

Membership in the Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR)

The Scientific Committee on Oceanic Research (SCOR) was founded in 1957 and is a component of the International Council for Science (ICSU). SCOR is the primary non-governmental organization for planning, promoting, and implementing international cooperative activities in oceanography. The international aspects of large ocean science programs such as the Joint Global Ocean Flux Study (JGOFS), the project on Global Ocean Ecosystem Dynamics (GLOBEC), the World Ocean Circulation Experiment (WOCE), and the Tropical Oceans and Global Atmosphere (TOGA) study all had their origins in SCOR groups. WOCE and TOGA became incorporated into the World Climate Research Programme (WCRP), but JGOFS (now completed) and GLOBEC continued to be directed by Scientific Steering Committees of SCOR and the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP). Since 1987, SCOR has provided travel grants to scientific meetings for scientists from developing nations and nations with economies in transition. Hundreds of scientists have received full or partial travel support through this program, supported by the U.S. National Science Foundation. Several SCOR activities relate to scientific and environmental issues that are of special relevance to developing nations, such as harmful algal blooms and quantitative indicators of marine ecosystem change induced by fisheries.

Presently, scientists from 35 nations are members of SCOR, with National SCOR Committees belonging to one of five membership categories. The only difference among the membership categories is the level of dues paid, with Category I nations paying US\$2,035 in 2010 and Category V nations (Japan, Russia, and the United States) paying US\$35,365. Dues are increased 1-5% each year to keep up with inflation. A nation's membership category is roughly based on the gross domestic product of the nation, as well as a nation's level of activity in ocean sciences. Each nation determines its membership category and SCOR encourages nations to move to higher categories over time as they experience the benefits of membership. Based on such criteria, most coastal nations who are not yet members of SCOR would probably seek membership in Category I.

Benefits

Membership in SCOR benefits nations in several ways. The advantages of membership in SCOR include the opportunity to comment on proposals for scientific activities as they develop, to assist in the formulation of international scientific priorities, and to encourage the involvement of a nation's scientists in these international efforts. The most tangible benefit is the increased exposure of a nation's scientists to international ocean science activities and the increased likelihood of participation in working groups and other SCOR activities. This is particularly important for nations that are still developing their ocean science capabilities and infrastructure. SCOR officers and co-opted members of the SCOR Executive Committee are chosen from member nations. The alternating annual General Meeting and Executive Committee meetings of SCOR are held in member nations, upon invitation from national SCOR committees. In many cases, these meetings provide opportunities for host nations to present the science being conducted locally.

SCOR working groups provide another means of exposure for scientists from member nations to the worldwide oceanographic community. Nominations for working groups are sought from all national committees and SCOR makes a significant effort to include members of working groups from developing nations. The SCOR budget for these activities includes travel funds for scientists selected to participate in them, so this should not be a burden on the nation that nominates working group members. It is rare for SCOR working groups to include members from nations that do not belong to SCOR.

Member nations receive background material for all SCOR General Meetings and Executive Committee meetings and have an opportunity to provide comments in person or in writing regarding working group proposals, the composition of SCOR working groups and the scientific steering committees of major oceanographic programs, and other SCOR actions. Support for travel of a nation's Nominated Members to SCOR's annual meetings are the responsibility of the nation.

Requirements

The main requirement to apply for SCOR membership is the demonstration that some national mechanism exists, or could be created, to serve as a National Committee for SCOR. The National Committee should include representation from the various marine science disciplines and from the various types of institutions in a nation's marine science community. The National Committee should nominate up to three individual scientists to represent the nation's SCOR Committee as Nominated Members of SCOR. The national Nominated Members are responsible to serve as liaisons and channels of information between SCOR and the nation's ocean science community. National SCOR committees are responsible to ensure that dues are paid to international SCOR each year.

A formal application for membership can be presented and accepted at SCOR's annual meetings or between meetings. Requests should be sent to the SCOR Secretariat. Any request for membership should include a very brief overview of the status of oceanographic research in the applying nation, including a short description of the major institutions, scientific interests, and other relevant information.