

OAE RESPONSE

Response to Attendee Feedback on
the 2023 5th Shaw-IAU Workshop on
Astronomy for Education



Office of Astronomy for Education

Introduction

At the end of the 5th Shaw-IAU workshop in 2023, we implemented a survey to gather your feedback on your workshop experience. We received an impressive 254 responses to the survey, with representation across 65 countries and approximately equal representation from male and female respondents. We are extremely grateful to everyone who took the time to provide this candid, valuable feedback, so we would like to take this opportunity to say thank you!

If you'd like to read our full report, you can do so [here](#).

We were delighted at the extent of positive feedback we received and the prevalence of knowledge gains among respondents. More than 90% of respondents reported gaining new knowledge in astronomy education activities happening in other countries, how to teach astronomy outside a classroom environment, teaching tools and methods and how to conduct evaluation. Of the respondents who presented a talk or poster at the workshop, 92% reported that the workshop had been either somewhat or very useful in gaining feedback on their work. Despite the online format of the workshop, two-thirds of respondents reported making new connections.

Nonetheless, there were comments about some of the challenges, as well as areas where the workshop could be improved. The OAE main office has spent time exploring how we can respond to such feedback and implement relevant changes and improvements to our Shaw-IAU workshops in future.

Results and Responses

The remainder of this document summarises the key feedback points from the 5th Shaw-IAU workshop and the actions the OAE has taken in response. All changes will be in effect for the 6th Shaw-IAU workshop in 2024. We hope to see you there!

Workshop Duration

Key feedback point: The most common suggestion for improvement suggested by respondents centred around the dates and times of the

workshop and sessions. Some felt the programme would be better spread out over additional days rather than condensed into three. Some respondents also felt that parallel sessions should be avoided. Nearly 40% of respondents reported being unable to attend all the sessions that interested them, the most common reason was due to the time slot for the session not being appropriate.

Action taken: We recognise the limitation of parallel sessions throughout the workshop, as well as the intensity of the three-day programme. For the 2024 6th Shaw-IAU workshop we have extended the programme by one day to reduce the intensity of the workshop and the number of parallel sessions. We would also like to take this opportunity to highlight that all core sessions of the conference are repeated at least once over the course of the workshop and presentations are available online via the [OAE YouTube channel](#) as soon as the workshop ends.

Variety of Workshop Formats

Key feedback point: There was considerable preference for future workshops following the same format - an international conference with participants from many different countries. However, open-text responses demonstrated a desire among some for a combination of formats: international, regional, and national workshops, as well as in-person and online workshops.

Action taken: We are continuing with the existing format of the yearly online Shaw-IAU conference as this provides higher accessibility for our international network, however, we have also started supporting regional, in-person workshops. Our first regional workshop was held in South Africa in 2023 in collaboration with the African Astronomical Society and the South African Astronomical Observatory. The event was attended by 40 individuals representing 11 countries in Africa. We also have the following upcoming regional in-person workshops in 2024 and 2025 that we encourage you to look out/register for:

- Turkey - October 2024
- Nepal - December 2024
- Panama - January 2025
- Argentina - May 2025
- Egypt - May/June 2025

Interaction among Attendees

Key feedback point: While 84% of respondents felt the workshop presented either a fair number or a lot of opportunities to connect with other attendees, in open comments, some respondents suggested that we introduce additional opportunities for attendees to interact with each other. Suggestions were made for more active discussions in sessions (not just via the chat function), and more dedicated sessions for networking.

Action taken: While in previous years, our discussion component within sessions was confined to audience engagement via the chat function, and live discussion from the speakers, this year, we intend to invite audience members 'on stage' to pose their questions to speakers and other participants live. We hope this will encourage more engagement with our session topics and interaction between attendees.

In addition, we will be adding drop-in networking sessions during the designated comfort/coffee breaks within the workshop programme. These will be dedicated sessions where attendees can interact on-screen with other attendees and discuss any topics related to astronomy education. These will take place on each day of the workshop.

We would also like to encourage attendees to make use of the 'speed networking' function within the workshop platform that we will be continuing this year. This allows for snapshot conversations with a number of different attendees. Attendees can also reach out to any attendee directly through the chat function within the online platform.

Space to Share Resources and Material

Key feedback point: There were requests for a designated space on the platform for people to upload and share resources.

Action taken: While there is not a suitable space to do this within the online platform, we will be creating a space on Google Drive for attendees to share links, resources, PDFs, etc. We will circulate this link during the workshop and the space will be accessible beyond the duration of the workshop.

Navigating the Online Platform

Key feedback point: Almost 85% of respondents found navigating the online platform either somewhat easy or very easy. Nonetheless, we recognise that

some respondents described usability issues with the platform. Respondents suggested a 'how to' guide or initial tutorial at the start of the workshop for using the platform. There were also expressions for earlier communication and information around the workshop.

Action taken: At each workshop, we deliver a tutorial on using the online platform during the live opening ceremony. We encourage individuals to attend this as it provides helpful basics for navigating the platform and accessing sessions.

Furthermore, in previous years, we have organised pre-workshop tutorials for session hosts and speakers, however, this year we will open these sessions out to all workshop attendees. For those who are unable to attend the live tutorial sessions, we will also provide a recording that can be accessed asynchronously.

Programme Display

Key feedback point: Some respondents reported challenges in interpreting the workshop online schedule and there were suggestions for a PDF version of the programme for readability.

Action taken: This year, we will be creating a PDF version of the workshop schedule. This will be available for download on the Shaw-IAU Workshop [webpage](#) in the coming weeks.

Concluding Remarks

Again, we would like to thank all individuals who completed the feedback survey last year and we hope the actions we have taken will improve the experience for all workshop attendees this year. We will implement another feedback survey for the 2024 6th Shaw-IAU workshop which we encourage all attendees to contribute to so we can continue to improve our workshops.