

Guide for preparation and review of abstracts for scientific conferences within EPIET, EPIET-associated programmes [EAPs] and EUPHEM

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Introduction

EPIET, EAP and EUPHEM fellows prepare their abstracts under guidance of the local supervisors. The role of EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP coordinators is to provide additional advice and support to maximise quality. Coordinators can also identify relevant experts from European networks who might agree to provide input.

Because abstract preparation is seen as a very important part of the training programmes, a few coordinators have been specifically appointed to oversee the process¹.

There are two distinct parts of the review processes:

- a) Improving the quality of the abstract;
- b) Receiving EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP technical green light for abstract submission to the conference.

These guidelines should be considered alongside the EPIET/EUPHEM guidance on abstract writing from the FEM-Wiki* and other teaching during EPIET courses.

Deciding what to submit and providing a Single Over-riding Communication Objective (SOCO)

When starting the work on the EPIET/EUPHEM projects, fellows, supervisors and coordinators must discuss early on which work will be suitable for presentation on a scientific conference. This should be discussed early in the fellowship when projects are prioritized. At this stage it may be clear that there will be an output to communicate, but not necessarily what the message will be.

When fellows decide to submit a conference abstract, EPIET, EAPs and EUPHEM request them to formulate a Single Over-riding Communication Objective (SOCO). This SOCO conveys the main message of the proposed presentation, with information on study design and the main conclusion. This SOCO is usually one or two sentences long (three at the maximum). Writing down the SOCO will help preparing a good abstract. The lack of a clear SOCO may suggest that the investigation is not yet ready for a conference presentation (e.g., no clear conclusion or public health implications).

Fellows should aim to submit at least one abstract to ESCAIDE in both years of their fellowship, but if they cannot identify a suitable submission this should be discussed with their front line co-ordinator before the SOCO deadline (see below).

* <https://wiki.ecdc.europa.eu/training/epiet/w/wiki/20-tips-for-good-abstracts.aspx>

Deadlines and workflows

The best way to determine the time at which various tasks need to be planned is to identify the conference abstract application deadline and work backwards (countdown). For ESCAIDE, the table below summarizes the desired deadlines that will enable efficient review of 100+ abstracts by the EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP coordination team with emphasis on highest quality of abstracts. For other conferences, the lower number of abstracts can lead to more flexibility in timelines.

The frontline coordinator and a second, assigned coordinator review each abstract. The frontline coordinator and the second reviewer communicate to ensure that the correct version is being reviewed. If the fellow receives discordant advice from the two reviewers (a natural occurrence in an open scientific world), the fellow, as a first author, seeks clarification and works to resolve the situation in the next draft.

Allowing sufficient time for abstract review should result in good quality abstracts which are more likely to be accepted by the ESCAIDE reviewers.

The process should start at least 6 weeks before the ESCAIDE deadline, with a discussion between the fellow and their site supervisor (with co-ordinator input if requested) to agree what abstracts should be developed for submission to ESCAIDE. At this stage, fellows should notify the EPIET/EUPHEM coordination team on the intention to submit an abstract and formulate the SOCO.

Fellows should ensure that an abstract consulted with all co-authors is ready 6 weeks before the ESCAIDE deadline.

Time before ESCAIDE deadline	Deliverable	To whom
6 weeks	Intention and SOCO	Online submission system
4 weeks	1 st draft	EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP frontline coordinator Second reviewer
4-1 weeks	Revision of consecutive drafts	EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP frontline coordinator Second reviewer
1 week	Final draft for green light	EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP frontline coordinator Second reviewer <i>+ copy to designated coordinators¹</i>

The fellow can expect comments from coordinators in maximum 5 working days. Within the last week before submission, the maximum standard turnaround time is 48 working hours. Where there are no comments, the fellow may send the next version for review.

Missed deadlines

The deadlines apply to the abstract notified to the coordination team by the deadline (table). Abstracts sent after the deadline will be considered for submission only when justified by urgent and recent investigations that could not have been planned in advance, such as new outbreak results, data becoming available at a late stage or matters of exceptional public health importance.

Abstracts sent before the deadline but not containing sufficient material to be able to review and improve (for example: very vague background & methods with "results to follow") may be deemed to have missed the deadline.

Other circumstances (Local/national meetings and co-authored abstracts)

Local (national) meetings

Fellows may wish to submit abstracts to conferences in their host country, which may have a more national or local focus.

These communications can count towards the scientific communication objectives, and are therefore still subject to a focusing and improvement process including an initial SOCO, and at least two abstract reviews involving the frontline coordinator.

Where the language is not English, the abstract should be drafted in English and then translated once the content has been agreed on by the supervisor and frontline coordinator. This can be circumvented if the frontline coordinator is able to work in the host site language or can obtain assistance from a coordinator with a good working knowledge of the language.

Fellow is co-author

Where fellow is co-author, not first author, these do not need the full review process but the FLC should be informed and the abstract sent to them before the presentation.

Clearance for submissions

Submission to the conference organisers can only happen after two conditions have been met:

1. Institutional clearance of the Training Site
The fellow is responsible for the institutional clearance of their respective Training Site. This should include review and approval by the co-authors within the Training Site or other institutes, the site supervisor and the project supervisors.
2. EPIET/ EAP/ EUPHEM technical green light
The EPIET/EAP/EUPHEM coordinator reviewing the abstract should sign off an abstract considered of acceptable quality. If the second reviewer is implicated, he/she signs off the abstract independently.

The ultimate responsibility for the abstract content and message always lies with its authors. The fellow and the training site supervisor are responsible for familiarizing co-authors with EPIET/EUPHEM/EAP abstract review procedures. Review of the abstract by co-authors needs to be done in parallel.

If the EPIET/EAP/EUPHEM supervisor does not feel that the abstract is of sufficient quality to give a "green light", then it should not be submitted with EPIET/EUPHEM affiliation. However, in that case, the abstract will not be considered as fellow's output of the fellowship.

Any disagreements should be approached through a discussion between the project or site supervisor and co-ordinator. Note that disagreements involving the communication of a message which cannot be supported by ECDC and the EPIET/EUPHEM programme (for scientific reasons), then the abstract cannot be submitted with EPIET/EUPHEM affiliation.

Affiliations

The EPIET/ EUPHEM affiliation must be included and standardised as below:

EPIET: European Programme for Intervention Epidemiology Training (EPIET), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, (ECDC), Stockholm, Sweden

EUPHEM: European Program for Public Health Microbiology Training (EUPHEM), European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, (ECDC), Stockholm, Sweden

Accepted abstracts

The slides for the oral presentation or the poster should be cleared by co-authors and by the front-line coordinator. Sufficient time for review of the outputs should be included in your planning

Useful resources

Checklist for posters:

<https://wiki.ecdc.europa.eu/fem/w/wiki/checklist-for-posters.aspx>

Tips for oral presentations:

<https://wiki.ecdc.europa.eu/fem/w/wiki/aide-memoire-for-oral-presentations-and-visual-aids.aspx>

Tips for abstracts:

<https://wiki.ecdc.europa.eu/training/epiet/w/wiki/20-tips-for-good-abstracts.aspx>

¹ These are currently Pawel and Chris for EPIET/EAP fellows, and Aftab for EUPHEM fellows