



APECS

Association of Polar
Early Career Scientists

2021-2025 Strategic Plan



APECS Mission and Strategic Aim

The **Association of Polar Early Career Scientists (APECS)** is an international and interdisciplinary organisation for undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, early career professionals, early career faculty members, educators and others interested in the polar and alpine regions and the wider cryosphere. APECS provides a platform for promoting collaborations and exchange among its members and with the wider polar research community, endeavouring to create a continuum of leadership in polar sciences.

The goals of APECS include creating opportunities for the development of innovative, international, and interdisciplinary collaborations among current early career polar researchers as well as recruiting, retaining, and promoting the next generation of polar enthusiasts. Specifically, we aim to:

- **Maintain a network** of early career polar researchers across disciplines and national boundaries to meet, share ideas and experiences, and develop new research directions and collaborations.
- **Offer opportunities** for career development towards both traditional and alternative professions related to the polar regions and the wider cryosphere.
- **Promote education and outreach** as an integral component of polar research.





APECS Strategic Plan



APECS recognises the importance of fostering the next generation of researchers who will be faced with responding to the increasingly critical challenges in the polar regions resulting from the impacts of climate change.

Since its inception during the International Polar Year (IPY) in 2007-2008, APECS continues to provide networking and career development opportunities for early career scientists by working with many international partners in the polar research community. It also continues to promote education and outreach as integral components of polar research. The organisation maintains rapid growth, both in membership and geographically, with the quantity of activities and projects led by APECS members increasing accordingly.

APECS has proven successful in building on extensive international, national and interdisciplinary networks to develop integrated research directions, meet career development needs, and communicate the urgent needs of polar science to a worldwide audience.

This APECS Strategic Plan 2021-2025 addresses both the challenges, as identified by the 2019 Organisational Review, and opportunities for APECS through six main Strategic Goals.

Goal 1: Expansion and Support for Membership

Actively support and recruit into leadership positions members from traditionally underrepresented regions and countries as well as underrepresented and marginalized groups (including members of the LGBTQ+ community, indigenous researchers, and members with disabilities), target institutions with polar interests to reach a more diverse and inclusive membership base, and develop spaces to better serve the needs of the membership.



Strategic goals

Goal 2: Improving Communication

Improve transparency and effectiveness of internal communication and maintain excellence of external communication connecting Council, Executive Committee, National Committees and the other members.

Goal 3: Strengthening National Committees & Global Connections

Guide and assist National Committees in establishing an internal structure, communication pathways, and forming partnerships with other National Committees and relevant organisations.

Goal 4: Establish a Structure to Grow Sustainably & Improve Internal Functions

Restructure the Council and APECS Leadership to increase representation, improve management structures, and raise the APECS' capacity to support its ECR membership through its activities.

Goal 5: Advancing Connections through Virtual and In-person Events

Continue to support and provide venues for in-person events, while increasing the development of virtual events in various languages, formats, and regions across all levels of APECS.

Goal 6: Maintaining & Building Partnerships

Maintain and increase fruitful relationships with partner organisations promoting opportunities for early career researchers.

This new Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide APECS actions in providing opportunities for early career scientists and fostering a continuum of leadership in the polar and wider cryospheric sciences.

Acronym Definitions:

ExCom: Executive Committee - 5 members elected annually by the Council; **PG:** Project Group - A group dedicated towards a specific event, task, or mission of APECS; **PGL:** Project Group Leader - Leads and organises PG activities and contributing members; **NC:** National Committee - Committee of members representing a country that is endorsed by APECS through an agreement; **ECR:** Early Career Researcher - A student (undergraduate to PhD level), recent graduate, postdoc, or other person in the early stages of their career. Importantly, APECS does not subscribe to a strict definition of "early career". Anyone who thinks they can benefit from the services and opportunities APECS provides is welcome in our network.





Goal 1: Expansion and Support for Membership

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APECS is a member-led organisation that draws strength from the diversity of its members. By empowering grassroots activities, APECS can remain nimble and relevant for the next generation of polar ECRs. Currently, membership consists of more than 3500 members from 73 countries and this number is continuously expanding. With continued growth, APECS will need to adapt its structure, support systems, and overall function to provide an optimal experience for everyone.

Action 1: Increase diversity and inclusion among membership & leadership

Diverse perspectives are critical to the foundation of an inclusive and well-rounded organisation. This can be achieved by actively recruiting members from many backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. The wider polar science community from underrepresented countries and regions as well as underrepresented and marginalized groups should be encouraged to become an APECS member and to apply for leadership positions within PGs and NCs. Additionally, APECS should consider targeting a new demographic via recruitment of undergraduate students, who would benefit from the career development resources, opportunities, and the community that APECS provides. For a more in depth look at a restructuring of the organisation and increasing diversity within ExCom, please refer to Goal 4, Action 3.

Action 2: Develop a better support system for members

As the APECS Membership and Council expand, it is important that individual members feel supported and valued. In order to effectively manage a growing organisation, clear expectations at the start of each term, along with comprehensive guides for every level within the Council are maintained, updated, and distributed on a regular basis. Internal communication is discussed further in Goal 2. APECS should prioritize developing and sharing resources about ethics, mental health, and safety in research. As effective mentoring is recognized as being critical for the success of ECRs, APECS should also consider revamping the Men-



Goal 1: Expansion and Support for Membership

torship Database into a more active and formalized mentorship program. Creating spaces through PGs (described in Goal 4, Action 3), partnerships (Goal 6), or social media interactions can allow members that are underrepresented in their field or the polar science community to be highlighted.

Action 3: Add an “Inclusion Strategy” Section to the PG Plan forms

In order to promote best collaboration practices within PGs, PG plans should include a brief “Inclusion Strategy” section. This section would provide the PG planners a space to identify potential roadblocks within their group that may advantage or disadvantage a certain group (for example, a webinar scheduled conveniently for only one region of the world), as well as to list ways they plan to address these roadblocks (for example, archive the webinar so it is available to all, hold two live Q&A sessions on the same topic in different time zones). Adding an Inclusion section will show that APECS values diversity and inclusivity as well as ensure that all members of the PG are considering these topics from the start. This proposal section would also provide a framework that members of APECS ExCom can use to check in with PGs about their progress over the course of the year.

Action 4: Continue to engage in politically neutral partnerships

APECS is committed to providing a neutral platform for ECRs engaged in polar and alpine research, not advocating for any particular point of view. Clear guidelines must be established explaining what APECS considers to be advocacy, and these guidelines should be made known to APECS leadership and National Committees.





Goal 2: Improving Communication



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Communication is crucial to ensure that an effective leadership can coordinate projects successfully and engage meaningfully with members. As APECS membership, NCs and the Council continue to grow, better communication strategies are needed to ensure the information we disseminate is reaching the relevant audience and to ensure that communication channels are clear and open. Most important are increasing the frequency and transparency of the internal communications among the Directorate, ExCom, and Council; maintaining the excellent quality of the APECS newsletter and website; and improving APECS social media presence.

Action 1: Improve the transparency of internal communication

- At the start of each term, APECS' goals, mission statement, structure, and roles should be reiterated to new and continuing members - this information should be easily accessible for members throughout the year.
- At the start of the term, all Council members should be provided with a list of suggestions for who to contact with what type of question that includes the contact information (e.g. when to contact their Council Chair, their ExCom contact, the APECS office, etc). ExCom meeting summaries should be more detailed and the location of these summaries should be communicated to the Council at the start of each term.
- If a decision to be made during an ExCom meeting will affect a PG's work, the ExCom should invite the leader or representative(s) from the PGs to attend and actively participate in the discussion of the topic at the bimonthly ExCom meeting.

Action 2: Maintain excellence of newsletter for member communication

- Continue to provide the newsletter alongside social media communications.
- Introduce a section highlighting the work of a different NC each month
- Reiterate and/or linking to the APECS mission statements as a footnote in each newsletter



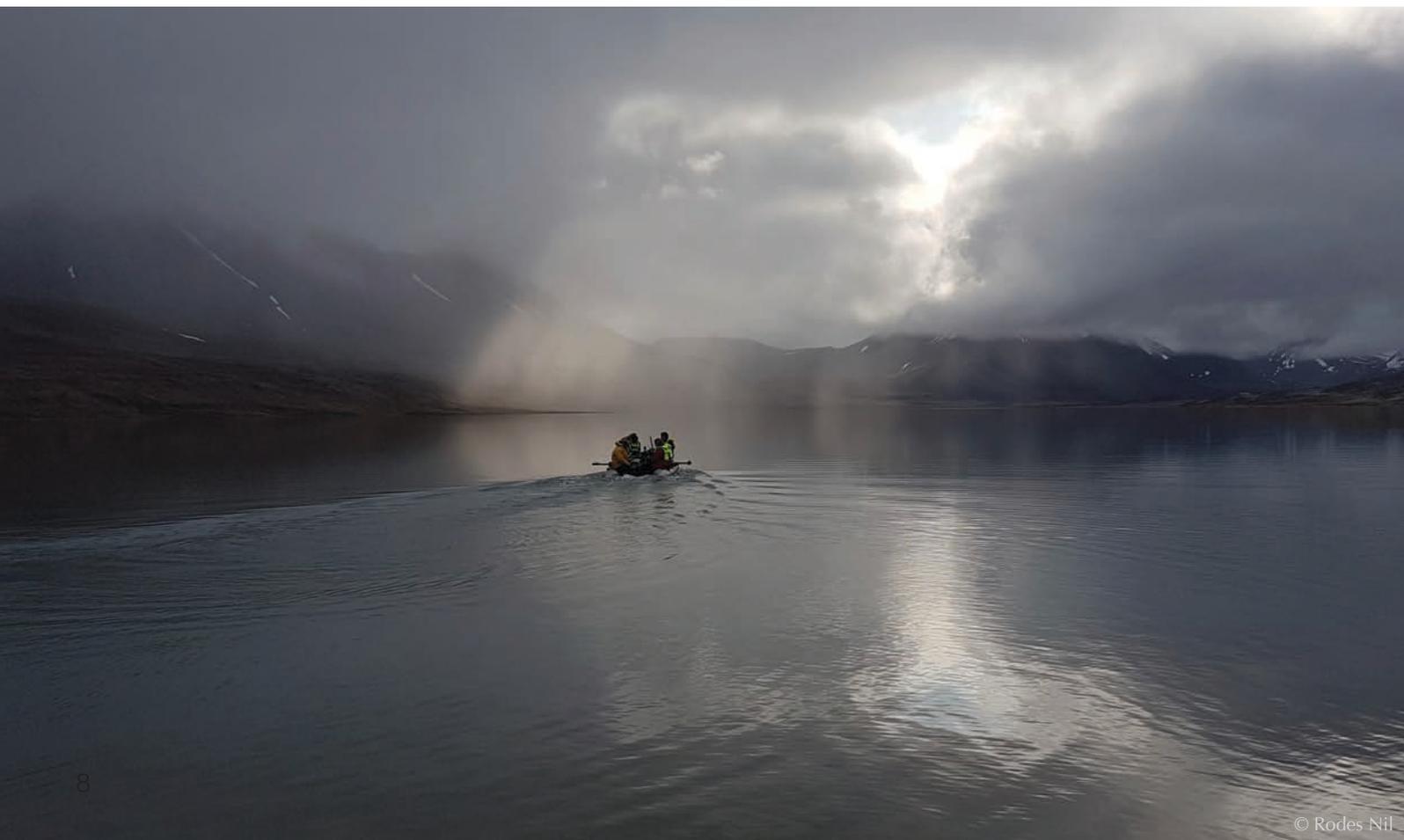
Goal 2: Improving Communication

Action 3: Improve social media strategy

- Add a third social media coordinator as well as backup list of volunteers who can fill in as needed. Encourage social media coordinator to attend ExCom meetings as needed.
- Tailor posts to the aesthetic and audience of each social platform.
- Engage with partner accounts to increase visibility, and for partnerships with NC accounts to translate posts into non-English languages.
- Consider monitoring the audience engagements of each social platform to ensure we are reaching a wide audience and disseminating information equitably.
- Create a Project Group for External Communications under the leadership of the directorate.

Action 4: Increase frequency & variety of webinars

- Webinars, online conferences, and other online events need to encourage the exchange of experiences and integration between ExCom, Council, NCs and the APECS membership. See Goal 5 for a more in depth look into virtual events.
- NCs should be encouraged to host at least one webinar per year in the local language for their members and the general public. See more regarding NC events in Goal 3.
- APECS members and PGs should be encouraged to organize webinars periodically (e.g. monthly) with different themes (i.e. career, research, policy, and outreach).
- Record all webinars and post to the APECS vimeo channel to increase access for members across all time zones and to allow closed captioning and translation into other languages.





Goal 3: Strengthening National Committees & Global Connections

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The 28 NCs of APECS (Figure 1) are crucial to providing personal connections and local networks while acting as a gateway to the larger organisation and international opportunities. Some NCs are well-established, with leadership structure, regular events, and a large membership. Other NCs are just getting started and benefit from the APECS parent organisation attracting members and aiding in development. A representative from each NC is present on the Council and also has the option to be involved in PGs throughout the term.

Action 1: Integrate NCs into decisions made by APECS

As an important part of APECS, NCs have an active voice in APECS decision making. Each NC already has a representative on the APECS Council who votes on behalf of the NC in larger decisions regarding APECS development. APECS will aim to include NCs even further in discussions at the international level when establishing partnerships and suggest relevant project groups and contact points to facilitate involvement and collaboration. Additionally, APECS should continue and improve the consultation of NCs through forms and surveys to get their feedback on long-term issues involving APECS actions and decisions.

Action 2: Assist in the organisation of NCs

APECS should take additional measures to assist the structure and organisation of NCs, guide them in following the APECS mission, and ensure NC members remain engaged. Due to EU privacy laws, APECS cannot provide direct contact information for registered members, but this guide should include examples of forms to distribute on the mailing list to gather member information.

Visibility through an online presence such as a website and social media is critical to attracting and retaining members of the NC and should be a priority. As NCs grow, it is important to effectively manage its leadership body, and APECS should provide suggestions for leadership structure and organisation that can be based on the organisation of the international



Goal 3: Strengthening NCs & Global Connections

body. This is explained in more detail below in Action 3. Additionally, APECS should streamline the process to become a full-fledged NC, and clearly outline the requirements and goals to establish this partnership.

Action 3: Streamline communication within NC and to local members

Regular communication between APECS and NCs, as well between NCs and their members will continue to be encouraged. APECS should continue to provide regular reminders of procedures (e.g. reporting of events) and ensure that NCs have clear information about who to reach out to for guidance or where to find information in case of need. The review of NC activities should strive to be more than just a report form - see Action 4 for more ideas on how to facilitate interaction. The development of a newsletter by the NCs is highly recommended and can include information such as current activities, events and opportunities. This can be distributed over email and social media to reach a wider audience. Additionally, NCs should consider translating the APECS newsletter into their local language, which has the potential to gain the attention and interest of local communities.

Action 4: Strengthen relationships between the NCs

The exchange of experiences between NCs is essential for APECS to remain cohesive and integrated in its actions and activities. APECS will encourage and provide support for NCs to establish regional meetings and/or forums in order to share experiences, form partnerships, and coordinate joint activities. The APECS World Summit workshops should continue to be organised, but virtual or in-person events that are more frequent (at least once per year) should be prioritised as not all NCs have funds available for travel. More frequent APECS NC calls should be established to provide insight to other NCs on particular activities, ideas, and events. Additionally, NCs should be encouraged to host collaborative events in local languages (e.g. Primera Conferencia en línea Iberoamericana) and with relevant groups to strengthen community ties and understanding. See Goals 2 and 6 for more details regarding communication and in-person/virtual events.

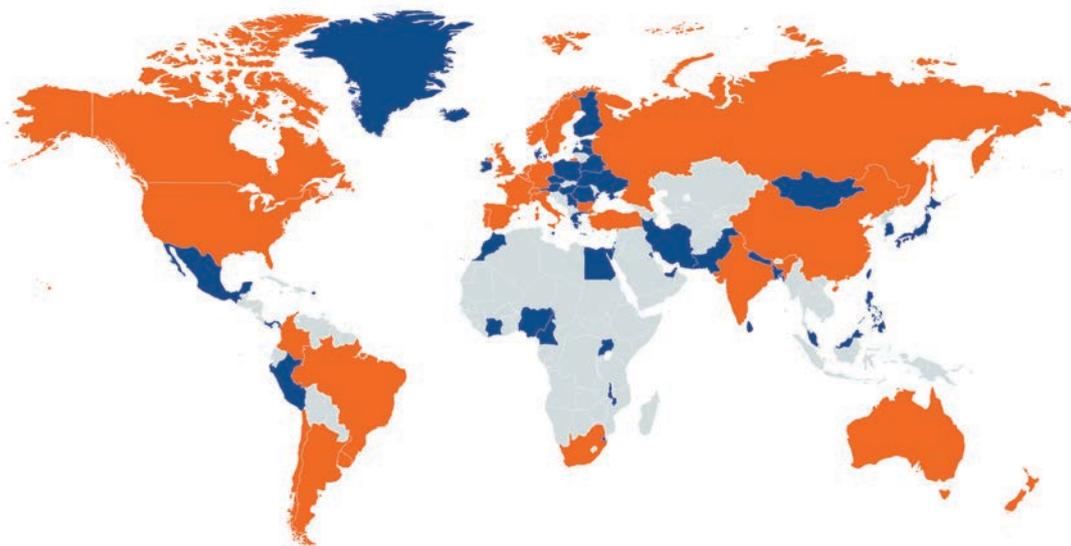


Figure 1: APECS National Committees presence around the world. Countries with an established NC are shown in orange, while countries with APECS members but no established NC are in blue. Countries without an APECS presence are in grey.



Goal 4: Establish a Structure to Grow Sustainably & Improve Internal Functions

As an early career organisation, APECS has a high turnover of members and projects and therefore needs to remain adaptable and be prepared for future volunteer and staffing changes. Documentation of processes is important to ensure ongoing sustainability of the organisation.

NCs also face high turnover and APECS aims to strengthen them by prioritising support to NC activities and supporting grassroots level activities (see Goal 3).

Action 1: Succession planning

APECS Council members will continue to be resourced with appropriate support/mentorship/guidance/training when participating and running APECS activities and projects so that these activities build capacity for all involved. To ensure processes are well documented, APECS will continue preparing standard organisational documents, including procedures of activities, legal requirements, advice documents for Council members and Project Group leaders and store these in Google folders that can be accessed by Council members. For further details, see Appendix A.15.

Action 2: Establish a formal process for delegation throughout the organisation

The ExCom, in consultation with the International Directorate and APECS Advisory Committee, will determine the tasks needed to address goals outlined in the organisational review. The ExCom of each term will be responsible for summarising progress for these goals and advising on potential targets for the next incoming ExCom. ExCom, in collaboration with Council members and NCs, can then form a plan to delegate any identified tasks through NC activities or Council projects. This will not restrict the tasks that Council members and



Goal 4: Structure for Growth

NCs can conduct; both remain free to also take on new ideas in line with the APECS' mission. PGLs will be responsible for delegating tasks to the wider APECS membership specific to a PG. While APECS can provide additional measures to assist with NC organisational structure (Goal 3), NCs can choose what best suits their structure and encourages collaboration with local organisations. For further details, see Appendix A.2.

Action 3: Leadership restructuring to improve management, representation, and transparency

APECS has grown from an organisation with 32 Council members at the time of the writing of the 2016-2020 Strategic Plan to 103 Council members at the time of writing this 2021-2025 Strategic Plan. The organisational structure needed to manage a Council of approximately 30 members is very different from that needed to effectively manage over 100 members. Different strategies have been attempted since the writing of the last Strategic Plan to accommodate the growing Council and devise new and creative ways to support the work of Council members, such as the development of Council guides, Council orientation at the beginning of the term, greater support for Project Group Leaders (PGLs), and management schemes to ensure that inactive members are followed up with, and active members supported. However, these measures have treated only the symptoms of the fundamental issue in Council management, which is that it is not feasible that an ExCom of 5 members plus several advisory ex-officio members, in conjunction with 2-3 Council Co-Chairs, all of whom are volunteers - can effectively manage a team of over 100 members. APECS' growing popularity is a boon to the ECR involved in the organisation itself, as well as for our ECR membership, who reap the benefits of the projects carried out by the APECS Council. In order to continue to support that growth, while maintaining effective management, it is critical to rethink the organisation of APECS leadership.





APECS Revised Structure

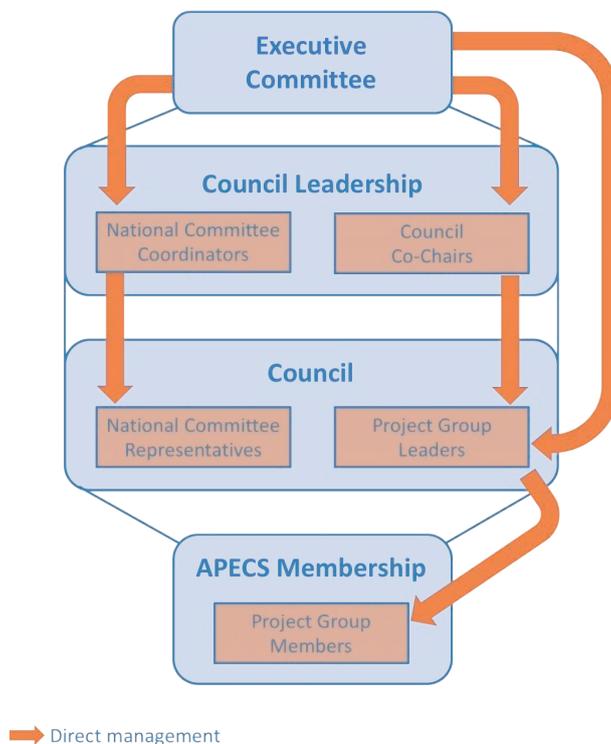


Figure 2: This graphic displays the new proposed APECS Council Structure. This effort streamlines the relationship between leadership and the APECS community.

Action 3.1: Restructuring of the Council for strengthened leadership in APECS

Moving into the next 5 years of APECS' tenure, both to streamline the functioning of leadership, as well as to increase the engagement of our wider membership in APECS' activities, the APECS volunteer leadership shall only be composed of the Council (NC Representatives, PGLs) and the Council Leadership (Council Co-Chairs, NC Coordinators, and ExCom). This is displayed in the figure below.

Action 3.2: Leadership Representativeness

In order to improve the representativeness of the APECS ExCom, a regional representation system will be implemented. From now on APECS ExCom will consist of 5 members representing the global reach of the association by having two representatives for Europe and North America (one each) and three representatives for the rest of the world (Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America). APECS recognizes that the experiences and challenges of being an ECR vary greatly geographically. This new system ensures that APECS ExCom includes the perspectives of some geographical areas that have been underrepresented throughout the history of the association. Including the perspectives of underrepresented areas will help ExCom to make decisions that benefit the association more globally, which in turn will help to increase the diversity of APECS (see goal 1).

APECS should consider applying term limits to leadership positions to include new perspectives and provide more leadership opportunities. ExCom members can serve for a maximum of two terms (consecutive or non-consecutive). The APECS President can serve for a maximum of one term as President, where this term is considered within the two-term maximum for an ExCom member, e.g. someone can serve on ExCom as a Vice-President for one term,



Goal 4: Structure for Growth

and then President the next term, at which point they will have reached their ExCom term limit.

Council leadership (Council Co-Chair and NC Coordinator) positions are held for a maximum of one term. NC reps may serve for a maximum of two terms (consecutive or non-consecutive). PGLs may serve as PGL for as long as they want, but only for a maximum of two terms (consecutive or non-consecutive) for a specific PG. After two terms leading a PG, a PGL is welcome to apply to lead a different PG for the next term, or to apply for a Council leadership position, or to apply for ExCom.

APECS members are not limited by how many terms they can contribute towards PGs or other APECS activities in a non-leadership capacity.

Action 3.3: Implement a more formal alumni network

APECS alumni are among the organisation's most loyal supporters. During their time in APECS, members can develop a wide range of skills and a wealth of institutional knowledge and APECS plans to retain this expertise and support by implementing a formal Alumni Network. APECS does already reach out to alumni for advice and support but not in a coordinated way, tending to rely on only a few alumni. Formalising APECS' relationship with alumni and broadening the network of connections will benefit current leadership in terms of skills development and polar networking. Such a network will also benefit APECS alumni who can retain and continue to benefit from the valuable professional and personal connections made during their time in APECS throughout their careers.

The alumni network will comprise a database of interested alumni. There needs to be a mechanism to keep the database up-to-date. Regular and relevant communications will be the foundation for engaging with the alumni network. This can be achieved through a regularly updated alumni website and a mailing list, where alumni can receive the newsletter and any relevant updates such as the APECS Annual Report. Alumni willing to act as mentors will be encouraged to join the mentor database. The mentor database is currently an underused resource that needs revamping, and the alumni network can be a tool to help strengthen and develop it. In addition, APECS will follow up with past members to better understand the sort of careers they go on to have and to ensure that all alumni have the opportunity to be involved in the alumni network and contribute as mentors in the future.

For a detailed look at this restructuring and relevant procedures, please see Appendix A.





Goal 5: Advancing Connections through Virtual and In-Person Events



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With membership spread worldwide, APECS members come together in person or through virtual meeting platforms and create pathways to promote education and outreach, network, and further career development.

APECS in-person events are often tied to conferences that members are already attending such as the SCAR Open Science Conferences, American Geophysical Union Meetings, and Arctic Science Summit Weeks, to name a few. Not only does this combination with well-established events save on extra costs needed for attendance such as flight tickets and registration, but these in-person side meetings are used as a catalyst for networking, career development, and motivation to strengthen membership involvement. These events provide ideal opportunities to connect, learn, share experiences, and develop ideas with a wide range of individuals from early to senior career levels from disciplines outside of the traditional working environment. The APECS World Summit Workshop, held in 2015 and 2018, has become the premier event for National Committees and Members to come together for a multi-day event to connect, collaborate, and develop new opportunities.

In recent years, APECS has strengthened its online presence with virtual workshops, conferences, webinars, and other events. This allows for a major reduction in personal travel time and costs, and thus, opens up events to those who otherwise would not be able to attend due to a financial barrier or visa limitations. With the onset of COVID-19, many groups needed to quickly transition their events online. Fortunately, prior events such as the annual APECS Online Conference prepared APECS members well for the need to move events online. Other virtual activities include the Polar Weeks held annually in March and September, and Council Project Groups regularly release webinars relevant to their activities.



Goal 5: Advancing Connections

Examples of Current APECS Activities:

Name	Location; Frequency	Description
APECS World Summit	In-person; 2-3 years	Brings together NCs and members to discuss and share ideas
AGU APECS Workshop	In-person, San Francisco, CA USA; Annual	Panel or 1-day workshop
Online Conference	Online; Annual	24-hour conference in English with research presentations & prizes
Conferencia Iberoamericana Online	Online; Annual	24-hour conference in Spanish with research presentations & prizes
International Polar Weeks	Online; Biannual	Celebration of polar-themed activities such as Art, Films, and Outreach around the Earth's equinoxes
APECS SCAR OSC 2020 Workshop	In-person Online; Biennial	2 day workshop bringing Antarctic ECRs together
EGU Workshop	In-person, Vienna, AT; Annual	1-day workshop for polar ECRs
MOSAiC 2019 School	In-person; Singular	Train and educate the next generation of Arctic system science experts

Action 1: Continue support for online events, and make them more inclusive through the use of local language & partners, and by considering time zones

With the inauguration of the Conferencia Iberoamericana Online in 2019, this represented one of the first APECS events in a language other than English and presented an opportunity for Spanish-speaking members to come together for a day of knowledge sharing and collaboration. This is an important milestone for APECS and the international polar community where events are traditionally held in English. As ECRs, many of APECS' members are developing professionally and may lack experience with networking and communication, even in their native language. Enhancing the number of online-events will bring more capacity building advantages to our membership, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic lock down. Holding meetings in a wide-range of regions and languages helps to increase motivation throughout our network. This reinforces the importance of hosting events in local languages, which should be supported by APECS, relevant NCs and other local groups. Besides using English as a common language in the meetings, APECS encourages NCs to hold national workshops which will be more focused and accessible in the local language.



As a global community, APECS encompasses members in various time zones where it is not possible to find a common time frame where everyone can come together. It is important to offer events in a wide range of time zones to accommodate as many people as possible and explore different options to make this a reality. Currently, the Online Conference is a 24-hour event, and APECS should support and promote virtual events that strive to achieve this standard of accessibility.

Additionally, APECS should continue to support well-established events such as the International Polar Weeks, Online Conference, webinars, and where a host conference is not available, consider a virtual event to allow those from financially-disadvantaged backgrounds to have the same opportunities for networking, capacity building, and intellectual exchange. These events often highlight people, non-scientific accomplishments, and local knowledge that are traditionally not included or underrepresented in polar publications, presentations, or large conferences. These aspects of polar life presented through means such as films/media, Indigenous knowledge, culture, and art are important to consider while conducting research or using resources and should continue to be further integrated, promoted, and supported by APECS.

Action 2: Facilitate and support regional/global meetings for National Committees and members

The APECS World Summit, held in 2015 and 2018, has become the flagship in-person event for NCs and members to come together. However, the APECS Leadership has a high turnover rate, thus leaving many members without the opportunity to come together. We recommend that APECS develop and support more regional and global meetings for both members and NCs. These events can either be virtual or in-person; as stated in Action 1, virtual events remove the need for a financial requirement to attend and are more accommodating to those who cannot travel. When not being able to afford participating in a meeting, online meeting rooms of the general workshop help to connect more people at the same time. In addition, bringing together people from the same discipline or similar research fields forges new collaborations which strengthen international connections. In-person events should be correlated with a larger workshop or conference if possible, while recognising that those from outside of the conference focus may not be able to attend. Also, participating in APECS PGs provides the opportunity to learn more about APECS' activities and improve the skills of the person involved. For more information on this Action, please see Goal 3.

Action 3: Continue to maintain social media strategy and improve online communications

APECS currently has a wide range of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, to reach out to various audiences, and platforms such as Zoom and Vimeo are regularly utilised to facilitate online communication. Hosting specific polar-related events facilitates addressing different audiences every time, with the ability to store the content online for future viewing. APECS doesn't only bring a platform that creates awareness via education and outreach activities, it also hosts extensive workshops from mentors and leaders in their fields. Within this scope, there is a circulation among the members that can be useful on social media as a tool to reach or be inspiration for other relevant researchers. Online communication and information dissemination is key to facilitating projects, ideas, and a sense of community so it is important that APECS maintains and updates these strategies each term to engage the early career pool of members. Please see more regarding communication in Goal 2.



Goal 6: Maintaining & Building Partnerships



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APECS has a large number of partners with which the organisation shares distinct aims and activities. APECS' sponsors and partners include well known international organisations with polar, cryosphere and alpine backgrounds. Memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been established between APECS and several international organisations but APECS works with many more with out a formal partnership agreement., including six associations of ECRs. It is within the objectives of the APECS Strategic Plan to maintain relationships and collaborations with historical and key partners as well as broaden and bolster the number of partner organisations. The aim of these partnerships is to stimulate interdisciplinary and international research collaborations, and grow future scientific leaders in polar research, education and outreach.

With the aims of **maintaining current and expanding partnerships**, APECS should consider the following action packages over the next 5 years:

Maintaining current partnerships:

Action 1: Ensure effective, efficient cross-collaborations

APECS is situated to produce effective and efficient relationships with its current partners by maintaining updated MoUs with each of its partner organisations and encouraging synergies in common activities and projects. APECS also emphasizes cross-sectional collaboration with a large number of organisations and should continue to remain an active partner.

Action 2: Review commitments

APECS collaborates with partners to organise and coordinate the evaluation processes of applications to the different positions for ECRs that its partners offer or for available travel support and other funding the partners want to distribute to ECRs. This process facilitates



the coordination of the application call for the partners, but also at the time offers opportunities to ECRs within APECS to act as reviewers and gain training and experience in the review process.

Action 3: Further promotion of partners' resources and activities

APECS traditionally hosts a number of educational and outreach activities such as the Polar Week or the Online Conference. APECS deliberately includes presentations and documentation from partners within in-person and online events with ECRs in order to highlight the collaborative work APECS has put in.

Action 4: Social networking

APECS has a broad network of social media resources and followers in addition to actively posting to the news section of the APECS website. The promotion of our partners through our social media and website reaches a broad network of organisations and researchers. In addition, APECS aims to increase its visibility in social media.

Expanding partnerships:

Action 1: Partner database

APECS will create a partnership database with up-to-date information regarding its partner organisations.

Action 2: Development of information packet

APECS should work to create an information packet which would contain information about APECS and our interests towards developing further and more widespread collaborations. This will serve as an easily accessible information source for potential partners.

Action 3: Partnership advertisement

APECS should develop an advertisement document such as a flyer to distribute among international organisations with common interests as a way to promote the organisation among potential partners. This could help reach an audience that APECS is currently unaware of and may initiate a new partnership.

Action 4: Target new partners

APECS should formulate a list of potential partners and the tentative terms of the relationship with APECS. APECS should then approach these organisations to discuss potential agreements and terms of a partnership agreement. The list of potential partners should be reviewed and investigated each term.

Action 5: Funding opportunities

APECS should identify funding opportunities and institutional organisations to continue support for the Directorate staff, APECS-led workshops, and funding opportunities for ECRs.

Action 6: Inclusion and diversity

APECS has a strong background in diversity, equality and inclusivity. APECS will provide resources in these terms (such as resources created by the DEI and Indigenous collaborations PGs) to guarantee a sound and up-to-date policy in its long-term relationship with its partners and among the membership.



Background

The Strategic Plan outlined herein is the result of discussions among the APECS Leadership (Executive Committee, Council, and APECS Directorate), the APECS National Committees, and extensive consultation with the wider APECS membership and polar research community. The community was consulted in two main ways:

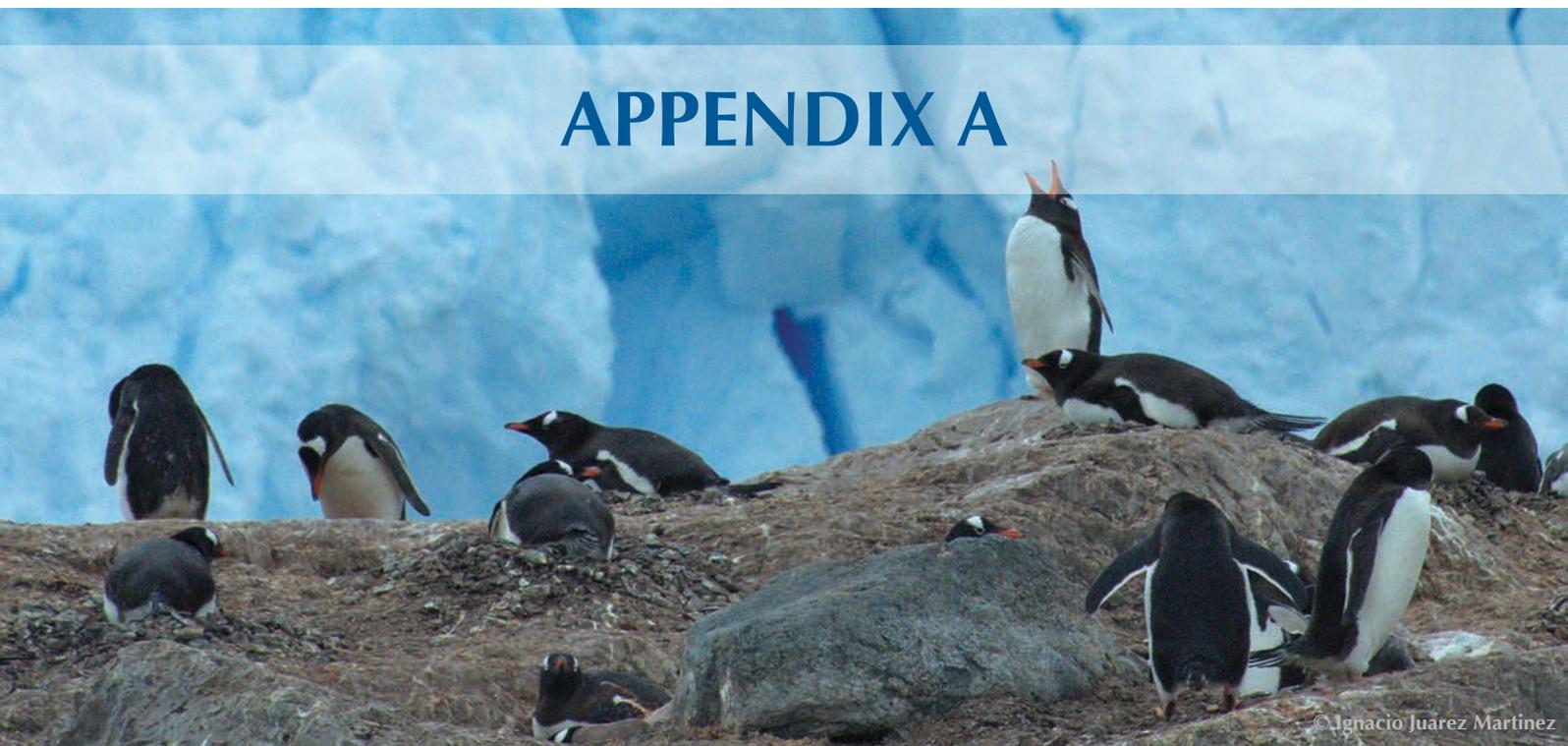
APECS Organisational Review 2019: The review was led by a committee composed of APECS members (past and present) and mentors to assess both the efficiency of current activities of APECS and to advise on the future direction of the organisation. The review consisted of informal feedback opportunities as well as a comprehensive survey. The survey received over 100 responses. The final recommendations of the APECS Organisational Review 2019 were published in December 2019 and are available [here](#).

Consultation among APECS Council and National Committees: A wider consultation in the form of a survey among the APECS leadership and National Committees was conducted in April - May 2020, which received 57 responses. The survey allowed comments on the recommendations of the APECS Organisational Review as well as recommendations and ideas for their implementation. The APECS Strategic Plan 2021-2025 was written by the 2019-2020 APECS Executive Committee, with the help of the International Directorate and the APECS Council, who are listed below in alphabetical order with affiliation.

Alex Borowicz, Council Member
Jilda Caccavo, Executive Committee Ex-Officio
Jennifer Cooper, Executive Committee President
Clare Earys, Council Member
Gerlis Fugmann, APECS Executive Director (until July 2020)
Carolynn Harris, Executive Committee
Charlie Hewitt, Council Member
Juan Hofer, Executive Committee
Swati Nagar, Council Member
Lara F. Perez, Executive Committee
Gabriela Roldan, Executive Committee Ex-Officio
Neelu Singh, Executive Committee
Sarah Shakil, Council Member
Juliana Souza, Council Member
Florian Vidal, Council Member
Deniz Vural, Council Member



APPENDIX A



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A.1 Succession planning

Legal requirements for succession planning will be determined by the International Directorate and their host institution/country, Advisory Committee, and ExCom, and may include or be included in documents such as Copyright, legal registration of APECS. Those responsible for updating documents will be determined by the ExCom and work may be delegated through the APECS Council. PGLs will be responsible for leading creation and/or updates of guides for running a project to enable effective transfer of project leadership across terms. To ensure incoming Council members are aware of the organisational structure of APECS and available resources, the ExCom or previous Council leadership will continue to present this information during Council orientation. Post-orientation, a quiz and/or “orientation feedback” survey will be provided to Council members. APECS will also continue to pair ExCom members with Council members to enable effective communication between leadership groups.

A.2 Availabilities

All volunteers and staff of the APECS leadership structure (ExCom, Council members, International Directorate) are responsible for indicating their away times in a designated Away Times document in the shared Council Google folder, along with alternate contact details if ongoing contact is needed during the away time (e.g. ongoing projects). Leadership are encouraged to use automated email messages for direct notification of away times, with an alternate contact method when necessary.

A.3 Council restructuring

Moving into the next 5 years of APECS’ tenure, both to streamline the functioning of leadership, as well as to increase the engagement of our wider membership in APECS’ activities, the APECS volunteer leadership shall only be composed of the Council (NC Representatives, PGLs) and the Council Leadership (Council Co-Chairs, NC Coordinators, and ExCom).



There will be no formal title other than APECS Member for those who contribute to PGs or other activities.

A.3 Council restructuring

In preparation for a new term, rather than soliciting a call for applicants to the Council, a call will be solicited for leaders of a series of PGs. These PGs will include our core PGs (e.g. Polar Weeks, Online Conference), PGs whose current members wish for them to continue into the next term, as well as PGs that the outgoing ExCom foresees will be needed for the next term (e.g. a PG for planning an event at an international conference). In the solicitation for PGLs for these specific PGs, we will solicit ideas for PGs coming from APECS membership as whole (as long as that member is willing to lead the PG they propose). In addition, we will solicit applicants specifically for the position of Council Co-Chair (2 positions).

ECR from APECS' membership, as well as members of the finishing term (both PGLs and PG members) will then apply to lead the advertised PGs, apply to lead a PG of their creation, or apply for a Council leadership position (Council Co-Chair or NC Coordinator). In this new system, groups may have 1-2 PGLs, depending on the workload of the PG, and its distribution of activities throughout the year (e.g. a PG may have two main periods of activity throughout the term that only require one PGL during each period, thus two PGLs could manage that group, one taking the main lead during the first period of activity, with the other taking the lead during the second period of activity).

In addition to PGLs and Council Co-Chairs, in preparation for the new term, NCs will be solicited for applicants for the position of NC representative (1 per NC), as well as NC Coordinator (3 positions). NC Coordinators may hold just the role of NC Coordinator, or may be both an NC Representative for a certain NC, as well as NC Coordinator. This will allow NC Coordinators to have a closer connection to NCs, as they will derive from the pool of NC leaderships themselves, and thus will be able to carry out their role more effectively.

Thus, one application for engagement in APECS leadership will be designed with various options within it. An applicant can select whether they would like to apply: 1) to be the PGL of an existing PG, 2) to be the PGL of a new PG, 3) to be an NC rep, 4) to be a Council Co-Chair, 5) to be an NC Coordinator. For applicants interested in creating a new PG, the form will request information on par with a preliminary PG plan, summarizing the intent of the PG, its goals, deliverables, related activities, needs in terms of PG members, and potential advantages to PG members who are involved (capacity building).

Following the solicitation for applicants to the Council (PGLs and NC representatives) and Council leadership (Council Co-Chairs and NC Coordinators), a call will be announced for applicants to ExCom. The outgoing Council and Council leadership will vote for the new term's ExCom from among all applicants (see sections A.6 Voting and A.7 ExCom restructuring for more details).

The ExCom of the finishing term will vote on applicants for PGL, Council Co-Chair, NC representative, and NC Coordinator. Once persons have been elected to all of these positions, PGLs and NC representatives will constitute the Council, while Council Co-Chairs and NC Coordinators will constitute Council Leadership.



A.3.1 Membership engagement in PGs

Once the ExCom and Council have been elected for a given term, it will be necessary to advertise a given term's PGs to the APECS membership in order to recruit PG members. The goals, needs, and deliverables of a given PG will be advertised to the wider APECS membership, and APECS members will be able to fill in a Google form to apply to contribute to a given PG. Depending on the number of members needed, PGL(s) of a given group will then select among the applicants to a given PG who the members of that PG will be. PG members will work with PGL(s) over the duration of that PG's tenure during the term. A summary of their group, as well as updates regarding that group, and the group's members, will be posted to the APECS website. At the close of a PG's activities, all members will provide a report on their experience of working on that PG. Any APECS member can apply to any number of PGs,.

Throughout the term (e.g. every three months), APECS membership (including active PG members) will be reminded that they can always propose PGs to lead at any time. APECS leadership will welcome applicants to lead new PGs at any point during the term. Furthermore, as needed, throughout the term, APECS leadership may advertise the need for further PG members for any given PG, as needed. The same goes for the replacement or the need for further PGLs. Applicants for PGL of existing PGs or applicants to become PGL of new PGs will be reviewed and voted on by ExCom.

If during the term a PGL needs to step down, or it is realised that more than two PGLs are needed, a PGL may either request a call among the wider APECS leadership for a new or additional PGL, or one of their current PG members may be interested in replacing or joining them in the role of PGL, in which case, that PG member would fill in the PGL form, and their application will be reviewed and voted on by ExCom.

A.3.2 Council management

ExCom will work with the Council Co-Chairs and NC Coordinators to manage the PGLs. The PGLs will manage the members of their PGs. Each ExCom member will have a set of specific PGL contacts. PGLs will be made aware of their ExCom contact, to whom they can turn if they require advice or help in carrying out the goals of their PG (in addition to being able to reach out to ExCom as a whole for any of their needs).

Council Co-Chairs will organise PGL meetings during which PGLs can exchange updates regarding their PGs, and exchange ideas. PGL meetings will be made open to all PG members to attend, but will only be mandatory for PGLs. Council Co-Chairs will also solicit and collate reports requested from PGLs throughout the term.

NC Coordinators will work with NC representatives to make sure an open line of communication is maintained between APECS international and APECS' NCs. NC Coordinators will acquaint NC representatives with the resources available to them from APECS international, and encourage collaboration and communication between NCs by holding biannual NC meetings for all NC representatives. NC Coordinators will also work to encourage the creation of NCs in countries where there are APECS members but no NCs.



A.3.3 Council and PG activity monitoring

All members of APECS leadership and all members of PGs will be given clear expectations of their activity requirements and made aware that sustained, unexplained inactivity or lack of communication will result in their removal from leadership or from a given PG. Contingency documents to guide monitoring and address inactivity for each level of APECS leadership and engagement will be made publicly available.

As the top leadership body, ExCom member activity will be monitored internally. ExCom will draw up an ExCom Contingency document, which will outline the steps to take if one ExCom member is felt to be not contributing to the extent agreed upon at the start of the term. This ExCom Contingency document will include criteria to define activity thresholds indicative of when a member of ExCom is no longer engaging to expectations, as well as outline a series of moderating steps aimed to work with the unengaged ExCom member to improve activity. If these moderating steps do not improve the situation, ExCom can vote to remove the inactive ExCom member with a 3-vote majority, followed by a special election to replace the removed ExCom member.

ExCom will monitor the activity of the Council (Council Co-Chairs, NC Coordinators and PGLs). ExCom will draw up a Council Contingency document, which will include criteria to define activity thresholds indicative of when a member of the Council is no longer engaging to expectations, as well as outline a series of moderating steps aimed to work with the unengaged Council member to improve activity. If these moderating steps do not improve the situation, ExCom can vote to remove the inactive Council member with a 3-vote majority, followed by a special election to replace the removed Council member.

PGLs will monitor the activity of PG members. ExCom will draw up a PG Contingency document, which will include criteria to define activity thresholds indicative of when a member of a PG is no longer engaging to expectations, as well as outline a series of moderating steps aimed to work with the unengaged PG member to improve activity. If these moderating steps do not improve the situation, the PGL can remove the inactive PG member, followed by a call for a replacement PG member (if needed).

A.3.4 Voting

As previously stated, each NC will have one collective vote, cast by the NC rep. Similarly, each PG will have one collective vote, cast by the PGL. In addition, individuals who hold positions of PGLs, Council Co-Chairs, NC Coordinators, and/or ExCom will each have one individual vote.

A.3.5 ExCom restructuring

In order to improve the representativeness of the APECS ExCom, a regional representation system will be implemented. From now on APECS ExCom will consist of 5 members representing the global reach of the association by having two representatives for Europe and North America (one each) and three representatives for the rest of the world (Africa, Asia, Oceania and South America). Country affiliation, and thus regional categorisation, will be based on the institutional affiliation, or lacking an institutional affiliation, the country of residence, of a given applicant, i.e. the country that the applicant indicated on their form to become an APECS member or the country that the applicant would indicate at the time of candidature, in the case that the applicant may have changed country of affiliation/residence



since becoming an APECS member. Any interested ECR from the APECS membership, previous PG members, PGLs, Council leaders, or ExCom members, may apply for ExCom, but at the time of voting, applicants will be divided into four categories: 1) North America (US and Canada), 2) Europe (EU countries, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland), 3) selected Commonwealth countries (UK, Australia and New Zealand), 4) All other countries. The outgoing Council will be able to vote for 1 ExCom member from categories 1 - 3, and 2 members from category 4. If in any category there are no candidates, then that regional category ExCom position is opened up for the next candidate with the most votes regardless of their regional categorisation.

In the case of a tie, the outgoing ExCom excluding members running for reelection will have an additional vote on which of the two tied applicants should be elected to ExCom, and the applicant with the majority of votes from ExCom will be elected.

While systemic issues related to cultural differences in the polar sciences between different countries (e.g. the independence of students from their advisors, or the value placed on volunteer work and community engagement), as well as the inherent advantage of ECRs from English-speaking countries, will continue to cause an overrepresentation of ECRs from certain countries in APECS membership and leadership, this regional representation system should at least help to facilitate engagement from the members from currently underrepresented countries. The importance of the NC Coordinators in working to create NCs and spur engagement in underrepresented countries cannot be underestimated. Thus, top-down measures such as regional-representation in ExCom, and bottom-up measures such as NC Coordinators encouraging the creation of NCs where there are none and encouraging further engagement from less active NCs, will do well to improve global representation in the upper echelons of APECS leadership over the next 5 years.

A.3.6 Term limits

ExCom members can serve for a maximum of two terms (consecutive or nonconsecutive). The APECS president can serve for a maximum of one term as president. A term as president is considered within the two-term maximum for an ExCom member, e.g. someone can serve on ExCom as a Vice-President for one term, and then President the next term, at which point they will have reached their ExCom term limit. Former ExCom members can serve as Ex Officios to the ExCom for a maximum of two terms.

Council leadership (Council Co-Chair and NC Coordinator) positions are held for a maximum of one term. NC reps may serve for a maximum of two terms (consecutive or nonconsecutive). PGLs may serve as PGL for as long as they want, but only for a maximum of two terms for a specific PG (consecutive or nonconsecutive). After two terms leading a PG, a PGL is welcome to apply to lead a different PG for the next term, or to apply for a Council leadership position, or to apply for ExCom. There is no limit on the number of terms during which a PG member can participate in PGs.

ExCom members can be members of an NC, but in order to prevent conflicts of interest, they cannot be in a leadership role in their NC during their tenure on the ExCom. Council members may be engaged in NC leadership roles at the same time they are on the Council.



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