

CONFERENCE INVITATION SCAM AWARENESS

WHAT IS CONFERENCING INVITATION SCAM?



WHAT CHARACTERISES A FAKE CONFERENCE ORGANISER?

- For-Profit, but mis-representing themselves as Not-for-Profit
- Prey on academics and particularly early-researchers who are eager to publish
- Promote the event as having a full timetable
- Select attractive venues
- Avoid peer review or quality validation processes

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

1. THE CONFERENCE HAS AN OVERLY AMBITIOUS TITLE

- ARE THE BUZZWORDS WORDS “**INTERNATIONAL**” AND “**GLOBAL**” USED BY PREDATORY CONFERENCE ORGANISERS TO DRAW YOU IN?
- DOES THE CONFERENCE TITLE SEEM A LITTLE TOO BIG FOR ITS BOOTS OR TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?
- DO THE ORGANISERS OR DELEGATES SEEM TO COME FROM ONLY ONE COUNTRY ALTHOUGH THE CONFERENCE IS SUPPOSED TO BE “INTERNATIONAL”?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

2. THE TECHNICAL PROGRAMME HAS A *VERY BROAD TITLE*

- DOES THE DESCRIPTION OF THE CONFERENCE'S TECHNICAL PROGRAMME TRY TO COVER EVERYTHING BUT THE KITCHEN SINK?
- DOES THE CONFERENCE PROGRAMME TRY TO COMBINE DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES IN UNUSUAL WAYS?
- DO THE CONFERENCE TITLE INCLUDE THE TERM **"INTERDISCIPLINARY"**?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

3. THE LANGUAGE ON THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE IS “OFF”

- IS THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE BIZARRELY WRITTEN IN TERMS OF GRAMMAR?
- DOES CONFERENCE WEBSITE CONTAIN MANY SPELLING ERRORS?
- DOES THE WEB SITE STRANGELY REFERENCE A WELL-KNOWN BRAND OR PRODUCT NAME BUT NOT RELATED TO THE NATURE OF THE EVENT?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

4. HIGH PROFILE ORGANISATIONS ARE SPONSORING A LOW-PROFILE CONFERENCE

- IS THERE A BIG MISMATCH BETWEEN THE PROFILE OF THE CONFERENCE AND THE PROFILE OF ITS SPONSORS?
- DOES THE CONFERENCE CLAIM TO HAVE A HOST OF IMPRESSIVE BACKERS, BUT YOUR COLLEAGUES HAVEN'T HEARD OF IT?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

5. THE ORGANISERS' CONTACT DETAILS ARE MISSING, OR JUST DOESN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT.

- IS IT DIFFICULT TO LOCATE CLEAR CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE ORGANISERS?
- IS THERE A MISMATCH BETWEEN THE ADDRESS OF THE ORGANISERS AND THEIR TELEPHONE NUMBER?
- IS A P.O. BOX USED INSTEAD OF A MORE CREDIBLE IDENTIFIABLE ADDRESS?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

6. ANOTHER CONFERENCE WITH A SUSPICIOUSLY SIMILAR NAME ALREADY EXISTS

- DOES ANOTHER CONFERENCE WITH A VERY SIMILAR TITLE POP UP WHEN YOU DO A SEARCH?
- DOES THE CONFERENCE NAME SOUND LIKE ONE YOU OR A COLLEAGUE PREVIOUSLY ATTENDED OR HEARD OF BEFORE?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

7. THE CONFERENCE OR ITS ORGANISERS HAVE KNOWN ASSOCIATES

- DOES YOUR SEARCH LEAD TO LINKS TO KNOWN PREDATORY CONFERENCES OR JOURNALS?
- DOES YOUR SEARCH INDICATE THAT THE ORGANISERS' ASSOCIATES APPEAR TO BE SHADY OR SUSPICIOUS?
- DOES YOUR ENQUIRY WITH COLLEAGUES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY FAIL TO ESTABLISH THE ORGANISERS' OR ASSOCIATES' LEGITIMACY?
- HAS ANYONE PUBLISHED THEIR EXPERIENCE OF BEING SCAMMED BY THE ORGANISERS OR THEIR ASSOCIATES?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

8. THE ORGANISERS ARE CHARGING HIGHER-THAN-NORMAL FEES

- ARE THE ORGANISERS CHARGING FEES THAT ARE HIGHER THAN WHAT IS STANDARD IN YOUR FIELD OF RESEARCH OR WORK?
- ARE THE ORGANISERS CHARGING FEES THAT ARE HIGHER THAN WHAT YOUR INSTITUTE LEVIES FOR A SIMILAR CONFERENCE?
- ARE THE ORGANISERS CHARGING PRESENTERS HIGHER FEES THAN ATTENDEES?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

9. THE CONFERENCE IS UNUSUALLY FREQUENT

- DO A LOT OF DIFFERENT LISTINGS FOR THE CONFERENCE POP UP?
- IS THE ORGANISER HOLDING MULTIPLE CONFERENCES AT THE SAME TIME?
- DO THE ORGANISERS' CONFERENCES ALTERNATE BETWEEN COUNTRIES MULTIPLE TIMES?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

10. THE CONFERENCE IS UNUSUALLY CHEAP

- DOES THE CONFERENCE APPEAR TOO LOW TO BE CREDIBLE FOR THE PROGRAMME CONTENT?
- DO THE ORGANISERS OFFER AN “ALL EXPENSES PAID” TO A HIGH NUMBER OF SPEAKERS?
- DOES THE REGISTRATION INCLUDE A CONDITION THAT YOU WILL BE CHARGED A DIFFERENT FEE IF YOU FAIL TO ATTEND AFTER REGISTERING?

HOW TO SPOT A FAKE CONFERENCE

11. THE ORGANISERS ASK FOR PERSONAL INFORMATION

- DOES THE REGISTRATION ASK FOR YOUR PERSONAL INFORMATION E.G. HOME ADDRESS, TEL. NO., E-MAIL ADDRESS, ETC.
- DO THE ORGANISERS INSIST THAT YOU PAY USING YOU PERSONAL CREDIT CARD AND IS NOT PREPARED TO TAKE THE UNIVERSITY'S PURCHASE ORDER?

THE LEGAL POSITION

- If the terms and conditions of the conference event are clear, the onus is on the invitee (potential attendee) to act cautiously and make the necessary enquiries.
- If there is a financial liability as a result of a fraud or fraudulent misrepresentation, the University can claim for the arrangement to be set aside (or 'rescinded') on the basis of false representation, without belief in its truth, made knowingly by the organisers.
- The University may be able to successfully claim and seek enhanced damages from the organisers. The case of **BV Nederlandse Industrie Van Eiprodukten v Rembrandt Enterprises Inc** [2018] EWHC 1857 (Comm) established that:
 - (a) the relevant test is whether, '**but for**' the representation by the organisers, the representee (potential attendee) would not have entered into the contract;
 - (b) it is sufficient for a representee to establish that a misrepresentation was a factor in the decision to enter the contract – importantly it need not be the only or the deciding factor;
 - (c) there is a presumption that the fraudulent misrepresentation by the organiser induces the representee to enter the contract.

WHAT PRECAUTIONARY STEPS TO TAKE?

- ✓ DOUBLE-CHECK THE CONFERENCE URL AND DOMAIN NAME.
- ✓ CHECK THE SUB-DOMAIN NAME (THE NAME OF THE ACTUAL DOMAIN USED).
- ✓ RUN THE CONFERENCE BY YOUR PEERS BEFORE YOU APPLY OR REGISTER TO ATTEND.
- ✓ SCAN THE CONFERENCE WEBSITE TO DETECT IF THE LANGUAGE IS BIZARRELY WRITTEN AND/OR CONTAINS ERRORS.
- ✓ CHECK OUT THE SPONSOR PAGE ON THE WEBSITE, IF IT SEEMS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE, IT PROBABLY IS!
- ✓ DOUBLE-CHECK THE ORGANISERS' CONTACT DETAILS. IF IT TAKES YOU TOO LONG TO FIND THEM, IT'S TIME TO GET SUSPICIOUS!
- ✓ SEARCH THE CONFERENCE NAME AND IF TWO IDENTICAL CONFERENCES APPEAR, ANALYSE BOTH TO TELL THE LEGIT FROM THE FAKE.

WHAT PRECAUTIONARY STEPS TO TAKE?

- ✓ SEARCH ON GOOGLE FOR THE NAME OF THE ORGANISERS ALONG WITH THE WORD "PREDATORY".
- ✓ CHECK THE CONFERENCE DETAILS AGAINST [CALTECH LIBRARY'S LIST OF PREDATORY CONFERENCES](#), [BEALL'S LIST OF PREDATORY JOURNALS](#); [UCD PREDATORY PUBLISHERS & CONFERENCES](#)
- ✓ CHECK THE POLICY AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF NON-ATTENDANCE IF YOU DECIDE TO REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE .
- ✓ REACH OUT TO YOUR PEERS, COMPARE THE PRICES THEY PAY FOR ATTENDING CONFERENCES.
- ✓ RESEARCH, RESEARCH, RESEARCH UNTIL YOU ARE SATISFIED THAT THE CONFERENCE IS LEGITIMATE.
- ✓ DO NOT GIVE YOUR PERSONAL PRIVATE INFORMATION
- ✓ DO NOT USE YOUR PERSONAL CREDIT OR DEBIT CARD – THE UNIVERSITY'S PURCHASE ORDERING SYSTEM WORKFLOW SHOULD ASSIST IN DOUBLE-CHECKING BEFORE MAKING A FINANCIAL

COMMITMENT.