



# BSA Annual Conference: A Guide for First Time Attendees

We're very much looking forward to welcoming you to our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference, taking place 8 – 10 April at the University of Manchester.

For many, a first BSA Conference will feel both exhilarating and intense. With over 200 paper sessions across three days, and more than 20 of these running in parallel, there will be a great deal to take in. We have developed this guide to help you prepare in advance, navigate the conference with confidence, and make the most of your time with us.

We recognise that first-time attendees may be balancing practical questions (Where will I go? Who will I speak to?) with professional ones (How will my paper be received? How should I engage in the sessions?). As an Association, we are committed to ensuring that everyone – particularly those joining us for the first time – feel welcomed, supported and part of the sociological community from the moment the conference begins.

Alongside the busy programme of sessions and presentations, the BSA Annual Conference is about much more than formal papers. It's a valuable opportunity to test ideas, exchange perspectives, and connect with a diverse community of peers. Whether in a session or chatting over coffee, the conference provides space to develop new ideas, build relationships, and contribute to important discussions within the discipline.

If you have any questions or need assistance during the conference, please do not hesitate to visit the registration desk where our friendly team will be happy to assist you.

We look forward to meeting you in person soon.

**The BSA Events Team**

## The Purpose of This Guide

This guide is designed specifically to support first-time attendees as they prepare for the BSA Annual Conference. It focuses on practical steps and considerations that may help you feel more confident in advance of April.

Comprehensive information about the venue, [accessibility](#), [IT arrangements for presenters](#) and frequently asked questions is already available on the [BSA website](#).

A final Delegate Information document, containing detailed logistical guidance, will be circulated closer to the conference.

## **Preparing in Advance: Using the Abstract Book**

As we do not use a conference app, we strongly encourage you to spend time with the Abstract Book once it becomes available (expected on our website w/c 9<sup>th</sup> March 2026).

With around 200 sessions across three days, reviewing the abstracts in advance will help you:

- Identify sessions most relevant to your research or professional interests
- Highlight plenaries or anniversary events you particularly want to attend
- Prioritise “must attend” sessions for each day
- Leave space for sessions outside your immediate specialism

Taking time to plan ahead can make the conference feel much more manageable and purposeful.

During the conference, a large printed copy of the programme grid will be available at the BSA Desk, and colleagues there will be happy to answer any questions. QR codes will also be displayed at the desk and around the venue, allowing you to access the most up-to-date version of the programme and Abstract Book quickly and easily on your device.

**PLEASE NOTE:** There will be no printed copies of the Abstract Book available for delegates to take away.

A noticeboard at the Registration Desk will also be updated regularly with programme changes and sessions of interest taking place that day.

## **Attendance at Sessions, and participation in Q&A**

Arriving a few minutes early to sessions will give you time to settle in and minimise disruption. Where possible, please stay for the full duration, as this supports fellow presenters and helps sustain the flow of discussion. If you do need to leave early, please do so discreetly.

Questions and discussion are a valued part of the BSA Annual Conference. Thoughtful, constructive contributions help create the supportive and intellectually engaged environment we aim to foster. Many first-time attendees find that asking a question during the Q&A portion of a session can be a helpful way to begin participating in the wider conference community.

## **Pacing Yourself Across Three Days**

Annual Conference can be energising but also demanding. It is not necessary to attend every possible session.

Build in short breaks between sessions where possible. Time spent reflecting, continuing conversations informally, or simply stepping outside for a few minutes can make the experience more productive and enjoyable overall.

### **Finding Your Way Around**

Please visit the registration desk when you arrive to collect your name badge and lanyard. Our staff there will be able to assist with any immediate questions.

Nearby, you'll find sponsors and the refreshment area, both excellent spots to meet fellow attendees.

Session rooms are listed in the programme and clearly signposted throughout the venue. If you are presenting, we recommend locating your room in advance and allowing time to check your presentation before the session begins.

### **Dress Code**

The dress code for the BSA Annual Conference is relaxed. Many attendees choose smart casual attire, particularly if presenting or chairing.

As you may be moving between rooms across the venue, comfortable shoes are strongly recommended.

### **Food and Drink**

Lunch and two refreshment breaks are provided on all three days.

The **Publishers Reception & Poster Presentations** are taking place on Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026 18:15-19:45 in the Drum. Attendance is free.

Our **75<sup>th</sup> Social** is taking place on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> April 19:00-22:00 in Whitworth Hall. Tickets are £25 and advanced booking is required. You can register [here](#) if you haven't already done so. This is an informal evening with drinks, hot canapés, music, and a chance to come together as a community in the middle of the conference.

### **Making Connections**

Conferences can feel busy, particularly if you are attending for the first time. It can help to think in advance about the conversations you would most like to have. Are there scholars whose work you have read and would like to discuss? Are there streams or themes you are keen to explore further? Attending those sessions can create natural opportunities for conversation.

Your badge includes attendees' institutional affiliations, which can often provide a simple starting point for introductions.

Social events and/or special events that are running throughout the conference offer more informal networking opportunities. Please see the [programme](#) for more details.

### Tips for Presenters

If you are presenting or chairing a session, a little preparation in advance can make a significant difference to your confidence on the day:

- Familiarise yourself with your allocated room and presentation set-up ahead of time.
- Introduce yourself to the session chair and fellow presenters before the session begins.
- Rehearse your presentation and plan carefully for timing. Chairs will use time signals (5 minutes, 2 minutes, STOP) to help sessions run smoothly.
- During Q&A, listen carefully to questions, take brief notes if helpful, and ask for clarification if needed.
- After the session, informal conversations often provide valuable feedback and opportunities for further discussion.

If you are a BSA Member, you may also wish to attend our [Mastering Presentation & Chairing Skills Workshop](#), which is taking place online on Wednesday 25 February between 12:30 – 14:00.

Whether you're an experienced presenter or new to public speaking, this interactive training session will equip you with the skills to present effectively and manage engaging Q&A discussions.

Led by BSA Trustees, **Mark Doidge** and **Jen Remnant**, this session will cover:

- **Presentation Skills** – Techniques to engage your audience, handle questions, and deliver with confidence.
- **Chairing a Session** – How to manage speakers, facilitate discussions, and keep sessions on track.
- **Stepping Up When Needed** – Gain the confidence to take on a Chairing role if needed, even at short notice.
- **Career Benefits** – Chairing sessions is a valuable professional skill that enhances your CV and career prospects.

This session is open to BSA Members, not just those volunteering to Chair at the upcoming BSA Annual Conference. It's a great opportunity to develop your professional skills in a supportive environment.

## **Other Support for First-Time Attendees**

We are also hosting an informal session led by our Vice Chair, Jen Remnant who will talk through navigating the BSA's 75th Annual Conference

We will cover:

- Some Annual Conference history and organisation of the BSA.
- Chairing, presenting and asking questions.
- Session selection and networking.

There will be plenty of time for discussion so please feel free to contribute additional comments or questions. We hope that the session will be of particular use to first-time attendees/presenters

This **members-only event** is free to attend but [registration is required](#).