

**SLAS 2023**  
**Queen's University Belfast, 30-31 March 2023**

**Conference Report**

**A. Conference Finances & Participation Overview**

**1. Conference Fees:**

We did not do Early Bird Registration. We built in a buffer period after registration had officially closed during which we wrote to people who had not yet registered and gave them an opportunity to do so. We also accepted other late registration requests during that period.

	<b>SLAS Member Student /Unemployed/ Retired</b>	<b>Non SLAS Member Student /Unemployed/ Retired</b>	<b>SLAS Member Delegate</b>	<b>Non SLAS Member Delegate</b>
<b>Full Conference Rate</b>	£170	£190	£210	£245
<b>Online Conference Rate</b>	N/A	N/A	£30	£65

Attendance at the in-person conference gave access to the online conference at no additional charge.

Apart from the SLAS Member Student / Unemployed/ Retired rate, which was the same as Leicester 2019, all of our registration rates were cheaper than those charged at Leicester, although they did not include dinner. The conference dinner at Belfast cost an additional £50 and had to be booked/paid separately.

We did not offer a day rate due to the conference location in Belfast.

All conference fees also included lunch, coffee breaks, two drinks receptions, wifi, and the costs of the various amenities in each of the conference rooms.

We provided a list of hotel options to delegates, who made their own accommodation arrangements.

**2. Income and Expenditure:**

<b>INCOME</b>	
Registration fees (in person)	£35,910
Registration fees (online)	£2580
Dinner tickets	£4650
Combined Academic Publishers	£100
Iberoamericana Vervuert	£220
Boydell and Brewer	£170
Liverpool University Press	£150

TOTAL	£43,780
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EXPENDITURE	
Conference catering including drinks reception and canapés (Thursday evening) and conference dinner including 4 bottles of wine per table of 10.	£17095.25
Drinks reception (Friday evening)	£649.96
BLAR cold lunch	£55.25
Music during drinks reception	£300
Keynote speaker costs (£400 was paid directly by SLAS)	£1623.69
Stationery, printing etc	£0
Room Hire	£4359.34
Conference support team	£1165.73
Conference Management Fee (Eventus)	£3200
Marketing (badges, pens, hire of display boards, t-shirts) £100 billed	£100 invoiced so far. Additional costs pending estimated another £500
5% food bank donation	£550
Sundries	£120
TOTAL	£29,219.22 (plus additional amount from marketing)

### 3. Final Conference Profit:

<b>INCOME 43,780– EXPENDITURE (estimate)</b> <b>£29,719.22</b>	<b>£ 14,060 (approx.)</b>
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The Online Conference incurred limited costs (details below) and so revenue from it was largely profit.

The University waived a 5% administration charge that would have been applied to the total revenue of the conference as well as VAT on room bookings. These concessions were made after the budget was done and so were not factored into the budget and help to explain some of the profit made.

In support of Visit Belfast's *Changing the Menu. For Good.* Campaign, we included a 4th course on the menu which meant that 5% of the total cost of the dinner would be donated to local food banks in an effort to support those experiencing food poverty in Belfast.

### 4. Registration Figures & Fees

We had 235 delegates registered of whom:

- 177 attended in person
- 58 attended online only
- 93 paid for the conference dinner
- 36 in-person delegates were not members of SLAS (60 if counting online delegates as well)
- 20 paid the student / retired / unemployed rate for non-SLAS members

- 53 paid the student / retired / unemployed rate for SLAS members

## B. Conference Planning & Organisation Overview

### 5. Conference Theme and Ethos

There was no conference theme, but efforts were made to encourage participation by delegates from the island of Ireland as well as to increase the visibility of Latin American cultural studies. This was reflected in our choice of keynote speaker, Cristina Rivera Garza. Nevertheless, the conference remained inherently interdisciplinary. The organisers were open to participation in multiple formats, as demonstrated by the inclusion of a photographic exhibition by the RECLAMA project, and workshops focused on poetic practice, public engagement, community-based research, and digital humanities. Where we noticed disciplines were underrepresented in submissions to the call for papers, targeted emails were sent and targeted social media promotion undertaken. We were open to all research themes and disciplinary approaches relating to Latin American in its geographical and temporal diversity.

### 6. Keynote Speaker

Discretion in deciding the keynote is left to the local organizing committee. Given our research interests and the underpinning ethos we were aiming for, we were keen to invite a scholar working in areas relating to Latin American cultural studies. We were delighted to welcome renowned Mexican author and intellectual Cristina Rivera Garza (University of Houston), who gave a keynote lecture entitled “The Lilita Rivera Garza Archive: Documentary Writing and the Afterlife of Femicide”. The keynote was exceptionally well attended. The lecture coincided with the publication of the English translation of Rivera Garza’s most recent work of fiction, under the title *Lilita’s Invincible Summer*. A local independent bookshop near QUB, No Alibis, ordered copies of the book and offered signed copies which had sold out by the Saturday morning after the conference. In addition, one of the publishers participating in the publisher exhibit, Iberoamericana, attended SLAS for the first time because of the keynote in order to promote *Escrituras geológicas* by Rivera Garza.

### 7. Call for Papers, Creating Panels, and Final Programme

We issued a call for papers and panels on 2 September 2022 with a deadline of 21 October, which was extended by around one month to 19 November. We used an online system for receiving proposals (Microsoft Forms) which worked reasonably well.

We accepted both individual papers and pre-formed panels (with or without discussants), and also encouraged alternative formats (workshops, roundtables, poetry readings etc). We did not accept proposals for book launches.

We received 190 proposals for individual papers and 36 proposals for pre-formed panels. The organising committee reviewed all proposals. We accepted all proposals on topics related to countries typically considered part of Hispanic and Lusophone Latin America including the languages, cultures and politics of indigenous peoples across the continent. We also accepted papers with a comparative and/or transnational focus (if they maintained a strong focus on Latin American contexts). Five paper proposals were rejected because they did not meet the selection criteria (for example, they focused solely on the Anglophone or Francophone Caribbean). Before the deadline closed, we also requested clarification on several short or unclear proposals, giving people the opportunity to resubmit or provide more detail.

Paper submissions were put into panels using only the titles, so panels were produced without regard to the gender, location, or career stage of the author.

We accepted papers in Spanish, English and Portuguese. We were open to papers in the indigenous languages of the Americas and of the island of Ireland. We had one such enquiry and advised the author that the audience may be limited as a result.

In between the original deadline and the extended deadline, we went ahead and reviewed submissions and notified of acceptances (or in a very few cases, rejections) to help people with applying for travel funding, SLAS grants and making plans. When the extended deadline had passed, and a further set of acceptance notifications had gone out, we created a draft programme and informed delegates which day they would be presenting on to allow them to go ahead with travel plans. On 1 February we made available a schematic overview programme and the registration system went live. We circulated a full draft programme by email on 27 February prior to registration closing on 6 March. After registration had officially closed, we chased people who had submitted a proposal but not yet registered. In effect, registration remained open until around a week before the conference.

When drafting the final programme, we were careful not to change the day of papers/panels that had already been communicated to delegates. We also tried as far as possible to accommodate a request to present on a particular day and/or at a particular time. Nevertheless, many changes were necessary, also in response to registration data. For example, there was a drop-out rate of approximately 25%. Delegates withdrawing for financial reasons or travel restrictions were accommodated in the online programme if they wished.

We broadly followed the same programme outline that operated in previous conferences including morning coffee, breaks, lunch and a conference dinner. The AGM was scheduled to avoid clashes with any panels during a longer break. The Friday evening drinks reception was a new addition which was well attended.

The committee tried to foresee potential thematic and/or disciplinary pathways through the conference when programming parallel sessions whether panels formed by us or pre-formed panels. This was intended to make the conference experience as rich as possible for different types of attendees. On the days of the conference this also enabled organisers to anticipate any issues and, for example, intervene in room allocations if needed and based on awareness of potential audience. We recommend that all rooms for panels at SLAS conferences hold 30 people or more.

All parallel sessions, refreshments, and other conference events such as keynote, AGM etc took place in a single building. This provided a hub for the conference delegates in which they could easily interact and meet between sessions as well as communicate with the organising committee if needed. The exception was the drinks receptions and conference dinner, which took place in an adjacent building – only a short walk away.

The programme was hosted online, rather than being sent out as an attachment by email, in line with the SLAS Climate Action Plan. This also avoided any confusion that might have resulted from the circulation of different draft versions given the number of changes that were made in the final stages.

## **8. Sponsorship**

We decided not to approach the host institution for sponsorship to ensure all conference profits would be returned to SLAS.

We did not request financial support from the Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, as is typical for SLAS conferences, but delegates from the FCDO did attend the conference.

## 9. Publishers' Fair

We received a list from the previous SLAS conference organisers with suggestions of who to contact regarding participation in this event and complemented this with further ideas from the organising committee. We contacted the following publishers regarding participation in the publishers' exhibition and advertising in the conference pack and programme:

Alborada, AMDigital, Berghahn, Bloomsbury Academic, Boydell & Brewer, Cambridge University Press, Gale/Cengage, Combined Academic Publishers Ltd, Duke University Press, Edinburgh University Press, European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies (ERLACS), Legenda, Gazelle Books, Gwasg Prifysgol Cymru – University of Wales Press, Iberoamericana, ILAS book series, Intellect Books, Liverpool University Press/Modern Languages Open, Manchester University Press, Nomos Verlag, Oxford University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, Pathfinder Books, Peter Lang, Pluto Press, SAGE, SUNY Press, Taylor & Francis Group (Routledge), Thompson Henry, UCL Press, University of Florida Press, University of Pittsburgh Press, WordPower, Zed Books

Initially, the University Events Management team approached publishers with limited success. The conference organisers subsequently approached publishers with more, but still limited success. Some publishers reported that their budgets are set much earlier in the year and so were unable to accommodate requests that were made mid-year. Others (a minority) reported that they no longer attend conferences. Those publishers which did attend were happy with the service provided and the publishers' exhibition was well attended. One of the publishers which advertised online offered discount codes (Combined Academic 30%). Iberoamericana attended SLAS for the first time due to the keynote publishing with them. When planning the conference organisers should give consideration as to where books sent by publishers might be stored securely before the event and overnight.

Due to the SLAS Climate Action Plan, we did not offer the option of inserting a flyer into the conference bag. Six publishers had paid (£50 plus VAT) for inserts when the conference was in Leicester. Instead, we offered a logo and listing in the programme and on the website – see below. One publisher enquired about including a banner in an email, but we did not offer this option.

Take-up from publishers was very limited this year, we think likely as a result of the changing contexts around how promotion of such materials, and measurement of the value of advertising/sales in this format, takes place. Charges / uptake was as follows:

Exhibition single table (£170+VAT): Iberoamericana; Boydell & Brewer

Exhibition double table (£250+VAT): N/A

Exhibition single table, one day, discounted rate for non-profit organisation (£43+VAT): N/A

Full-page advert in pdf programme (£100+VAT): Liverpool University Press, Combined Academic Publishers

Logo and listing in programme and on website (£50+VAT): Iberoamericana, Liverpool University Press

## 10. Website, Social Media and Online Conference.

The conference webpages were hosted within the School of Arts, English and Languages webpages, and contained information on the conference itself as well as general information about the city. See:

The Modern Languages Core Disciplinary Research Group Twitter account, as well as the accounts of the conference organisers, were used to promote the conference and share relevant information. The official conference hashtag was #SLASBelfast2023, but some delegates used other variations.

We received (without charge) assistance in producing the website and programme from Maria Meehan, the School Marketing, Recruitment and Events Co-ordinator.

SLAS had used the Gather platform for the hybrid conference in Bath. We used the same platform for the online conference. The costs of the platform were covered by SLAS and so do not feature in the conference accounts. The only cost incurred in relation to the online conference was for dedicated tech support on the day. One of our conference helpers with relevant skills was assigned to provide tech support for the online and in person conference. One delegate was unable to access Gather due to a firewall issue and we had to refund the registration fee. There were no other significant issues.

The online conference was not well attended with many panels having no audience. Delegates who had initially registered to come in person often opted to move to the online conference. If we were to organise the conference again, we would suggest holding the online conference on a separate day (perhaps even a few days after the in-person conference to allow people to return home and log in with greater ease). We would also recommend considering a separate keynote for the online conference or securing permission to broadcast the in-person keynote. It was not possible to record the keynote this year.

We did not offer the possibility of hybrid panels or a hybrid conference due to the limitations of the available technology and tech support. We think that this was the right decision and delegates seemed to appreciate being back in person. A few panel convenors “went rogue” and played pre-recorded videos. This was done at their own risk and, if they asked, this was made clear in advance. We had no objection.

## 11. Special Events

A drinks and canapés reception was hosted before the conference dinner with live music provided by a local Brazilian musician. An informal reception was held at the end of the conference to provide delegates with an opportunity to socialise before leaving.

Throughout the conference, a photography exhibition installed by the RECLAMA project was on display in the conference venue's main social space. The exhibition focused on themes selected by young Afro Ecuadorian women from across Esmeraldas, including religious and spiritual practices, food and gastronomy, and aesthetics. The exhibition linked to a film screening and a paper that were also part of a double panel on “Women’s Narratives of Everyday Resistances from Territories in the Context of Colonialism and Extractivism”. The RECLAMA project is a collaboration between activists and academics from Northumbria University, Universidad de San Francisco de Quito, and the Mujeres de Asfalto collective, funded by British Academy/GCRF.

During the conference, *BLAR* editors hosted a publishing workshop for members of PILAS aimed at encouraging young scholars to prepare and submit research to the journal.

In general, conference organisers decided to leave time in the evenings to allow visitors to Belfast to explore the city and its culture.

All catering at the conference was provided by the Campus Food and Drink team. The dinner was provided at an additional cost on top of the registration fee. Wine was included (2 bottles of red and 2 bottles of white per table of 10 people). The venue also had an open bar. The organisers have no clear insight into whether it is better to include the conference dinner as part of the registration fee or to have it as an option. The dinner was held in the Great Hall and we had exclusive use of the venue until midnight. This allowed delegates to relax and enjoy conversations after the meal ended without needing to find an alternative venue.

Food and drink at the conference followed the stipulations of the SLAS Climate Action Plan, namely that the SLAS conference and committee meetings 'should offer vegetarian and vegan food only, unless special dietary requirements preclude this'. Alternatives to dairy milk were offered for tea and coffee, and single use plastic was avoided. Provision was made for delegates who had notified us of special dietary requirements, including allergies, in advance.

Bottled water (in glass bottles) and compostable cups were available in the panel rooms. These bottles could be refilled at water fountains which were located near the Junction café on the ground floor of the Peter Froggatt Centre.

At the end of the conference on Friday we held an informal drinks reception. This was very well attended. We were surprised at the attendance as we had expected many delegates to be travelling home promptly after the conference. It is possible that the event encouraged delegates to stay longer or, having travelled to the island of Ireland, they opted to explore further over the weekend.

## 12. Organisation

### Organising Committee:

Dr Sarah Bowskill, Reader in Latin American Studies

Dr Tori Holmes, Senior Lecturer in Brazilian Studies

Dr Ricki O'Rawe, Senior Lecturer in Latin American Studies

### Conference Support Team:

Laura Kennedy, PhD student in Comparative Literature, School of Arts, English and Languages

Leonid Kuzmenko, Marie Curie Early Stage Researcher, School of Arts, English and Languages

Claire Whyte, PhD student in Spanish, School of Arts, English and Languages

The conference support team were invaluable in providing support during the conference. They were paid for their work at the same rate as they would have been paid for hourly paid teaching. The rate of pay was at the discretion of the organisers. The conference support team were involved in providing support over the two days of the conference. Organisation prior to the event was done by the Organising Committee. The Conference Support Team and Organising Committee maintained contact with one another during the conference using WhatsApp. This was a very effective means of communication to reach people in different parts of the building.

The University Events Management Company (Eventus) were also engaged at a cost of £3200. They provided guidance on the tasks to be completed and ensured that we kept to schedule. They provided guidance on producing the budget, liaised with on campus catering and with publishers. They provided

certificates of registration and attendance. They set up and managed the online registration portal. The cost was quite high, but we would not recommend organizing the conference without such infrastructure support.

The School Finance Team were responsible for receiving funds and will return all profits from the conference to SLAS. We were very grateful for the expertise of Lorraine Browne, Sonia Rose and Carleen Walsh.

#### Additional Notes:

- PILAS was held the day before the SLAS conference in Belfast. There was a separate organising committee, which included a local PGR student. The organisation of the two events was almost entirely separate with the exception of an early stage meeting at which the Organising Committee provided some advice on how to deal with issues such as room booking and catering based on their institutional knowledge.
- It is not clear to us how many delegates attended both PILAS and SLAS conferences. Some people informed us they were only able to attend one or the other.
- There may have been some confusion between the two conferences. Ideally, the call for papers should be synchronised. The SLAS conference received some applications from very early stage PhD candidates and Masters' students which may have been a better fit for the PILAS conference.
- We have no strong view as to whether the conference should have run over an extra day/half day.