

SEP Terms of Reference

Approved by *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board: **15 May, 2018**
Latest Revision: **6 May, 2018**

(1) General Purpose

The Science Evaluation Panel (SEP) reports to the *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board (JRFB) and is responsible for evaluation of all proposals in the context of:

1. The themes and initiatives of the IODP Science Plan;
2. The completeness of the site characterization data package and its adequacy for achieving the scientific objectives of the proposal.

The SEP is responsible for the peer review process and the selection of the best and most relevant proposals for forwarding to the JRFB or other Facility Board for development of annual and long-range schedules. The SEP also advises the JRFB on any shortcomings of the proposal pool with respect to themes and challenges of the IODP Science Plan, and makes suggestions for stimulating proposal pressure in those areas.

The latest version of the **SEP and EPSP Terms of Reference** can be downloaded from <http://iodp.org/boards-and-panels/facility-boards>.

(2) Mandate

The primary responsibility of the SEP is to evaluate all proposals submitted to IODP in terms of both scientific excellence and completeness and quality of the site characterization data packages. The internal organization of the SEP to conduct complete proposal evaluations is flexible (e.g., it may break into sub-panels) and will be determined by the two Co-chairs according to the needs at each meeting.

Specifically, the SEP is responsible for:

1. Evaluating pre-proposals, identifying pre-proposals to move forward towards a full proposal (path depends on the platform requested), and deactivating those proposals unlikely to succeed. The SEP also provides feedback to proponents regarding potential successful science and drilling strategies, and early guidance about necessary site characterization data.
2. Evaluating full proposals, including a review of site characterization data packages and verification of the completeness and adequacy of the site characterization data submitted by proponents to the IODP Site Survey Data Bank (SSDB). The SEP provides feedback to proponents on science and drilling strategies, and on the

degree of completeness of the site characterization data package of each drill site. This will result in identification of those proposals needing revision, those having significant data gaps, and those to be sent for external review.

3. Selecting the best proposals for forwarding to the appropriate Facility Board for development of its annual and long-term platform schedules. Each forwarded proposal will be accompanied by a summary of key discussion points, including status of site characterization data, and justification for the rating assigned by the SEP, as well as a summary of the external reviews. The IODP Science Support Office (SSO) will create the proposal packages with all forwarded proposals for the appropriate Facility Board(s). Full proposals that the SEP identifies as among the scientifically most compelling, but in need of further site characterization or technological development based on review of the site characterization data, are placed in a “holding bin.” When those further site characterization or technological needs are determined by the SEP to be satisfied, such proposals will be released by the SEP Co-chairs and included within the pool considered in developing annual and long-range platform schedules.
4. Examining and encouraging opportunities for use of newly emerging site characterization technologies, and fostering (international) cooperation and coordination for site characterization data acquisition.
5. Communicating with lead proponents throughout the SEP evaluation process. The SEP will provide a written evaluation addressing both the scientific goals and the completeness and adequacy for the site characterization data.

(3) Decisions

The SEP will normally reach decisions by consensus at a meeting or by email. A quorum will consist of at least two-thirds of the panel members. In cases for which a consensus is not possible, decisions will be reached by a simple majority of all members present and eligible to vote. In such cases, voting records will be reported in the panel minutes.

(4) Conflict of Interest

SEP follows the ***JOIDES Resolution Conflict of Interest Policy and Implementation Guidelines***. Actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be declared at the start of each meeting and resolved by the SEP Co-chairs and/or the JRFB Chair, and treatment thereof will be recorded in the meeting minutes. Proponents will not be present during any part of a meeting when their proposal is nurtured, evaluated, or discussed.

(5) Meetings

Robert's Rules of Order will govern all meetings. The SEP will convene twice annually, as appropriately timed with proposal submission deadlines, and additional electronic meetings may be held as appropriate. This will allow for feedback to proponents within three months of the proposal deadlines. The SSO will produce draft minutes of the SEP plenary sessions, including detailed voting results, for approval by the SEP within one month following the meeting.

(6) Membership

The SEP membership is large and must strive to ensure sufficient breadth of expertise not only across all areas of the IODP Science Plan, but also in evaluation of site characterization data packages. The SEP Co-chairs will work with the JRFB and the IODP Program Member Offices (PMOs) to maintain balance of expertise and diversity in its broadest terms, and to ensure regular rotation of its membership. SEP members shall normally serve terms of three years. Candidates for SEP membership are recommended by the PMOs.

The JRFB approves the final selection based on the PMO recommendations and other considerations. When appropriate, non-voting specialists may be invited to SEP meetings on an *ad hoc* basis to assist with evaluation of proposals.

(7) Co-chairs

The SEP Co-chairs will provide leadership in the two areas of evaluation that are the responsibility of the SEP: scientific peer review of the proposals, and evaluation of the adequacy and completeness of the site characterization data. They will be nominated by members of the SEP and approved by the JRFB for a term of three years. The roles of the SEP Co-chairs require substantial dedicated time, and they should be provided with appropriate salary and logistical support by the appropriate PMO.

(8) Liaisons

The SEP Co-chairs will be liaisons to the JRFB. A liaison from the EPSP will attend SEP meetings to assist in evaluation of practical and safety aspects of the drilling proposals. Representatives from the IODP Science Operators may also attend SEP meetings for assessment of technological requirements for proposals under evaluation. Liaisons from other international geoscience initiatives should be encouraged to attend SEP meetings as appropriate for the proposal pool.