

The IUPAC Project System:
Guidelines for Divisions / Standing Committees

Policies and procedures for the formal IUPAC project system have been evolving since inception of the system in January 1999, and they will probably continue to evolve as needed. The Project Submission Form and accompanying Guidelines for completion of the form describe the basic concept of the project system. Those guidelines are directed toward individuals who plan to propose projects.

This document is intended to consolidate the additional information and guidance required by the Division and Standing Committees that are responsible for encouraging the submission of proposals, evaluating the proposals, approving the most meritorious projects and providing management oversight to the approved projects. The following text refers for simplicity to "Divisions" but is equally applicable to any Standing Committee that handles projects.

Scope of projects. For purposes of consideration and funding through the project system, an IUPAC project encompasses an activity of limited scope and time frame with clearly stated objectives that can usually be achieved in a period of no more than 2-3 years. Traditional projects involve the international standardization of nomenclature and terminology; publication of glossaries in particular fields; setting standards for presentation of spectral and other data; establishing uniform scales for quantities such as pH; forging agreement on analytical methods; compilation and evaluation of quantitative (usually numeric) data in areas where there are international needs; and innovative projects with an educational or training component. In addition, IUPAC is quite willing to consider novel ideas that lead to other types of projects. However, IUPAC's mission and limited resources preclude support of research projects and scientific conferences. Also, "projects" whose purpose is to develop or manage projects are not suitable for funding under the project system.

Procedures for Review and Approval. The project system is built on the concept that a proposal to carry out a well defined task will be subject to peer review to guide the committee(s) in decisions on approval and funding. A simple, but multi-step, procedure has been developed to deal with proposals expeditiously and with a minimum effort for the Divisions as follows:

- Receipt and initial screening at the Secretariat. The Secretariat reviews the proposal for completeness and screens it to ascertain that it is appropriate for consideration as an IUPAC project under the guidelines given above. The Secretary General can be consulted as needed. A proposal that passes this preliminary screen is given a number of the form yyyy-mmm-x [yyyy = year; mmm is a sequential number; x =1 for the initial proposal and is augmented for a revised proposal].
- The proposal is sent to any Division or Standing Committee designated on the Submission Form *and to any other Division and Committee that might reasonably be interested*. The objective is to include any reasonable alternatives at this point. The proposal goes to the Division's *Projects Coordinator*; in the absence of a designated Projects Coordinator, it goes to the Division President. The Secretariat designates the probable lead Division for an interdisciplinary project, but this can be altered by mutual agreement at a later stage.
- The Projects Coordinator is asked to respond to only two questions at this time: (i) Is this proposal of potentially sufficient interest to your Division to warrant undertaking

an outside review? (ii) If so, from whom should reviews be sought? On point (i) the Coordinator may wish to consult with other Division Committee members as needed. It is also possible that the Coordinator will prefer to have the proposal modified before it is considered further and may communicate with the proposer through the Secretariat or directly with a copy to the Secretariat. On point (ii) the proposer is asked to suggest at least three reviewers. The Division may wish to select others instead of or in addition to those suggested. The Secretariat may be able to help Divisions establish and maintain a database of potential reviewers.

Ideally, *this initial screening step should consume no more than two weeks* if the entire review is to be carried out in a timely manner.

- The Secretariat solicits reviews on behalf of the Division, follows up with dilatory reviewers as indicated, and assembles reviews for consideration by the Division. [If inadequate reviews have been obtained, the Division President or his designee may wish to specify additional reviewers and ask the Secretariat to obtain further reviews.] If any publication in printed or electronic form is contemplated in the proposal, the Secretariat also sends the proposal to the Officers of CPEP for comments on the suitability of publication methods. The tracking system at the Secretariat permits anyone concerned to follow the steps involved.
- The Division Committee considers the proposal, outside reviews and any other pertinent information, including comments from CPEP. If possible, the Committee arrives at a decision by e-mail within a few weeks and notifies the Secretariat. If it is necessary to defer a decision – for example, to be able to prioritize a number of proposals before deciding on funding – the Secretariat should be kept informed to avoid additional “prodding” and to permit the proposer to be notified if there is to be an extended delay.
- Interdisciplinary projects require special consideration, since the reviews normally occur concurrently in more than one Division. The Divisions’ respective Project Coordinators should exchange information and views by e-mail, via the Secretariat or directly with a copy to the Secretariat.
- When a proposal is to be forwarded to the Project Committee, the Division(s) should prepare as complete a recommendation as possible for transmittal via the Secretariat. A statement merely that the Division approves the proposal is unlikely to carry much weight with the Project Committee. If it is a very large project, the Division should make it clear how important it is and why the Division cannot fund it. If it goes to the Project Committee as an interdisciplinary project, two or more Divisions must have approved it and generally provided partial funding. The Project Committee should be seen as a source of additional funds to encourage interdisciplinary projects, not as a substitute for funding projects that the Division does not consider highly.
- The Project Committee conducts its review by e-mail and normally reaches a decision in about three weeks if adequate information is available. The Project Committee is free to seek additional information from the proposer, the Division(s), or additional outside reviewers. The Secretariat is notified of the PC’s decision. If the requested funding is approved, the Division(s) is notified and a notice is sent to the proposer, as indicated below. If the PC does not approve funding as requested, the Division(s) is notified and can consider whether it wishes to proceed with the partial funding that it has already approved, provide additional funds, or decline to fund the project with the limited resources.

- The Secretariat prepares official notice to the proposer of approval or disapproval of the project, which is sent by e-mail and in a formal letter signed by the Secretary General, with copies to the relevant Division(s). The reasons for disapproval and any relevant comments from the Division or Project Committee are normally included in the letter.

See also *Project Review Procedure* given at www.iupac.org/projects/project_rev_proc.html .

Funding. Most projects are funded from a Division's *project budget*. The Project Committee serves as an additional source of funds for a project that

- is interdivisional – *i.e.*, approved by two or more Divisions that have serious interest in having the project supported and normally provide partial funding
- is too large for Division support [generally more than 25 percent of a Division's biennial base budget]
- emanates from a Standing Committee with no project budget

Whenever feasible, additional funds from outside IUPAC should be sought, particularly for more costly projects. Funds may be solicited by individual project proposers [as detailed in the *Project Submission Form*], by the IUPAC Secretariat [often on the recommendation of the Division responsible for the project], or by the Division itself [with advance clearance from the Secretariat to avoid conflicts or appearance of impropriety].

Additional funding from the Divisional Reserve. When necessary, a Division may request from the Secretary General and Treasurer additional funds from the Divisional Reserve as an *adjustment* to the Division budget. Such requests are not part of the formal project approval system, but the request may be partly or entirely based on the desire to fund one or more highly meritorious projects. Requests should be routed via the Secretariat and should be justified in the overall context of the Division's programs and obligations. The Secretariat will provide supporting material as needed. During the "transition period" 2000-2001, a substantial reserve was available, but Division budgets are now normally expected to cover most of the project portfolio.

Operating and Project Budgets. The biennial Division budget is presented and tracked in two components – for *projects* and *operating expenses*. Funds committed to projects are regarded as "spent" by the Division in the biennium in which they are committed to the project, even though the actual cash remains in IUPAC's treasury until needed for specific project expenses. Funds committed to a specific project are available for the lifetime of the project and do not lapse at the end of a biennium.

To assure adequate funds for projects, the Treasurer has allocated Division budgets for 2002-2003 as approximately 25 percent for operations and 75 percent for projects. As needs develop during the biennium, it may be desirable to reallocate remaining funds between the two component parts of the budget. The Treasurer will be glad to consider such needs as they arise.

Project Budget Variances. A small overspending by a project [less than 10 percent] can usually be approved by the Executive Director. Proposals for additional funds must be submitted to the managing Division for action. Funds remaining at the conclusion of the project revert to the IUPAC treasury.

A Division may plan to fund a project over two biennia if necessary, but this procedure should be used with caution because of the impact on future Division programs.