

What we've learned about running teachers' advisory panels

Practical ideas on how to set up and run successful teachers' advisory panels

When setting up a panel...

Decide **what you need advice on**, and how you will use the advice you receive. Teachers can give very valuable first-hand views on the kind of activities and resources that work well in the classroom, and can act as guinea pigs for new courses, workshops and learning materials.

By testing your products with teachers, you gain **crucial insights** into how to make them work best for students and staff. It is also a valuable promotional bonus to say '**tested with real teachers**'.

When recruiting...

Plan carefully - if you want to get good teachers, you need to **book their time** well ahead, and expect to be let down by 20 to 25% of your group. We've found that panels with about **seven to ten teachers** work best. It can get out of control if there are many more, or lack variety if there are fewer.

Recruit teachers who do different kinds of jobs in different kinds of schools. Have a brief chat over the phone with teachers before they join the panel to try and ensure their suitability. Invite teachers to one panel initially to assess if it is the right role for them.

Try not to organise things for the end of term or in the holidays. The **middle of the term** is generally less busy for them, so they'll be more willing to devote their time and energy to the panel.

Use your website or e-newsletter to recruit teachers and make the most of any contacts with teachers you already have, such as those who have already helped with other projects. Offer **incentives**, freebies for the school and good communications with the school and head teacher. 'Getting involved' is a great **CPD opportunity** for teachers.

When running the panels...

Don't plan to do too much in one go, or assume everyone will turn up on time and not want to leave early. Try to keep it **fun and light-hearted** - they're giving up their free time - but do let them know that they need to give others space to speak, and remind them they're there because they have different views and experiences.

Make use of anyone who didn't make your panel – keep their details, send them drafts to comment on, stay in touch through marketing lists.

Further resources:

See www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/adviseus for more details about the Science Museum's teachers' panels

Come on our training course **Learning in Museums** to find out more about how museums promote informal learning – contact learning@sciencemuseum.org.uk for details.

Find out more about running courses for teachers at your museum by consulting another sheet in the *What we've learned* series:

- What we've learned about running teachers' courses