

Beware of SCAM conferences!

An alert from your CCFA PD committee

Before you decide to register for a conference, whether online or in-person, please ensure you verify the authenticity and reputation of the conference. Predatory, scam and fake conferences are on the rise, and can be extremely deceptive!

- These could be online or in-person.
- Often the events do exist, but when a participant arrives, they find it ill-attended and lacking the prestigious keynote speakers advertised, with few learning or networking opportunities.
- Often the conference is not happening at all. For example, you may click on the Zoom link given for an online conference and there is nobody there. And when you try to find out what happened, you get no reply to your concerns.

“Predatory conferences are set up to appear as legitimate scientific conferences but which are exploitative as they do not provide proper editorial control over presentations, and advertising can include claims of involvement of prominent academics who are, in fact, uninvolved.” (from Wikipedia)

“Fake conferences often look and sound like standard academic conferences. Their websites boast renowned keynote speakers, and advertise the event to be hosted at reputable venues, partnered with upscale hotels, and backed by high-profile sponsors.” (from [Four Waves](#))

“Fake conferences are set up to scam people out of registration and publishing fees. Organizers are known to accept every submission made, as long as it is accompanied by a registration fee. These conferences lack the editorial integrity and basic legitimacy. It's very common to fall for the scam and register for the event, either as a speaker, or an attendee. Fake conferences are big business. They are run by for-profit companies for the sole purpose of generating revenue. These unethical conference organizers are not connected to the industries or fields around which they organize events. They simply search out the experts in a particular field and falsely claim that they have signed on to be keynote speakers, when the researcher may not even know that the event exists.” (from [Four Waves](#))

The companies organizing predatory conferences are experts at what they do. These conferences are set up to look legitimate, and their websites, keynote speakers, and venues make them seem like the real thing. However, there are some common red flags to look for when assessing the legitimacy of an academic event:

Red flags to watch for

1. Overly ambitious title (e.g., 'international' or 'global')
2. Scientific programme that is very broad, making it difficult to discern a clear focus
3. Website with spelling and grammatical errors
4. Mismatch between the profile of the conference and the sponsors involved
5. Unclear organizers, ambiguous details, difficult to verify their credentials
6. Dubious, lax peer review process with reports of abstract acceptances without proper scrutiny
7. Unreasonably high and/or non-refundable fees, compared to well-established conferences
8. Your credit card gets declined

Tips to identify a fake or predatory conference (from [Four Waves](#))

1. Research the organizer

Are you familiar with the event organizer? Some fakes set up websites with very similar names as reputable organizations. Have you worked with them or read their work in the past? If not, learn as much as you can about them before you attach yourself to their event. A Google search with the organizer's name plus "review" at the end can quickly reveal if it's a scam, or look them up on social media.

2. Look at the event focus

Consider what you've learned about academic conferences from the ones you've been involved with in the past. Is the way this event is organized inline with others? Is the program focused on a specific area, or is it broad and applicable to a wide range of subjects? A broad program is a warning because an event with a loose focus can be applicable to many fields, opening the door to more invitations and attracting more submissions and registration fees.

3. Consider the registration fee

Is the amount being charged to attend or present at this conference in line with the fees you'd normally expect to pay to attend a conference? A registration fee that is significantly higher than what you'd expect to pay is a major red flag. If this is one of the first academic conferences you've been a part of, search out other conferences, talk to colleagues in your field, and compare the fees associated with those.

4. Evaluate the event website

Does the URL look suspicious? Is the website well built and well organized? Oftentimes, the organizers of fake conferences attempt to add legitimacy to their websites by adding a subdomain that specifically mentions the conference focus in the URL rather than a URL that fits with the rest of their website. Legitimate conference websites link back to recognized academic institutions and research organizations. Predatory conference sites usually have very few linkages and partnerships with legitimate organizations. Is the content error-free? Many companies that organize predatory conferences do not employ native English speakers to write their website copy. This makes it likely that you'll find grammatical errors throughout.

5. Verify who the sponsors are

Do the event sponsors make sense considering the conference focus? Is IBM listed as a sponsor for a Literature conference? If so, that's a red flag. Many fake conferences simply list big-name sponsors that are unconnected to the topics being discussed.

6. Ask them questions

Reach out to the organizer to ask a few questions. Are they responsive, or are they hard to reach? Organizers of legitimate academic conferences should be collaborative, easy to reach, and eager to answer your questions. Contact them and ask about the event timeline, expectations placed on presenters, and their peer-review and application evaluation process.

Examples of fake conferences. Can you spot anything wrong with them or might you be fooled too? PLEASE spread the word among your colleagues, and whenever you come across a fake conference PLEASE tell others and forward the information to the [CCFA office](#) so we can try to keep a list.

- [BIT Congress Inc](#)
- [Conference Series LTD](#)
- [4th International Congress on Addictive Behavior and Dual Diagnosis](#)
- [OMICS International](#)
- [W.A.S.E.T.](#) (World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology)
- [6th World Congress of Education](#)
- [9th International Nurse Education Conference](#)
- [6th World Nursing Conference](#)