

ESCAIDE 2014: Guidelines for abstract submission, review and selection (May 2014)

A) ESCAIDE 2014: ABSTRACT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES (INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS)

A1) Abstract submission requirements: Abstract Structure and Content

1. Abstracts may be submitted online only. Abstracts submitted via fax or email will not be accepted.
2. All abstracts must be submitted and presented in English using UK English spelling.
3. As a principle, ESCAIDE abstracts should contain original material from recent work that is not yet in the public domain. The ESCAIDE Scientific Committee has made the following statement on acceptance of published work to guide authors:

The ESCAIDE conference encourages work that introduces new ideas, research and understanding to the field. The conference focuses on infectious diseases where outbreak events are unforeseen and happen quickly, and the presentation of emerging threats and prevention tools are key components. Hence abstracts should address work that is relevant, interesting and topical.

As a principle, ESCAIDE abstracts should contain original material from recent work that is not yet in the public domain. To support this principle, the ESCAIDE peer review process includes criteria such as relevance, immediacy and originality of the work. There are circumstances that an abstract addressing work already in the public domain retains public health value for ESCAIDE audiences, such as an elaborated assessment of a recent outbreak that has initially been published as a 'rapid communication'. However, in general, abstracts of published work are discouraged, and they risk to be scored negatively in peer review, and hence rejected for the conference programme.

4. Abstract content should have the following structure:

Subject: Select one subject track that best matches the content of the abstract (see Annex 1 for list of subjects)

Title: Choose a title that reflects the main message of the abstract.

Presenting author/Contact Author: Fill in initials, first name, as well as surname. The initials will be used in the abstract book and other correspondence.

Authors: List all authors consecutively, separated by commas, first author with first name full, other authors with initials and surnames. If authors have different affiliations, then number the affiliation(s) in brackets after each name.

e.g.: *Michael Gdalevich (1), N. Keller (2), N. Asur (1), Y. Arbeli (1), T. Feinmesser (3), L. Katz (2), A. Leventhal (4), S. Scharf (1,3).*

Affiliations: Write each affiliation out full on a separate line. Number the lines without brackets.
e.g.:

1. *Ashkelon District Health Office, Ashkelon, Israel*

2. *Central Laboratory for Meningococci, Sheba Medical Center , Tel Hashomer , Israel*
3. *Barzilai Medical Center , Ashkelon , Israel*
4. *Public Health Services, Ministry of Health, Jerusalem , Israel*

Abstract background, methods, results and conclusions:

The text of this part of the abstract should **not exceed 275 words**. Please do not repeat the headings of '.background', '.methods', '.results' or '.conclusions', nor use any typographical formatting (such as bold, italics, underscore etc).

Keywords: Please include 4-6 key words; use terms listed in the Medical Subject Headings (MESH) from the Index Medicus (<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/>)

Contact details: Fill in formal title, initials, first name, surname, institute, address and other details of the contact person for the abstract.

5. Authors are requested to indicate their preference for an oral or poster presentation when submitting their abstract. This will be taken into account where relevant, but is non-binding.

A2) ESCAIDE: General information for abstract authors

6. After having submitted an abstract, confirmation is sent to the e-mail address given by the contact author when logging onto the system (please make sure to state your correct email address!).

7. It is the author's responsibility to submit a correct abstract. Any errors in spelling, grammar or scientific fact in the abstract text will be reproduced as typed by the author. Corrections to abstracts can be made up to the deadline of 25th May 2013.

8. After the close of the abstract call, each abstract will undergo a peer review process- see below. This determines if the abstract will be accepted into the ESCAIDE conference. Authors will receive notification of acceptance or rejection between 26th June-4th July 2014 by email. In order to receive this important communication, please ensure that emails from escaide2014@shscevents.co.uk are not considered as spam by your e-mail provider. Please note that only the contact author will receive mail concerning the abstract.

9. All accepted abstract presenters are required to register and pay the appropriate registration fee to attend the conference (or notify the organisers by e-mail of their intention to withdraw the abstract) before Friday 26th September 2014 . Registration ensures that the abstract will be published in the abstract book and the presentation is included in the programme.

10. If by 26th September 2014 the listed presenting author has not:

- registered and paid to attend the conference, or
 - notified the organisers by mail that the work is to be withdrawn, or
 - nominated a co-author or other individual who has registered for the Conference to present the work on their behalf,
- the abstract may be removed from the abstract book and the conference programme.

11. If a presenting author does not register for the conference and neglects to notify the organisers that they are unable to attend before the start of the Conference on 5th November 2014, the author risks incurring a penalty prohibiting acceptance of abstracts submitted to ESCAIDE for a period of 3 years. The same penalty may apply to any author who does not attend the session for which he or she has been scheduled. Those subject to this penalty will be informed in writing.

B) ESCAIDE 2014: ABSTRACT REVIEW GUIDELINES (INFORMATION FOR REVIEWERS)

B1) Overview of abstract review and selection

1. Each single abstract is reviewed by 3 independent scientific reviewers with expertise that is matched to the abstract subject 'track'. Each reviewer will use the criteria and scoring system described in the [ESCAIDE reviewer's instructions for the evaluation of submitted abstracts](#) – see below.
2. A final decision on the acceptance to the conference is made on the basis of the combined assessment from all 3 reviewers. The reviewer scores and assessment is applied to a predefined abstract selection process. The process 'algorithm' indicates if an abstract is selected for an oral presentation, poster presentation or is rejected from the conference.
3. The whole review process is overseen by the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee, and in cases of a lack of consensus in reviewer opinion, or when selection is unclear, the Scientific Committee may be asked to give a final decision on the inclusion of an abstract into the Conference.

B2) ESCAIDE Reviewers' instructions for the evaluation of submitted abstracts

4. Reviewers should base each review on the following underlying principles:
 - All abstracts are evaluated according to 7 criteria:
 - Criteria 1-5 correspond to each consecutive section of the abstract;
 - Criteria 6 & 7 address the abstract as a whole.
 - Each criterion is broken down into 3 statements. Reviewers are asked to consider each statement in turn and assess if it applies to the abstract. A "yes" answer is equivalent to a score of "1"; a "no" corresponds to a "0" score.
 - Thus, each criterion can be scored with a minimum total of 0 and a maximum total of 3 points, where 3 = excellent, 2 = good, 1 = fair, 0 = poor.
 - **All criteria are evenly weighted.**
 - In addition, reviewers are asked to give **comments at the end of the form, particularly for criteria scored with low overall scores (i.e. 0 or 1)**. These comments will be used to provide anonymous feedback to the abstract authors upon request.
5. The 7 evaluation criteria that reviewers should use are as follows:

A) Specific criteria

A1. Background: rationale of the study (0-3)

- Does the rationale formulate clearly the public health issue(s) the study is about?
- Is key existing knowledge presented to set the stage for the study?
- Are the objective(s) of the study stated clearly?

A2. Methods: Appropriateness of methods (0-3)

- Are critical terms and definitions clearly explained?
- Are the methods appropriate for the study?
- Are these methods described sufficiently, avoiding undefined terms and unnecessary jargon?

A3. Results: Presentation of the results (0-3)

- Are the results summarised adequately, using quantitative terms?
- Is the analysis (descriptive as well as statistical) of the data appropriate?
- Are the data sufficient and presented in a way that allows the reader to reach a conclusion?

A4. Conclusion: Conclusions and interpretations of results (0-3)

- Are the conclusions justified, based on the results presented?
- Do the conclusions answer the issue and objectives stated in the rationale and background?
- Are the results and their interpretation discussed in the context of existing scientific knowledge?

A5. Action: Recommended intervention and estimation of public health impact (0-3)

- Are specific public health actions recommended, or reported as undertaken?
- Are the actions/recommendations/control measures practical, and derived directly from the results presented?
- Does the study provide clear evidence of its potential or actual public health impact?

B) Overall criteria for the abstract as a whole

B6. Overall clarity of the abstract (0-3)

- Are appropriate and simple terms used to describe the methods and discuss the results?
- Is the writing clear and concise?
- Is there a logical sequence and cohesiveness among all abstract sections?

B7. Public health significance (0-3)

- Does the study, in both its topic and its results, have a clear application to improving public health, and is this application obvious to the reader, without the need for complex explanation or extrapolation?
- Is the study sufficiently sound (including clarity and strength of results) to serve as a basis for taking public health action?
- Do the data solve an immediate problem, or build on existing knowledge (rather than simply repeat what is already known)?

Reviewer comments:

6. All reviewer comments are encouraged, but are particularly valuable **for those abstracts with poorer scores** (i.e. whenever there is a criterion scored 0 or 1), as their authors will most benefit from your constructive criticism. Please be aware that your comments and scores will be shared with the authors anonymously. Comments are valuable for many reasons, including general feedback and to guide authors on how to develop their abstract content into presentation material for ESCAIDE.

Final recommendation:

7. After having scored and commented on the abstract, each reviewer is asked for a final recommendation, i.e. to:

- Reject (the abstract is in your opinion unsuitable for ESCAIDE)
- Accept as Poster
- Accept as Oral Presentation

Please note that generally 'Poster' and 'Oral' presentations in ESCAIDE should not reflect differences in scientific merit. Instead, they depend on the more suitable way of presentation for any given study (e.g. abundant and complex results, long tables, may benefit from a poster). Therefore, recommendations should only be based on suitability of medium for presentation; the 'poster' category should not be used for studies that the reviewer considers to be scientifically 'less important'.

Next steps

8. A final decision on the acceptance of an abstract to the conference is made on the basis of the combined assessment from all 3 reviewers. The reviewer scores and assessment is applied to a predefined abstract selection 'algorithm' to indicate if an abstract is selected for an oral presentation, poster presentation or is rejected from the conference. (See 'ESCAIDE Guidelines for abstract selection' for more details)

The whole review process is overseen by the ESCAIDE Scientific Committee, and in cases of a lack of consensus in reviewer opinion, or when selection is unclear, the Scientific Committee may be asked to give a final decision on the inclusion of an abstract into the Conference.

Thank you very much for your valuable assistance!

The ESCAIDE Scientific Committee

C) ESCAIDE 2014: ABSTRACT SELECTION GUIDELINES

C1) Overview:

Call for abstracts and presentation of selected abstracts: the backbone of ESCAIDE

1. Over 90% of the ESCAIDE Scientific programme comprises of the presentation of submitted abstracts following an open call. Hence submitted abstracts form the 'backbone' of the conference. All submitted abstracts are subject to independent peer review, and on the basis of the review, abstracts are selected to be include in the programme as either oral or poster presentations.
2. More information on the ESCAIDE abstract submission and peer review processed are available in following documents:
 - ESCAIDE abstract submission Guidelines
 - ESCAIDE Abstract reviewer Guidelines

Rationale for the Abstract selection process:

3. The ESCAIDE conference is held over 3 days in a venue with limited capacity. Hence both conference space and programme time dictates that only a certain number of abstracts can be presented at the conference. Hence a selection has to be made to meet conference capacity limits.
4. Selection also ensures that the conference retains a threshold for scientific quality; only abstracts that are of a certain standard are admitted into the conference, and limiting abstract numbers upholds the scientific quality of the conference.
5. A clear selection procedure also ensures that:
 - submitting authors can have confidence that the process of section is fair,
 - abstract reviewers understand that their assessment of each abstract is vital. Reviewer opinion and scoring underpins abstract selection and therefore directly impact on the content of the conference programme.
 - Conference delegates can have confidence that the ESCAIDE programme is developed independently, based only on quality-driven processes .

Actors in the abstract selection process:

a) ESCAIDE Abstract authors

6. Abstract authors are responsible for submitting work they wish to present at the conference. during the call for abstracts.

b) ESCAIDE reviewers

7. ESCAIDE reviewers are public health experts who independently review the quality of each abstract using predefined criteria. The reviewer is asked to consider the following 2 separate elements when reviewing each abstract:

- **Quality:** Reviewers should judge each abstract against a set of predefined quality criteria and 'score' the abstract based on an informed assessment of the content to indicate the underlying scientific quality of the abstract.
- **Acceptability:** Consider the abstract as a whole and indicate one of the following options:
 - Accept as an oral presentation ,
 - Accept as poster presentation,
 - Reject.

The dual opinion is important; in principle the score of the abstract should determine the underlying quality, and the decision to propose either an oral, poster or to reject the abstract should be made independently of the score. Hence reviewers should make no distinction in scientific quality between oral presentations and posters at ESCAIDE; abstracts should be allocated for an oral or poster slot based on which presentation medium is most appropriate for the content and the relevance and public health significant of the abstract. Both the overall score and the acceptance decision can then be used to support the selection process.

c) ESCAIDE Scientific Committee: primary responsibility for the selection of abstracts

8. The Scientific Committee is an independent body whose responsibility is to uphold quality of the Scientific programme. Under this broad remit, the Committee has full responsibility to oversee the selection of abstracts.

9. In practical terms, the Committee:

- set the thresholds for acceptance of abstracts based on the programme capacity and the number of abstracts submitted.
- ensure that the selection process and algorithm is applied accurately and consistently to support fair selection.
- acts as arbiter and takes on the role of additional review panel in cases which might undermine the selection of abstracts using the algorithm alone. This includes
 - divergence of reviewers decision and scores on a specific abstract (within-reviewer variance)
 - divergence of scores between different reviewers which results in biased selection of certain topics/abstracts (between-reviewer variance).
 - Incomplete triplet reviews resulting in uncertain scoring and acceptance decision, and where an additional and definitive review is needed.

10. Ultimately the Committee must ensure that abstract review and selection are based on quality transparency and equitability, and the processes and criteria used to select abstracts enhance the scientific quality of the conference.

C2) Selection process:

General considerations

11. The selection process is based on an identification of a predetermined upper limit of abstracts that can be accepted into the programme; this is decided by the Scientific Committee, but is ultimately determined by Conference venue capacity and programme times.

12. Historically 200-300 abstracts have been accepted into the conference each year from over 400 abstracts received following the open call (the number of submitted abstracts has been growing year on year since conference inception in 2007).

13. As a guide, typically **90-100** abstracts are accepted as oral presentations; this is relatively inflexible because the programme is usually limited to approximately 20 oral topic ‘tracks’ with up to 5 abstracts presented in each track (These are usually divided into either 6 or 7 ‘parallel’ sessions in the programme, with 3 tracks presented simultaneously).

14. The total capacity of posters usually has more flexibility, although space constraints typically mean that only a maximum of 150-200 can be accepted.

Selection Algorithm to determine the acceptance of abstracts at ESCAIDE and the division of accepted abstracts for oral or poster presentations

15. The following forms the basis of the selection:

Decision 1: Reviewer triplet rules by majority (e.g. 2 reviews accepted as oral = accepted as oral, 2 rejections=rejected)

Decision 2: All author requests for a poster presentation are respected. Hence an abstract that has been submitted for a poster cannot be allocated to an oral presentation.

Decision 3: In case of split reviewer acceptance (i.e. 1 oral, 1 poster, 1 decision), then the preference of the author determines (oral or poster).

Decision 4: Papers with a mean review score below a pre-determined minimum threshold are rejected. The threshold is determined by conference capacity but typically is set based on acceptance of 270 abstracts.

Decision 5: Papers with a mean score above a pre-determined maximum threshold are awarded an oral presentation. The threshold is determined by conference capacity but typically based on acceptance of 90 oral presentations.

16. Worked example:

Assumption that the following mean points threshold applies:

- Oral presentation = 16 and above (‘capacity threshold’ based on space limitation)
- Acceptance threshold = 13 and above

Abstract number	Author preference	Reviewer Preference and Scores (O=Oral, P=Poster, R=Reject)					Majority Consensus	Final Decision	Comment
		1	2	3	Mean				
Abstract A	Oral	(O) 20	(P) 15	(O) 16	17	Oral	Oral	Review consensus = Oral	
Abstract B	Oral	(P) 14	(O) 16	(O) 15	15	Oral	Poster	Review consensus =Oral. However the score is below capacity threshold = Poster	

Abstract C	Poster	(O) 19	(O) 19	(O) 16	18	Oral	Poster	Review consensus =Oral, and score is above capacity threshold. However author preference is for a poster =Poster.
Abstract D	Poster	(O) 19	(P) 19	(R) 13	17	None	Poster	Majority accept but no consensus on type. Hence author preference determines decision= Poster.
Abstract E	Oral	(P) 19	(P) 19	(O) 16	18	Oral	Poster	Review consensus = Poster, so even though score is above capacity threshold, the abstract is awarded a poster.
Abstract F	Oral	(O) 17	(R) 13	(P) 15	15	None	Poster	Majority accept but no consensus on type. Author preference determines initial decision (oral). However, overall score is above acceptance threshold but below capacity threshold= Poster
Abstract G	Oral	(R) 16	(P) 14	(R) 12	14	Reject	Reject	Review consensus to reject= Reject

17. The algorithm is applied to each abstract to determine selection. The Scientific Committee oversee the process to verify all is fair, and provide further review in cases where the algorithm cannot be applied, or where discrepancies or errors in the review process means that a further judgement and final decision is needed.

18. Once complete, the final award decisions for the abstracts are collated, and each abstract author is informed of the final decision by e-mail.