Conference Program Committee Guidelines

International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge (LAK)

Introduction

The International Conference on Learning Analytics and Knowledge (LAK) is the premier research forum to debate the state of the art at the intersection of Learning and Analytics. The conference provides a common ground for diverse stakeholders — including researchers, educators, instructional designers, data scientists, software developers, institutional leaders, and policy-makers — in the design and implementation of analytics systems. The conference is organized by the Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR), a leading academic society for promoting learning analytics research and practice.

The conference is held in cooperation with the ACM and in association with ACM SIGCHI and SIGWEB. Conference Proceedings are compiled through a peer-reviewed and a double-blind process and then archived in the ACM Digital Library. Archiving of the LAK Conference Proceedings within ACM Digital Library guarantees that the proceedings are available to the broadest audience of computing professionals. ACM and, therefore, LAK Conference Proceedings, carry an enlightened copyright policy granting liberal author rights: the authors may self-archive their own papers as Open Access Preprints, as long as they carry the specified ACM statement.

This document details the process required to create an academic program of the LAK conference, adhered to by the Society for Learning Analytics Research (SoLAR).

Program chairs selection

LAK Program Chairs ensure the quality and integrity of the LAK conference. The Local Organizing team selects Program Chairs in consultation with SoLAR's Executive Board, which supervises the conference organization.

The initial proposal for Program Chairs forms a part of the local institution application for hosting the next edition of the conference. Such an application is typically submitted two years in advance when a local organizing institution is selected from the submitted applications.

To be nominated as Program Chairs, the individuals need to be respected in the field of learning analytics, visible through their strong track record. Each conference edition usually has 3–4 program chairs, with one of them typically being a LAK Program Co-Chair from a previous year to assist with knowledge transfer and consistency of program organization. Due to SoLAR's commitment to diversity and inclusion, the list of Program Chairs is scrutinized to be balanced regarding geographical, gender, and career stages.

The proposed Program Chairs must be approved by the SoLAR Executive Board to guarantee compliance with the guidelines described above. The proposed list is revised by the Local Organizers if needed, to achieve the gender, geographical, and career-stage balance, through negotiation between the Organizing Committee and the Executive Committee. The Executive Board reviews and approves the Program Chairs as part of the LAK conference selection process.

Program chair duties and responsibilities

The program chairs have the highest responsibility with regards to defining the academic program of the conference. Specifically, their tasks include:

1. Proposing to the organizing committee the theme of the conference.
2. Recruit the Program Committee (PC) who will review submissions.
3. Recruit Senior Program Committee (SPC) who will provide meta-reviews and write acceptance recommendations to Program Chairs.
4. Draft the conference call for papers.
5. Propose keynote speakers for approval to the SoLAR executive committee.
6. Orchestrate and supervise the paper review and author rebuttal process.
7. Make final decisions on paper acceptance following reviews, rebuttals, meta-reviews and SPC recommendations.
8. Structure and schedule conference sessions, based on the similarity of accepted papers
9. Manage the production of the Main Conference Proceedings, published by the ACM. The ACM-published proceedings include full and short research papers. Companion Conference Proceedings that include other double-blind peer-reviewed submission types are published by SoLAR and available to all on SoLAR's website.
10. Write the foreword for the Main Conference Proceedings and Companion Conference Proceedings.
11. Select, allocate and supervise the session chairs during the event of the conference.
12. Manage the process for deciding on paper and reviewer awards.
13. At the end of the conference, mark program committee members who performed below their expectations.
14. Consult with the Journal of Learning Analytics editors regarding the timeline for a special section with the invited papers from the LAK conference.

Program committee duties and responsibilities

Program Chairs have the responsibility for assembling the conference program committee that reviews the submissions.

The quality of reviews and selected submissions is a collegial negotiation process mainly in the hands of PC and SPC members.

The following set of principles define the responsibilities of LAK PC and SPC members:

1. PC and SPC members are solely responsible for their reviews and meta-reviews. While it is permissible for PC members to obtain sub-reviewers (e.g., graduate students or colleagues) that have relevant additional expertise and opinion, the PC members are

ultimately responsible for the content and the quality of the provided review, and must be willing and prepared to discuss the merits of the assigned submissions.

2. PC and SPC members must complete their reviews and meta-reviews in a timely manner, per the timeline specified by the Program Chairs and be available and willing to provide further clarification during the final acceptance discussions, including reflecting on author's rebuttals, if provided. The Program Chairs should clearly communicate the review timeline in their invitation.
3. PC and SPC members must take an active part in helping submission authors improve their papers. The reviews and meta-reviews should contain enough information to support their claims and evaluations, as well as constructive feedback and suggestions for improvement.
4. It is expected that PC and SPC members will make efforts to attend and participate in the LAK conference.
5. SoLAR Executive Board has a zero-tolerance policy toward the abuse and disrespect of LAK submission authors and other PC members. It is expected that provided reviews, meta-reviews and authors' rebuttals are written in a respectful and considerate manner.

Program committee selection

The members of the Program Committee (PC) must have a strong qualification to judge the technical soundness, scholarly contribution, novelty and overall quality of submitted LAK papers. To ensure the quality of the conference, it is essential to ensure the continuity of the Program Committee and add new members to help achieve the success of future events.

Program Chairs have the responsibility of creating the Program Committee (PC) and the Senior Program Committee (SPC) to ensure a high-quality and robust paper review process. As such, Program Chairs take into consideration the following when selecting PC and SPC:

1. PC members should be active researchers and practitioners in the field of learning analytics. SPC comprises senior colleagues from the learning analytics field with a recent and strong track record, substantial involvement in the past LAK PCs, and research community involvement.
2. New PC members (typically between 10% and 30% of the PC) should have participated and published at least one paper during the past 1–2 LAK Conferences.
3. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the Learning Analytics field, the PC and SPC include experts whose areas of expertise cover the anticipated topics of conference submissions.
4. Program Chairs are not required to retain PC members who have not met their responsibility in past editions of the conference.
5. To align with SoLAR's commitment to diversity and inclusion, Program Chairs must create a diverse PC with respect to gender, geographic distribution, experience and school of thought.
6. The size of the program committee is dimensioned to address the number of submissions, based on the historical trends of the conference.

Review process

The quality and integrity of the review process are central to the conference goals and subsequent prestige and reputation. To ensure a high-quality of conference papers as the field and conference continued to grow, the conference has adopted the following set of guidelines for the review process of research papers:

1. The review process details are publicly available and clearly communicated to the research community as part of the call for papers.
2. The conference follows the double-blind review process for both review and meta-review stage.
3. Each paper receives at least three double-blind peer reviews by the LAK PC.
4. After peer reviews are completed, the authors can access the reviewer's comments (without numerical scores) and write an optional, 500-word rebuttal.
5. Each paper is then assigned a member of the SPC who then writes a double-blind meta-review and a final recommendation based on the reviews, the rebuttal, and the submission (when necessary).

Review integrity

The following principles are used to ensure the integrity of the LAK review process:

1. Program Chairs assign papers to PC and SPC members that do not have conflicts of interest. PC members must report any undetected conflicts of interest to the Program Chairs so that the paper can be reassigned.
2. All submissions are double-blinded, and reviewers note if the submissions were blinded sufficiently in the evaluation form.
3. Program Chairs, PC and SPC members are not allowed to see the reviewers who are assigned to the submissions they (co-)authored.
4. For submissions where one of the Program Chairs is a (co-)author, the entire process of handling the submission and making a recommendation will be made by the remaining Program Chairs.
5. If all Program Chairs have a conflict of interest or co-authored a submission, a Proxy Program Chair will be nominated to handle this particular submission.