



A divisional structure for ASM scientific affairs – a position paper

The following paper has been prepared at the request of ASM President, Professor Lyn Gilbert, as a result of the discussions held at the National Scientific Advisory Committee (NSAC) and Strategic Planning meetings held in Adelaide in February 2001.

The document was subsequently modified in response to comments made by National Council and NSAC members and several State branches. However, it has not been approved by National Council and therefore still represents the personal viewpoint of the author. It is intended as a discussion paper, not as a definitive or proscriptive document.

In preparing it I have made the following assumptions:

- that representation on National Council will remain State-based;
- that the position of Secretary will be replaced by that of Vice-President (Scientific Affairs);
- that the ASM is committed to increasing its input into national issues affecting basic and applied biological

Professor Julian I. Rood
 Department of Microbiology
 Monash University
 Melbourne, Victoria
 Tel: (03) 9905 4825
 E-mail: julian.rood@med.monash.edu.au

and medical research, including funding;

- that the ASM is committed to implementing a national approach to the formulation of the scientific programme of the Annual Scientific Meeting; and
- that the ASM is committed to the funding of smaller satellite meetings as well as the Annual Scientific Meeting.

Proposed divisional structure

The following divisional structure is loosely based upon the divisional structure of the American Society for Microbiology but takes into account the current ASM SIG structure. For structural reasons related to limiting the size of

NSAC, it is not practical to have more than four divisions. No significant change is envisaged in the role of SIGs, except that they will input into the Annual Scientific Meeting via NSAC rather than Local Organising Committees (LOC) and will report on their activities to NSAC rather than National Council.

It is envisaged that many SIGs will have input into more than one division and that the divisions will represent discipline areas rather than an amalgam of SIGs. That is, it will be the responsibility of the divisional representatives on NSAC to represent disciplines not covered by an active SIG.

Note that the distribution of SIGs into the divisions is not even, because the divisions represent major research fields in microbiology rather than the current, more applied SIG structure (Table 1). For example, there is currently no medical microbiology SIG and all of virology is represented by a single SIG.

Division 1: Medical & Veterinary Microbiology

Discipline areas Clinical microbiology, diagnostic microbiology, medical mycology, public health microbiology, antimicrobial chemotherapy, veterinary microbiology.
 Current SIGs Mycobacteria, mycology, mycoplasmatales, ocular microbiology, parasitology and tropical medicine, public health microbiology, serology, veterinary microbiology, women's and children's microbiology.

Division 2: Virology

Discipline areas Medical virology, molecular virology, biology of human, animal and plant viruses, viral vaccines.
 Current SIGs Virology.

Division 3: General, Applied and Environmental Microbiology

Discipline areas General microbiology, microbial systematics, microbiology education, microbial ecology, environmental microbiology, food microbiology, industrial microbiology, eukaryotic microorganisms.
 Current SIGs Water microbiology, computers, cosmetics and pharmaceuticals, culture collections, culture media, education, food microbiology, laboratory management, microbial ecology, probiotic and gut microbiology, students, rapid methods.

Division 4: Bacterial Genetics, Physiology and Pathogenesis

Discipline areas Microbial genetics, molecular biology, bacteriophages, biotechnology, microbial physiology, bacterial pathogenesis, bacterial host-pathogen interactions, bacterial vaccines.
 Current SIGs Molecular microbiology, microbial physiology.



Structure of NSAC

Chair

- Vice-President (Scientific Affairs)

Deputy Chair

- Elected annually by NSAC from within its membership

Members

- Convenor (visiting speakers) *ex-officio*
- Deputy convenor (visiting speakers) *ex-officio*
- ASM President *ex-officio*
- Division 1 representatives (3)
- Division 2 representatives (3)
- Division 3 representatives (3)
- Division 4 representatives (3)

Divisional representatives would be appointed for a 3 year term of office, starting at the end of the Annual Scientific Meeting. New members would be nominated by NSAC to National Council for formal ratification. The nomination process would involve advertisement in *Microbiology Australia* and consultation with relevant SIGs but note that SIGs would not be directly represented. However, chairs or past-chairs of SIGs would clearly be potentially excellent candidates. It is envisaged that the divisional representatives would be researchers and scientists with enthusiasm, good organisational skills, and a broad knowledge and an excellent or developing reputation in the divisional field.

Representation of NSAC on National Council

Both the Chair and Deputy Chair would be members of National Council.

Role of NSAC members in the Annual Scientific Meeting

It is envisaged that NSAC would take over the responsibility of running the symposium component of the Annual Scientific Meeting but would do so in close consultation with the LOC to ensure consistency with the overall theme of the meeting. The LOC would be responsible for the Plenary Sessions and the Proffered Paper, Workshop and Poster Sessions

whereas NSAC, through the divisional representatives, would organise the symposia.

The latter would be organised as outlined below. Each division would have approximately 10 symposium slots (90 min each) to fill, with guaranteed funding from registrations for two international speakers per division. The role of the divisional representatives would vary according to their length of service on NSAC as follows:

Year 1: Provide general advice on divisional symposia.

Year 2: Act as Deputy Divisional Chair, assist the Chair to organise symposia.

Year 3: Act as Divisional Chair, directly responsible for the organisation of the divisional symposia, for ensuring that the relevant SIGs and LOC are consulted in the preparation of these symposia and for ensuring that the symposia cover the breadth of the divisional interests.

For example, a Division 2 representative appointed to NSAC after the 2004 meeting would generally assist in the 2005 meeting, would be Deputy Chair in 2006 and would organise the Virology symposia for the 2007 meeting, irrespective of where that meeting was located. Therefore, the representative would have 3 years in which to prepare for the major task of preparing for the latter meeting.

This system would provide continuity for NSAC and for the scientific programme and would remove the current dependence upon the breadth of the local research base which has, at times, been a problem in some of the smaller States.

Note that the divisional representatives would be known throughout their period of tenure on NSAC as Division X Chair (YEAR), where YEAR is the year of the scientific meeting for which the representative has organisational responsibility.

Timetable for the implementation of the divisional structure

The earliest Annual Scientific Meeting for which this proposal can be implemented is 2004. Assuming that the divisional proposal is ratified at the 2001 Annual General Meeting, the following timetable is proposed. After the 2001 AGM NSAC would be constituted as follows:

2001-2002

- Chair
- *Ex-officio* members
- Divisional Chairs (2004) (4)
- Eight representatives nominated by National Council.

2002-2003

- Chair
- *Ex-officio* members
- Divisional Chairs (2004) (4)
- Divisional Chairs (2005) (4)
- Four representatives nominated by National Council.

2003-2004

- Chair
- *Ex-officio* members
- Divisional Chairs (2004) (4)
- Divisional Chairs (2005) (4)
- Divisional Chairs (2006) (4)

2004-2005

- Chair
- *Ex-officio* members
- Divisional Chairs (2005) (4)
- Divisional Chairs (2006) (4)
- Divisional Chairs (2007) (4)

Approval of international visitors and satellite meetings

NSAC will have the responsibility of recommending to National Council both the international speakers and the small satellite meetings to receive ASM financial support. The international speakers programme is currently handled by a Convenor and no real change is envisaged, other than providing a Deputy Convenor to support the current incumbent.

Early on in its tenure NSAC will need to develop procedures for handling the approval process for small meetings such as the current Virology and Bacterial Pathogenesis meetings. Both application proformas and timetables will need to be developed.