

Guide to Avoiding Predatory Conferences

Purpose of this Guide

This Guide seeks to:

1. Provide an overview of what a predatory conference is
2. Identify the signs of a predatory conference
3. Provide guidance on how to avoid a predatory conference.

What is a Predatory Conference?

Predatory conferences are profit-driven conferences that do not provide any qualitative contribution to the academic community. Often referred to as “bogus” or “fake conferences,” predatory conferences lure participants in by pretending to be legitimate conferences and provide weak or no peer review for presentations.¹ Typically, after an individual signs up and pays a fee to attend a predatory conference, the conference will either not take place at all, or takes place with inadequate quality.² This often leads to individuals losing a lot of money to attend these fake conferences and potentially results in significant damage to an individual’s academic reputation.

Characteristics of a Predatory Conference

The following characteristics are common in predatory conferences and should alert an individual that they should conduct further research into a conference’s legitimacy before registering.

- The conference takes place in a popular tourist destination.
- Conference materials are focused on tourism rather than the individual’s field.
- The title of the conference uses phrases such as “global” or “international.”
- The invitation comes from a public email account.
- The conference advertises commercial sponsorships.
- The invitation encourages the recipient to invite colleagues to sign up.
- The conference’s topic does not match the individual’s area of expertise.
- The conference takes place solely online.
- Important conference dates change frequently.
- The method of payment is different than a normal credit card payment.
- There is a clause that in case of cancellation there is no refund or a refund in the form of credit for another conference.
- The conference organizer provides false information about affiliation with a major publication.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-024-02360-2>

² <https://www.technologynetworks.com/tn/articles/inside-a-fake-conference-a-journey-into-predatory-science-321619>

How to Avoid a Predatory Conference

The following are additional steps an individual can take to identify a predatory conference and properly screen a conference prior to signing up or making a deposit.

- Search online for the name of the conference and organizer. If there are limited or no results, the conference is likely predatory.
- Check for an affiliation with an established association in your field.
- Compare registration fees with those of other conferences in your field.
- Look for spelling and grammar mistakes in the conference materials.
- Check whether a venue is listed, and if it is, contact the venue to ensure the event is taking place.
- Look for contact details for the event organizers. Contact information should not come from chat boxes, messaging apps, or unofficial looking emails.
- Look at the presentation review process. Conferences that accept presentation proposals quickly are more likely to be predatory.
- Contact any listed speakers or committee members to ensure they are truly affiliated with the conference.
- Read any previous conference proceedings that have been published.

If you have any questions or are concerned that you have been invited to a predatory conference, please contact the Office of the General Counsel.