an enjoyable experience and would attend similar events in the future

Q53. During the meeting I found it more difficult to concentrate compared to in-person meetings

Q54.I was not able to dedicate as much time for eDSBS as I would have for a similar in-person meetings

Q55. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Moving forward

On a scale from 1-5 how can you rate the following statements: (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree, NA = Not applicable)

Q56. I would like future Society-sponsored symposia (Deep-Sea Biology Symposium, International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals, International Symposium on Chemosynthesis-Based Ecosystems) to have at least some sort of online component.

Q57. I would like the Society to help organise smaller online events on a regular basis such as webinars, lecture series or journal clubs

Q58. Do you have any other comment(s) related to this section?

### Suggestions

Q59. Do you have any other suggestions to make to the Scientific and Organising Committee for future meetings?

### Demographic Data

This section is not compulsory to complete. However, doing so will help the Society to understand if the experience of the online meeting has been similar across different demographics.

Q60. What is your current professional role?

* Student
* Postdoctoral Researcher
* Independent Researcher (in Academia, Research Institute, NGO, Government)

Q61. What is your country of working affiliation?

 (Drop-down menu with list of 193 countries)

Q62. What is your ethnicity?

Q63. What is your gender?

* Female
* Male
* Other
* Prefer not to answer

Q64. What is your age group?

* 18-24 years
* 25-34 years
* 35-44 years
* 45-54 years
* 55-64 years
* 65 or older

## **S4. Post-meeting questionnaire results**

A total of 80 respondents completed the questionnaire. The majority were presenters (49), followed by attendees only (26), while the remaining were Society trustees that were involved in organising the meeting. Due to the small number of the latter group, their responses were treated together with those of participants. Each question was rated by an average of 71 respondents (min = 38, max = 80, median = 77, standard deviation = 12).

All the responses that involved rating a statement are presented in S1 Table. For simplicity in interpreting the results, strongly disagree and disagree, and agree and strongly agree, were grouped together.

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| **S1 Table. Questionnaire results.** Results for each category are expressed as percentages of the total number of responses for the question. |
| **Questionnaire Section** | **Questionnaire item number** | **Questionnaire item** | **Total number of responses** | **Strongly Disagree & Disagree** | **Neither Agree or Disagree** | **Agree & Strongly Agree** |
| Format of the Conference | Q2 | Live talks (i.e. not pre-recorded) with live Q&A were an essential part of the virtual conference to create an online event atmosphere | 79 | 5.06 | 10.13 | 84.81 |
| Q3 | Pre-recorded talks were essential owing to occasional technical issues with the live presentations and issues with internet | 77 | 10.39 | 12.99 | 76.62 |
| Q4 | Pre-recorded talks, or live talks recorded during the events, were needed only to enable those outside of conference time-zones or with poor internet to watch talks after the live sessions | 76 | 28.95 | 11.84 | 59.21 |
| Q5 | I watched a large number (>5) of recorded talks on the Thinkific platform and found it useful | 70 | 25.71 | 12.86 | 61.43 |
| Q6 | I watched only a small number (<5) of recorded talks on the Thinkific platform and found it only useful for posters | 63 | 44.44 | 14.29 | 41.27 |
| Q7 | I viewed online content (recorded talks and posters) on the Thinkific platform post-conference (Note: the content was available for up to 14 days post-conference) | 74 | 22.97 | 4.05 | 72.97 |
| Q8 | In the future I would prefer online content to be available >14 days post-conference | 74 | 16.22 | 16.22 | 67.57 |
| Duration of the conference | Q10 | I found the duration of eDSBS (1 day of pre-meeting events plus 2 days of talks) sufficient | 78 | 11.54 | 14.1 | 74.36 |
| Q11 | I found having 2 long days of talks without many breaks better than 3 days with longer breaks | 76 | 42.11 | 19.74 | 38.16 |
| Q12 | I would prefer 3 days of talks with longer breaks | 78 | 39.74 | 14.1 | 46.15 |
| Q13 | I would prefer 2 days of talks but with parallel sessions and longer breaks | 75 | 68 | 17.33 | 14.67 |
| Q14 | I generally prefer to attend / present at online meetings later in the evening of my time zone rather than earlier in the morning | 67 | 40.3 | 31.34 | 28.36 |
| Platforms | Q16 | The live Zoom talk sessions were the most important and useful part of the conference | 79 | 3.8 | 24.05 | 72.15 |
| Q17 | The recorded talks on Thinkific were the most useful part of the conference | 78 | 21.79 | 34.62 | 43.59 |
| Q18 | Slack was the best way to get in touch directly with other speakers and ask questions of the organisers | 73 | 12.33 | 21.92 | 65.75 |
| Q19 | Email communications prior to the meeting were clear and sufficient | 80 | 11.25 | 32.5 | 56.25 |
| Q20 | The eDSBS page of the Society’s website was helpful | 80 | 15 | 38.75 | 46.25 |
| Q21 | I found the number of platforms used for the meeting too many and hard to follow | 78 | 55.13 | 19.23 | 25.64 |
| Format of oral presentations | Q23 | 10-min-long presentations followed by 5 mins of Q&A was sufficient | 80 | 6.25 | 3.75 | 90 |
| Q24 | All talks should be live where possible, pre-recorded talks should only be used when live talks are not possible | 80 | 28.75 | 16.25 | 55 |
| Q25 | In the future I would prefer to do a live talk | 67 | 5.97 | 34.33 | 59.7 |
| Q26 | In the future I would prefer to do a pre-recorded talk | 69 | 42.03 | 49.28 | 8.7 |
| Format of poster presentations | Q28 | Having posters available on Thinkific throughout the meeting in addition to a 2-hour poster browsing slideshow session on Zoom was sufficient | 78 | 10.26 | 7.69 | 82.05 |
| Q29 | Posters should not use any audio or video narration and stick to the traditional format | 79 | 74.68 | 11.39 | 13.92 |
| Q30 | Posters for online meetings should opt for a landscape layout and not a portrait layout | 74 | 22.97 | 44.59 | 32.43 |
| Q31 | I would like to see the addition of live lightning talks that link to posters | 77 | 14.29 | 14.29 | 71.43 |
| Q32 | I would like to see live Q&A sessions with the poster presenters | 78 | 11.54 | 23.08 | 65.38 |
| Q33 | Dedicated Q&A channels (e.g. in Slack) should be set up for each poster presentation | 78 | 34.62 | 21.79 | 43.59 |
| Q34 | A dedicated link for poster browsing should be available throughout the duration of the meeting | 78 | 2.56 | 10.26 | 87.18 |
| Data Protection | Q36 | I felt comfortable sharing my presentation (oral and/or poster) during the meeting | 54 | 0 | 9.26 | 90.74 |
| Q37 | I was more careful with data I presented compared to an in-person meeting | 54 | 50 | 25.93 | 24.07 |
| Pre-meeting professional events | Q39 | I found the early-career event on “Enhancing opportunities for early-career scientists” a valuable addition to the meeting | 48 | 10.42 | 12.5 | 77.08 |
| Q40 | I found the two student panel events on “Life beyond graduate school in the world of deep-sea science” a valuable addition to the meeting | 40 | 5 | 17.5 | 77.5 |
| Q41 | I found the two student panel events on “Life beyond graduate school in the world of deep-sea science” a valuable addition to the meeting | 38 | 7.89 | 15.79 | 76.32 |
| Q42 | In the future I would like to see more of these pre-meeting events | 69 | 4.35 | 20.29 | 75.36 |
| Networking | Q44 | I was able to connect to people whose research was of interest to me and vice versa | 75 | 17.33 | 12 | 70.67 |
| Q45 | I received more than usual number of questions for my work compared to past in-person meetings | 47 | 55.32 | 23.4 | 21.28 |
| Q46 | Overall, I had more engagement at this online meeting compared to past in-person meetings | 67 | 56.72 | 26.87 | 16.42 |
| Social Events | Q48 | I liked the Icebreaker event (Swag share) | 80 | 13.75 | 13.75 | 72.5 |
| Q49 | I liked the Social event after the Annual General Meeting, where participants were randomly assigned to a different breakout room every 10mins, and were given pre-determined discussion topics | 40 | 10 | 22.5 | 67.5 |
| Q50 | I liked the Social following the closing ceremony | 80 | 8.75 | 16.25 | 75 |
| Overall experience | Q52 | Overall, I found eDSBS an enjoyable experience and would attend similar events in the future | 80 | 2.5 | 3.75 | 93.75 |
| Q53 | During the meeting I found it more difficult to concentrate compared to in-person meetings | 78 | 43.59 | 10.26 | 46.15 |
| Q54 | I was not able to dedicate as much time for eDSBS as I would have for a similar in-person meetings | 77 | 25.97 | 10.39 | 63.64 |
| Moving forward | Q56 | I would like future Society-sponsored symposia (Deep-Sea Biology Symposium, International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals, International Symposium on Chemosynthesis-Based Ecosystems) to have at least some sort of online component.] | 79 | 3.8 | 16.46 | 79.75 |
| Q57 | I would like the Society to help organise smaller online events on a regular basis such as webinars, lecture series or journal clubs | 79 | 3.8 | 6.33 | 89.87 |

## **S5. Organisers’ feedback**

On top of the feedback received from the meeting’s participants, we - the meeting organisers - would like to make some recommendations to future organisers covering logistical, technical, and practical aspects of organising a meeting:

* *Platforms.* The use of three different platforms for this meeting (Zoom, Thinkific and Slack) on top of information contained on the Society website, made it confusing for participants to know ‘where to go’ at times. Having conspicuous buttons at the top of the main meeting page that connect directly to the different components of the meeting helped. Consider minimising the total number of links to avoid confusion. For example, use one link for all live presentations (if no parallel sessions) and socials, opening and closing ceremonies, and another one for webinars / career-related events. Spend time developing communication plans and testing platforms. If time and budget allows, developing short instruction videos might be a good way to engage with participants.
* *Digital engagement.* Use multiple social media platforms to help promote the event and maximise interaction between participants, as each one has a slightly different target audience.
* *Poster presentations.* Ask participants to prepare posters in landscape format and not portrait, as the latter does display well on digital devices.
* *Breaks.* Have a couple of breaks throughout the day to give participants the chance to rest and prepare and eat their meals.
* *Support staff.* Similar-sized events should have at least four paid support staff, so they are able to work in shifts as a team of two, especially if the meeting spans more than six hours per day. If needed, support staff (and organisers) should shift schedules before the meeting to the meeting time zone as you would for an in-person meeting.
* *Time allocation for successful execution.* Three months were spent organising this meeting. Although the meeting was in general successful (see previous section), we would recommend planning for similar-sized online events to start at least six months in advance.
* *Satellite events in multiple languages.* Organising additional events and/or webinars in multiple languages could help increase inclusivity and engagement with non-English speakers.