

# Guidelines for “ *Advocatus diaboli* ” <sup>1</sup>

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## Introduction

This document aims to provide some basic information on the tasks an "*advocatus diaboli*" should ensure during a conference session. If the "*advocatus diaboli*" is also the chairperson, he/she should read the companion document describing the tasks of a session chairperson. However, as much as possible, it is recommended to have two persons, one for each position.

The objective of an "*advocatus diaboli*" consists in triggering the discussion after a presentation or after a session. Experience shows that this function often is minor simply because discussion usually kicks off without delays. If not, this person should be prepared to put forward some relevant comments or questions. However, the idea is not to dominate the discussion but raise stimulating questions, eventually a little provocative, within the scope of the presentation(s).

## Before the session

### Reading the papers

The "*advocatus diaboli*" should read the papers of the conference session where he/she is assigned that function. This will help him/her to get familiarity with the topic and with the content of the presentations, identify interesting comments or questions that can be used if discussion does not go on naturally.

## During the session

### During the presentations

During each presentation, the "*advocatus diaboli*" should look carefully at information which is given during the presentation but which was not written in the paper to eventually alter/complement the comments or questions previously prepared. This occurs frequently, as new results have been obtained by the authors between the time they wrote the paper for the conference proceedings and the time of the presentation. It could be useful for the "*advocatus diaboli*" to have a copy of the PowerPoint files used for the presentations.

(1) Published in "Sewer networks and processes within urban water systems" (Bertrand-Krajewski et al., editors).  
London (UK): IWA Publishing, WEMS - Water and Environmental Management Series, November 2004, 160-161.  
ISBN 1 84339 506 1.

## **During the discussion**

During the discussion, the "*advocatus diaboli*" should wait to see if questions arise and, if not, start the discussion. Other questions can be put forward, participating as any other participant in the discussion within time limits.

The "*advocatus diaboli*" should ask questions or give comments which should help the speaker and/or the audience :

- to clarify and explain any point that remains unclear after the presentation
- to extract as much information as possible from the facts, experience, results, etc. given by the author/speaker, and to question their validity, representativity, reproducibility, transferability, etc.
- to point some critical hypotheses, assumptions, theories or viewpoints, and protocols used by the author/speaker that may significantly affect scientific work and scientific conclusions. This is particularly important as, frequently, options or choices are not seriously discussed in conferences. Many ad-hoc options, choices, etc. are made without being rigorously discussed. In other words, the objective is to deepen the scientific methodology, and to make clear how scientific work and thinking is made. It may eventually refer to epistemology. This is particularly valuable for modelling.
- to refer to existing or previous work on the same topics, especially if different conclusions or approaches are/have been used. Reference to other national and international research is frequently a weak point, for many (but bad...) reasons : too many papers, conferences and journals, too much grey literature, not enough time, etc. This is consequently important that the "*advocatus diaboli*" contributes to a fruitful literature and cross-reference process.

## **After the session**

### **Contribution to the session report**

It might be appropriate that the "*advocatus diaboli*" contributes to review the session report prepared by the rapporteur.