

Societies' and Lecturers' Discussion Forum

Monday 24th November 2008

Outline and background information on discussion topics

Session 1: Lecturers' fees and expenses

Current position

NADFAS has two main roles:

As an accreditation body, NADFAS administers the recruitment of lecturers and undertakes continuing quality control/accreditation processes. It also provides support services to member Societies offering help, guidance and information on their organisation of lecture programmes. This includes publication of the NADFAS Directory of Lecturers the current structure and content of which has been agreed over time.

The booking of a Lecturer by a Society involves the establishment of a contract between Lecturer and Society to which NADFAS is not a party. This relationship between Lecturers and Societies has often been described as a free market.

The following is a summary of points concerning the operation of the 'free market' which may be useful and a full reference can be found in the guidance section of the Directory:

- a. Fees are subject to individual negotiation and contract between Societies and Lecturers.
- b. The Directory does not include any indicator relating to lecture fees.
- c. Lecturers may charge for their travel or other expenses in addition to the lecture fee which should be formally agreed in advance, preferably at the time of booking.
- d. NADFAS provides a booking form which once signed constitutes a contract.
- e. Other arrangements should also be discussed and agreed in advance including any hospitality for the Lecturer, lifts from the station and so on.

Discussion topics

1. Confidentiality/disclosure regarding lecture fees.
2. Fee levels.
3. Satisfaction with the free market (non intervention, negotiation, few regulations).
4. Responsibilities of Lecturer and Society in relation to arrangements, including travel, communication and hospitality.

Session 2: Lecture report forms and the grading system

Current position

An important part of the accreditation process is ongoing monitoring as an assurance of quality. NADFAS adopts a constructive approach based on feedback forms completed by a Society following each lecture. The terms of accreditation allow for very rigorous measures if there are significant quality issues but these are very rarely considered.

3,500 forms are processed through the Education Department each year and individual records are diligently updated for feedback. The ratings are available to lecturers who might wish to view their own file. Summary statistics based on the current ratings are published annually.

Lecturers are also provided with a standard report form for completion following a lecture on which constructive comments about the Society can be offered. This form is available for both Lecturers and Society members from the NADFAS website.

Report forms have been developed over a number of years with input from member Societies and lecturer representatives. Amendments have been agreed following discussions at Advisory Council meetings. The last major revisions were considered in this way in 2004.

Discussion topics

1. Is the current feedback form completed by Societies with the range of ratings offered still considered appropriate?
2. Alternative proposals are occasionally suggested (e.g. should the ratings be simplified to “satisfactory vs unsatisfactory”?)
3. Are the feedback forms clear, understandable, easy to use and interpret?
4. Would Societies and Lecturers feel comfortable with the use of secure on-line feedback forms?

Session 3: Training and support on digital projection technology

Current position

NADFAS has now issued comprehensive guidance notes to assist both Societies and Lecturers in coping with what is seen as an inevitable move to digital technology over time. The guidance notes are by necessity quite lengthy and detailed but it might be useful to summarise some of key points:

A reasonable assumption has been made that there is no panic to convert to digital equipment and that Societies and Lecturers alike must be allowed to move at their own pace. The NADFAS role will be one of facilitating the inevitable movement whilst not disrupting current arrangements.

The guidance suggests certain 'standards' to avoid the risk of individual lecturers or Societies adopting various incompatible digital formats. Guide specifications for equipment are suggested and will be updated as the technology develops but specific makes and models are not. A current working view is that the type of venue is critical to the choice of model. Also for this reason it is suggested that the ideal position is for Societies to provide the projection equipment and screen as they do currently.

National equipment suppliers have been contacted with a view to negotiating purchase discounts but no significant reductions have been offered.

The Education Department will shortly launch a pilot on-line forum hosted by the NADFAS web site as a means of sharing information between digital users.

This session will be useful to help develop further practical ideas for support or training.

Discussion topics

1. Choice of equipment

Views from those who have made purchases as to what further practical support or guidance could be offered.

Are local suppliers helpful and does the suggested specification assist with purchase?

2. Use of equipment

Provide comments on respective quality of carousel or digitally delivered lectures.

What could be done to assist with the issues encountered from use of digital?

Session 4: Open session

The relationship between Lecturers, member Societies and NADFAS goes well beyond that of contract and service provision. There is a detailed history and positive affinity between us all.

Mindful that we all wish for NADFAS and Societies to thrive and having made it to this 40th year milestone together, this is one of those rare opportunities for a very good cross section of members and Lecturers to consider the future together.

Any number of positive outcomes or suggestions could emerge from this session. Those participating might wish to consider future growth and opportunities, promotion of NADFAS to the wider world and how we ensure the satisfaction of members.