

CONFERENCES: GENERAL GUIDELINES

Conferences are professional events where researchers meet and network with colleagues, industry affiliates, national lab scientists, instrument manufacturers, students, and materials advocates. Typically the principle purpose is to share one's own work, learn from others, and develop new ideas. This guide is designed to help you to make the most out of your trip.

To get an idea about the scope of these meetings: the major professional conferences in Materials Science draw up to 8,000 attendees over the course of one week. For example, MS&T is an annual meeting that brings together five materials-related societies every fall, including the American Ceramic Society, TMS, AIST, and ASM. This is also the parent organization for Materials Advantage.

Similarly, the Materials Research Society has annual meetings in the Spring and the Fall. There are many smaller or more-focused conferences within Materials Science as well, with MSE researchers often attending annual or specialty meetings for TMS, ASM, HeatTreat, APS, ACS, AVS, IEEE, and others.

01 PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE



PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

- ▶ Conference attendees will be wearing everything from suits to business casual.
- ▶ You will usually do a lot of walking outside the conference hall, so plan for the weather.
- ▶ From poster presentations to meet-and-greets in the evening, prepare to be on your feet a lot.

REPRESENTING

YOUR SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT, AND RESEARCH GROUP

When you are at a conference, you are a walking (and talking) advertisement for the university, the department, and the research group. You will literally be wearing a sign with your name and school around your neck! Make sure you are representing the school and department in a good light. This means that you are respectful of others, you are attentive in the technical talks, you are well-behaved and you speak well of your school and department.

Of course conferences can also be fun. They are a great way to catch up with or establish new friends and colleagues at other universities and companies. But remember to do so in a safe and professional way. You may not throw parties in your hotel rooms. Even if alcohol or other substances are legal, you are required to act responsibly. **The UConn Student Code of Conduct always applies when you are on business travel.**

<https://community.uconn.edu/the-student-code/>



CONFERENCE ACTIVITIES 02

ATTENDING TECHNICAL SESSIONS

You are attending the conference for both educational and networking opportunities.

It is not reasonable for you to skip large portions of the conference to go work on school assignments or (worse) go sightseeing. It is your responsibility to address missed school work, but also keep in mind that your travel expenses are being covered by the department or your advisor and you are expected to attend the conference.

The first few minutes of a talk are often the most important--plan accordingly.

Do not leave during the middle of a talk. If you are trying to attend talks in different sessions, wait until the applause to get up and leave. If you know that you will need to leave partway through a talk, it is best to position yourself at the back of the room, so

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ATTENDING TECHNICAL SESSIONS *continued*

that you can make a discrete exit. Especially, don't walk out during a presentation when you or your advisor has a collaboration with the presenter.

Invited talks, typically given by very well-known experts in their field, may be more thorough.

Conferences often feature scientific and industrial awards in which you may hear some of the best and most widely understandable talks of the meeting.

POSTER SESSIONS

- ▶ Poster sessions are designed to encourage extensive interaction with the presenter. Ask many questions for the posters that you find interesting, and keep in mind there is always something to be learned from others' work.
- ▶ If you are presenting a poster, be open to questions and constructive criticism.

INDUSTRY EVENTS

- ▶ There are often professional development workshops, talks that especially target those in industry, or sessions focused on specific equipment or methods.
- ▶ There are sometimes scheduled tours. Note that these can take longer and may incur a cost.

STUDENT EVENTS

- ▶ Most conferences, such as MRS, are tailored for graduate students and professionals. A few are unique by providing a wide array of activities for undergraduates as well.
- ▶ Engage with students of other universities and learn about the various graduate or post-doctoral programs. Network with industry professionals and researchers.
- ▶ Balance time between events, technical talks, and posters for a well-rounded takeaway.

03 EXHIBIT & CAREER FAIR

THE EXHIBIT

- ▶ Major conferences typically have an area with a variety of companies, research journals, or scientists demonstrating what they do.
- ▶ The exhibit is for meeting, learning and selling things. It is not a career fair.
- ▶ See what kind of equipment is available for various lab tasks at the booths. You may want to ask if they hire students for internships if your work aligns with the company's. If so, it is polite to ask them for a business card and send them a thank-you note the following week, along with your resume.

CAREER FAIR

- ▶ Many meetings also feature a career fair. It is a good idea to bring a few copies of your resume and meet the professionals.
- ▶ The career fair may be geared for graduate students or professionals, but you may want to get ideas of what is available for when you're close to graduating, or seek internships.

BREAKS

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BREAKS

- ▶ Several times a day there are mandated breaks in the talks. Conversation with the speakers and other attendees is encouraged during these breaks. Introduce yourself, tell them where you are from, and ask them questions.
- ▶ There are usually refreshments available throughout the conference. You may also buy food.
- ▶ Conferences often offer welcome events or networking opportunities that may also suffice as a meal.

MEALS

- ▶ Meals may be an opportunity to meet and network with peers, faculty, or professionals.
- ▶ Lunches are often available onsite, especially for special events. Do not travel too far for restaurants—you are at the meeting for the meeting, not a food tour...
- ▶ While on professional travel, ALWAYS KEEP all receipts for meals, transportation, and other conference-related expenses.

TOURISM & SAFETY

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TOURISM AND SAFETY

- ▶ You will often be in a big city or a large campus, and should travel with group members you are familiar with. Exchange numbers with classmates and professors, and inform someone if going off-site alone.
- ▶ Be a tourist on your own time. Your purpose for going to the conference (and for paying for it, and/or being sponsored to go) is to attend the conference.

NIGHTLIFE

- ▶ Outside the conference hall, prioritize safety. Avoid going out alone at night and travel with familiar people.
- ▶ Since the trip is sponsored by the university or society, you should reasonably limit your outings. Your attendance is expected at the conferences throughout the duration of your stay.