

PAGES Young Scientists Meeting: Feedback and suggestions

Responses from the IPO are indicated in orange italics.

1) Was the online application procedure straightforward? Do you have ideas for improvements?

The general consensus was that the online application procedure was simple and straightforward. The main causes for complaint/suggestions for improvement were:

- More clarity between what was required for each of the meetings. There was confusion about whether it was necessary to register for the OSM if already registered for the YSM, and how many posters one could have at the meeting.
- Abstract instructions should be stated on the website before entering the registration page.
- The time between application and notification was too long.

We agree that earlier notification of attendance is desirable but it was complicated by uncertainty on our side about funding. Since some people could only attend with funding, we needed to wait until we knew which of our grants were successful, and this came very late in the process.

Other suggestions for improvement and comments include:

- Ability to edit information after initial upload was good.
- The use of the word “referees” was confusing and made it sound like a peer-reviewed process. Perhaps it should have said “references”.
- Registration was expensive.

Registration covered accommodation, most meals, venue, equipment and personnel. In comparison to other meetings, we feel that the registration cost for the YSM was very reasonable. The meeting was a non-profit event and the IPO made every effort to obtain funding for as many participants as possible.

- Was a very involved process but helped organize thoughts on reasons for wanting to attend.
- It would be good to know how many people applied and why some people were declined.

We received over 180 applications, so had to reject many. The decision on rejection/acceptance was based on reviews of the applications, with emphasis on scientific merit and relevance to PAGES, but to a lesser extent also on suitability (career stage, motivation, etc), and geographical balance.

- Had difficulty with online payment.
- Have the option of cash payment for registration.

2) What organizational problems did you experience before, during or after the YSM?

On the whole, people were very happy with the organization of the meeting and the information provided on the website. The dominant complaints tended to be similar to those above, namely:

- Confirmation of attendance was too late.
- Confusion over OSM and YSM registration.
- Notification of who would give a talk came too late.

We agree that earlier notification would have been better. The process was complicated by the fact that many people did not confirm their attendance until very late (often related to funding issues), and we could not assign talks until the attendance list had been finalized.

- Individual emails about who was presenting a poster or talk would have been good.
- Hold the meeting in a more easily accessible location.

The venue choice for the YSM/OSM was a tradeoff between location and cost. More central locations were available, however, the cost of these venues would have increased the cost of registration. Another consideration was choosing a city with a large enough PAGES community to form a Local Organizing Committee.

Other thoughts and individual comments, which we have taken on board and will do our best to address at the next meeting, include:

- An attendance certificate would be good.

An attendance certificate is available by contacting Leah Witton (witton@pages.unibe.ch).

- Field trips were organized too late.
- PAGES should have asked YSM to use the PAGES cups instead of plastic coffee cups during breaks – be more sensitive to environmental footprint.
- Registration desk should have been alphabetical or organized better.
- Difficult to obtain information when not staying at the dorm, and was still charged for room and board.
- Organization of shuttle bus from the airport would be good.
- Itemized receipts for registration and accommodation should have been provided to attendees at registration.
- The email about publication ideas came too close to the beginning of the meeting and limited the discussion time with co-authors.
- Round tables were not convenient for all to watch speaker and slides.
- YSM mailing list should be limited to participants only to reduce spam.

This list is restricted to participants only. There was a technical error at the beginning but this has been fixed.

- More detailed information on accommodation.
- Not clear which meals were included in the registration fee.
- Some indication of a limit for airfares to those receiving funding.
- Internet at the dorm was very slow and it was difficult to work after sessions.

3) How useful were the components of the YSM for you?

a) Poster sessions

General consensus was that the poster sessions were good for networking and exchange of ideas but that there was not enough space between the poster boards for people to move freely. Several people suggested having longer poster sessions.

52 responses: Score of 123 out of a possible 156 (very useful to perfect).

Longer poster sessions would be good, but of course they are at the expense of other program elements. We will consider a few less talks next time.

b) Oral sessions

It was felt that the chosen oral presentations provided a broad range of topics and were of high quality.

52 responses: Score of 132 out of a possible 156 (very useful to perfect).

c) Breakout groups

Opinion on the breakout groups was varied. Some felt they were not very useful and that the questions were not thought-provoking enough. Others felt they were constructive and provided a good opportunity to express ideas. Some common comments included that the breakout session was not very well organized or structured, more time was needed, and that direction should be given on the expected outcomes of the session. It was also suggested that a moderator be present to help streamline and focus the discussions.

51 responses: Score of 88 out of a possible 153 (somewhat useful to very useful).

We agree that the breakout session would have benefited from better organization. We will consider soliciting suggestions beforehand next time.

d) Invited guests' talks

General consensus was that these presentations were very useful and interesting and provided new insight into topics that were generally not covered by university lectures and conference presentations. It was highlighted here (and in other sections of the form) that there was a bias towards American programs and that it would be good to provide information from other regions as well.

52 responses: Score of 128.5 out of a possible 156 (very useful to perfect).

A more global representation would have been good, but availability of non-American speakers was lower and their potential costs higher.

e) YSM dinner

All comments on this were positive. It was particularly felt that the informal nature of the BBQ was conducive to mixing and socializing.

37 responds: Score of 89 out of a possible 111 (very useful to perfect).

Here we wanted feedback on the free YSM BBQ that took place in the park. Many people were confused by which dinner was meant and commented on the

OSM dinner at the winery instead. A few people noted that the OSM dinner was expensive, particularly with respect to value for money. The OSM dinner was a non-profit event and the cost included transport, band, alcohol, food, and venue. We feel that it was comparable to conference dinners at other meetings but appreciate that it was still substantial on a student budget.

4) Our objectives for the YSM were to provide a platform for scientific exchange, for networking and career-supporting knowledge, and for information about PAGES and the work of international organizations. How well were these objectives met?

a) Scientific exchange

Any comments made were positive.

47 responses: Score of 124.5 out of a possible 141 (very useful to perfect).

b) Networking

Any comments made were positive. There was a suggestion to provide a list of young scientists with their respective specialties.

52 responses: Score of 132.5 out of a possible 156 (very useful to perfect).

c) Career-supporting background knowledge

Suggestions made included providing information for women in science, and having better geographical coverage of programs (e.g., less US-centric).

51 responses: Score of 110 out of a possible 153 responses (very useful).

d) Information about PAGES and international organizations

General consensus was that the objectives and goals of PAGES were well communicated. Several people suggested providing more information on other international (not just American) global change programs.

52 responses: Score of 129.5 out of a possible 156 (very useful to perfect).

5) What did you like about the YSM? What worked for you?

The small size of the YSM was seen as being key to its success for many people. In addition, the diverse and international participation, and the wide range of disciplines represented were highlighted as positive features of the meeting. Other common opinions were that the breaks and lunches (and meeting in general) were well-suited towards networking and discussion, that the presence of senior scientists was good, and that the inclusion of social events and lunches in the registration cost enhanced networking and socializing.

6) What aspects did you not like? What improvements to the YSM would you suggest?

The main suggestions were:

- Breakout sessions need to be better organized and participants should be able to choose which group they contribute to.
- There needs to be more time and room for posters.
- There should be greater representation from the Southern Hemisphere.
- The location needs to be more central and easier to get to.
- Oral presenters need to keep to their allocated time better (particularly noted for the OSM) and the oral sessions needed to have a break between them.

Other suggestions included:

- More information on how to communicate climate change science to the general public.
- Organize a short welcome presentation at reception.
- More involvement/participation by senior scientists.
- Have the poster sessions structured around something other than the topic so that poster presenters have more opportunity to visit the posters that are relevant to them.
- Include more ecologists and archeologists.

7) Do you have new ideas for inclusion in the next YSM?

The following very useful suggestions were made:

Young scientist involvement

- Include young scientists in the organization of the meeting.
- Have the young scientists chair the oral presentations.
- Have the young scientists vote for the best poster/oral presentations.

Senior scientist involvement

- Include more senior researchers.
- Organize a mentoring program between young scientists and more established researchers.
- Invite established senior scientists for a “question and answer” session.

Talks

- Include a brief self-introduction speech at the opening of the meeting.
- Include introductory talks at the beginning of each topical session, as topics covered were very broad.

Workshops/Breakout Groups/Topics

- Offer short, topical young scientists workshops prior to the meeting.
- Offer workshops/breakout sessions on specific themes (dating techniques, age models development, new proxies, multiproxy protocols, etc.), as there is disparity in the knowledge and methods used in different countries.
- Organize breakout sessions around research interests, e.g., methodological advances, future directions etc.
- Include a talk or practical session on public speaking.
- Include a discussion on the transference of paleoclimate knowledge to society.
- Hold a workshop to exchange thoughts or experiences with senior female scientists.

- Invite representatives from the business community to talk about professional development.
- Provide information from a wider range of international organizations.
- Group modelers and proxy people in pairs for a brainstorm on potential proposals or projects.

Poster sessions

- Have 1-2 min introductions to each poster
- *Note that this would have taken an extra 1-2 hours.*
- More time for poster sessions.
- Have the posters awardees give a short presentation.

Jobs

- Provide a board for postings of job offers or CVs of young scientists.
- Provide a list of job resources (list servers, websites, classifieds, etc.).
- Include a discussion on job hunting or career paths (including those outside of academics).
- Include a discussion on tips for finding post-doc positions.
- Organize breakout groups with senior scientists to discuss career advice.

General

- Have a longer meeting (if the YSM is held separate from the OSM).
- Hold the meeting in a more central, easily accessible location.
- Take a group photo
- *Yes, it is a shame we forgot!*
- Offer child care options at future meetings.
- Have more social events (e.g., field trips during the meeting).
- Include more social sporting activities, such as the soccer game.

8) How did you find the length of the meeting (too long, too short or just right)?

The general feeling was that the length of the YSM was perfect, when taking into account the additional days for the OSM. Many comments indicated that if the next YSM were held on its own, then an additional day would be needed. It was also suggested to have one day of rest, or a field trip in between the YSM and OSM.

9) How important is it to have the OSM following the YSM? Would it make sense to hold a stand-alone YSM?

Nearly all agreed that the OSM and YSM should be held together. Some additional suggestions included:

- Decreasing the cost of the OSM for participants of the YSM.
- The YSM could stand-alone if other workshops were held alongside it.
- A separate YSM could be held on a more specific topic or covering a certain timescale.

10) What were your experiences at the YSM and OSM? For example, did you gain new knowledge, develop new contacts, make new plans for collaborations, get job offers?

General experiences that participants highlighted:

- Development of new contacts and collaborations (internationally).
- Received important feedback and ideas for research.
- Exposure to many different disciplines and projects.
- Ideas for new research directions and job opportunities.
- Gained new knowledge on a range of topics.
- Gained experience in talking to other scientists and presenting research in a non-threatening environment.
- Gained up-to-date overview of climate change science.
- Mixed and shared experiences with other researchers of a similar career level.