

Handbook for the GBIF Science Committee

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Introduction

This document describes the duties and responsibilities of the GBIF Science Committee members. It is intended that the guidelines and information in this document should assist the Science Committee members, especially the Chair in fulfilling his/her obligations and at the same time help to ensure a more effective, efficient, and timely administration of all aspects of the GBIF scientific activities.

Further recommended reading

This document should be read in association with the [GBIF Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#), [Rules of Procedure \(RoP\)](#) and the [Terms of Reference for the GBIF Science Committee \(SC ToR\)](#).

Role of the committee

The Science Committee is an advisory committee that will oversee the development and progress of the GBIF Work Programme and make recommendations to the Governing Board, the Executive Committee and the Secretariat (RoP 7.3.1).

All members have the responsibility to act at all times in the interest of GBIF and not represent their national interest in the committee.

The Science Committee will strive to work by consensus in drafting its advice and recommendations (SC ToR 3.3)

The main responsibilities of the Science Committee are highlighted in the Science Committee Terms of Reference:

Work Programme

- In accordance with GBIF's objectives and priorities, provide high-level advice and guidance to the Secretariat regarding the development of the GBIF Work Programme (SC ToR 1.1).
- Make recommendations to the Governing Board regarding the Work Programme (SC ToR 1.2).
- Assist in reviewing progress towards planned outcomes of the Work Programmes and their quality - including the methods and effectiveness of consultation, marketing, technology transfer and IP management strategies - and suggest improvements (SC ToR 1.3).
- Provide advice on the needs of GBIF stakeholders and how the Work Programme can be better aligned with stakeholders (SC ToR 1.5).

Strategic directions

- Contribute to the setting of longer-term strategic directions and the making of strategic investment decisions by the Governing Board, including advice on the balance of effort between GBIF's various scientific goals and activities (SC ToR 1.4).

Analysis of synergies

- Provide analysis of what can be achieved by promoting coordination and cooperation with existing national and global initiatives, and priorities for synergistic GBIF investment (SC ToR 1.6).

Promotion of GBIF

- Promote GBIF in various fora (SC ToR 1.7).

Task Groups

- If necessary, propose that the Executive Secretary establish *ad hoc* groups for specific time-limited tasks (SC ToR 1.8).

Scientific meetings/symposia

- In collaboration with the Secretariat, organise the GBIF Science Symposium (SC ToR 1.9)
- Organise science-planning meetings (SC ToR 1.10).

Awards

- Provide advice to the Governing Board and the Executive Committee regarding the procedures and requirements for the Ebbe Nielsen Prize and the Young Researchers Awards, review nominations for the ENP and the YRAs, and select the annual winners (SC ToR 1.11). Reference to ENP needs to be changed at some point to reflect current situation.

Special for the Chair

- The Chair will dispatch a draft agenda with documents for the meeting of the Science Committee no later than one week before an agreed meeting date (SC ToR 3.2). The Secretariat will assist in developing the agenda and documents and making them available in electronic format to the committee.
- The Chair will provide a report on the committee's activities and recommendations at each Governing Board meeting. The Chair may also send additional reports to the Governing Board when appropriate (SC ToR 3.5).

Members

The composition of the Science Committee is:

- 1 Chair (elected)
- 3 Vice-chairs (elected)
- Up to 5 appointed (at-large) members
- 5 ex-officio members (Chair and 3 Vice-chairs of the Governing Board and the Executive Secretary)

Chair

The Science Committee Chair will be elected by simple majority for a two-year term. The chair has to be elected among Voting Participants (RoP 7.4.1.). The Chair may be elected for only two consecutive terms in the same position (RoP, 7.4.5.).

Vice-chairs

The three Science Committee Vice-chairs are elected by simple majority for a two-year term. The 1st Vice-chair has to be elected among Voting Participants (RoP 7.4.1). The 2nd and 3rd Vice-chairs may be from Voting or Associate Participants (RoP 7.4.2). The three Vice-chairs may be elected for only two consecutive terms in the same position (RoP, 7.4.5.).

Appointed members (at-large)

The up to 5 appointed (at-large) members of the Science Committee are appointed by the Executive Committee who will seek suggestions from the Governing Board, GBIF committees, and the Secretariat (SC ToR 2.3). The at-large members will be chosen for their capacity to contribute to the overall scientific direction of GBIF (SC ToR 2.4).

Ex-officio members

The Chair and three Vice-chairs of the Governing Board and the Executive Secretary are ex-officio members of the Science Committee (SC ToR 2.5).

Meetings

Face-to-face meetings

The Science Committee will normally meet at least twice a year, with one meeting held back-to-back with the annual Governing Board meeting and one or two held intersessionally (SC ToR 3.1.1).

Teleconferences

The Science Committee may have meetings via electronic means (SC ToR 3.1.2).

It is recommended that the Science Committee meetings and teleconferences are coordinated to precede the meeting of the Executive Committee by approx. a week as the Science Committee Chair can then report to the Executive Committee.

Meeting quorum

A quorum for a Science Committee meeting is defined as at least two of the four elected officers (Chair and Vice-chairs). If a quorum is not present, the committee may provide recommendations but will have to indicate which committee members are providing the advice (SC ToR 2.6).

Meeting planning

The GBIF Secretariat will provide administrative support in connection with meetings of the Science Committee. This includes helping with drafting and sending out agenda and documents, setting up meeting room, minute-taking, etc. See separate document 'GBIF Secretariat administrative support to committees' for more information.

The agenda and supporting documents should be sent out to the committee no later than one week before the agreed date of a Science Committee meeting (SC ToR 3.2).

The Secretariat will keep a record of each meeting of the Science Committee and will circulate the record to the committee members shortly after the meeting (SC ToR 3.4).

The Secretariat has created a secure web repository where the meeting agendas and supporting documents for each committee meeting can be found. Only current members of the committee will have access to the documents.

The Science Committee documents can be accessed from http://directory.gbif.org/documents/science_committee/ (password protected).

Funding

The Chair, Vice-chairs and members of the GBIF Budget Committee are not paid positions.

Attending meetings in conjunction with the Governing Board meetings

Whenever Science Committee meetings and related activities (e.g. Science Symposium, Ebbe Nielsen Challenge award, etc.) are held in conjunction with the annual Governing Board meeting, the travel, hotel and per diem costs are normally to be paid by the Participant from which the *elected* committee member comes. Committee members from Voting Participant developing countries (i.e. countries that qualify for the developing country discount under the Financial Model) may apply for partial travel support to attend the relevant Committee meeting and Governing Board, so long as the Participant is in good standing. Approval of such support will be at the discretion of the Secretariat based on the availability of funds.

If it is deemed necessary for *at-large* members to attend such committee meetings, the Secretariat will cover the costs for those *at-large* members (SC ToR 3.6.1).

Attending intersessional meetings

Whenever Science Committee meetings are held intersessionally, the committee members' costs for participating in these meetings will be covered by the Secretariat.

It is recommended that the Science Committee meetings and teleconferences are coordinated to precede the meeting of the Executive Committee by approx. a week as the Science Committee Chair can then report to the Executive Committee.

The [GBIF Travel Guidelines](#) offer more information about travel approval and travel reimbursement.

Annex 1 - Current composition of the Science Committee

Composition of the [Science Committee](#) as of 18 June 2025.

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Chair | Birgit Gemeinholzer, Germany |
| 1 st Vice-chair | Melodie McGeoch, Australia |
| 2 nd Vice-chair | <i>Vacant</i> |
| 3 rd Vice-chair | Soledad Ceccarelli, Argentina |
| Ex-officio | Liam Lysaght, Ireland (Governing Board Chair) Sharon D. Grant, United States (Governing Board 1 st Vice-chair) André Heughebaert, Belgium (Governing Board 2 nd Vice-chair) Christoph Häuser, Germany (Governing Board 3 rd Vice-chair) Joe Miller, United States (Executive Secretary) |

Annex 2 - List of Science Committee Chairs and Vice-chairs over time

List of GBIF Science Committee Chairs

- Birgit Gemeinholzer, Germany (2022-
- Thomas Orrell, United States (2017-2022)
- Rod Page, United Kingdom (2013-2017)
- Leonard Krishtalka, USA (2009-2013)
- Erick Mata, Costa Rica (2007-2009)
- Wouter Los, Netherlands (2003-2007)
- John Curran, Australia (2001-2003)

List of GBIF Science Committee 1st Vice-chairs

- Melodie McGeoch, Australia (2021-
- Greg Riccardi, United States (2016-2021)
- Mark Costello, New Zealand (2012-2016)
- Mark Graham, Canada (2008-2012)
- Ian Cresswell, Australia (2004-2006)
- Jorge Soberon, Mexico (2003-2007)
- Wouter Los, Netherlands (2001-2003)

List of GBIF Science Committee 2nd Vice-chairs

- *Vacant* (2024-
- Enrique Marinez Meyer, Mexico (2019-2024)
- Anders G. Finstad, Norway (2015-2019)
- Arturo Ariño, Spain (2011-2015)
- Tanya Abrahamse, South Africa (2009-2011)
- Daphne Fautin, United States (2005-2009)
- Esteban Manrique Reol, Spain (2001-2003)

List of GBIF Science Committee 3rd Vice-chairs

- Soledad Ceccarelli, Argentina (2024-

- Philippe Grandcolas, France (2022-2024)
- Birgit Gemeinholzer, Germany (2019-2022)
- Philippe Grandcolas, France (2015-2019)
- Jean Ganglo, Benin (2011-2015)