

## **International Association of Bioethics (IAB) Board of Directors Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

This document accompanies the constitution for purposes of specifying how the Board of Directors (Board) will operate in broad terms and clarifying the expectations for Board members during their tenure. It is a living document, which the Board will adjust when its officers and members think it is appropriate. This may occur in response to issues identified either by IAB membership or by individual Board members.

### **1. Board Responsibilities**

A minimum of six meetings per year will be held, with the ordinary schedule to be holding meetings every other month. The quorum necessary for the Board to conduct business shall be at least 50% of members of the Board and must include either the President or the Vice President.

The Board is responsible for the following specific tasks:

- Planning the WCB in collaboration with local hosts
- Publishing select WCB papers in its official journal, *Bioethics*
- Recognizing outstanding contributions to the field through administration of awards
- Serving as responsible stewards of IAB resources, including its budget, the Secretariat, all awards, and networks.
- Communicating with IAB membership
- Seeking funding to conduct all Association activities in ways that offer tangible support for full participation by members of low- and middle- income regions and by early career researchers
- Recruiting individual and institutional members
- Striving to ensure the IAB adheres to sustainable environmental practices in all its operations
- Striving to integrate other broad matters of social concern into its activities, including (but not limited to): creating structures of collaboration and participation that are inclusive and do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age or disability

### **2. Individual Board Member Responsibilities**

The constitution outlines specific responsibilities assigned to Board officers, including the President, Vice-President, Treasurer, and Communications Officer. The Board may appoint additional officers, sub-committees, or executive staff to carry out specific tasks, including organizing the scientific program of any conference or congress held under the auspices of the Association, or may authorize the President to appoint such additional officers or sub-committees. The Board's rationale for doing so will be made clear and recorded in the minutes of the Board's meeting.

Responsibilities of other Board members will be assigned to each Board member each time a new Board is constituted. To function effectively and comprehensively, *each Board member must assume leadership for a specific domain*. More than one member may share leadership in a specific domain. Board members may contribute to more than one domain.

Leadership domains for Board members include:

- **World Congress of Bioethics (WCB) lead:** assume responsibility for maintaining communication with the organizers of the upcoming WCB; assume responsibility for organizing a process of securing bids for the next WCB and clarifying expectations (e.g., re: space, an online option, local collection and transfer of fees to IAB)
- **Awards lead:** organize the Bioethics Service to Others in the face of Challenges including, e.g., the calls, the decision procedures, informing the winners, the award ceremonies
- **Institutional membership lead:** maintain contact with current institutional members, attract new institutional members, develop ideas for institutional membership benefits
- **Networks lead:** establish standard operational procedures (SOPs) for creating new networks, facilitate communication between the Board and proposed new networks, monitor, maintain contact with existing networks,
- **Mentorship lead:** set up a structure for mentorships and assume responsibility for coordinating support for early career researchers
- **Development lead:** work with charitable foundations to fund new initiatives and support ongoing programs
- **Publication lead:** serve as Guest Editor responsible for peer reviewed publication of select Congress papers in the Association's journal, *Bioethics*
- **WHO lead:** coordinate with WHO local and/or national representatives on a joint IAB/WHO session at the WCB
- **Sustainability lead:** coordinate IAB activities in relation to environmental concerns (e.g., the climate crisis) including (but not limited to) liaising with the WCB lead in relation to sustainable conferencing
- **Special Initiatives lead:** coordinate one-time tasks not already assigned to Officers or members

The responsibilities under each domain will ordinarily be carried out in working groups with other Board members participating. Where appropriate, past Board members or colleagues external to the Board with Board approval of their involvement.

Board members will show professionalism and exercise appropriate discretion in communicating about sensitive and confidential matters. This includes not sharing meeting agendas, minutes, attachments, or recordings with people outside the Board. Members of the

Members of the Board exercise academic freedom when writing and speaking about bioethics topics. To avoid misrepresenting their views as the views of the IAB, its Board of Directors, or its members, a disclaimer must be included in any public facing communications that references IAB decisions or events. For published papers, Directors are asked to share embargoed copies of manuscripts confidentially with Directors as soon as galley proofs are available.

### 3. Responsibilities of the Secretariat

The Secretariat is an office within IAB that includes a paid position furnishing administrative support of approximately 8 hours/week to the President, and to all Officers, members of the Board, and members of the Association. Their tasks may include

- communicate with all Officers of the Board and regular support for the President and Treasurer
- communicate with Association members, including organizing and disseminating the IAB bulletin, soliciting nominations to the Board, issuing calls for hosts and presenters at the World Congress of Bioethics
- collaborate with the Treasurer for semi-annual meetings to review budget income and expenses
- hold all Association funds
- manage, distribute, and maintain confidentiality of Board meeting records (e.g., agendas, minutes, attachments, votes, and recordings), including granting/removing access to restricted website areas as members join/leave the Board, removing links to recorded meetings after 30 days
- take reasonable steps to support free speech about sensitive topics at Board meetings using techniques such as omitting names where appropriate from meeting minutes
- administer elections to the Board and Officer positions, and conduct votes, surveys, and other solicitations with Association membership

#### **4. World Congress of Bioethics**

The IAB holds a biennial World Congress of Bioethics (WCB) where members of the Association debate a wide range of bioethics topics that have global significance. A selection of papers from the WCB are published in the Association's official journal, *Bioethics*.

The WCB will be held in different regions of the world and should also be held in hybrid format to promote equity and sustainability. Applications to host the WCB from groups based in locations that endeavour to be sustainable are particularly welcome. Bids from institutions to host the WCB will be solicited and discussed among the Board and with the involvement of the Feminist Association of Bioethics (FAB), which holds its meeting at the same location immediately prior. The decision of where to host the WCB will be decided by a majority vote of the Board and announced to members of the Association at the WCB which is held two years prior, with advance notification given to officers of FAB. Bids to host the WCB must express in writing institutional support for freedom of speech at all WCB sessions; the Board may request a guarantee from the host institution's leadership.

After the announcement of the WCB site, a Call for Presentations will be issued. Submissions will be peer reviewed by an International Advisory committee chaired by the host institution, with IAB Board members serving as reviewers.

Each WCB host agrees to prepare for the possibility of an unforeseen emergency that would necessitate making the Congress an online-only event. A final decision to exercise this option will be made by a vote of the 4 IAB Officers, with the President deciding in the event of a tie. Every effort will be made to fully engage both the Board of Directors and the WCB host prior to deciding to exercise this option.

## 5. Board Commitment to Diversity

As representatives of an organization committed to diversity, the Board enacts this commitment through:

- Board membership that is geographically diverse, and strives to be gender-balanced; balanced between high-, middle-, and low-income regions; and includes an early career researcher (5 years post-terminal degree or less at time of election, subject to exceptions)
- recruitment and support of members from low- and middle-income nations
- recruitment and support of members at early career stages
- awards that recognize diverse contributions to the field
- communication that is accessible to non-English language speakers
- Congresses where members are free to debate controversial bioethics topics
- Congresses held in different regions of the world
- Congresses offering a hybrid (in-person and online) format

## 6. Other

In all deliberations, the Board strives to follow a consensus process. The understanding of consensus here is that all Board members are able to give expression to their ideas and concerns, and these ideas will be recognized and integrated into discussions in an equitable manner. In decision-making, Board members may approve proposals and other matters before the Board, resist approval, or express reservations and approve. However, it has the leeway to act on the basis of majority rule when the officers recommend this.

The Board conducts a self-evaluation of whether it meets the requirements and standards set in the constitution and in this document at regular intervals and votes on necessary changes. While self-evaluation does not follow a fixed schedule, it ordinarily occurs every 2 years in tandem with evaluation of the biennial WCB, starting with the 2024 WCB. Evaluation will include attention to equity in processes and structures as well as outputs.