



REPORT OF THE SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL ON ITS FORTY-NINTH SESSION – ADDENDUM 1

Discussion on the issue of the scoring system used by the Review Panels for the evaluation of IARC Sections/Groups

Background

1. In May 2005, after considering document GC/47/13 Rev.1, the Governing Council approved Resolution GC/47/R10 which endorsed the proposal to conduct a detailed scientific assessment of each Cluster to judge the quality of the work of the Cluster and how well it fitted with the overall mission and strategy of IARC. It also endorsed that a five-year cycle of reviews covering each Cluster be introduced.
2. In May 2009, after several Reviews, the Governing Council approved Resolution GC/51/R11, which adopted new “Guidelines for IARC Scientific Review Procedures” and authorized the Chairperson of the Governing Council, upon the request of the Chairperson of the Scientific Council to adapt the guidelines in light of experience in reviews.
3. Any such adaptations shall be presented to the next session of the Governing Council for approval.

Introduction

4. The objectives of the Review are to conduct a detailed scientific review of the Groups comprising an IARC Section based on past achievements, future plans and an assessment of how well the work of the Section fits with the overall mission and strategy of the IARC. In order to examine a complete Section, information regarding past performance and future plans will be available to the Review Panel, which will, in turn, provide advice to the Director regarding the overall strategy of the research programme being pursued and developed within each Section.
5. After a few review cycles it became apparent that the scoring system should be reassessed. The Scientific Council decided at its 49th Session that its Chair and Vice-Chair together with Professor Nicholas Jones (Scientific Council member for the UK) and the IARC Secretariat would develop a revised system for scoring.
6. This proposal for a revised scoring system will be circulated to all Scientific Council members for their final approval and presented to the Governing Council for its approval in May 2013.

Current scoring system for scientific quality and relevance of the work

Evaluation of the Group and Section

The **past performance** and **future plans** of each Group and of the Section should be scored independently for **quality** and **relevance**, as follows:

a. Assessment of scientific quality (using the four-point scale below)

A single score should be assigned for the work of each Research Group, the Section as a whole, and separately for the performance of each Group and Section Head.

Scoring:

The following classification will be used:

- 1: **Outstanding:** Work of the highest international calibre, pioneering and trend-setting.
- 2: **Satisfactory:** Work that is internationally competitive and will make a significant contribution to science or public health.
- 3: **Questionable:** Work which is not of a high scientific standard, but which could be improved.
- 4: **Unsatisfactory:** Work which is of poor scientific standard and is unlikely to make a contribution to science or public health.

b. Assessment of the relevance of the work to the mission of IARC

This should include how well the proposed work benefits from IARC's unique position, how well it appears to fit with the IARC strategy and how it might impact on public health.

A single score should be assigned for the work of each Research Group and for the Section as a whole.

Scoring:

The following classification will be used:

- 1: **Perfect fit:** This type of work is ideally suited to the mission of IARC.
- 2: **Good fit:** This type of work is suited to the mission of the Agency.
- 3: **Questionable fit:** Uncertain.
- 4: **Poor fit:** Work which should not continue.

Scores should be accompanied by justifications and recommendations for action, where necessary.

Suggested new scoring system to be approved by the Governing Council at its 55th Session

7. The Scientific Council noted that a four grade system (Outstanding/ Satisfactory/ Questionable/ Unsatisfactory) to assess the scientific quality of the work might not be fine enough to capture nuances of the review process and it was suggested that more 'granularity' be introduced into the scoring system.

8. The new scoring system has been developed by the Scientific Council Chair, Vice-Chair and Professor Jones in consultation with the Secretariat and is given below:

"It is essential that in determining their scores for a particular piece of work, reviewers consider the narrative description given for each score.

As the score should reflect the complete portfolio of research from a Group or Section then the peer-review committee may choose a combination of categories to reflect heterogeneity within a Group or Section e.g. F/C.

In selecting a score the reviewers should take account of the role of IARC's research in the context of its mission, including conducting work in low and middle-income countries and research which is difficult for national institutes or centres to perform.

O (Outstanding)	Outstanding work of the highest international calibre, pioneering and trend-setting. This score will only be applied to exceptional programmes of work, not because a programme was particularly topical or in an under-researched area.
F (Forefront)	Work that is at the forefront internationally and that, it is considered, will have an important and substantial impact.
C (Competitive)	Work that is internationally competitive, of high quality, and will make a significant contribution.
NC (Not competitive)	Work that is not considered competitive or high quality and is unlikely to make a significant contribution.
U (Unsatisfactory)	Unsatisfactory or poor quality work
P (Preliminary)	Work that is too preliminary to rate, which should be continued and monitored /reassessed by the Director in the short- to medium-term with subsequent update for the Scientific Council."

9. The scoring system for the relevance of the work to the mission of IARC (Perfect fit/ Good fit/ Questionable fit/ Poor fit) was felt appropriate.

10. The Scientific Council suggests that this new scoring system be implemented as from 2014 by the Review Panels of the Sections of IARC Monographs (IMO) and Molecular Pathology (MPA).

11. The "Guidelines for IARC Scientific Review Procedures" will be updated accordingly.

12. The Governing Council is requested to approve the new scoring system to assess the scientific quality of the work of the Sections being reviewed as described in document SC/49/13 Add.1.