

### 16.1.3 Guidelines for Advice Drafting Groups

#### Membership

The Chair of an Advice Drafting Group (ADG) must be a member or an alternate member of ACOM, designated by the ACOM leadership to reflect the wishes of ACOM. The Chair will be encouraged to take this role for three years, with ADG-related travel and per diem at ICES expense.

Members of an ADG are national representatives nominated by ACOM members. There should be no more than one nominee per ICES Member Country (trainees are a potential exception; see below).

Up to three of the ADG members shall be appointed by countries designated by the ACOM leadership. Although the quantity of advice produced can vary, each ADG should have a minimum of three national members. This is in addition to the ADG Chair, the Chair(s) from relevant expert group(s) (EGs), and often members of the ACOM leadership. ADG-related travel and per diem will be at ICES expense.

To maintain an effective link between the ADG, the reviewers, and the EG(s), the ADG should include either the Chair or another designated member from each relevant EG. Such members will provide expert input to the ADG and relay feedback to and from their EG. Where applicable, as agreed with the ACOM leadership, the reviewers' Chair or representative may also be invited to present the results of their work. ADG-related travel and per diem will be at ICES expense.

The Chair of an ADG can invite additional experts to assist in the work of the group. This invitation must be made in agreement with the ACOM leadership, with ICES covering ADG-related costs.

All ADG members are expected to participate in an objective and unbiased manner, regardless of how they have been nominated. All members will be asked to read and adhere to the ICES Code of Conduct, and to declare any potential personal conflicts of interest. Members should alert the Chair of any unforeseen conflicts of interest arising during the meeting.

The allocation by the ACOM leadership of an ADG role to a specific country is based on a fair and equitable process that ensures the independence of ADG members. Nominees from countries appointed to represent ACOM in the ADG should have experience in translating science into advice, but need neither be members nor alternate members of ACOM.

In nominating members to the ADG, the following key features will be observed by national ACOM members.

1. The avoidance of undue influence beyond science and facts.
2. Nominees with no direct connections to relevant ICES expert groups will be preferred.
3. There will be balanced representation from across ACOM.

The ADG Chair, upon request and in consultation with ACOM leadership, may accept a second nominee from an ICES Member Country to act as an observer for training purposes. This will be at national expense.

The ADG will be supported by a professional secretary from the ICES Secretariat to ensure consistency in advice drafting over time, as well as in the coverage of various regions and topics.

In summary, the ADG should or could consist of:

- a Chair (who is a member or alternate member of ACOM);
- a minimum of three ACOM-nominated representatives and additional national ACOM nominations;
- invited trainees (at national expense);
- a representative from each relevant EG;
- a representative from the reviewers;
- a member of the ACOM leadership;
- experts invited by the Chair; and
- observers (representatives of stakeholder groups that have received ICES observer status).

The ADG Chair should encourage active participation by all ACOM nominees by:

- actively assigning tasks and roles to ACOM nominees; and
- seeking the input of all members in a structured way (e.g. giving the lead on discussion to each member in turn).

Most ADGs are carried out through a physical meeting. In the case of ADGs carried out by correspondence the same rules apply, but with no expenses paid by ICES.

### Observers

The meeting is open to relevant stakeholders and client commissions, acting as observers. The ACOM leadership reserves the right to limit the numbers of observers if required.

Observers should not influence or lobby the scientific advice process. They may ask the Chair for speaking time at the meeting to receive clarification on certain matters or to provide factual information. The Chair may limit an observer's speaking time in cases where it is felt that a presentation exceeds the discussion's immediate scientific scope. The Chair may also ask an observer to leave a meeting if their conduct does not conform to "ICES policy on observer status" (ICES, 2013<sup>1</sup>).

Stakeholders are encouraged to offer input. Any text on stakeholder information included in the draft ICES advice is the responsibility of the ADG and must be relevant to the specific advice being given.

### Tasks of the Advice Drafting Group

The ADG will work from draft texts of the advice, prepared by EGs, the ACOM Vice-Chairs, and/or the Secretariat as appropriate and as decided by ACOM. In specific cases, the ADG will draft advice solely from reviewed EG reports.

Prior to the ADG, all members should read the relevant reports and the draft advice sheets. In the case of Special Requests, ADG members should also read the request sheet prepared between ICES and the requesting organization.

The ADG should ascertain that the advice:

- is consistent with the scientific results and, where applicable, takes into account relevant comments by the peer review;
- is consistent in interpretation, meaning that the same or similar approaches and frameworks should be used to address similar issues;
- is consistent in presentation, meaning that the same or similar language should be used to describe similar situations;
- is clear and presented in a manner that is appropriate to the client, avoiding as much as possible technical terms or jargon;
- answers the request fully; and
- considers the full range of relevant issues.

For recurrent fisheries advice the ADG should also ensure the following points are covered, i.e.

1. That the assessment on which the advice will rest:
  - a) meets the standard of quality for stock assessments,
  - b) has been audited and quality checked by the EG,
  - c) is conducted according to the specifications of the benchmark, and
  - d) is unbiased in interpretation;

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<sup>1</sup> ICES. 2013. ICES policy on observer status. Adopted by Council 24 October 2013. ICES CM 2013/Del-11.3. 4 pp. <http://www.ices.dk/community/get-involved/Pages/Observers.aspx>.

2. That unless significant issues are identified, the single-stock advice should be based on the assessment as accepted by the EG, following methods described in the stock annex;
3. That if a significant issue is identified that cannot easily be rectified, the ADG will inform ACOM as soon as possible with a suggestion for a potential course of action. This may result in advice being postponed;
4. That the provision of advice on fishing opportunities is based on the appropriate basis (management plan, MSY, or precautionary approach), agreed with the clients and consistent with the procedures outlined in "Advice basis" (ICES, 2018<sup>2</sup>).

In the case of decisions that change earlier advice drafts, the technical minutes of the ADG would include the rationale behind this choice. EG members should also be informed before the advice is approved by ACOM. Any changes to stock assessment settings or forecasts (as documented in the stock annex) should be made by the relevant stock coordinator and communicated to the EG.

### Working procedure

ADGs may meet physically or work by correspondence, as appropriate and as approved by the ACOM leadership.

Decisions of the ADGs should be by consensus, in other words by general agreement. The working procedures must ensure that the ADG is balanced, and that no individual dominates its deliberations. Procedures must be transparent to all interested parties. Technical minutes must reflect deliberations accurately. If during the ADG no consensus was reached on the advice, ACOM leadership shall be informed immediately. The minutes should reflect the different opinions, highlighting specific issues with supporting arguments. This should record both the range of opinions and the rationale used to support such differing views in a transparent manner. Advice cannot be published without consensus. If the science or advice is challenged by a minority of the ADG, the opinion of an expert reviewer can be sought. The ADG Chair must inform the ACOM if these procedures are not adhered to, and must make a recommendation for removing or correcting any actual or perceived bias in the advice. If technical issues are challenged during the ADG, they should be referred back to the EG. If these issues cannot be resolved prior to the draft advice being released to ACOM, the release of the advice may be delayed until the EG and ADG can resolve the issue.

Based on the proposed draft texts of the advice the ADG should, if relevant and necessary, clarify the text and highlight problems relevant to management. Any significant amendments to the text should be referred to the representative(s) of the EG and the reviewers (if applicable) that are participating in the ADG, to ascertain that no misinterpretation has occurred. The ADG Chair and the Secretariat should work together to ensure that the ADG works effectively in producing advice. The ADG shall adopt the final draft.

It is the right of the ACOM to change the formulation of the advice. In case of changes that might alter the content of the advice, ACOM should return the advice to the ADG to be reconsidered.

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<sup>2</sup> ICES. 2018. Advice basis. In Report of the ICES Advisory Committee, 2018. ICES Advice 2018, Book 1, Section 1.2. <https://doi.org/10.17895/ices.pub.4503>.