

INTERNATIONAL GEOGRAPHICAL UNION

GUIDELINES FOR COMMISSIONS AND STUDY GROUPS

1 Confirmation of the Objectives, Program and Membership

The commissions and study groups are established on the basis of their objectives and the programs formulated in the proposals. Adherence to these programs is expected but a certain degree of flexibility is possible. In the first instance, a program should be discussed with the full members of the commission and the final revised statement of objectives should be submitted to the Secretary-General as soon as possible, but not later than three months after the Congress. This statement of objectives, together with the final list of members, will be published in the IGU Bulletin.

A provisional list of *full members* should be included in the proposal. It is possible that some changes will be made after the commission or study group has been approved. In compiling the final list, the chairperson should keep in mind that only one person per country is acceptable and a person can only serve on one commission. Members of the IGU Executive are not eligible for regular positions within commissions or study groups.

These restrictions do not apply to *corresponding members*, whose number is unlimited. In the past, some commission chairpersons have preferred to limit the number of corresponding members and, in addition, circulate the newsletters among interested institutions and individuals who are not classed in the category of corresponding members. The decision of how to handle this matter is left to the chairperson. In some cases additional functions were assigned to individuals connected with the commissions – advisors, experts, regional correspondents, etc. These have no standing in the IGU Statutes but are not necessarily discouraged.

At an IGU Congress, the commission can recognise the contributions of members who have served on previous commissions by appointing non-voting *honorary members* for the term of the Commission. The chairperson should advise the Secretary General of persons elected to honorary membership.

It is recognised that in some cases an Executive Secretary who is *not* a full member of the commission can be appointed to help the chairperson with the day-to-day administration of the commission. He/she may come from the same country as the chairperson but will not, however, be treated as a full member of the commission.

The commission can constitute itself in any way deemed appropriate and appoint a vice-chairman, a secretary, a treasurer, or persons responsible for various projects and tasks. However, the final responsibility for the activities rests with the chairperson approved by the General Assembly or, in the case of study groups, appointed by the Executive Committee.

2 Activities

Each commission and study group is free to organise its activities during the four-year term. They may include organisation of international symposia on selected topics or sessions within conferences organised by other associations. It may involve research projects carried out by correspondence or publications prepared without an actual meeting of its contributors. Some commissions in the past were involved in major educational projects including technical workshops, preparation of textbooks or study guides. Another form of activity may involve organisation of field trips, preparation of films, videos, publication of maps, atlases or systems of geographic information. Compilation of bibliographies or making comparative statements on the state of the art within the chosen discipline has also been done in the past. Where practical, activities of commissions should be promoted through an independent website reciprocally linked to the IGU website.

The chairpersons are reminded that the activities of a commission or study group should be spread over a period of four years and not concentrated in the last year or two. It is hardly a satisfactory performance if the commission limits itself to organising a session during the Congress. On the other hand, we do expect that the commissions and study groups will take an active part in the regional conferences and the International Geographical Congresses sponsored by the Union. This participation can take the form of either specialised symposia or sessions during the main event.

3 Publications

The International Geographical Union publishes the IGU Bulletin once or twice a year and this serial is distributed free of charge to all member countries, as well as to members of the Executive and chairs of the commissions and study groups. In addition, the Secretariat may publish a Handbook, circular letters, a catalogue of publications or calendars of future events, but no other central publications are foreseen at this stage. However, our publication program is quite extensive thanks to the initiative of the Congress and Regional Conference organisers who are responsible for their proceedings and thanks to the chairpersons of various commissions and study groups who sponsor their own publications.

There is no attempt at this stage to limit the flexibility and variety of publication programs which include commercially published books, atlases, volumes of proceedings, special issues of periodicals, brochures, etc. However, it is important to distinguish between publications sponsored by the IGU bodies and those offered by individuals associated with commissions and study groups.

We suggest that the former, i.e., publications resulting from the work undertaken under the sponsorship of the IGU, and approved by the commission be clearly identified as such. The name of the International Geographical Union should be prominently displayed, either on the cover or the title page, or at least clearly stated in the preface or introduction to the volume. In case the IGU subsidy was used for the publication, the UNESCO sponsorship should be acknowledged, since our funds are partly received from this international body. The Union is interested in keeping track of all publications resulting from our work and we would appreciate it if you notified the Secretariat about their appearance. They should be listed in the interim and final reports each commission is expected to produce.

From time to time the Union publishes a Catalogue of Publications. This is not meant to be an exhaustive bibliography but rather a catalogue of items which can be purchased or requested by individuals, bookstores and libraries. The catalogue is to be used as an instrument which could help diffuse our publications better. In compiling the catalogue, the Secretary-General relies on the reports of the commission chairpersons but a certain degree of uniformity and editing is necessary. In submitting items to the catalogue, please keep in mind that only such items as are still available on the market, even if in small quantities, should be listed. Articles in periodicals, unless republished as separate brochures, should not be included, nor should you list items no longer available. If a publication is available directly from the sponsoring agency, a university or institution, please give us their address so that we may direct potential customers to the supplier.

4 Finances

The International Geographical Union has its budget approved by the General Assembly and a certain amount of money is set aside to assist the commissions and study groups in realising their objectives. The overall amount of money devoted to this purpose varies and the funds available to each commission will also depend on their number. It is also worth remembering that funds will be made available gradually over a period of four years and will depend to a certain degree on the revenue of the Union. If individual countries are slow in paying their contribution, our financial situation is obviously adversely affected.

Each commission and study group is free to decide how the money is to be spent, whether on commission meetings, delegate travel to such meetings, commission publications, or research subsidies.

The request should be made by the Chairperson to the Secretary General, indicating the purpose of the request and advising to whom the cheque or money order should be sent. Our auditor insists that formal requisition forms be used and the appropriate form is enclosed with this document. Please use only these forms if you wish to request funding. When the funds are transferred, please remember to return the receipt. Without them, no further payments will be made.

Each chairperson will be expected to present a financial report at least twice during the term in which the disbursements of the IGU funds is clearly indicated. We do not request that the actual receipts be submitted but it is advisable to keep them in case of the need to check these reports. If any funds are left over at the end of the term, they should either be transferred to the successor commissions or returned to the IGU treasurer. They cannot be kept as discretionary funds of former chairpersons.

The financial year of commissions is the calendar year ending 31 December. The finances of commissions are managed by the chairperson or an officer approved and elected by commissions at the Congress of the IGU. Accounts are held at a recognised financial institution approved by the commission. For expenditure of more than \$200US the chairperson notifies the commission in advance.

An annual financial statement is produced as soon as practical after the end of the financial year, and this is submitted by the chairperson to the IGU Executive by 31 January. The financial statement will show the opening and closing balances of the accounts, along with a bank reconciliation statement showing an itemised list all income and expenditure.

5 Reporting

Each commission/study group will have an IGU vice-president assigned to it as a liaison member of the Executive. Contacts with this vice-president are encouraged as he/she will be expected to report to the Executive Committee on the level of activities.

The International Geographical Union is expected to produce annual reports, to be submitted to UNESCO councils of which we are members. These reports, as well as the final quadrennial report, have to depend on the appropriate reporting system within the Union.

Each chairperson will be expected to submit a brief report once a year at the end of each calendar year but not later than January 31. This interim report should contain a brief statement on events sponsored by the commission or study group, its publications and major accomplishments. Please distinguish clearly between the conferences organised by your commission or study group, and those in which you only participated. Likewise, do not submit publications of individual members but only those sponsored by your commission or study group. Reports should be brief but it is important that they be submitted on time. The final report covering all four years will be needed towards the end of the term.

Other forms of reporting may include newsletters published by individual study groups circulated among their corresponding members and other interested persons, reports or newsletters published in friendly journals, and interim reports submitted to the Secretary-General for publication in the IGU Bulletin. These may cover either individual events or projects and will be published without editorial changes throughout the term.

6 Archives

The International Geographical Union maintains archives at the Villa Celimontana at the Home of Geography in Rome. All chairpersons are advised to either transfer their files at the end of each term to the Home of Geography or at least send them a letter indicating where the files have been deposited. The latter applies if a commission decides to deposit old files with the university or a local archive. However, we would like to have a central register of archival material for future historians of science to be able to draw on. The same applies to publications issued by each commission and study group. The Secretary-General appreciates receiving a copy but it would be advisable to send another copy to the Home of Geography to be included in their collection.

The archives are professionally managed and open to any bona fide scholar who would like to consult them. Archival material should be sent to: The Executive Secretary, Home of Geography, Palazzetto Mattei, via della Navicella 12, 00184 Rome, Italy. (Tel./Fax.: +39 06 77591183)

7 Future of the Commissions

All commissions are appointed by the General Assembly for four years and their terms expire at the time of the General Assembly. There is a possibility of re-appointing them but this will depend on the program of work submitted earlier for consideration of the Executive Committee and the General Assembly. The proposal should contain justification why the IGU should be involved in this activity, the objectives and program of work of the future commission, as well as the proposed membership. In the case of the existing unit requesting re-establishment, it is worth remembering that the maximum term of service for a member in any capacity shall be twelve years. In addition, a member cannot serve as chairperson for more than two terms. A considerable rotation of membership is recommended in every four year term. In inviting your members, please remember that we should try and have representation for various parts of the world, different generations of scholars, an appropriate proportion of women, etc. However, since the membership in the commission or study group is recognition of professional accomplishments, the quality criterion should be kept in mind first and foremost.

In making decisions about approving the proposals or otherwise, the Executive Committee has to consider several factors including the need to keep the overall number of commissions within reasonable limits and the need to allow new initiatives to be shown. This may affect extending the life of existing commissions.

8 Study Groups

According to our statutes, study groups are appointed by the IGU Executive Committee for one term only and thereafter they can either be upgraded into commissions or terminated. Otherwise, all recommendations outlined above regarding commissions apply to study groups as well.

9 Final Remarks

This set of guidelines was developed as a help to the chairpersons to conduct their business. They may be particularly useful to those who are not familiar with the way the International Geographical Union operates. However, there is also a need to standardise procedures to satisfy both our financial sponsors and our auditors.

Several countries, as well as the UNESCO councils, ask us about the reports, procedures and financial statements before the funds are released. Our finances are also audited on an annual basis by a professional auditing company and we have been advised to tighten our procedures if we wish to have their endorsement.

Cumulatively large amounts of public monies are involved and it is important that both the funds available to the Union and the voluntary work of our colleagues be used as efficiently as possible.

Commission on Geographical Education
March, 2007