

Moderation Guide

Overview

Moderators are panellists that have been designated to provide structure for and lead panel discussions. Moderators can participate in the conversation if a panel has 4 or fewer panellists. If a panel has 5 (or more!) people, the moderator should primarily act as a guide for the discussion. Unless otherwise noted, panels at Dublin 2019 - An Irish Worldcon are intended to be 50 minutes long within a 60 minute time slot. Please ensure that the panels finish by the 50 minute mark so that the next panel in the room can begin on time. If audience members want to stay after the panel to talk to panellists, please direct them to take conversations to seated areas outside of the panel room.

Pre-Con

Before the convention starts, moderators should have contacted the other participants by email to address any concerns and may share any resources (useful links, recommended watching/reading, etc) that are relevant to the panel. This email should include questions they'd like to open with and a query asking if the other panellists have topics they want to cover or any questions of their own that they'd like to ask. Most panels are intended as discussions, led by the moderator - if your panel will have a different format, discuss it with your panellists in advance and make a plan.

In the Green Room

Please meet in the Green Room (CCD Level 5 Foyer, or Point Village Odeon level) 15 minutes before the panel. Break the ice with the panellists, continue the pre-con discussion (if you were able to have one), or touch base about what you want to discuss if you can. It is good to quickly review panel description, purpose and format with the participants even if you have already done this. Please check with the participants if there are any topics to avoid. Please do not add anyone to panels at the con without checking with Programme Ops.

Beginning of the Panel

Start the panel with an appropriate greeting and the title of the panel, introduce yourself and give a brief description of the subject. Please be aware, there are access spaces for mobies/wheelchairs, and access seating people who need to sit near the front. However, if these are empty as the panel begins, they may be used by people without access needs. In addition, please ask the audience to fill in all the seats, and keep the aisles and doors clear for safety reasons. From here, let the participants provide brief introductions, and move the panel along if they take too long.

Microphone use

Remind panellists to use the microphones if they are not already - this is an accessibility issue! In some larger rooms, a Tech person will be available to solve any microphone issue. If a Tech person is not available and the microphones are not working in your panel room, please report this issue to Programme Ops. Also, people at the front may also be lip-reading so please encourage panellists to not cover their mouth and to look to the audience when speaking.

During the Q&A most rooms will have a microphone for audience questions, which you should ensure the audience uses - this is an access issue. If there is no audience microphone or if it is not working, repeat questions from the audience to ensure everyone hears them.

During the panel

Stay engaged in the conversation and take notes if needed. Make sure all panellists have equal opportunity to participate in the conversation - this does not mean giving all panellists exactly equal time (for example, some people may choose to be brief rather than verbose) but rather ensuring no panellist is overlooked or one person dominates the conversation. Pay special attention to making sure that you are maximising the inclusion of diverse voices among both panellists and audience, such as People of Color or those of women on mostly male panels (or vice versa). Prevent the discussion from drifting away from the topic. Be firm but fair when redirecting people. If someone goes off-topic into a subject that you know is covered at another panel, you can plug that panel then steer the discussion back on course. Another useful tip is to use the phrase "That's a subject for another panel." to help get back on track.

If there is a disturbance (like someone continuing to record a session that has been designated not to allow recording, or there is an unrelenting heckler in the audience), you are empowered and encouraged to contact convention operations via text or voice call at +353 87 342 0902.

Managing panellists

Common difficulties with panellists include talking over others, going off topic or otherwise impeding the flow of the discussion. As the moderator, it is your duty to politely interrupt them and redirect to another panellist, especially if there's one who hasn't had a chance to respond to the question yet. Alternately, you can always bring up another topic with a different panellist as a way to get the rest of the group back into the discussion. Don't let panellists (including yourself!) pursue individual agendas unless they are directly on topic. This includes extended sales pitches for individual author's books - although brief mentions of their own work and how it applies to the topic are of course encouraged.

Including the audience

Allow time for questions, but don't let individual audience members monopolise the panel or drag it away from the topic. Be clear if you are accepting both questions and comments, or just one or the other.

When you do call on the audience for questions, avoid gendered language ("sir", "miss", "girl/boy"). Don't assume that the audience member can see you pointing at them, either. Using clothing as identifiers can be a good technique (blue shirt, red corset, TARDIS dress), but do NOT use assistive devices ("person in the wheelchair") and do not assume that an unusual outfit is a costume. Avoid judgment-based descriptors like "weird" or "unusual" as what might be foreign to you may be commonplace in the person's culture - this is a Worldcon after all!

While you should try to keep the programme on track, don't let any of these guidelines cause you to stop a discussion which is interesting to both the panel and audience! Sometimes panels end up in different places than were intended, but still fulfill the "big picture" goal of providing interesting and thought-provoking content.

Wrapping up

Programme Ops will notify you when you have approximately 10 minutes left in your allotted 50 minute panel. Consider asking a summing-up question near the end of your allotted time, like asking your panellists something forward-looking about what changes they see ahead (if applicable) or what they might be looking forward to regarding the given subject. Then, bring the panel gracefully to a close when your time is up. Remember to thank everyone!

This moderation guide has been heavily influenced by the moderation guides from Capricon and Arisia. We thank them for the use of their content.