

World Climate Research Programme Guidelines on Producing Terms of Reference for WCRP Core Activities

6 June 2025

These Guidelines are to ensure that all WCRP Bodies have consistent Terms of Reference (ToR), but that there is sufficient flexibility to allow for the different needs of each Body. The Guidelines on Producing Terms of Reference for WCRP Core Activities are applicable to the steering groups¹ of the WCRP Core Projects, Lighthouse Activities, Academy, and any other Body convened by the WCRP Joint Scientific Committee (JSC), regardless of its size and when the duration of its mandate exceeds six months.

Please refer to [WCRP Procedural Terms and Definitions](#) for definitions of terms used in this document.

The ToR should outline the following terms of a WCRP Body:

1. **Purpose** – The objectives, scope, and expected outputs/outcomes/products of the work of the Body should be listed. The intention to produce any reports or plans (scientific/strategic/implementation) and how regularly these should be updated, if applicable, should be noted.
2. **Governance** – Which governing body approves the membership and the budget of the Body. In the case of Bodies overseen by more than one entity, how is this co-sponsorship organized.
3. **Membership** – The number of members (can be a set number or a range) and any special requirements for Membership should be outlined. The [Guidelines on Membership of WCRP Bodies](#)² outlines responsibilities, membership, length of appointment, and size and diversity of WCRP bodies. If there are different types of Membership (regular member, *ex-officio* member, emeritus members, etc.), these should be listed. Detailed procedures for the nomination, review and appointment of new members (including Chair/Co-Chair/Vice Chair positions) and for voting should also be included.
4. **Duties and Responsibilities of Members** – Any duties and responsibilities that are additional to those outlined in the [Guidelines on Membership of WCRP Bodies](#) should be listed. How often the Body is expected to meet, both in person and virtually, should be detailed.

¹ Usually called either a 'Steering Group' or a 'Scientific Steering Group.'

² Duplication of the content of the [Guidelines on Membership of WCRP Bodies](#) should be avoided, as the text may be periodically updated. When the Guidelines on Membership of WCRP Bodies and text in a ToR are not in agreement, the text in the Guidelines on Membership of WCRP Bodies will prevail unless the difference has been approved by the JSC.

5. **Subsidiary Bodies** – If the Body will set up subsidiary bodies, this should be noted and the duration and mechanisms for overseeing these subsidiary bodies should be outlined.
6. **Liaisons** – If the Body will have formal liaison roles with other bodies, these should be listed.
7. **Duration** – The formation and dissolution dates of the Body should be listed. If there is no dissolution date provided, the Body will remain in place until the WCRP JSC provides written notice of the dissolution date to the Chairs (and any related Office) of the Body.
8. **Resources** – The resources, including financial and in-kind support, that the Body will receive to do the work should be detailed.³ If the Body will be supported by the WCRP Secretariat, an International Project Office, or a Support Unit, this should be mentioned.
9. **Code of Conduct** – It must be noted that all WCRP Body members must adhere to the [WCRP Code of Conduct](#) at all times.
10. **Carbon Footprint** – Any measures undertaken by the Body to adhere to the [Guidelines on reducing carbon emissions from travel](#) should be listed.
11. **Terminology** – Definitions of any special terms that are particular to the activity should be defined. Note that the [WCRP Procedural Terms and Definitions](#) contains definitions of common terms and these do not need to be redefined.
12. **Approval of the ToR** – The ToR must be approved by the JSC. Unless there are exceptional cases, the ToR should be submitted to the WCRP Secretariat at least one month prior to the annual JSC Session for approval by the JSC at that Session). The date of JSC approval should be listed in the document and it should be published on the JSC website. Any changes to the ToR must also be approved by the JSC.

³ The exact amount of financial support may be known, or it may fluctuate from year to year. In the latter case, the main mechanisms for obtaining support should be listed.