

Grand Tribunal - Ethos

This document provides you with a flavour of the spirit of Grand Tribunal UK. It's split into two types of ethos; policies and guidelines.

Policies

Policies are formal decisions by the organisers which must be observed by all attendees, all contributors to this wiki/website and all members of the mailing list. Minor infringers can expect a quiet word from the organisers. Persistent or extreme violation of a policy could lead to your removal. If you think that a policy needs changing, discuss it on the mailing list or contact an organiser. If you wish to complain about a breach of policy, please contact an organiser.

Each policy has a separate section below.

- Disability and equality policy
- Harassment policy

Guidelines

Guidelines are good ideas, ethical principles, which shape how we run the event. They express our values, they set goals we should aim for, but there may occasionally be exceptions.

Guidelines should be listed below in full, although anything more than 500 words long can go on a separate page. They're open for editing by all attendees and mailing list members, although if you're going to radically change the meaning of a guideline then it would be a good idea to discuss it on the mailing list first.

Economic inclusivity

You might call this "value for money" but it's about more than that.

Pencil-and-paper roleplaying games offer an inexpensive hobby which can be enjoyed by everyone regardless of income. Beyond a pencil, a rubber and some paper, the Ars Magica core rulebook is really the only essential purchase that is required to provide many years of gaming enjoyment for a troupe of half a dozen or so players. You can spend more and we strongly believe that the additional Ars Magica sourcebooks offer superb extensions to gameplay at excellent prices (and Lord knows it's helpful to have more than one core rulebook lying around). However, the point is:

- **You can spend as much or as little as you like**
- **You will never feel excluded**
- **You will always get value for money**

We feel this ethos should extend to our convention too. That's why:

- **The ticket price should be affordable to those on low incomes**, including those on state benefits or minimum wage. The basic ticket price should be just enough such that a minimum number of ticket sales will just cover the costs of hiring the venue.
- **There will be no additional costs for participating in any games** and no prerequisites for purchasing anything in order to play a game, beyond a pencil, paper and dice. For example, players must not be expected to buy a specific rulebook. Story Guides are encouraged to run games using supplementary Ars Magica books, but they will be expected to bring those books with them and share them with their players.

- **Attendees will never be pressured into paying more.** No shaking of donation tins. No guilt trips if you help yourself to a tea bag out of the communal box. You will not be *asked* to donate. Unofficial extras inside the venue, such as tea and coffee, or spare stationery, are paid for out of the extra money left over from ticket sales once the venue and other basic expenses have been paid for, or from entirely voluntary donations. If you want to make a donation, thank-you, please seek out an [organiser](#) - you will not be *asked* to donate. If we've already sold enough tickets to cover these nice-to-haves, your offer of a donation will be politely and gratefully refused.

Fringe events, outside the venue, such as the teashop meet & greet, restaurant, pub, take-aways and café breakfast are entirely optional. You won't miss out on any gaming by not attending those. You can attend them and just order tap water and a bread roll if you like.

- **Attendees should be allowed to bring their own food, drink and stationery.** They should never be locked-in to purchasing from one "preferred", "exclusive" or "contracted" vendor.
- **We will not tie you to specific accommodation, transport, caterers or vendors.** If you want to pay for three nights at the Queen's Hotel, that's up to you (it is *really* nice, and we also have lots of other recommendations). If you want to ask on the mailing list if you can kip on a local attendee's sofa, that's fine too. The main venue should be located in a town with a good range of accommodation and good public transport links.
- **Nobody is stopping you from spending more if you want to,** and if you do decide to spend more, you should still feel that you're getting your money's worth. You will not be judged on how much or how little you spend. If you're loaded and want to donate towards refreshments, or buy a round of drinks or snacks for everyone - thank you! If you've saved up all year to treat yourself to a blow-out, great! (Cheltenham makes a good base for a Cotswold holiday, by the way.) If you can barely afford the ticket and have to hitch-hike and sleep on a sofa, no problem, we are grateful that you made the effort.
- **We're not anti-commercial, we're just pro-inclusive.** We want to support the games industry, especially small businesses. For example, if you sell dice, miniatures or roleplaying rulebooks, we could arrange for you to set up a stall. Contact the organisers if you're interested. Money raised will go towards venue hire, expenses and nice-to-haves such as refreshments. Sponsorship is also possible, but we will never sign any exclusivity deals.

Respect for our hosts

Our venue is owned by Gas Green Baptist Church, which is a member of the Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB). We ask that attendees respect our hosts and do not engage in any behaviour that would bring our hosts into disrepute. Not only do we like and respect them, we want them to welcome us back for future events.

In addition to the fact that our venue is not licensed for alcohol, Baptist churches often do not permit alcohol on their property (according to BUGB). So please do not bring alcohol to the venue.

Grand Tribunal UK is not a religious event and does not promote any religion. We just happen to be using a Baptist venue, and they happen to be really nice people. Attendees of all faiths and no faith are welcomed at the church, which is just around the corner on Russell Street.

Disability and equality policy

Dogs and pets

We allow assistance dogs that have official assistance dog paperwork that proves that they have been trained for that purpose; for example, Guide Dogs for blind people. No other pets are permitted. Please ensure your guide dog is wearing its official harness, or bring your paperwork with you, or provide the paperwork in advance to the organisers. Note that there may be young children at the event and people who have been attacked by dogs in the past.

Equality of access

Our main venue including all the rooms used for scheduled games, toilets and kitchen (refreshments) are accessible to wheelchairs. These rooms are all on the ground floor, level access throughout inside with 1 shallow step from the pavement. Doors are all wide enough for wheelchairs. There is a toilet for the disabled with all the usual handrails etc.

If you have a carer or other personal assistant to help with disability issues, then that assistant does not need a ticket unless they want to reserve their own place to play in a game. Without a ticket, your assistant is welcome to play in games which have spare places unoccupied by ticket-holders, but you'll need to wait until just before the game starts to be sure.

The two larger gaming halls can be a little echoey, especially the sports hall. If you have significant hearing difficulties, please contact an organiser or talk to your preferred games' scheduled story guides and we will do our best to ensure your games take place in the lounge, where the smaller room size and soft furnishings reduce echo.

There are upstairs rooms (no lift) which some freeform players sometimes use as changing rooms. We did once use an upstairs room as a "Mage's Tower" in the freeform, but if there are players with mobility issues then we will solve this problem by simply declaring the upper floor out of bounds.

As of 2013 all fringe events (i.e. optional Friday evening events) are held in wheelchair-accessible venues.

We can make other provisions: if you require a BSL signer for example, or have other special needs please contact the organisers. The more we know about your needs in advance, the more we can do to meet them.

We also have a designated Quiet Room, where conversation is discouraged and no games are taking place, where you can retreat and just mellow out for a while, read a book, or relax on your own.

We will provide a car and driver (typically Andrew Oakley) to take anyone with mobility issues to and from Cheltenham's main public transports hubs, including the train station and the bus station. Please contact an organiser or more specifically email Andrew: andrew@aoakley.com

Equality of opportunity

Grand Tribunal UK is open to everyone regardless of gender, race, sexuality, religion, disability, nationality, eye colour or any other characteristic, with the exception of age. The minimum age to attend is 16. There is little mature content to the games beyond that which you would expect from a bawdy medieval tavern ballad; think PG with occasional 15 certificate.

Players are welcome to play characters which are the same as or different from their actual personal characteristics, although most games will have pre-generated characters which fit the specific history of Ars Magica's Mythic Europe environment. Whilst Ars Magica does pride itself on historical research and folklore, most storyguides adapt medieval culture to be welcoming to a far wider range of characteristics than would be historically accurate. It is a game focussing on wierdo magicians, not a factual re-enactment of xenophobic medieval attitudes. That said, sometimes deliberately playing an outsider makes for a fun challenge. Talk to your storyguide.

We are able to provide a quiet room for prayer or non-religious quiet break. However this is likely to be upstairs and not accessible to wheelchairs, and likely to resemble an untidy music practice room with a few chairs. Cheltenham has a number of religious venues, including churches, mosques and a synagogue, all within walking distance of the venue. Our hosts, the Baptist church around the corner, would love to see you.

Racist, sexist, homophobic and other kinds of prejudicial, offensive or otherwise annoying behaviour are forbidden as per our Harassment policy.

We do, however, reserve the right to make jokes about the spending power of the Norwegian krone.

Harassment policy

We have **never** had any reported incidents of harassment, but we include this policy for everyone's peace of mind.

Harassment, be it racial, sexual, disability based, inappropriate touching, aggressive behaviour or anything that causes others discomfort to others - simple bullying and unwelcome chat-up lines are definitely included - are not part of Grand Tribunal, and they won't be.

If a delegate makes you uncomfortable in any way then let them know (if possible to do so) why and how. Usually if you explain the problem the person concerned will apologize, be mildly embarrassed and stop doing whatever the annoyance is. It can end there, and hopefully all will be well.

If you feel you cannot address the issue this way, you need to tell someone, and that someone is usually [CJ](#). Now if [CJ](#) is the one causing you the problem, then go straight to another organiser or another long-established participant such as Neil Taylor or Sheila Thomas. *These policies apply as much to the organisers as other attendees.* We can then have a quiet word with the person, and if need be ask them to moderate their behaviour or leave. We've never needed door security, but we have the mobile phone numbers of friends who are licensed doormen should we need to remove someone by force.

Any person who harasses another will not be welcome at future UK Grand Tribunals, and while words said in jest or playful messing about can be taken the wrong way, we all want to enjoy a friendly, happy and fun convention. We don't think we need this policy - since we started in 2007 it has never once been a problem - and I hope we never need to use it, but just to make absolutely clear - we are adults, and we expect decent, civilized behaviour.

We can **not** imagine this will ever be needed; but we want to do all we can to make everyone feel safe and secure and have an amazing time. If you have any suggestions or improvements feel free to respond to the [mailing list](#), or email CJ off list at: chrisjensenromer@hotmail.com