

## Summary of the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee to Establish an International Council within the AAPM

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In 2019, the Ad Hoc Committee for Defining the Structure, Charges and Budget for 2020 of the International Committee had extensive discussions regarding a modified structure for international activities within the AAPM, especially whether these activities should be organized via an International Committee or an International Council. Leadership of that Ad Hoc Committee, which included many individuals who have been leaders in international medical physics activities, met with AAPM's officers and executive director, as well as the chairs and vice chairs of all councils. It was the clear consensus of the assembled leadership that a new council, an International Council, should be formed.

Consequently, the Ad Hoc Committee to Establish an International Council within the AAPM was formed to develop a proposal to establish an International Council and formulate the required revisions to AAPM's By-Laws and Rules. In April 2020, this Ad Hoc Committee presented its report to the Board of Directors, which was overwhelmingly endorsed. *The Ad Hoc Committee then made a motion to revise AAPM's By-Laws and Rules to the AAPM Board of Directors, which was enthusiastically approved. The change in AAPM's By-Laws necessary to establish an International Council is the vote that is now before the membership.* The associated Rules changes, which have been approved by the Board of Directors, will take affect pending an affirmative vote by membership on the By-Laws changes.

This summary of the Ad Hoc Committee's report is provided to assist membership in making an informed decision on the proposed By-Law change. The full report is available [here](#).

*The AAPM has been actively engaged in international affairs for much of its history.* Many AAPM groups and individual appointees have worked directly with at least 30 international organizations over the years, including the International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These international activities have contributed significantly to all aspects of the profession of medical physics, 'improving health through medical physics', which is the Vision of the AAPM. Further, nearly 20% of AAPM's membership consists of medical physicists living outside the U.S. These members actively participate in all aspects of the AAPM, including in its two largest sources of non-dues revenue: AAPM meetings and journals (*Medical Physics* and *Journal of Applied Clinical Medical Physics*).

The AAPM currently engages in international activities across every aspect of our organization. The number and diversity of international activities within the AAPM demonstrate that *many AAPM members are highly invested in international volunteer activities; activities that also yield significant domestic benefits.* For example, AAPM volunteers donate countless hours to impact the work of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), an organization that establishes international standards, including those for imaging, therapeutic, and dosimetry devices. Without AAPM's participation, the resulting standards – which are applied to the vast majority of equipment sold in the US – reflect only the interests and preferences of industry and European regulatory organizations.

At present, the AAPM partners with international organizations on six continents to solve global medical physics issues. These partnerships are mutually beneficial, as the AAPM faces many of the same issues encountered by medical physics organizations outside of the US. Further, discoveries and newly developed technologies in one country can advance science and clinical care everywhere through international communication and partnerships. It is thus imperative that AAPM partner with international

leaders in medical physics to collectively advance the science, practice and professional stature of medical physics.

In view of the numerous benefits to AAPM, and the profession of medical physics, through its international activities and partnerships, this Ad Hoc Committee adopted three foundational principles as essential for the future of AAPM and its members, and used these principles to guide its work.

1. International partnerships strengthen the AAPM and, thereby, its membership.
2. International collaborations strengthen the science, education, and professional practice of medical physics in the US.
3. International collaborations have the potential for contributing to improved quality and safety in healthcare, not only in the US, but also abroad.

At present, much of the international activity of the AAPM is organized under the International Affairs Committee (IAC, under Administrative Council) and the International Educational Activities Committee (IEAC, under Educational Council). In addition, international collaborations are managed by EXCOM while joint Task Groups with other international societies are overseen by Science Council. The multiple locations of international activities within the AAPM are summarized in Figure 1.

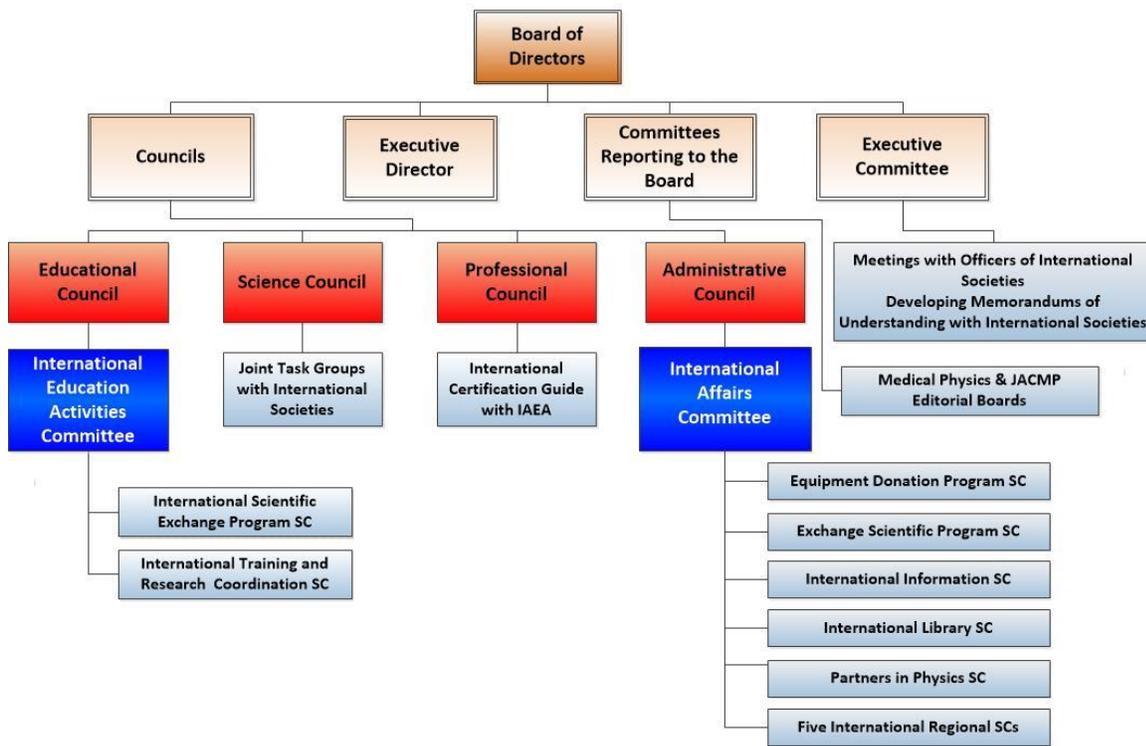


Figure 1. Current organization of international activities of the AAPM (in dark and light blue). International activities are distributed across four councils, our journal editorial boards, and officers of the society. In addition, liaisons to IAEA, EFOMP, IOMP and others do not all have a clear reporting relationship within this paradigm.

The *primary weakness of the current paradigm* is a lack of coordination of international endeavors, which stems from their fragmented positions within AAPM's organizational structure. Simply put, AAPM's international activities are not harmonized due to the lack of a single AAPM entity to act as an overall coordinator on the international front. This has led to:

- Duplication of effort
- Lack of standardization
- Lack of metrics to assess impact
- Ineffective or contradictory sharing of information with partner clinics and organizations
- Missed opportunities to grow AAPM membership
- Inability to effectively respond to changing landscapes
- Suboptimal presentation of the AAPM as a global leader in the development of safety and quality standards
- Inability to effectively communicate international volunteer opportunities to AAPM membership
- Inability for leadership to maintain clear, current knowledge of the organization's international efforts and partnerships

The drawbacks of the lack of coordination of AAPM's international activities are clear. Unfortunately, an easy fix to these problems is not possible within the current organizational structure of the AAPM, whose By-Laws and Rules do not present an opportunity to simply split and/or move committees, subcommittees, workgroups and task groups involved in international activities to reside under a single group. *Formation of an International Council will provide the AAPM coordination, consistency, rigorous oversight, and the ability to strategically develop and prioritize its global activities.* Currently, those attributes are lacking, in part due to the fragmentation of international activities within the organization.

Centralizing and coordinating AAPM's international activities via a new International Council will greatly enhance efficiency and minimize duplication of effort, yielding a greater potential for success and long-term benefit by strategically prioritizing the limited budgetary resources available to the AAPM for international efforts. The International Council will provide a single point of contact for all things international, both within and beyond the AAPM, as well as act as a conduit for our international partners to work with AAPM. Strategies will be developed by the new council for the effective administration of programs and activities. The maintenance of existing programs, as well as the establishment of new ones, will be associated with metrics to assess their success, ensuring sustainable, measurable, and meaningful impact on global health as it relates to the practice of medical physics in the U.S. and abroad. Although AAPM's current structure has facilitated a great many accomplishments in its international activities, *it is time to adopt a more coordinated approach.* Figure 2 provides an overview of the proposed AAPM structure related to international activities.

The *major strength of an International Council is the ability to set and accomplish goals and address challenges in an organized and coordinated fashion* through centralized management and communication, both within the AAPM as well as with partners and stakeholders outside AAPM. By clearly demonstrating AAPM's measurable value in the international arena, we also can better present the benefits of membership in the AAPM, as well as better advocate for increased investment in AAPM's international efforts by industry partners that are active internationally.

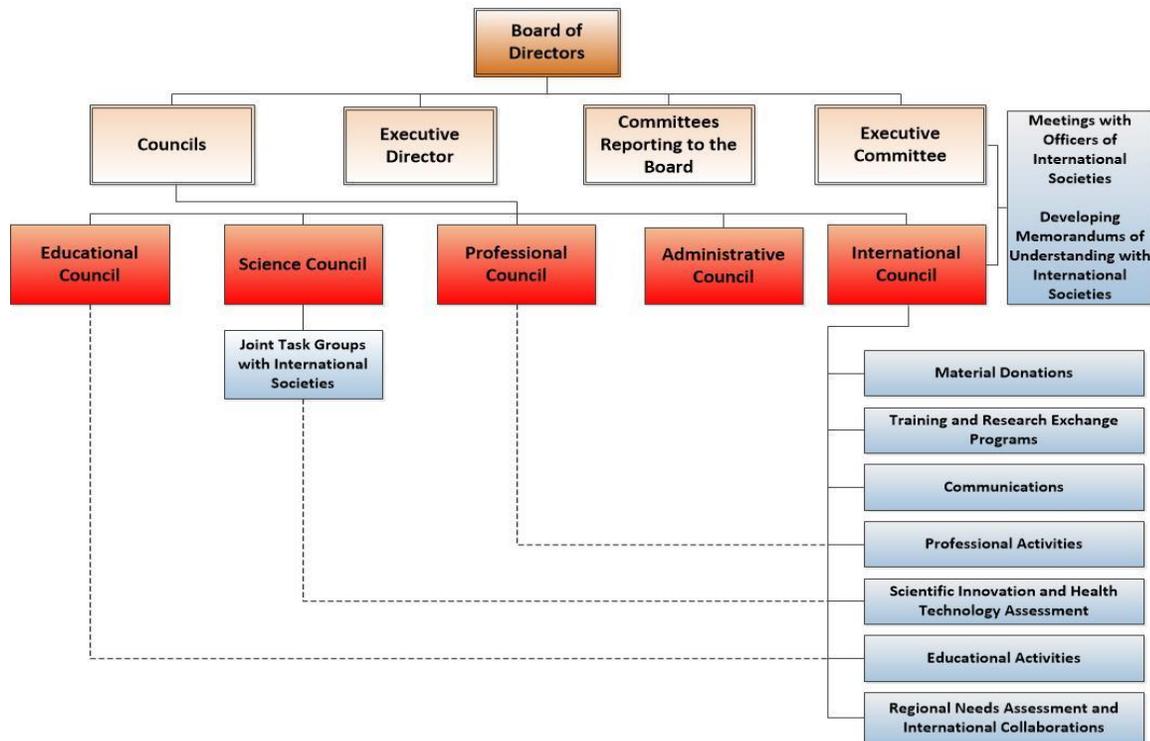


Figure 2. Proposed organization of international activities within the AAPM (in light blue). International activities will be coordinated under one council, whose leadership will participate with AAPM officers in inter-organizational meetings and in developing cooperative agreements. All liaisons to international organizations will report to the International Council chair. Journal editorial boards (not shown) will continue to report to the Board of Directors. Cross-council communication is built into the paradigm via the make-up of the International Council, which includes one member from each council. Dotted lines are examples of such communication channels.

As with all AAPM efforts, international activities require coordinated oversight, which is hampered by the current, fragmented nature of AAPM’s international activities. Such oversight and accountability is essential to ameliorate the effects of any potential bias, ensure broader access to volunteer opportunities, and to manage any perceived conflicts of interest, issues about which some AAPM members have expressed concern. Thus, it is essential to organize AAPM’s international activities in a way that ensures rigorous oversight. A further strength of an International Council is that it will establish clear procedures and metrics by which to evaluate and prioritize international activity proposals. Methods will be defined to:

- Assess the relevance, impact, and likely success of proposed activities, as well as their alignment with the mission and vision of the AAPM
- Demonstrate how the proposed activities build on prior work and establish a platform for future engagement and impact
- Summarize for AAPM members how the proposed activity will benefit them directly
- Prepare detailed budgets that identify the required volunteer time, financial support, and AAPM HQ staff support needed for successful completion of a proposed activity
- Identify and select the most qualified participants

There will be a modest administrative cost associated with the establishment of an International Council. Each of AAPM's four existing councils are assigned a "staff liaison" to provide program management assistance to the council leadership and committee chairs. While the support needs vary by council, there are some basic, essential tasks required by any council. It is estimated that the staff effort will be approximately 30% of an FTE, or approximately \$25,000. Other expenses for the newly formed council are expected to be similar to those of existing councils, such as those associated with annual council retreats and other costs of doing business, which are estimated to be about \$45,000. Adding together these expenses, *the anticipated financial resources needed for the new council is approximately \$70,000 per year.* To put this in perspective, *this additional cost to AAPM is approximately 0.6% of the 2020 AAPM budget.* It should be noted that these are strictly administrative expenses and would be in addition to the budgets for international activities that are established and approved through our standard budgeting processes. Again, the only increase in expenses associated with the formation of an International Council is the modest sum needed for administrative support from AAPM staff. This increase is anticipated to be offset, however, by the increased the efficiency with which the AAPM carries out its international activities, providing AAPM with 'more bang for the buck.' Additionally, improved coordination will yield an increased awareness in international medical physics communities of AAPM meetings and the benefits of AAPM membership, which may bring additional revenue to the organization and yield new opportunities for the AAPM and its members.

In summary, for AAPM to stay relevant in today's global society, as well as to maintain its status as the premiere medical physics organization in the world, our participation in global medical physics activities must be done in a *comprehensive and organized manner.* By doing so, AAPM will accomplish its Mission of 'advancing medicine through excellence in the science, education and professional practice of medical physics,' and do so on a domestic and global scale.

*The By-Laws change currently before the membership was specifically developed to address these organizational inefficiencies by creating an International Council to provide centralized coordination and oversight for international activities. Approval of this amendment by the voting membership of the AAPM will allow the establishment of this International Council.*