



American Philosophical Association

# Good Practices Guide

Draft for Public Comment, Spring 2017

*Developed by the APA Task Force on a Best Practices Guide  
Peter Railton (chair), Mi-Kyoung "Mitzi" Lee, Diane Michelfelder, Robin Zheng*

# Table of Contents

---

Table of Contents.....	2
Preface .....	3
List of Topics .....	5
Section 1: Communication and Implementation of Guidelines for Good Practices .....	7
Section 2: Teaching, Supervising, and Mentoring students .....	9
Section 2, Appendix A: Good Practices in Teaching Philosophy .....	18
Section 3: Professional Development and Placement.....	20
Section 4: Good Practices for Interviewing .....	29
Section 4, Appendix A: Guidelines for Interviews via Internet Meeting Software and Telephone.....	36
Section 4, Appendix B: Research on Interviewing.....	40
Section 4, Appendix C: Acceptable Interview Questions.....	44
Section 4, Appendix D: Sample Candidate Evaluation Sheet.....	46
Section 5: Countering Implicit Bias.....	47
Section 6: Social Events, Alcohol, and Accessibility .....	53
Section 7: Professional Communication .....	61
Section 7, Appendix A: Some General Norms for Discussion .....	71
Section 8: Mental and Emotional Health and Safety .....	73

# Section 6

## Social Events, Alcohol, and Accessibility

---

### Alcohol and social events

It is often suggested that the traditional culture of professional philosophy in the English-speaking world is a “drinking culture.” Whether or not this is the case, it is certainly true that many departments sponsor multiple kinds of events in the course of the academic year involving faculty and students where alcohol is served. And in any environment whatsoever where alcohol is served, drinking can lead to behavior that is problematic in a wide range of ways, ranging from offensive or harassing conduct to behavior that is aggressive, dangerous, or illegal. Events involving philosophers are no exception.

Good practices in the area of social events and alcohol are called for not only to mitigate the possibility of unprofessional or dangerous behavior, but also for reasons related to inclusiveness. There are many reasons why some philosophy faculty and students choose not to drink or to drink very little—for some it might be a personal matter, for others it might be connected with a serious health concern or with their religious convictions; for others it will be an important question of prudence (for example, if they plan to drive from the event). Making an effort to prevent such individuals from being marginalized by the choice of venue or character of an event is important for creating an open, diverse departmental culture. Those new to the department or lacking in seniority can be under special pressure to drink more than they would like to in order to fit in, while others can come to feel that not participating in drinking activities could limit their access to those with whom they would like to have conversations. At the most extreme, such considerations could give rise to the worry that philosophy as a professional pursuit is not for them.

Recognizing the important role that departments can play in shaping their own culture, the following guidelines are suggested as good practices for social events where alcohol is available to be consumed. In this context, the phrase “social events” refers to events that officially fall under departmental auspices. This would include departmental receptions for new or retiring faculty and guest speakers as well as departmentally sponsored picnics, parties, dinners, or other kinds of social gatherings. These guidelines are not meant to cover non-departmentally funded parties at the home of a member of the department, nor the informal socializing over alcohol that occurs when a group of students on campus become involved in philosophical conversation and decide to continue the conversation at a nearby bar. Informal socializing among faculty and students at a bar following an evening seminar or a class presents a special case; here too good practices can be identified.

- Departments planning on holding social events at which alcohol will be served should thoroughly familiarize themselves with relevant institutional policies and adhere to these policies in organizing and holding the event.
- Departments should take steps, as best they can, to ensure that for social events involving alcohol, drinking itself does not appear to be the focal point of the event. (An example of an event that would appear to “feature” alcohol would be an announcement of a departmental event that will

take place at a bar, or a departmental picnic at which a truck from a local brewpub would be present.)

- Non-alcoholic beverages should be available at all social events involving alcohol; they should be set up in such a way that they are just as easy to get as beverages containing alcohol.
- No one should be made to feel conspicuous or out of place if they choose not to drink at a social event involving alcohol.
- Departments should discuss the value of promoting drinking in moderation at departmental social events. Steps that could be taken include limiting the number of drinks per person through the distribution of drink tickets; limiting the length of the event; and limiting the amount of alcohol served.
- Some institutions have taken the step of requiring that, at events where alcohol is served, a member of the department with training in good practices with regard to alcohol must be present. Such individuals can also be designated as persons to whom any concerns about alcohol-related behavior at the event could be communicated.
- In situations where faculty (including graduate teaching assistants) and students decide to adjourn to an informal location following a class or seminar, faculty should be aware that the choice of a bar as the locale is one of several options. At a minimum, before a bar is chosen, faculty should ensure that all students are above drinking age. But if bars are habitually chosen, faculty should be aware that this will have a discouraging and marginalizing effect on students who feel uncomfortable about going to bars or who for any reason prefer, or need, not to drink alcohol. Such informal interactions are an important part of the educational experience, and it is important that students not feel excluded. Varying the venue for such post-class socializing, e.g., by going to a coffee shop or café, can enhance inclusivity.

### **Accessibility of social events, conferences, and other meetings**

Philosophy departments today, and their members, host a large range of different events: public lectures, conferences, colloquia, workshops, forums, and club meetings, among others. It is important to ask whether there have been adequate measures taken in the planning of such events to make them accessible to those who might have limited mobility or other disabilities.

Clearly, it will be a matter of judgment which concerns about accessibility should be taken into account for a given kind of event. To help members and departments think about the spectrum of issues and instrumentalities in providing accommodation, we are reproducing here, with minor alterations, an accessibility and accommodation checklist, assembled by Kelsey Borrowman, in her role as editorial assistant for *Hypatia*, in conjunction with the *Hypatia*/APA Committee on the Status of Women conference at Villanova University in 2015.

### **Accessibility and Accommodation Checklist**

The following checklist is tailored to larger conferences with open submission of abstracts but can be adapted to thematic conferences, smaller workshops, etc., as appropriate:

- Consult the APA Committee on Inclusiveness in the Profession, which includes a disability representative familiar with and working on disability issues.

- Consider inviting disabled philosophers to contribute a paper or panel.
- Explicitly include among the areas in which submissions are invited topics touching on disability.
- Put in the conference announcement information about the accommodations you will be able to provide, the accessibility of parking and the locale, and whom to contact for questions of access. The contact person should have sufficient authority to coordinate disability services for the meeting.
- In choosing a venue for the conference, determine the facility's ability to accommodate accessibility issues. This includes restrooms, meeting areas, coffee and lounge facilities, dining areas, etc. Accessibility should be convenient and, if access is difficult, conference staff should be available to assist. (See below for some more specific questions to ask and recommendations.)
- On the conference pre-registration form, ask what accommodations the participant will require—these might include the following: conference materials in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or on tape or disk; sign language interpreters; ramps for getting on and off platforms; designated “handicapped” parking; and so on. If a requested service cannot be provided, it is important to contact the registrant with the disability *as soon as possible* to explain the situation and attempt to work out some alternative accommodation.
- Collect as early as possible information about any relevant dietary restrictions of conference participants (vegetarian, vegan, lactose or gluten-intolerant, kosher, halal, etc.).
- Before the conference or meeting, arrange for your staff and volunteers to have an orientation session that deals with how they can best help individuals with disabilities—this is, indeed, a general learning opportunity made concrete. You can have staff from the Office of Disability Student Services, or individuals with the disabilities, help you conduct these orientations. Be sure that you cover all groups of disabled persons—those with visual or hearing impairments, individuals with mobility impairments, individuals needing various types of physical assistance, and those with hidden disabilities such as the learning disabled and those with hidden physical disabilities. Be sure that you go over the activities of the meeting and how all these activities can be made accessible to everyone. Address the relevant aspects of providing meeting access, and always make this orientation part of your conference planning.
- At conference registration, try to be sure that someone is available who can address questions about accommodations and provide relevant information, and provide the name of someone who will be at the conference to be contacted should further questions or needs arise. Also, ensure that a registration table is available at a height appropriate for a mobility aid user (34” is recommended).
- If food is served during the conference, try to ensure that a range of foods will be available whenever food is served, and label such food accordingly. For food served by a wait staff, be sure the staff is aware of any dietary restrictions and informed about the contents of the food.
- If, during or after the meeting, you are planning a reception, or if meals are in buffet style, ask participants with disabilities if they will need assistance, and assign staff to help at breaks or meals.

### Some general planning considerations

- When budgeting for meetings or conferences, include accommodating people with disabilities as a budget item. If you need to get an idea of costs, speak to the Coordinator of Disabled Student

Services or others on your campus who have already planned events where people with disabilities were accommodated.

- Consider offering a free or reduced companion rate on the basis that the companion will assist the person with the disability.
- When staffing, find individuals on campus who would be willing to volunteer as readers, guides, and personal assistants and do other functions related to accommodating individuals with disabilities. Be sure that these volunteers are included in any staff orientation and make sure that they have training as to how to work with people with disabilities.
- Consider putting together a group of volunteers as a Digital Access Facilitation Team ([such as the one for the Society for Disability Studies conference](#)), who will be responsible for consistently and comprehensively live-tweeting the entire conference as a way of collaboratively increasing the accessibility of the meeting or conference.
  - Consider offering these volunteers a free or reduced rate in recognition of the labor necessary to produce such access.  
*Please note that there is an ongoing conversation surrounding the use of tweeting and other forms of compulsory recording as potentially undermining a safe space for discussing sensitive and often difficult experiences that can arise within contexts engaging topics like race/racialization, sexuality, gender, etc. Consider informing participants at the outset that you will be recording/transcribing (even tweeting). They can then use their own discretion about what to say or withhold. This solution keeps disability access as the baseline.)*
- Arrange for good internet connection when needed, e.g. for participants presenting via videoconference.
- Sometimes you might use the internet to provide alternative formats of materials during the presentation, for example, allowing people using screen readers or other assistive technologies to follow along with an online version of your displayed material. For remote real-time captioning (often referred to as remote CART, for Communication Access Realtime Translation), you will need a connection that is reliable and has sufficient bandwidth for transferring audio.
- Have a designated quiet room, *especially if* the participants are not staying in the same location as the conference or meeting (but, notably, there should be a closer location for participants to access). This is helpful for a range of disabilities and impairments including but not limited to sensory processing disorder and chronic fatigue, and any participant who needs access to a safe and private space for medication or injection. This space could also be used as a nursing/pumping room. Make sure it has comfortable chairs and conveniently located electrical plugs.
- Make sure you have a list of both adaptive and public transportation, including cabs, accessible vans, and city buses, if any, or those who might volunteer to give people rides to hotels, etc.
- Consider an [accessibility guide](#) that includes contacts, information for the conference or meeting itself, and a list of accessible local eateries, etc. If you do not put together a physical accessibility guide, make sure that your contact person has this information available.

### Planning for possible emergencies

- In the event of an emergency, are there both auditory and visual alarms?

- Do you have an evacuation plan that addresses the evacuation of persons with disabilities?
- Have you trained your staff in these evacuation procedures?

### More specific recommendations

#### Venue

- Is the path to the building accessible?
- Is there a specific entry that is accessible?
- If the main entrance has steps, does it also have a railing?
- If there is not an automatic door opener, can the door be easily opened with one hand?
- Is there an accessible washroom in the building? Where is it located?
- Is the room, theater, etc. accessible? Are the doors wide enough for someone in a wheelchair to get through?
- Are there seats or spaces allotted for individuals in wheelchairs or those who need to sit close to the front to lip read, hear, or see?
- Where would someone with a guide dog sit?
- Is there someone assigned to guide an individual to the correct accessible location?
- If there are additional events, such as an outside event or social hour, is there seating available for people who cannot stand for long periods of time?
- How easy is the terrain to negotiate? Can a person in a power wheelchair or with crutches easily navigate it?
- Are there any physical dangers to a person with a visual impairment?
- Work together with a campus disability office, such as the Coordinator of Disabled Student Services (DSS), who will know how to evaluate the facilities in question. Also, keep a record of various facilities and their accessibility (this could be kept with the DSS Coordinator or in that office where meetings and conference are planned). When in doubt, walk through the facility with an individual knowledgeable about access issues.

#### Signage

- Are large, clear letters and plain language used on signs directing people to specific areas? Are they free from glare?
- Are event personnel aware of stair-free pathways to the event?
- Are the areas of travel and the display areas adequately lit?
- Is there enough room for persons in wheelchairs to safely pass one another? (72" is recommended)
- If the main entrance isn't accessible, are there signs directing people to the accessible entrance?

#### Washrooms

- Are the floors slip resistant and glare free?

- Are changes in floor level (i.e., stairs, ramps, escalators) marked with a textured edge and color contrasting?
- Is there an accessible washroom? (If not, an accessible portable toilet should be made available in an appropriate location.)
- Is there a gender-neutral or “family” washroom that in which a person with a disability and a personal care assistant can use together? (This kind of washroom can also make the event more welcoming to trans\* and gender non-conforming attendees.)
- Are large, clear letters, understandable pictures/symbols, and Braille used on the signs identifying the accessible washroom(s)?
- Do event personnel know where the accessible washrooms are located?
- Do the doors to the washroom and the stall have clearances that allow a wheelchair to pass through and allow for closer of the stall door? (37.5” is recommended)
- Can the stall door be closed and locked with one hand?
- Are grab bars in place on the wall closest to the toilet?
- Can the toilet paper dispenser be easily reached?
- Is there adequate leg clearance under the lavatory counter for persons in wheelchairs to wash their hands?
- Can paper towel dispensers or hand dryers be reached or is assistance available?
- Are there shelves or other projections that could be hazards for persons with a visual disability?
- Do urinals have grab bars installed on each side?

### Communications

- Have you arranged for an amplified audio system complete with microphones and stands? Are the stands adjustable?
- Are handouts or other printed materials available in alternate formats such as large print, Braille, or in electronic form if requested?
- Have you ensured that all parts of the venue are smoke free and free of strong scents, e.g., fresh paint or floor varnish?
- Have you scheduled a sufficient number of breaks during the day?
- Are podium heights adjustable to meet the needs of different speakers?
- Can microphones be adjusted?
- If there is an elevated stage, can those using mobility aids access it?

### Access for individuals who are deaf or hearing impaired

- In the Americans with Disabilities Act, all meetings and conferences must be accessible to individuals with hearing impairments. Therefore, you must take provisions for people who are both hard of hearing and totally deaf.

- Make sure that you can obtain the use of some type of assistive listening device that can be used by an individual who uses a hearing aid or who needs listening amplification. Usually, the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS) has access to such equipment. It is good to know how to obtain this equipment if needed. You should also learn how to hook up the equipment or obtain the services of someone who can do this and who can be on call if the equipment is not functioning during the day(s) of the meeting.
- If requested, the host campus must provide for a sign language or other interpreter for the hearing impaired or deaf individual. Make budgetary provisions in case such a service is requested. Again, the DSS Office can provide you with names of qualified interpreters should they be required.
- You may also be requested to provide note-takers for these individuals. This is a legitimate request and can be provided from the DSS Office or by using volunteers from meeting sessions or staff members who have this assignment.

### Services for individuals with visual impairments

- In planning your conference or meeting, make provisions to put all information used by participants into large print, on tape, in electronic format, or in Braille. Again, ask for this information on your registration form and make budgetary provisions for such accommodations. Documents should be prepared in advance in the format that is the registrant's preferred mode of communication.
- Train one or more individuals to serve as guides and/or readers for visually impaired attendees. The guides will probably be asked to take an individual to a specific workshop, the restroom, or lounges and dining areas. Guides may be asked to leave the participant, stay with the participant, or to return for the participant after the workshop or activity has been completed. The guide may also be asked to orient the participant to the meeting facilities so that the participant can travel about independently. Readers may be asked to read from the printed meeting program or other print materials, or to help with session evaluations. This may even occur when an individual wants program information in another format because, often, these alternative materials are not available in time to provide them to the attendee(s) prior to the conference.
- Someone at the registration desk should be prepared to read items for an individual or to fill out evaluations and other forms. If you have more than one workshop, be sure that the workshop coordinator is prepared to help the person with a visual impairment fill out the workshop evaluation form at the end of the session.
- Make an area available to a person with a service animal so that the animal can relieve itself during the day.

### Access for individuals with learning and other hidden disabilities

- Individuals with learning disabilities may also request readers, note-takers or guides. These requests are legitimate and should be honored.
- If possible, have an area set aside so that the individuals with disabilities such as diabetes, heart conditions, asthma, and arthritis can have a place to rest once on a while. This "rest area" may serve multiple purposes such as giving a learning disabled individual a quiet place to read information or

fill out evaluations or just be away from meeting confusion. (This may be the same or different from the “quiet room” discussed earlier.)

- You are not responsible for giving an individual medication, but you should know how to get in touch with medical personnel if necessary. Keep in mind that all medical information about individuals must be kept confidential.
- Make sure you have a list of both adaptive and public transportation including cabs, accessible vans, and city buses, if any, or those who might volunteer to give people rides to hotels, etc.

### **Additional resources**

- [APA’s Resources on Diversity and Inclusiveness](#)
- [Digital Access Facilitation Team, Society for Disability Studies](#)
- [Statement from APA Members with Disabilities on Accessibility](#)
- [Recommendations for Making Presentations Accessible](#)
- [How to Make Presentations Accessible to All](#)
- [Accessible Presentations in an Interdisciplinary Space](#)
- [Composing Access](#) – contains links to resources for making a presentation accessible and conference organizing aimed at access
- [The Quiet Room by Susan Naomi Bernstein](#) – on the importance of having a quiet rest space
- [Sample Accessibility Guide](#)
- Consider browsing the informative and ongoing [#AcademicAbleism](#) hashtag on Twitter
- [PhdDisabled – What It’s Like Doing Academia with Disability & Chronic Illness](#)

Note: This list is a work in progress, a beginning to what must entail collaborative contribution. The recommendations are not in any particular order, and some are intentionally repeated. We have also depended on the wording from and information provided by the listed sources. If you have recommendations (such as for more inclusive language or other possibilities for accommodations), additional sources, or would like to suggest adjustments to the document, please contact [info@apaonline.org](mailto:info@apaonline.org).