

Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research

Roles and Responsibilities of SCAR Directors



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General Background

The SCAR President and Vice Presidents (SCAR Directors) are vital to the operation of SCAR. As with all SCAR Delegates and Alternate Delegates, the Directors are expected to be recognised, active researchers in a given area of Antarctic research endeavour.

The Directors are responsible for executing decisions made by the SCAR Delegates and for providing strategic oversight of SCAR's operations on behalf of the Delegates. The Directors also have the ability to take decisions on behalf of the Delegates which are binding on the organisation.

In addition, the President and Vice Presidents each have important responsibilities pertaining to their individual roles (as outlined below). The President and Vice President roles are voluntary (unpaid) positions, yet they require a significant time commitment from those who hold these offices.

The SCAR President and Vice Presidents along with the SCAR Executive Director, form the [SCAR Executive Committee](#), which meets regularly during the year to discuss key SCAR business. The Executive Director is head of the [SCAR Secretariat](#), which manages the day-to-day operations of SCAR.

SCAR is a charity under UK law and also a Limited Company. The President and Vice Presidents (VPs) are Trustees of the charity and together they form the Board of Directors of the Company. They have legal responsibilities under UK law. In addition, they are able to make decisions on behalf of the SCAR Delegates that are binding on the organisation. Information on legal responsibilities is provided below, and further detail is available in SCAR's [Articles of Association](#).

The President and Vice-Presidents are expected to interact regularly with the Executive Director and Secretariat staff and to deal with them in keeping with UK workplace legislation and best practice.

Key to success in these roles is appropriate time allocation, not just for the specifics of the roles, but also, crucially, for communication with SCAR's members, scientists, partners and, importantly, the Executive Director and Secretariat staff.

Election

The President and four Vice Presidents are the Delegates / Alternate Delegates of five different Full Member countries, elected at the biennial SCAR Delegates Meeting from among those present at the meeting, in accordance with SCAR's [Rules of Procedure](#). The term of office is typically four years (i.e. across two consecutive Delegates' meetings), with the possibility of being re-elected for a second term. Only half of the Directors are elected at any given meeting – two Vice Presidents will be mid-term and two will be finishing their terms. When a new President is elected, the former President remains on the Executive for two years to provide continuity and support for the new team. That position does not require the occupant to be a Delegate or Alternate Delegate.

Meeting attendance and time commitment

Under normal circumstances, every two years the SCAR Directors attend the SCAR Delegates Meeting, usually in conjunction with the Open Science Conference (e.g. in 2016, 2018)¹. In the intervening years, a smaller Executive Committee Meeting is held, comprising the Executive Committee members (Directors and Executive Director) along with Science Group, Scientific Research Programme and Standing Committee Chief Officers. These meetings have traditionally been held in-person but an amendment to the SCAR Articles of Association in 2021 allows virtual attendance. These meetings take place over several days. Minutes of these meetings can be found on SCAR's website, alongside [the papers for the meeting](#). Meetings of the SCAR Executive Committee take place approximately every 6-8 weeks and last about two hours. SCAR Directors are expected to be available for all of these meetings.

SCAR President

The SCAR President provides leadership for and visibility of SCAR.

The SCAR President is expected to act in the best interests of SCAR at all times, and especially considering the SCAR emphasis on promoting all of the disciplines under its banner, delivering excellent, evidence-based science advice, and facilitating capacity building among its Members.

The role has an inward leadership component, ensuring that the organisation functions to deliver what has been agreed by the Members, and that this work is integrated, timely and in keeping with the SCAR Strategic Plan. A key component of this internal work is regular liaison with the Executive Director and SCAR Secretariat, as well as with the SCAR Vice-Presidents and the SCAR Subsidiary Group Chief Officers.

The SCAR President has an outward-facing leadership role, representing SCAR in international forums, and in particular as SCAR's Head of Delegation to the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meetings. Other key interactive roles include with SCAR's parent organisation – the International Science Council – and with CCAMLR, COMNAP, IAATO, ASOC, WMO and other agencies/bodies of the United Nations. The SCAR President is directly responsible for the evidence-based advice portfolio within SCAR, assisted by the SCAR Executive Director.

In this outward-facing role with Antarctic Treaty System organisations, a close working relationship has to be maintained with the Chief Officer of SCAR's Standing Committee on the Antarctic Treaty System. The SC-ATS CO is SCAR's representative to the Committee for Environmental Protection. The President, SC-ATS CO and Executive Director, are the SCAR Treaty Delegation. Much work is required to prepare Treaty papers, usually requiring at least six months lead-in time annually.

In addition to these roles, the SCAR President assumes responsibility for the delivery of SCAR's work and the efficient functioning of the organisation. The latter includes final responsibility for Secretariat staff (including replacement procedures where required), good business practice, and appropriate fiduciary care, all in keeping with UK law and best practice. In this respect, the President is also responsible for

¹ Note that in 2020 the SCAR Delegates meeting was cancelled due to the global pandemic, and an online meeting was held in March 2021.

arranging and giving effect to the annual performance discussion with the Executive Director.

From a workplace practice perspective, if the Executive Director or Secretariat staff raise a formal complaint, the complaint first goes to the President and Vice-President for Administration, except if either of those roles are the subject of the complaint, in which case the complaint should be to an alternative Director or Directors. Those with whom the complaint is lodged are obliged by UK law to deal with it and may take advice from SCAR's HR consultants and/or solicitors.

The SCAR President also has the responsibility for seeking opportunities to improve financial support for SCAR and opportunities to both promote the organisation and those who undertake Antarctic and Southern Ocean research.

In terms of time, the President's role requires, at the very minimum, a 20% commitment (amounting to a day a week on average). Although this is the minimum requirement, the time required for an effective contribution is much closer to 40%. Moreover, long stretches at a time require close to 100% commitment, in particular for the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (about 14 continuous days a year, excluding preparation time), for the biennial SCAR Open Science Conference and Delegates meeting (14 continuous days, excluding preparation time), for the biennial SCAR Executive Meeting (7 continuous days excluding preparation time), and for other meetings. These include, in typical years, work with member countries to promote SCAR and/or to participate in particular meetings.

Considerable travel (or e-meeting participation) can be expected. The SCAR President should visit the Secretariat in person at least annually. This can be combined with other SCAR business for most efficacy. In addition, at least four other international trips or participation events can be expected annually (Treaty Meeting, SCAR ExCom or Delegates Meeting, and two other meetings).

Although not a pre-requisite, if the SCAR President's role is being undertaken alongside an institutionally demanding one, having a part time Administrative Assistant is exceptionally useful. The SCAR Secretariat staff is not in a position to provide this assistance given their considerable commitments to other organisational requirements.

SCAR Vice Presidents

The SCAR Vice-Presidents are expected to act in the best interests of SCAR at all times, and especially considering the SCAR emphasis on promoting all of the disciplines under its banner, delivering excellent, evidence-based science advice, and facilitating capacity building among its Members.

Each Vice President (VP) takes on a particular area of responsibility, with these being decided in discussion among the Directors when a new President or new Vice-Presidents are elected.

The Vice-Presidential roles require about a 10-20% time commitment, but the workload varies among these roles on an annual cycle. The best outcomes are achieved by regular attention to the commitments of the role. SCAR Open Science Conference and Delegates Meeting years are especially busy. Vice Presidents are expected to be present at these meetings for their full duration and at SCAR ExCom meetings in alternate years. In addition, in their formal roles, SCAR Vice Presidents can expect to attend one other meeting annually at the least. Usually these are meetings either in the scientific area of specialisation of the Vice President, or in a given region that is close by for travel.

The SCAR Vice Presidents are instrumental in providing leadership in their areas, ensuring that SCAR's work is undertaken in keeping with the Members' wishes, in keeping with the Strategic Plan, and in an integrated and forward-looking manner.

Vice President for Administration

The VP for Administration has oversight of all SCAR administrative practices, and a strategic focus on regular consideration of the efficacy of SCAR's structural arrangements.

For the SCAR Secretariat, the VP for Administration works with the Executive Director and President to ensure that the Secretariat staff, including the Executive Director, are employed under contemporary workplace expectations and arrangements, with the delivery of good HR and workplace practice and appropriate development opportunities.

For the organisation as a whole, the VP for Administration is responsible for ensuring that administrative practice is in keeping with SCAR's governing documents and policies, and where necessary makes recommendations to ExCom and to the Delegates for changes to these to remain in keeping with the members' wishes for the organisation, UK law, and contemporary administrative practice for NGOs in particular.

Where any changes to SCAR's policies and procedures are required, the VP for Administration takes responsibility for the process on behalf of the Directors, working with the Executive Director and, where necessary, SCAR's solicitors, to give effect to revisions for consideration by the Members at a Delegates meeting in keeping with SCAR's rules and policies.

The VP for Administration has oversight of SCAR subsidiary groups not taken care of by other Directors, and is expected to be in regular communication with them.

At the SCAR Delegates Meeting, the VP for Administration leads and/or chairs all sessions to do with SCAR's administration, other than elections (led by the Executive Director), finances (VP for Finance) and membership matters (President), and all sessions where subsidiary groups under the VP for Administration's oversight are reporting back.

Vice President for Capacity Building

The VP for Capacity Building is responsible for developing SCAR's strategic vision for capacity building and equity, for implementation of this vision, and for seeking opportunities to extend support for these activities. These opportunities include interactions with Members' programmes and others, such as those under the banner of the International Science Council, organisations which are part of the International Science Council, or those that are associated with the Antarctic Treaty System.

The VP for Capacity Building chairs the Capacity Building, Education and Training Group (CBET) of SCAR, and sets its membership in discussion with the SCAR Subsidiary Group Chief Officers and ExCom. CBET is responsible for advising on all aspects of SCAR capacity building. Close collaboration with the Executive Director is a key requirement for this role.

A key role for the VP for Capacity Building is overseeing the SCAR Awards and Fellowships Programmes so that they run efficiently, take the varied membership of SCAR into account, focus on capacity building where appropriate, and are equitable. In this role, the VP for Capacity Building works closely with the SCAR Executive Officer and Executive Director.

During Delegates Meetings, the VP for Capacity Building leads all discussions on capacity building and equity.

Vice President for Finance

The VP for Finance works with the Executive Director, Secretariat and Subsidiary Group Chief Officers to develop the budgets for Members' approval, and develops annual budget statements with the assistance of the Secretariat for reporting and auditing purposes. The VP for Finance also monitors and advises the Directors and Delegates on SCAR's investments and on the financial strategy SCAR should adopt to best support its agreed activities and deliver against its Strategic Plan.

The VP for Finance works in association with the SCAR Executive Director and Executive Officer to ensure that cash flow over the course of the year is in keeping with expectations and reports back to the ExCom about these matters. All non-routine expenditure or changes to expenditure plans must first be cleared with the VP for Finance, who may pass decisions on to ExCom on a discretionary basis.

During Delegates meetings, the VP for Finance chairs the Standing Committee on Finance and is responsible for ensuring it has appropriate membership from SCAR's Delegates and Alternate Delegates. The VP for Finance also delivers the budgets and reporting against them to the SCAR Delegates, leading all financial discussions.

The VP for Finance has specific fiduciary responsibilities under UK law and with regard to SCAR's accounts.

Vice President for Science

The VP for Science oversees the science facilitation component of SCAR. Thus, close and ongoing coordination with the Scientific Research Programme (SRP) Chief Officers and Science Group Chief Officers, along with the Chief Officers of the Standing Committee on the Humanities and Social Sciences is required. When new SRPs are being proposed, the VP for Science is instrumental in guiding the Programme Planning Groups to ensure that their work is delivered in an efficient and timely way and in keeping with SCAR's practices. The formal review of SRP proposals is handled by the VP for Science, who then makes recommendations to the Directors and Delegates on the outcomes.

During Delegates meetings, the VP for Science chairs the science reporting parts of the meeting.

The VP for Science plays a crucial role in the content of the SCAR Open Science Conferences, being a standing member of the International Science Organising Committee. That role is not typically Chair of the Committee, but rather advisory to ensure that the conference develops in a way in keeping with the aims of the Open Science Conferences and reflects the preferences of the community in the context of the SCAR Strategic Plan. Often the VP for Science or the SCAR President will also be a member of the Local Organising Committee for the meeting.

The SCAR VP for Science also has a key role in representing SCAR science in an international setting.

Legal Responsibilities of Trustees

The President and Vice Presidents have legal responsibilities under UK law as Directors of the Company and Trustees of the charity.

The following UK Government website sets out the responsibilities of Company Directors:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/being-a-company-director>

The UK Charity Commission summarises “Trustees duties at a glance” as follows, with full details available via [this link](#)

- [*Ensure your charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit*](#)
- [*Comply with your charity’s governing document and the law*](#)
- [*Act in your charity’s best interests*](#)
- [*Manage your charity’s resources responsibly*](#)
- [*Act with reasonable care and skill*](#)
- [*Ensure your charity is accountable*](#)

Reporting

The President and Vice Presidents must ensure that SCAR complies with legal reporting requirements.

SCAR reports to UK Companies House each year. It submits a Trustees Report along with its annual audited accounts. The Trustees Report contains details of SCAR activities and plans. Most filings are public and available through:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/companies-house>

SCAR also reports to the UK Charity Commission each year following the preparation of the annual accounts. The main website can be accessed at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>