

# Report of the SC-HASS Ad Hoc Sub-Committee on Conference Organization

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The SCAR Standing Committee on Humanities and Social Sciences (SC-HASS) is the product of a merger between the SCAR History Action Group (originally formed in 2004) and the SCAR Social Sciences Action Group (originally formed in 2010). The Groups were formally merged into the SCAR Humanities and Social Sciences Expert Group (HASSEG) in 2014, which in 2018 became a permanent Standing Committee (SC-HASS). The History Action Group met for the first time in 2005 and since then regular meetings have been held in venues around the world. A convention has emerged in which odd-year conferences are organized by SC-HASS with a focus on Antarctic humanities and social sciences research, while in even years SC-HASS researchers participate within the overall frame of the SCAR Open Science Conferences.

The odd-year conferences have grown substantially, from 18 participants at the inaugural History Action Group meeting in Munich in June 2005 to 130 participants at the SC-HASS conference in Ushuaia in April 2019. This in turn has increased the demands placed upon local organizers and the responsibility placed upon the Chief Officers to select the venue and organizers. The continued growth of Antarctic humanities and social sciences suggests that the SC-HASS conferences are likely to only be larger in the future. The geographical diversity of the SC-HASS membership further increases the need to consider carefully where future conferences are organized to ensure accessibility to as wide as possible a spectrum of the community. Moreover, it can no longer be presumed that certain organizational conventions known tacitly within a small group will be known to others. The Chief Officers of SC-HASS have therefore determined that a more formal, rigorous, and transparent process is required to select

future conference venues and organizers. The present sub-committee was convened in May 2019 to begin this process.

The document that follows includes six recommendations. These have been developed with input from the SC-HASS membership and are now forwarded to the Chief Officers with a recommendation that they take effect for the 2023 SC-HASS conference and all further conferences.

**Recommendation #1:** A formal venue selection process should be implemented. Venue selection should be the responsibility of a three-person sub-committee chosen by the Chief Officers. At least one member of the sub-committee will normally have been participated actively in the organization of a recent SC-HASS conference. The sub-committee will also be responsible for ensuring that a local organizing committee (LOC) is established, and will provide advice to the LOC, including on matters of program structure and content (e.g. the Lewander Lecture).

**Recommendation #2:** The conference sub-committee should announce an open call for expressions of interest (EOIs) with clear selection criteria based on the Recommendation #3 and #4 below six months in advance of the SC-HASS odd-year business meeting preceding the odd year in which the conference is to be held (i.e., the call for the 2025 conference should be released six months in advance of the 2023 SC-HASS business meeting). All EOIs must be sent in full written form to the Chief Officers at least one month in advance of the business meeting and conform to a template to be established by the conference sub-committee. The Chief Officers will in turn delegate evaluation of the EOIs to the conference sub-committee. During such evaluation, the conference sub-committee may conduct inquiries to and request additional information from the proposers of the EOIs. The sub-committee should complete its work and announce, in consultation with the Chief Officers and the Steering Committee, a decision as soon as feasible but no later than the time when the Open Science Conference is held in an even year preceding the proposed conference.

**Recommendation #3:** In assessing the strength of competing EOIs, the sub-committee should ensure that a range of relevant factors are considered. These should include:

1. **Diversity:** ensuring that SC-HASS conferences respect the geographic diversity of the group's membership, and the desirability of stimulating local interest in the group's activities in different locations. EOIs are strongly encouraged to provide opportunities for early-career researchers to participate fully in the conference. The conference sub-committee should consider taking an active role in soliciting EOIs from underrepresented regions and communities.
2. **Accessibility:** assessed in financial terms (ensuring that registration and participation costs are kept reasonable so as to encourage participation by early-career and unwaged researchers), geographical terms (ensuring that the travel costs are not unreasonably high), and legal and ethical terms (ensuring that a venue is not chosen where government policies may make it unreasonably difficult or burdensome to enter and be present in the relevant country, or where a significant number of potential attendees may be denied entry). If the conference is hosted in a country where English is not the primary language, the LOC is encouraged to explore the possibility of presentations in the host country's primary language if translation can be provided. EOIs are strongly encouraged to consult the SCAR Management Plan and address the climate impacts of the conference, through for instance options for carbon offsetting or for remote participation by videolink.
3. **Organizational support and competence:** there should be a clear indication of what kind of support will be obtained from local and national funding sources to defray organizational costs and thus permit a wide level of participation; a clear plan for who will take responsibility for which tasks; and a confirmation of what facilities and satellite activities will be included within the conference. The sub-committee must have confidence in both the plan and the individuals behind it. Active support from the relevant national SCAR delegate is strongly encouraged. EOIs must follow the SCAR policy on sponsorship and fundraising. Financial contributions from SCAR to conference organization are generally expected to defray expenses such as travel expenses for unwaged and early-career researchers rather than to pay for administrative support for conference organization.

4. Proposed theme: as has been the custom in the past, each conference has had an overarching theme. Examples of such themes have included either a specific historic moment, synergies with the venue, or a disciplinary trend that organizers feel warrants particular attention.

**Recommendation #4:** The sub-committee should provide some flexibility as to the duration of the conference and to the number of participants or speakers. Each submitted EOI should outline a proposed program structure including, where appropriate, an overview of potential satellite activities (such as artistic performances and exhibits, or workshops on a specific professional or intellectual theme), and alternative presentation forums (such as poster sessions). All aspects of the feasibility and suitability of that aspect of the EOI will be assessed by the conference sub-committee.

**Recommendation #5:** Once the successful EOI bid has been accepted, responsibility for determining the precise structure and content of the program will fall on the LOC in consultation with the conference sub-committee. The LOC may, in consultation with the Chief Officers, choose to convene a scientific committee to assess submissions and construct the final program. The LOC should announce a call for abstracts at least ten (10) months and open the registration at least four (4) months before the conference begins.

**Recommendation #6:** The Lewander Lecture should be an invited keynote presentation to be held at SC-HASS odd-year conferences only. The Lecture should hold a prominent, stand-alone place on the conference program. Selection of the Lewander Lecturer should be the responsibility of the LOC in consultation with the conference sub-committee. This recommendation does not preclude the LOC from scheduling additional keynote lectures. Additionally, the program must include a dedicated slot for the SC-HASS business meeting, preferably near the start of the program. The LOC should liaise with the Chief Officers to determine how long a time slot is required for the business meeting.