REGULATIONS FOR STUDY AND SCIENTIFIC GROUPS, COLLABORATING INSTITUTIONS AND OTHER MECHANISMS OF COLLABORATION[1]

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization requires expert advice for overall scientific and technical guidance, as well as for direct support of global, interregional and regional technical cooperation programmes for national health development.

Such advice and support must reflect high scientific and technical standards, the widest possible representation of different branches of knowledge, and local experience and trends of thought throughout the world, and must cover a broad range of disciplines related to health and social development.

Expert advice and support may be obtained from and provided by individuals, groups and institutions.

The present regulations do not cover:

(*a*) advice obtained from members of expert advisory panels acting individually or collaborating in expert committees;[2]

(*b*) expert advice available informally;

(*c*) expertise provided at regional level on problems of a regional or subregional character;

(*d*) advice obtained through channels covered by other regulations (e.g. from non-governmental organizations); or

(*e*) scientific and technical meetings other than those of expert committees, study groups and scientific groups, and especially meetings concerned with and adapted to special programmes (e.g. the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases, the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, the Diarrhoeal Diseases Control Programme, the International Programme on Chemical Safety).

Adherence to the principles underlying these regulations is essential, but practical application must be responsive to evolving demands on the Organization, and new ways and means of securing and using expertise may prove necessary.

[1] Text approved by the Executive Board at its sixty-ninth session (resolution EB69.R21) with amendments approved at its 105th session (resolution EB105.R7).

[2] For regulations for expert advisory panels and committees, see p. 104.

1. STUDY GROUPS

1.1 Study groups may be convened instead of expert committees when one or more of the following conditions are met:

– the knowledge on the subject to be studied is still too uncertain and the opinions of competent specialists are too diverse for there to be a reasonable expectation of authoritative conclusions which can be immediately utilized by the Organization;

– the study envisaged concerns too limited an aspect of a general problem, which may or may not come within the purview of an expert committee;

– the study envisaged implies the collaboration of narrowly specialized participants who may belong to very different disciplines and on whom the Organization occasionally calls, without its being necessary, however, to include them in its expert advisory panels;

– certain non-technical factors render unsuitable an expert committee meeting, which would be too official in character;

– urgent or exceptional circumstances call for some administrative procedure which will be simpler and more rapidly applicable than that involved in meetings of expert committees.

1.2 The Director-General has authority to convene study groups, to determine the nature and scope of their subjects, the date and duration of their meetings, their membership, and whether their reports should be published. In so doing, the Director-General shall follow, whenever applicable and as far as practicable, the principles and rules applicable to expert committees, particularly those concerning the technical and geographical balance of the groups. Members of study groups may be members of expert advisory panels or other experts.

1.3 The regulations applying to the reports and documents of expert committees shall also apply to the reports and documents of study groups.

1.4 Meetings of study groups may be held at the regional level, to deal with subjects essentially of regional interest, when one or more of the conditions outlined in paragraph 1.1 above are met. Such study groups may be convened by Regional Directors, who will apply to them the provisions of regulation 1.2 above, *mutatis mutandis*, and ensure optimal coordination between such study group meetings and meetings on the same or related subjects in other regions or at headquarters level.

1.5 Should a study group be convened in conjunction with another organization, Regulations 4.20 to 4.22 concerning expert advisory panels and committees shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*.

1.6 In the exercise of their functions the members of WHO expert advisory panels and other experts participating in study group meetings shall act as international experts serving the Organization exclusively; in that capacity they may not request or receive instructions from any government or authority external to the Organization. They shall enjoy the privileges and immunities envisaged in Article 67(*b*) of the Constitution of the Organization and set forth in the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies and in Annex VII thereof.

2. Scientific Groups

2.1 The functions of scientific groups are to review given fields of medical, health and health systems research, to assess the current state of knowledge in those fields, and to determine how that knowledge may best be extended. In other words, scientific groups play for research a role comparable to that of expert committees and study groups for the Organization's programme in general.

2.2 The Director-General has authority to convene scientific groups and to determine the nature and scope of their subjects, the date and duration of their meetings, and their membership. In so doing, the Director-General should follow, whenever applicable and as far as practicable, the principles and rules applicable to expert committees. Members of scientific groups may be members of expert advisory panels or other experts.

2.3 The Director-General shall submit the reports of scientific groups to the global Advisory Committee on Health Research,[1] and the reports may be published at his discretion.

2.4 Meetings of scientific groups may be held at the regional level, to deal with subjects essentially of regional interest. Such scientific groups may be convened by Regional Directors, who will apply to them the provisions of Regulation 2.2 above, *mutatis mutandis*, and ensure optimal coordination between such scientific group meetings and meetings on the same or related subjects in other regions or at headquarters level.

2.5 Should a scientific group be convened in conjunction with another organization, regulations 4.20 to 4.22 concerning expert advisory panels and committees shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*.

[1] The former title (Advisory Committee on Medical Research) was changed by the Thirty-ninth World Health Assembly in its decision WHA39(8).

2.6 In the exercise of their functions the members of WHO expert advisory panels and other experts participating in scientific group meetings shall act as international experts serving the Organization exclusively; in that capacity they may not request or receive instructions from any government or authority external to the Organization. They shall enjoy the privileges and immunities envisaged in Article 67(*b*) of the Constitution of the Organization and set forth in the Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the Specialized Agencies and in Annex VII thereof.

3. WHO COLLABORATING CENTRES

Definition and Functions

3.1 A WHO collaborating centre is an institution designated by the Director-General to form part of an international collaborative network carrying out activities in support of the Organization's programme at all levels. A department or laboratory within an institution or a group of facilities for reference, research or training belonging to different institutions may be designated as a centre, one institution acting for them in relations with the Organization.

3.2 Institutions showing a growing capacity to fulfil a function or functions related to the Organization's programme, as well as institutions of high scientific and technical standing having attained international recognition, may qualify for designation as WHO collaborating centres.

3.3 The functions of WHO collaborating centres, severally or collectively, include the following:

(*a*) collection, collation and dissemination of information;

(*b*) standardization of terminology and nomenclature, of technology, of diagnostic, therapeutic and prophylactic substances, and of methods and procedures;

(*c*) development and application of appropriate technology;

(*d*) provision of reference substances and other services;

(*e*) participation in collaborative research developed under the Organization's leadership, including the planning, conduct, monitoring and evaluation of research, as well as promotion of the application of the results of research;

(*f*) training, including research training; and

(*g*) the coordination of activities carried out by several institutions on a given subject.

3.4 A WHO collaborating centre participates on a contractual basis in cooperative programmes supported by the Organization at the country,

intercountry, regional, interregional and global levels. It also contributes to increasing technical cooperation with and among countries by providing them with information, services and advice, and by stimulating and supporting research and training.

Designation

3.5 The criteria to be applied in the selection of institutions for designation as a WHO collaborating centre are as follows:

(*a*) the scientific and technical standing of the institution concerned at the national and international levels;

(*b*) the place the institution occupies in the country's health, scientific or educational structures;

(*c*) the quality of its scientific and technical leadership, and the number and qualifications of its staff;

(*d*) the institution's prospective stability in terms of personnel, activity and funding;

(*e*) the working relationship which the institution has developed with other institutions in the country, as well as at the intercountry, regional and global levels;

(*f*) the institution's ability, capacity and readiness to contribute, individually and within networks, to WHO programme activities, whether in support of country programmes or by participating in international cooperative activities;

(*g*) the technical and geographical relevance of the institution and its activities to WHO's programme priorities;

(*h*) the successful completion by the institution of at least two years of collaboration with WHO in carrying out jointly planned activities.

3.6 Regional Directors shall propose institutions for designation as WHO collaborating centres by the Director-General. They shall do so on the basis of preliminary exploration with the institutions and national authorities concerned and with the advice of and on suggestions from the Organization's programme officers responsible, at both global and regional level, for the programmes concerned.

3.7 Regional Directors shall provide the Director-General with appropriate information concerning:

(*a*) the programme requirements to which the prospective centre is expected to respond and the functions it will have to perform;

(*b*) the suitability of the institution concerned, on the basis of the criteria laid down in these regulations and by the Director-General; and

(*c*) the government's and institution's agreement to the proposed designation.

3.8 Designation shall be by agreement with the administrative head of the institution after consultation with the national authorities. The designation shall be signified to the institution and the national authorities by the Regional Director concerned.

3.9 After designation, an institution shall be known by the official title "WHO Collaborating Centre", followed by a concise indication of the sphere of activity covered.

3.10 WHO collaborating centres shall be designated for an initial period of four years. The designation is renewable for the same or shorter periods, if warranted by programme requirements and the results of evaluation.

Management

3.11 Collaboration with the centres shall be managed by relevant programme officers in that part of the Organization which initiated the designation process, whether at headquarters or in a region. Collaborating centres, however, shall maintain their technical links with all parts of the Organization relevant to their agreed programme of work.

4. National Institutions Recognized by WHO

4.1 For collaborative activities of such scope or nature as may not warrant the designation of a WHO collaborating centre, the Organization may propose that an institution that is able and willing to participate in such activities with WHO be designated by the national authorities concerned for that purpose.

4.2 Upon designation by the national authorities, such institution shall be formally acknowledged by the Organization as a national institution recognized by WHO. However, no reference to WHO may be included in the title of the institution.

4.3 An agreement shall specify the tasks to be performed by the institution and the technical contributions to be provided by the Organization.

4.4 Official recognition by the Organization shall be for one year and shall be tacitly renewed unless notice is given by either party three months in advance.

4.5 The acknowledgement of such recognition of a national institution by WHO shall be signified to the government and to the institution concerned

by the Regional Director. Working technical relationships with the institution shall be developed at regional or headquarters level, as appropriate.

4.6 National institutions recognized by WHO shall be authorized by their respective governments, when such authorization is necessary, to maintain direct working relations with the Organization and with WHO collaborating centres.

5. Other Mechanisms of Collaboration

5.1 Other mechanisms of collaboration with individual experts, expert groups and institutions – for example by contractual technical service agreement – are developed by the Organization in response to particular requirements.

5.2 These mechanisms are mostly based on the very close involvement of individual experts, expert groups and institutions in the definition of programme objectives, the formulation of strategic plans to attain those objectives, the implementation of those plans, and the monitoring of progress.

5.3 The Director-General shall apply to these mechanisms the working procedures he deems most effective, even though these procedures may differ from those provided for in these regulations and those pertaining to expert advisory panels and committees. These mechanisms, however, shall be in general conformity with the principles outlined in these regulations, especially concerning the adequate international and technical distribution of expertise.

5.4 All new developments in the Organization's collaboration with individual experts, expert groups and institutions shall be subjected to the monitoring and evaluation procedures outlined below.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation

6.1 In the development of its individual, collective and institutional mechanisms for expert guidance and support, the Organization must be able to rely on adequate monitoring and evaluation procedures.

6.2 The Director-General shall develop those procedures, using to the full the technical resources of the Secretariat as well as scientific and technical advisory bodies dealing with various aspects of the Organization's programme, in particular the global and regional advisory committees on health research.[1]

[1] See footnote 1, p. 115.

6.3 The Director-General shall report to the Executive Board, from time to time, on the results obtained and on any difficulties encountered in giving effect to the above regulations, and shall propose action to ensure their maximum effectiveness.