



# Bridge: A MindSport For All

*Connects People, Challenges Minds*

## **Bridging Academia, Policy and Practice Conference**

The *Bridge: A MindSport for All* (BAMSA) Conference 2021 was attended by academics, administrators, and bridge players from 62 countries across the world. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> international bridge conference. The University of Stirling and BAMSA hosted the online event over four days at the end of June. The success of the conference was due to a concerted effort on the part of many people. The programme involved 70 presenters and panelists from 20 countries. Collaboration among members of the global BAMSA network was the driving force behind the event.

The conference aimed to create a dialogue between academics and bridge players. Representatives of local, regional, national and international bridge organisations were all present. Practitioners included policymakers, bridge teachers, organisers and players. The academics came from a variety of disciplines. Sociology, psychology, sports studies, health sciences, global studies, social work and leisure studies were all represented.

The conference sessions inspired wide-ranging discussions. In his [insightful keynote address](#), Professor Martin Seligman applied his wellbeing theory to the game of bridge. Other sessions focused [on the role of bridge in society](#), and the ways in which bridge benefits people of different generations.

A [session on education and digital learning](#) provoked discussion on how best to teach bridge in schools. The conference also demonstrated the importance of addressing inequalities and creating a safe and welcoming environment. Training in equality and unconscious bias for tournament directors, selectors and youth trainers, was proposed at [a session on gender](#).

Covid 19 has changed the way bridge clubs operate. [A discussion about opportunities and challenges post-Covid](#) was relevant to bridge clubs planning a return to face-to-face play. Online bridge has been a lifeline for many players but not for all. Approximately half of all club players stopped playing during the pandemic and bridge clubs cannot be complacent.

To raise awareness of the positive role of bridge in society, the conference showcased the multiple benefits of playing bridge and the social role of bridge clubs. Positive case studies from around the world are particularly relevant to governing parties committed to [improving mental health and reducing social isolation](#).

The Scottish Bridge Union, the American Contract Bridge League Educational Foundation, the Leisure Studies Association and the University of Stirling all provided funding. Thanks to their support, the conference created a valuable online resource for the international bridge community. Recordings of all the sessions along with the pre-recorded presentations are available on the [BAMSA website](#).

The conference was free to attend. To support Bridge: A MindSport for All, please donate to the [Keep Bridge Alive crowdfunder](#).

Please follow BAMSA on Facebook page and twitter (@bridgemindsport). Visit the website and subscribe to the e-bulletin to keep up to date with news from *Bridge: A MindSport for All* ([bridgemindsport.org](#)).

## Session 1A Summary

### Mindsports in Academia and Society

Session 1A of the conference focused on Mindsports in Academia and Society. The presentations and the recording can be accessed [here](#).

The session started with a welcome from Prof. Samantha Punch of the University of Stirling and BAMSA project lead. Prof. Punch spoke about the importance of bridging the world of academic and the world of bridge, as well as the policy world and argued that collaboration is needed. Next, an opening address from Gianarrigo Rona, President of the World Bridge Federation was delivered, in which he spoke of bridge as a universal game and an inherently social game. Prof. Punch and Dr David Scott, University of Abertay, then gave short presentations on their research. Prof. Punch focused on how BAMSA have been approaching bridge as a mindsport in society, and Dr Scott shared his research in relation to the physicality of bridge and experiences of emotion.

Following these talks, a panel was assembled of contributors, some of whom had provided advanced recorded presentations. The panel was diverse with contributions from Prof. David Scott of Texas A&M University, Kim Frazer, Author of *Gaining the Mental Edge at Bridge* from Australia, Dr Liat Hen-Herbst of University of Ariel, Israel and Zoe Russell of the BAMSA team. The panelists discussed defining characteristics of mindsports and the ways in which bridge can be understood as a mindsport, including what benefits and downsides there are of doing so.

The discussion of categorising bridge players and the relationship between social and serious bridge is a core aspect of Prof. David Scott's work (1992, 1994) which has been picked up on and expanded on in Punch et al. (2021). A key conclusion here is that 'bridge' is different things to different people, and it is useful to continue to be clear about and make distinctions between different forms of player and play.

The discussion around classifying bridge as a mindsport is a new avenue for research, which has been touched upon in some BAMSA papers, particularly around player identities in Punch et al. (2020). Whilst the concept of a mindsport is accepted in some contexts, it is not in others, and within the discussion there was a variety of considerations and opinions. This also incorporated the term 'e-sports', which is another category alongside 'mindsport' to consider.

The webinar has both academic and bridge implications. Future research is needed to consider defining sports and the place of mindsports like bridge in society including implications for inclusivity; cross cultural comparisons of bridge as a mindsport; online bridge as an e-sport. Bridge implications include: the image of bridge and raising awareness of bridge; access to funding for bridge and bridge research; the place of bridge in society and increasing participation.

## Session 1B Summary

### Wellbeing and Bridge

The BAMSA Conference Session 1B focused on Wellbeing and Bridge. The recording and advance presentations can be accessed [here](#).

The session started with a welcome from Prof. Samantha Punch of the University of Stirling and BAMSA project lead. Prof. Punch introduced Professor Martin Seligman as a world-leading mental health expert and lifelong bridge player. Prof. Seligman addressed for the first time how he is bringing his two passions together in applying his PERMA theory of wellbeing to bridge. PERMA stands for the five pillars of wellbeing: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment.

Prof Seligman explained how PERMA can be usefully applied to understanding wellbeing and the motivations behind why people play bridge. He went on to discuss two types of cognition (automatic and deliberate) and how this relates to playing bridge, ageing, and dementia. Noting the potential benefits of bridge playing to wellbeing and cognition in older age.

In his address, Prof. Seligman combined PERMA anecdotally with bridge and asked participants to identify which aspect of PERMA spoke most to them; it would be useful to engage in a more robust application of PERMA to real-life motivations and interest in playing bridge. Given the global decline of bridge as a mindsport, understanding motivations to play such a time-intensive game could be valuable for further marketing of bridge.

Following Prof Seligman's keynote address, Prof. Punch Launched her new book 'Bridge at the Top: Behind the Screens' (Master Point Press). Prof. Punch discussed her book with the publisher Ray Lee and two elite Bridge players interviewed in the book Jill Levin and Chip Martel. Prof. Punch described how this book was really where BAMSA began, a case study of what goes on at the bridge table. All panel members discussed the importance of bridge to their lives including meeting their spouses and family connections to the game. They then discussed making money at bridge at the potential avenues for this as a professional player. It was noted that people who make money at bridge could make money doing something else but choose bridge because of love of the game.

The panel then discussed difficult and challenging partners and negative comments made at the table and how this behaviour can put players off despite a love of the game. In particular, they discussed the ongoing and systemic experiences of sexism and gender inequality within the game. Academic and in particular feminist research has long highlighted that equality within leisure and sporting contexts needs to tackle the structural inequalities present within the game. This is an important avenue for future research in creating a more inclusive environment in bridge to ensure its survival.

The keynote and book launch covered bridge play amongst older and more elite players, future research needs to take into account the views and experiences of younger novice players. BAMSA's next research project 'Bridge in Schools' will tackle this gap in the bridge world which will speak to issues around recruitment and retainment. This could also be a golden opportunity to apply Seligman's PERMA theory of wellbeing to young people playing bridge in schools.

## Session 2A Summary

### Impact of a Global Pandemic on Bridge

The aims of Session 2A were to explore issues relating to the impact of the pandemic on bridge and how they might be resolved, to consider case studies and to identify future research needs. The key questions addressed the next steps for the bridge community, and the opportunities and challenges of the New Bridge Different. There were several pre-recorded presentations for the session, plus five live presentations:

- Kevin Judge discussed the benefits, barriers and motivations experienced by bridge players, through the lens of social capital. Social capital is a balance between cooperation and self-interest and is an imperative approach based on the work of James Coleman who describes social structure, ideology and stability.
- Nicky Bainbridge described her experiences of running her bridge club when the pandemic hit. Some members continued as online members, but a significant number indicated they were waiting for face-to-face bridge to return. Some players prefer to play in person because this part of their social life.
- Patrick Shields talked about how a County Association filled the gaps that bridge clubs couldn't easily fill.
- Peter Cox described the situation with bridge in Australia, which at the time was in a fairly unique position, as they had reopened for face-to-face bridge. The future there could be a hybrid version. Most people would be playing in clubs with some online bridge.
- Jan Kamras discussed the activities of the European Bridge League. Courses and seminars in future could be partly online and partly face to face, meaning that more NBOs might be able to participate. For competitions, players want to meet; it's part of their enjoyment in playing competitive high-level bridge.

The panel discussed how to maximise the positives and minimise the negatives of the online experiences during the pandemic. Primarily, online is more convenient, but face-to-face is more sociable. We need to keep the game together, while recognizing that both aspects have strengths. There was a discussion about how a hybrid solution might work. It was also pointed out that about 50% of bridge players were not playing online.

The audience then split into six separate groups to discuss various key challenges:

- **Future of Club Bridge:** A hybrid solution could be way forward.
- **Testing Times for Tournament Bridge:** The economics of tournaments is important. Also, there are concerns about cheating online.
- **New Etiquette of Online Bridge:** The atmosphere in online bridge is different to at a bridge club. There is a different playing etiquette that has to be learned.
- **Pandemic Organisations:** There might be a need for change of focus in NBOs re social/competitive bridge or managing hybrid bridge.
- **Locating the Missing Players:** Only 40-50% of previous players are playing online at the moment. Over half the players are waiting for face-to-face to come back and that should be a key to future discussions.
- **Online Bridge – An Inferior Game?** Inferior is the wrong word to describe online bridge – different is a better word. How can we combine the best of online and face-to-face bridge?

The panellists gave a few brief thoughts to sum up. Peter Cox asked how do we motivate the clubs to want to move forward? Patrick Shields said the best way was face-to-face and online to move forward together, using the advantages from both. Nicky Bainbridge said it's important to not leave anybody behind. Christina Ballinger said how much we are all really looking forward to playing face to face again. Espen Gisvold said that the pandemic has changed the shape of bridge and it will be a hybrid in future. Cathryn Fox wondered whether in a few years' time we would look back on this period positively.

The Session 2A recording and presentations can be accessed [here](#).

## Session 2B Summary

### Digital Bridge and Cheating

Session 2B 'Digital Bridge and Cheating' had 356 registered participants including academics, administrators, and bridge players.

Two live presentations by Tihana Brykljačić and Jordan Maclean gave psychological and sociological perspectives on cheating at digital bridge. This was followed by a panel session with:

- Eric Laurant of the World Bridge Federation Investigation Committee
- Jan Kamras President of the European Bridge League
- Boye Brogeland World Champion Bridge Player in Norway
- Steve Weinstein World Champion Bridge Player and Bridge Winners Partner.

The panel discussed five main questions:

1. What is the impact of cheating on bridge as a game/mindsport?
2. What the implications for the image of bridge?
3. What is the role of Bridge Winners, public discussion and confessions?
  - 3a. *What do you see as the role of Bridge Winners in relation to the naming and shaming of cheaters, and what are the issues involved in having such public discussions?*
  - 3b. *What is the role of confessions and how do you see the different online confessions*
  - 3c. *What about the players who have been accused but not confessed?*
4. What do you see as the roles of international and national organisations
5. Levels of play and contexts of cheating: Is it a worse bridge crime depending on who did it and where and how it was committed?

The panel were unanimous in their condemnation of cheating, as it undermines the essence of bridge as a mindsport. There was a call to action for the international federation and national organisations to take preventative action at all levels of the game. They can do so by amending existing statutes and creating new rules and laws that account for the nuances of digital bridge; developing robust processes for disciplining and punishing players who are suspected, or have confessed, to different types of cheating; and establishing best practices for detecting cheating. An implication of the session was to teach ethical bridge behaviour.

The recording for Session 2B can be accessed [here](#).

## Session 3A Summary

### Bridging Generations

Session 3A of the conference focused on Bridging Generations. The presentations and the panel recording can be accessed [here](#).

The session was opened by Prof. Alison Bowes, University of Stirling and sets the scene by discussing what healthy ageing means and what bridge has to offer in this context. Discussing this and the way that bridge connects people across generations were some of the key aims of the session. Panel speakers gave short presentations or had pre-recorded presentations which addressed these aims from different disciplinary perspectives and different global contexts.

Dr Marek Malysa based in Poland for example shared how learning to play bridge affects wellbeing and cognitive skills in the elderly population and is linked to a lower risk of Alzheimers. Dr Miriam Snellgrove of BAMSA, presented on research about loneliness and bridge during the covid-19 pandemic. She shared that divisions between loneliness and connectedness are complex with regards to online and offline bridge in particular. Polly Fong, University of Queensland, Australia, applied a social identity perspective to ageing well and aging in place, discussing how important social groups are for wellbeing. Her research is based on a case study of a bridge club.

José Júlio Curado, Open University of Portugal contributed a global studies perspective on bridge, emphasising the importance of interdisciplinarity. He argued that the key question is how bridge can promote a more inclusive, fairer, and cohesive society whilst increasing social wellbeing. Finally, Chris Panagiotaros, based in Australia, focused on intergenerationality and developing community through bridge which he contextualised in terms of a 'crisis of loneliness' and the contemporary world of 'hyperindividualisation'.

During the session panellists and attendees addressed key themes and questions related to the role of bridge in older life, and how to encourage younger people into the game, and foster cross-generation interactions. Discussions included the extent to which bridge might be ageist. Miriam Snellgrove argued that the narrative about bridge as a being problematic due to it being an older person's game should be shifted to seeing this as a positive, whilst focusing on barriers to entry and continued participation by younger people.

There was a discussion about the role of academic research, and the importance of advocacy work. There was a desire to see more universities getting involved with and cooperating with BAMSA. Priorities for future research which were identified include a focus on adult play groups which Polly Fong argues are severely under-researched, especially links to health and wellbeing.

Another gap is seen to be the focus on practice, and how to expose young people to bridge, and how this might translate into intergenerational relations and community development. Prof. Bowes suggests that international collaboration is important, and that there is scope for a focus on multi-disciplinary working, which not only benefits bridge communities but aligns with what research funders are looking for.

## Session 3B Summary

### Gender, Sexism and Bridge

Session 3B of the conference focused on Gender, Sexism and Bridge. The recording and presentations can be accessed [here](#).

The session was opened by Dr Miriam Snellgrove, University of Stirling who set the scene by discussing how gender inequality can sometimes be seen as an individual problem, but that this overlooks the way this inequality can be ingrained at the institutional level. Bridge organisations, like many other organisations, are an institution that upholds and reproduces gender inequality. The aim of this session was then to consider what solutions the bridge world could take within the wider world of inequality. Panel speakers gave short presentations or had pre-recorded presentations that addressed these issues from different perspectives and global contexts. During the session panellists and attendees addressed key debates around how to make bridge more inclusive and how to encourage more women into the game at all levels.

One debate centred on the roles and responsibilities of clubs and organisations and whether reform should come from organisations mandating it or the ground up. Some argued for more investment, research and leadership from Zonal, Regional and National Bridge organisations while others suggested women are recruited at club level and that a one-size-fits-all approach would not work. Another debate was the future of the women's game and whether it should be upheld or abolished. Some argued that removing the category would take away a safe space for women. Further, as fewer women play in the open removing the woman's category could remove women from bridge.

Others took the opposing view arguing there would not be more woman players until the women's game was abolished. The idea of quotas was another contentious issue both for teams and within the leadership of bridge organisations. Some panellists strongly opposed the idea suggesting only the best players should represent their country and the best person should be selected for the job in organisations others emphatically argued for positive discrimination to help overcome the unique obstacles women face.

The panellists also discussed what obstacles were faced by women in bridge. We discussed the time and travel commitments how this may be more challenging for women due to social pressure to take on more childcare and housework. We also discussed socialisation and how this may impact women's confidence. Microaggressions such as the fact that commentators are almost exclusively men, that the hall of fame is so male-dominated, and that bylaws are usually written with the word 'he' were also discussed. As were more blatant examples of sexism and sexist comments made by men and woman players. Sponsor bias towards all-men teams was also noted. As was selector bias in choosing the open teams.

What is clear from this session is that there is ample internal expertise within the female bridge-playing community that could be harnessed to put forward the well-needed changes required. A report, co-authored by the panellists highlighting suggested changes to tournament and club bridge, could act as a galvanising mechanism for the wider bridge community. The roles of organisations is an important avenue for future research in creating a more inclusive environment in bridge to ensure its survival and other social inequalities also need to be considered including ethnicity, sexuality and disability.

## Session 4A Summary

### New Approaches to Teaching and Recruitment

Session 4A of the BAMSA conference focused on New Approaches to Teaching and Recruitment. The presentations and the recording of the panel discussions can be accessed [here](#).

Dr Terrie-Lynn Thompson introduced the session and spoke about the pedagogies of technology and the pedagogies of bridge. She spoke about the concept of 'situated learning' and ideas of pedagogy as a 'situated activity'.

**Panel 1** discussed learning and teaching in bridge and answered key questions in relation to ways to attract new learners online and for face-to-face bridge for different age groups. They considered whether there are specific obstacles and opportunities. Relating to effective ways to attract new players, Mary Sharp said that we need to think about how people learn. She continued to talk about the 'growth mindset' which is found in teaching more generally and is about building students' resilience and resourcefulness. Milan Macura next argues that there is no 'best way' of doing anything, there are multiple ways and for everyone a different kind of way might work. He speaks about the different motivations for different age groups of players and that we might need different approaches for teaching.

Akiko Yanagisawa speaks about the challenges for promotion of bridge. Bridge for example is not well known in Japan, and it takes a lot of extra work just to explain the game when recruiting players. Stephanie Threlkeld suggests that it is important to focus on learning by doing, rather than by being talked to. She spoke about efforts to revamp a teaching programme and that, when the pandemic hit in particular, the challenge was to come up with an online programme which embodied the same principles.

**Panel 2** discussed school and youth bridge and how to engage and retain learners. The session began with Marianne Harding from the Norwegian Bridge Federation and Morten Bilde Chair of the Danish School Bridge Association whose presentations and discussion were focused on answering questions about the key challenges and opportunities as well as tips for what works in practice and how to advance research of bridge. Marianne Harding started off by dispelling a myth that youngsters are not interested in learning bridge. She said many are simply unaware of what bridge is, so have no reason to say if they want to learn it or not.

Morten spoke about the Danish school project, and he said it is important to understand 'the way people learn things are changing and that means that the way we teach bridge in general has to change'. He argued that it is important to have case study research on how bridge impacts learning. This is needed to get politicians to fund activity. They were joined by three more panellists, Sue Johnson, Michael Xu and Patty Tucker who continued the discussions and shared practical knowledge and experiences such as with 'New Tricks' in the UK, the founding of the Youth Bridge Association in 2020 and the Atlanta Junior Bridge group.

The session overall highlighted where there can be important shared learning of practical approaches to learning and teaching, which are diverse. It also illustrated scope for new academic research that is interdisciplinary, and engages with theory, as well as offering specific learning to use for policy engagement.



## Session 4B Summary

### Marketing Bridge

Session 4B of the conference focused on Marketing Bridge as well as the Conference Close with comments from Prof Punch, Dr Malysa and Dr Brkljačić. The presentations and recording can be accessed [here](#).

For Session 4B 'Marketing Bridge' there were 278 registered participants (academics, administrators, and bridge players). This session was the first of a two-part *Bridging Insights* project that is headed by Professor Samantha Punch, which aims to develop a marketing research campaign strategy for promoting the card game bridge to the next generation of players.

Several questions were posed to the whole group using an online polling system, Menti. A behavioural change framework introduced each of the ideal types of bridge players – competitor, socializer, self-improver, and mind gamer.

The 'competitor' type generated discussion around the thrill of competing on an international stage. Some however felt that the 'win at all costs' mentality is too much and might dissuade new players to bridge. The 'socialiser' type is associated with people, food, and game play. Some felt bridge clubs must embrace these socialising qualities to attract new players. The 'self-improver' type is eager to learn and continually improve their craft. To achieve this, a problem-based teaching approach was recommended for newcomers. The 'mind gamer' type is an expert who can, sometimes cynically, outmanoeuvre opponents using the psychology of the game. Some questioned the authenticity of this type more than the others.

### Conference Summing Up

The BAMSA conference demonstrated that an academic lens provides a different and often challenging perspective on issues such as ageism, cheating and sexism. The following themes were discussed.

**Continuums rather than dichotomies:** many dualisms were discussed including online/offline; positives of the digital vs negatives; youth versus older players; social versus serious players, negative/positive stereotypes. The polarisation of categories is not helpful, and many agreed that we need to think more in terms of continuums where the extent to which something should be focused on or whether it is a good/bad thing varies according to context, level of player, culture etc. There is still more work to be done to conceptualise and theorise the complexity of shifting continuums in order to unpack further the layers of bridge practices and to avoid over-homogenising certain issues or groups

**Mindsport:** Academics use of theory serves as a useful explanation of the dynamics of the bridge community, but theory can be alienating for practitioners. It is academics' responsibility to make it more accessible. Bridge language can also be exclusionary. Bridging the two worlds of academia and practice needs awareness of how language can hinder discussion.

**Well-being:** This session explored the diverse ways that bridge can contribute to a meaningful life. Interesting questions were raised in relation to the ways that Professor Martin Seligman's PERMA framework on wellbeing might be applied to the marketing of bridge.

**Pandemic bridge:** For some, like Martin Seligman, online is the way forward, but for others they are desperate to return to face-to-face bridge. Many talked about the pandemic opening doors for bridge and being a big opportunity for forcing us to be more innovative with technology. However, there are also associated health risks with too much screen time especially for those who now work even longer hours on digital devices.

**Ageing:** Bridge offers an important social space for time-rich older people, but a question was raised regarding latent ageism. There is a tendency to talk negatively about the stereotype of bridge being a game for older people. Instead, perhaps the appeal of the game to older people could be embraced more positively rather than framed as a negative that must be addressed. By over-focusing on the need for youth players, there is a risk of devaluing the older people who play and love bridge. Furthermore, there may be a need to ensure that intergenerational encounters at the bridge table are always welcoming and positive for both older and younger people.

**Digital learning:** offers different approaches to teaching with online communities of practice. There were interesting discussions in relation to who the teaching presence in schools should be?

**Cheating:** several years ago, players led the way with tackling cheating and now bridge organisations have caught up. IBOs and NBOs are taking responsibility with new policies and procedures developed.

**Sexism:** There is a tendency for bridge organisations to turn a blind eye, leaving issues for individuals to address rather than see the problem as an institutional issue. There is a need to address structural inequality and to avoid individualising sexism as a personal trouble. Gender inequalities should be reframed as a public issue which requires a collective solution. International and national bridge organisations need to take some responsibility in terms of acknowledging the problem, assessing the implications of it and exploring the most relevant solutions.

The gender panel discussed various possibilities including training for TDs, selectors and youth trainers on unconscious bias and raising awareness about gender issues. Sexism and gender inequality should be taken more seriously, and organisations could devise relevant gender policies and diversity guidelines to enable the game to be more inclusive. Otherwise it risks having an outdated image where it is out-of-touch with wider society where greater attention is paid to gender and social inclusion more broadly.

**Social Inclusion:** This conference showed in several sessions that it is important to address social inequalities so that future generations come into a more contemporary environment that is welcoming and safe for all players.

**Missing players:** It is not clear what has happened to those players who have not embraced computer bridge during the pandemic. It is also not clear that enough is being done not to lose them permanently from the game or how to entice them back. The invisible players are a hard-to-reach group as some do not communicate via email. We need to remember that online bridge has not been a lifeline for all during the pandemic.

**Other missing voices:** young women who drop out; young adults who leave and return (an area for more research – what entices them back?); different race and ethnic groups; LGBTQ communities. It was also suggested that we may be missing an opportunity to adapt bridge offerings to cater for the time stretched working adults.

**Future research:** The conference has inspired the possibility of using bridge as a detailed case study that demonstrates community connection and intergenerational opportunities. A cross-cultural, multi-disciplinary, collaborative funding proposal could be developed to address a societal issue like healthy ageing and social isolation using the case study of the mindsport bridge.

# BAMSA Conference Evaluation

On the final day of the conference participants were asked to complete an evaluation form to allow the BAMSA Team to assess the impact of the conference and to explore best practice for future BAMSA events.

## Survey Respondents

Of the 60 attendees who completed the survey the majority (87.9%) identified as bridge players just over half were bridge teachers, over a third were bridge organizers or policy makers and just under a quarter were academics. The respondents were mostly from Europe (65.5%) and North America (20.7%).

## Reflecting on the conference overall

Respondents were very positive about the conference overall. When asked if they agreed with the statement "Overall, I found the conference satisfying" 86% either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they agreed with the statement "The live sessions had the right amount of variety" 83% either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they agreed with the statement "The programme was sufficiently varied" 95% either agreed or strongly agreed.

When asked if they agreed with the statement "The different parts of the conference were well-integrated" 78% either agreed or strongly agreed. When asked if they agreed with the statement "The IT worked fine" 81% either agreed or strongly agreed. In the free text responses respondents also praised each of these aspects. Participants were also asked how far they agreed that the conference had met each of its aims, and for each aim the majority of respondents (at least 70%) either agreed or strongly agreed.

- A fascinating experience. I attended all of the sessions, and there was a great mix of topics.
- Perhaps a bit more focus on clubs would have been useful. It was a truly excellent thing for bridge and will have a good long-term impact.
- Simply amazing... thoroughly enjoyed it all and wish for more
- Just very well done, congratulations on the scope and range of interesting contributors.

## Conference impact

The free text responses indicated that the participants had a broadly positive view of BAMSA. Overall the conference increased respondents' knowledge in all aspects of BAMSA and many respondents will use the research in their work. The sessions on Bridging Wellbeing, Bridging Organisations and Bridging Schools were particularly relevant with approximately 70% of respondents reporting they will use this research, and around 50% agreeing the conference had given them tools and resources in these areas.

## Valuating the individual sessions

The respondents were asked if they had watched the prerecorded sessions. Some sessions were more popular than others and few had watched all the recordings for each session. However, the free text responses suggest that participants may return to view these after the conference. Overall those who had watched the pre-recordings found them useful with the pre-records and live sessions all receiving at least a 3 out of 5 rating on average (where 5 was extremely useful).

## Future research

A range of suggestions were given for future research with many focusing on attracting new players, teaching, retention and transferable skills, such as:

- Skills developed by bridge for real life
- More on transitions of people coming into bridge clubs for first time. More on social bridge players

- The Pedagogy of Bridge Teaching. A comparison of learning bridge online vs learning face to face
- The ways that bridge can support the teaching of mathematics in schools
- How to support policy for Governments and marketing ideas and success to grow the number of new players. New youth players

General comments about BAMSA were positive, including:

- Valuable research, across disciplines with collaborative approaches, that identifies the positive benefits and impacts of Bridge to individuals, groups and society worldwide.
- Good functioning project, strong academic team. Deliver on promises.
- A driving force behind bridge gaining recognition as a mindsport, both by individuals and policymakers
- Working hard to promote and sustain bridge in changing environments
- Opening my eyes to much more about bridge
- Worthwhile and thought provoking
- Well presented, enterprising, informative.

**BAMSA Project Lead: Professor Samantha Punch**

Email: [bamsa@stir.ac.uk](mailto:bamsa@stir.ac.uk)

