



# Responsibilities of ISTA Technical Committees

- Guideline -



## Tasks and Responsibilities of ISTA Technical Committees

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### A. Definitions

The Technical Committees (TCOMs) are standing committees, and are constituted through the Executive Committee following the ISTA Constitution Article VII (c)(5) to perform a continuing function.

The Technical Committees work under the responsibility of the Executive Committee as laid down in the ISTA Constitution Article VII(c).

The Technical Committees are founded according to different fields of seed science and seed testing or of different activities within the Association, which gives the committee its name.

They fulfil all tasks laid down in the ISTA Constitution Article VII(5) in their specific field on technical and regulative aspects.

Rules of order and tasks of Committees are defined in parts B, C, and D.

The Editorial Board operates according to the ISTA Constitution Article 7 (c) (7) and consists of an appointed Chief Editor and a number of Associate Editors with different fields of expertise. The Editorial Board/The Chief Editor is responsible for the contents of Seed Science and Technology.

A Task Force has a defined set of objectives that ceases to exist once these objectives are achieved or considered obsolete.

A Working Group is a sub-group within one or more committees with a specific task. Task Forces and Working Groups may involve individuals that are not member of any existing committee but seek cooperation with ISTA and possibly also intend to join a committee as a member.

### 1. List of Technical Committees

17 Technical Committees are constituted by the ISTA Executive Committee.

Advanced Technologies Committee (ATC)  
Bulking and Sampling Committee (BSC)  
Flower Seed Testing Committee (FSC)  
Forest Tree and Shrub Seed Committee (FTC)  
Germination Committee (GER)  
GMO Committee (GMO)  
Moisture Committee (MOI)  
Nomenclature Committee (NOM)  
Proficiency Test Committee (PTC)  
Purity Committee (PUR)  
Rules Committee (RUL)  
Seed Health Committee (SHC)  
Seed Storage Committee (STO)  
Statistics Committee (STA)  
Tetrazolium Committee (TEZ)  
Variety Committee (VAR)  
Vigour Committee (VIG)

### B. Rules of Order

*(Part B. applies for the following Technical Committees: Advanced Technologies Committee, Bulking and Sampling Committee, Flower Seed Committee, Forest Tree and Shrub Seed Committee, Germination Committee, GMO Committee, Moisture Committee, Nomenclature Committee, Purity Committee, Seed Health Committee, Seed Storage Committee, Statistics Committee, Tetrazolium Committee, Variety Committee, Vigour Committee)*



## 1. Composition of Technical Committees

### Members

The Technical Committee shall consist of the Chair, the Vice-Chair and a maximum of 13 members. All members are engaged in the science or practice of seed testing and shall be specialists on the particular subjects of the committee.

The Technical Committee should consist of specialists from different regions of the world whenever possible.

Personal members, associate members or employees of a member laboratory receive priority to become a committee member.

A guideline "How to become an ISTA Technical Committee Member" is available on the ISTA website: [www.seedtest.org](http://www.seedtest.org).

### Nomination of Chair, Vice-Chair and Members

The Chair shall be a personal member, an associate member or an employee of a member laboratory whenever possible.

The tenure of office of the Chair shall be from the adjournment of the ordinary meeting at which he/she was appointed to the adjournment of the ordinary meeting held in the third year after the appointment (i.e. three years). A Chair can be reappointed for further terms.

Whenever possible, the Chair shall be proposed by the committee and approved by the Executive Committee. Eligible for the nomination are the current Chair or the Vice-Chair. In case that the current Chair or the Vice-Chair are not available, another member can be proposed and approved as a Chair. If no current member of the committee is available, the Chair shall be proposed by the ECOM and approved by the committee.

A new Vice-Chair will be appointed by the Chair and approved by the committee and Executive Committee by email prior to the congress to take effect after the congress.

Other members of the committee are nominated and approved in accordance with "How to become an ISTA Technical Committee Member" by the Chair and approved by the Executive Committee. A Technical Committee member is appointed for the three year period.

The composition of the committee is announced at the end of the committee meeting in the first year of the three year period.

If the Chair, Vice-Chair or any member cannot sit on the committee for the whole period, replacement shall follow the principles for the nomination of the Chair.

## 2. Responsibilities of Chair, Vice-Chair and Technical Committee Members

The Chair, the Vice-Chair and the TCOM members should follow the Code of Ethics of ISTA.

### Responsibilities of the Chair

The Technical Committee Chair has the overall responsibility for the Technical Committee and manages its activities contained in the Technical Committee Working Programme (Terms of Reference) by

- developing a succession plan for the following triennium, and as a contingency during the current triennium, that should be communicated to the ISTA ECOM through the committee's ECOM representative, in cooperation with the Vice-Chair
- steering the committee and prioritising work areas
- ensuring that TCOM's terms of reference fulfil the requirements of the ISTA Strategy
- leading the creation of the working programme
- encouraging scientific work, seed science and technology
- recommending appointment or replacement of committee members to the Executive Committee, after the approval by voting within the TCOM
- establishing working groups and appointing leaders for these groups to deal with specific technical projects
- presenting oral and written reports of the committee's activities to the membership
- appointing a member as co-ordinator and contact person for updating the TCOM website
- keeping the ECOM, the Secretary General and the TCOM co-ordinator informed on the main subject discussed within the TCOM



In case of an inactive member or other circumstances concerning the conduct of a technical committee member, the TCOM Chair may advise the Executive Committee who, if they agree, will ask the Secretary General for advice on appropriate actions to be taken.

At the end of the triennium, the Chair and Vice-Chair will evaluate members to determine who should continue and who should retire from the committee.

### **Responsibilities of the Vice-Chair**

The Vice-Chair actively co-operates with the Chair.

The Vice-Chair shall take over the Chair of the TCOM, if needed during the three year period.

### **Responsibilities of a Member**

A Technical Committee member participates in discussions and votes taking place in the committee. He/she also supports actively the work of the Technical Committee and its objectives by:

- answering technical queries
- taking part in validation studies
- contributing to at least one project or working group
- co-ordinating the work of a working group
- suggesting new activities to be taken on board by the Technical Committee

An active member participates in:

- committee discussions (at least 75%);
- committee votes (at least 75%); and
- at least one project.

A non-active member does not fulfil these requirements.

### **Voting within Technical Committees**

A vote is required within the Technical Committee before Rules Proposals are forwarded to the Rules Committee. Voting on other issues like validation reports, annual reports, work plans and new members may also be necessary.

Voting within the committee is conducted by correspondence (usually e-mail), and two-thirds of the committee members must participate. If fewer than two-thirds of the committee participate then the decision cannot be accepted because the committee was not quorate. 'Participation' in this context means to vote 'yes' or 'no' or to 'abstain'. Committee members who fail to reply cannot be included in the process.

Decisions on all proposals put to the vote are by simple majority; a simple majority is a majority of one or more 'yes' or 'no' votes (abstentions are not included). If the number of 'yes' and 'no' votes are equal, the Chairperson has the casting vote.

Example:

A committee has 15 members: if 10 or more members participate, then the committee is quorate; if only eight participate, the committee is not quorate and no decision can be made.

Eleven of the 15 members have participated, with six voting yes, four voting no, and one abstaining. The proposal is accepted because there were more 'yes' votes than 'no' votes.

The TCOM Chair should keep records of any voting that takes place i.e number of members voting and their responses to ensure that the information is available if requested. At the Secretariat, the records of voting within committees are archived by the TCOM co-ordinator who should be copied into all e-mails relating to committee votes.



## 3. Technical Committee Working Programme and Progress Report

### Working Programme

The Executive Committee develops a document with strategic priorities, which should be understood as a recommendation for the Committees concerned (see the flow chart below).

The Technical Committees makes use of this strategic document to prepare the Working Programme. The Working Programme is prepared by each committee by evaluating the current situation in the committee related area worldwide, taking into account the resources available.

The working programme is established for a period of three years. Major changes should be made in consultation with the Executive Committee and documented in annual progress reports.

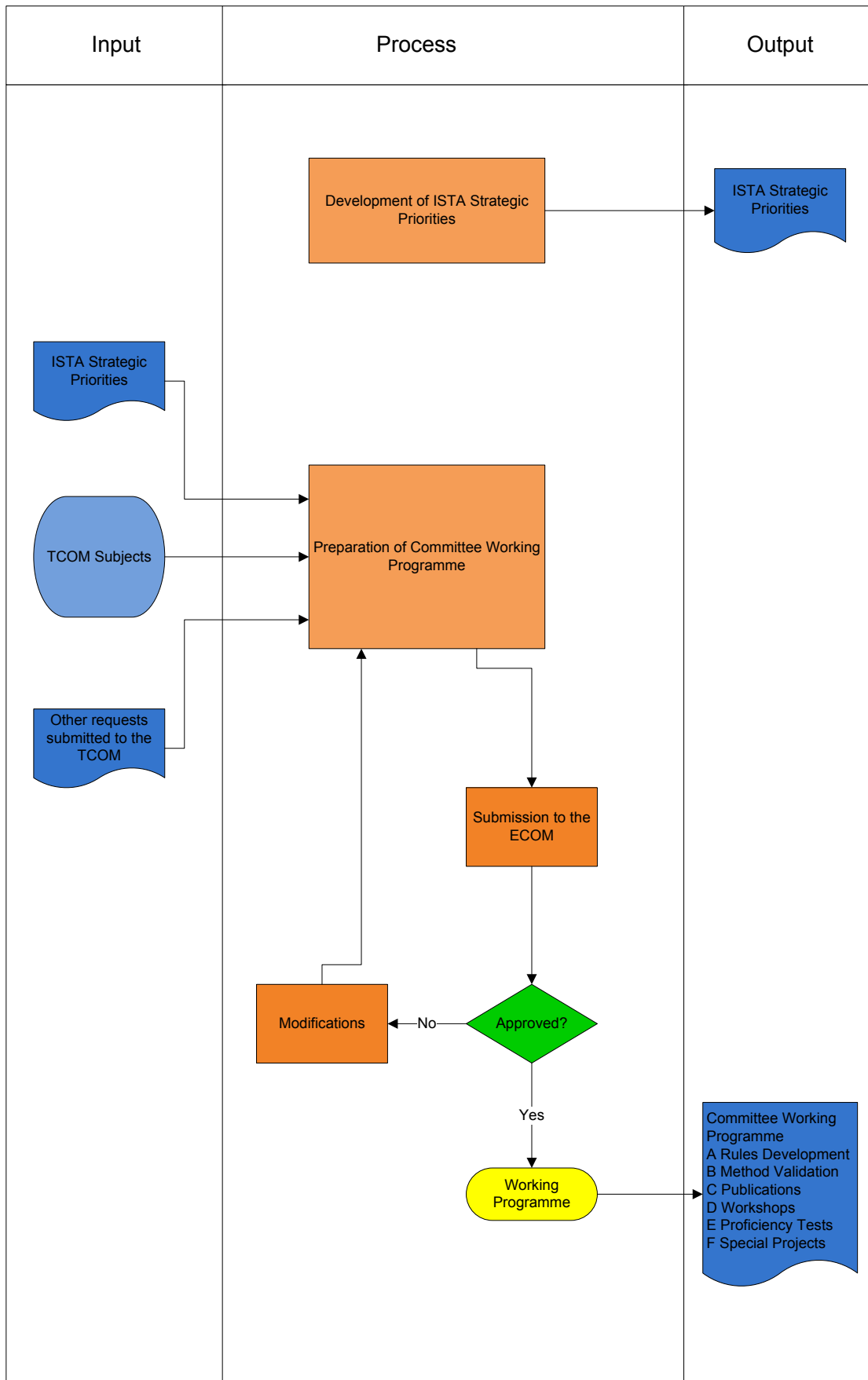
Inter-technical-committee projects are discussed between the Technical Committee Chairs. A lead committee and a responsible member of this committee is nominated.

The Working Programme is approved by the Executive Committee.

Guidance on how to prepare the working programme is given in the form TCOM Working Programme and Progress Report Annexe 3.



### Technical Committee Working Programme – Information Flow





### **Progress Report**

The Progress Report is the record of the committee work for the last calendar year. It is presented to the Executive Committee at the beginning of the following year and published in the Annual Report in order to inform the ISTA Membership, and stakeholders about the progress, problems, final results and conclusions reached during the last year. The Progress Report reflects the development of the projects described in the Working Programme and the routine tasks fulfilled by the committees (see form Annexe 3).

## **4. Communication between the TCOMs, ECOM and Secretariat**

The Executive Committee nominates individual Executive Committee-members as contact persons for each TCOM in order to have an immediate link to the Executive Committee and to improve the communication between the Executive Committee and the TCOMs.

The interaction between the TCOM and ECOM member should be a two-way flow of information.

New ECOM contact persons are appointed at the first meeting of the new ECOM which is immediately after the congress and TCOM Chairs are informed as soon as possible. The ECOM member should be copied in to all committee member e-mails. To ensure an archive is maintained the TCOM Co-ordinator should be copied in to e-mails on at least key Committee decisions.

## **C. Tasks**

*(Part C. applies for the following Technical Committees: Bulking and Sampling Committee, Flower Seed Committee, Forest Tree and Shrub Seed Committee, Germination Committee, GMO Committee, Moisture Committee, Purity Committee, Seed Health Committee, Tetrazolium Committee, Variety Committee, Vigour Committee)*

### **1. Method Validation and Rules Development**

The Technical Committee is responsible for the development and validation of methods and submission of Rules Proposals for the *International Rules for Seed Testing* (Rules). The Technical Committee ensures that Rules Proposals for introducing new methods or species and Rules changes are technically and scientifically valid and applicable in routine testing of a seed testing laboratory.

Guidelines for the preparation of a method validation report and the procedures for its submission and evaluation are set out in the documents '*ISTA Method Validation for Seed Testing*' and '*SOP How to handle Rules Proposals?*'.

### **2. Training and Education**

#### **Organisation of training activities**

The Technical Committee provides various educational events and activities in order to ensure the uniform application of the Rules and also to keep analysts in seed testing laboratories informed about new methods and technologies in the area of seed science and technology.

The committee members act as organisers and/or lecturers.

The committee should when possible organise at least one event per triennium and more if possible as a result of invitations to hold a workshop or the availability of funding. The committee should co-ordinate actions with the Secretariat and ECOM.

Directions on the organisation of educational events and workshops are given in the '*Guidelines for Organising ISTA Workshops*'.

#### **Develop and review Rules accompanying publications (handbooks) and training publications on specific seed testing topics**

Accompanying publications to the *International Rules for Seed Testing* are handbooks and these refer usually to one specific chapter of the Rules or species group. They explain in detail techniques and relevant topics in seed sampling and testing methodology. The handbooks also have the objective of giving guidance on the interpretation of the ISTA Rules. Handbooks are not limited to Rules methods and species and aim to provide background and guidance regarding other tests and their development.



Other training publications (e.g. training course proceedings) are not intended to accompany the *International Rules for Seed Testing*.

The handbooks and the other training publications should be applicable to the improvement of knowledge and training of laboratory staff.

The scientific and technical responsibility lies with the Technical Committee Chair, with the Secretariat providing guidance and assistance on format and other editorial matters.

To ensure the quality of handbooks the Technical Committee shall keep them up-to-date by

- ensuring they conform with the Rules;
- evaluating new scientific developments to ensure that handbooks include appropriate, up-to-date methods
- suggesting new publications or withdrawal of outdated publications to the Executive Committee.

The development, the review and the publication of accompanying publications to the Rules shall be approved by the Executive Committee.

### 3. Proficiency Test Programme

The Technical Committee runs its own PTs or assists the Proficiency Test Committee and the Accreditation Department in conducting proficiency tests by

- establishing proficiency tests on methods;
- giving advice and expertise on the organisation and content of PT tests; and
- giving advice and guidance on the evaluation of the results and queries from participants at the request of the PTC

### 4. Exchange of information

The Technical Committee is responsible for exchanging information in its technical field by

- organising workshops, seminars, or symposia
- discussing within the committee
- responding to requests related to its technical field(s)
- providing articles for STI
- providing information and updating information on the ISTA website

## D. Tasks of Committees not covered in part B and C

### Seed Storage Committee

The Seed Storage Committee characterizes and maximizes seed storage in horticulture, crop and forestry species, and their wild relatives, so that their sustainable use in trade is enhanced. This is also implemented by developing and amending guidelines on the storage of seeds.

### Nomenclature Committee

The Nomenclature Committee establishes and updates the ISTA Stabilised List of Plant Names. It coordinates the correctness of the ISTA Rules in co-operation with the Rules Committee in this respect. It provides a record of the ISTA List of Stabilized Plant Names to the ISTA Secretariat for its publication and provides advice in nomenclatural issues.



## **Statistics Committee**

The Statistics Committee carries out statistics projects and develops statistical tools to be applied in seed testing. It supports the other Committees in different activities, such as method validation and the proficiency test programme.

The Statistics Committee organizes training activities.

## **Advanced Technologies Committee**

The Advanced Technologies Committee is appointed to identify and evaluate emerging technologies of relevance to ISTA members and stakeholders. The Committee works in close collaboration with the relevant TCOM and then communicates findings on promising technologies to Members and TCOMs that might have an interest.

## **Rules Committee**

The committee members are the Chairs of all ISTA Technical Committees and the Editorial Board. The Chair is appointed by the Executive Committee. As ex-officio member the Chair of the AOSA Rules Committee and the Honorary Past President are included in all mailings.

The Chair edits the Rules proposals and, through the committee's members, ensures consistency and consultation within all TCOMs.

The Rules Committee members vote on all Rules proposals and provide comment. The vote and comments assist the Chair in preparing the final set of proposals to be put before the membership.

## **Editorial Board**

The Chair of the Editorial Board acts as Chief Editor of Seed Science and Technology and appoints co-editors that are approved by the Executive Committee.

## **Proficiency Test Committee**

The Proficiency Test Committee defines the Proficiency Test Programme Plan. It consists of Proficiency Test Leaders, i.e. individuals who volunteer to procure seed material and prepare samples for at least one PT round in the three year period between two congresses. The committee also provides advice to other TCOMs in setting up particular test rounds (e.g. seed health or variety testing) or components to regular PT rounds. With exception of the GMO Proficiency Test, the PTC coordinates and administers all proficiency test activities. The Chair is appointed by the Executive Committee.

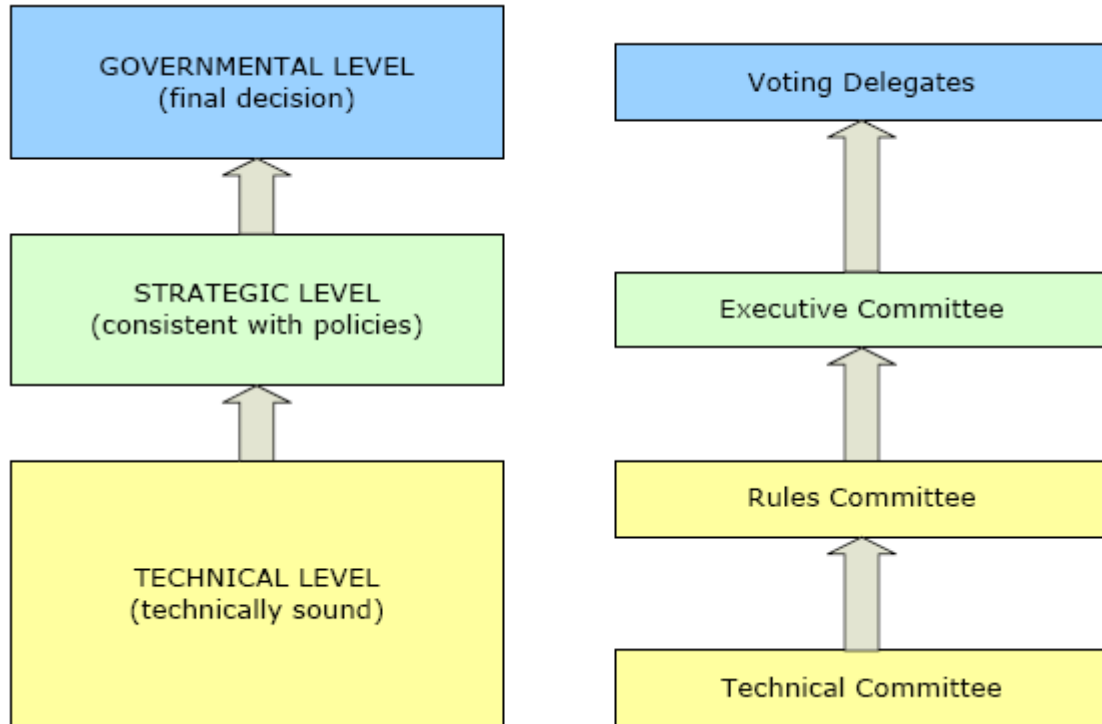


**Annexe 1**

**SOP How to handle Rules Proposals**

**1. Policy**

Changes to the *International Rules for Seed Testing*, including amendments, new methods and species, follow the same standard procedure to ensure that they are technically sound and consistent with ISTA's policies. Therefore, each change is voted on by three different committees, i.e. the Technical Committee, the Rules Committee and the Executive Committee before they are forwarded for voting to the ISTA Delegates.



**2. Standard Operation Procedure**

**Purpose and Scope**

This Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) provides direction on how to change the *International Rules for Seed Testing*. The procedure ensures that all new Rules or changes pass through the same system before their incorporation into the ISTA Rules. This SOP is applicable to all ISTA Committees.

**Objectives**

This SOP defines the role and responsibilities of the Executive Committee, Rules Committee and Technical Committees.

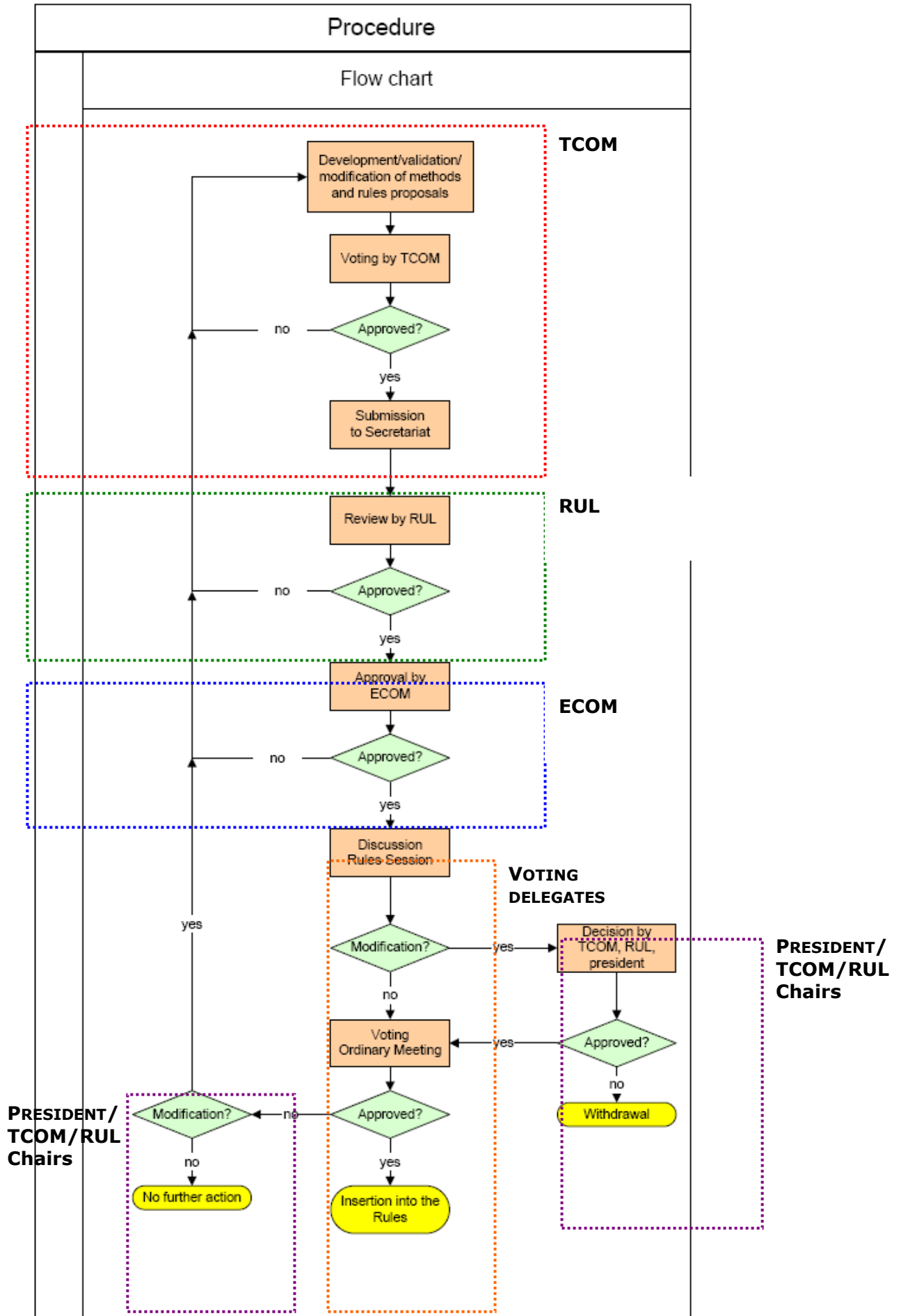
This SOP serves both as reference in case something is unclear and as documentation on how to handle Rules Proposals.

**Related Documents**

ISTA Method Validation for Seed Testing  
Responsibilities of Technical Committees

**Roles and Responsibilities**

**Technical Committee:** The Technical Committee is responsible for the development and validation of proposed Rules changes to a Chapter. The Technical Committee ensures that Rules Proposals for introducing new methods or species and Rules changes are technically and scientifically valid and applicable in routine testing of a seed testing laboratory.





**Rules Committee:** The Rules Committee functions as editor of the *International Rules for Seed Testing*. The Rules Committee ensures consistency throughout all chapters of the Rules. It ensures that a Rules Proposal fits into the Rules concept – in principle, technically and editorially. It also verifies that formal requirements of method validation are met.

**Executive Committee:** The Executive Committee is responsible for ensuring that Rules Proposals are in line with the policies and strategy of ISTA. It approves the Technical Committee Working Programme (Terms of References) and the Rules Proposals.

## Procedure description

The Flow Chart on page 11 shows the single steps as well as the responsibilities.

1. After the preparation of a Rules Proposal, the Technical Committee Chair leads the voting on the Rules Proposal within the committee. Two-third of the members of the committee shall constitute a quorum. The majority has to agree on the Rules Proposal and where applicable has to approve the validation report. The Chair submits the Rules Proposal, the validation report (when required) and the result of the voting within the committee to the Secretariat before the given submission deadline.

2. The Rules Chair and Rules Vice-Chair prepare the *Proposed Rules Changes* in cooperation with the Secretariat. They check if all necessary documents and information are submitted by the Technical Committees and evaluate the Rules Proposal on compatibility with the Rules and final phrasing.

The *Proposed Rules Changes* are sent to all Rules Committee members for review, comments and vote. Each Chair who submitted a Rules Proposal has to check if it is incorporated correctly and that all additional information (e.g. validation report) is in place. There is the option to include Rules Proposals in anticipation of supporting validation studies but if the validation reports are not available to circulate to the membership prior to the ordinary the proposals will be withdrawn.

The Rules Chair accepts proposals for modifications on existing Rules Proposals which resulted from the editing and reviewing of the *Proposed Rules Changes* usually up to two weeks before the documents are sent to the Executive Committee.

3. The Executive Committee approves the Rules Proposals. It verifies that the *Proposed Rules Changes* are in agreement with the ISTA policies and strategy. It decides if a Rules Proposal shall be proceeded or modified by the Technical Committee Chair and Rules Chair or if it shall be cancelled.

In case of any concerns about a Rules Proposal and/or a validation report the Rules Chair shall inform and discuss it in detail with the Technical Committee Chair.

4. The Secretariat forwards the *Proposed Rules Change* and validation reports to the Voting Delegates at least two months before the Ordinary Meeting.

5. During the ISTA Meeting, the Rules Session and the Rules Proposal Voting Session take place.

**Rules Committee Session:** In this Session, the Rules Chair presents and explains the Rules Proposals to the ISTA Membership. Any withdrawal and modification of Rules Proposals is only possible in a consensus decision between the Technical Committee Chair, the Rules Chair and the ISTA President.

**Rules Proposal Voting Session:** This session during the Ordinary Meeting is chaired by the Rules Chair. In this session the Voting Delegates vote on the Rules Proposals. When the Rules Proposal is voted through the new method or Rules change is included into the Rules.

6. After the Ordinary Meeting the Executive Committee ensures the follow-up of the rejected Rules Proposals and informs the corresponding Technical Committee.

**Annexe 2****Timetable for Rules Proposals:**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Deadline</b>
1	Submission of Rules Proposals and method validation packages to the committee	-	-	any time
2	Submission of Rules Proposals, Method Validation Reports and Voting Results to the Secretariat	TCOM Chair	-	November 1
3	Preparation of Rules Proposal document	RUL Chair, Vice, SEC	1M	December 1
4	Evaluation on compatibility; final formulation	RUL	1M	December 31
5	Preparation of ECOM Document and submission to ECOM	RUL Chair SEC	2W	January 15
6	ECOM Meeting	ECOM		mid February
7	Preparation of final 'Proposed Rules Changes' and Method Validation Reports Distribution to the members and stakeholders	RUL Chair SEC	2M	April 1
8	Vote on the 'Proposed Rules Changes' at the Ordinary Meeting	Voting delegates		second half of June
9	Decision on modification of rejected Rules Proposals	RUL Chair, ECOM, TCOM	1M	mid of July



### Annexe 3

#### ***Working Programme and Progress Report***

#### **Committees' Working Programme and Progress Report**

The Committees' Working Programme is structured in five areas: (A) Rules Development, (B) Publications, (C) Workshops and Seminars, (D) Proficiency Tests, (E) Questions to the Committee and (F) Special Projects.

The form is intended to be used for documenting the tri-annual working programme and for recording progress in each of three annual reports. New items added after the final programme was approved should be highlighted.

## A Rules Development

### A1 Introduction of New Methods

	TCOM: COM	Method name/Subject	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

### A2 Introduction of New Species

	TCOM: COM	Species and test	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

### A3 Introduction of Rules Changes

	TCOM: COM	Subject	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

## B Publications

### B1 Rules accompanying publications

	TCOM: COM	Publication title	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

### B2 Training publications on specific seed testing topics

	TCOM: COM	Publication title t	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

### B3 Scientific information publications

	TCOM: COM	Publication title	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

## C Workshops and Seminars

### C1 Training and education workshops

	TCOM: COM	Workshop subject and location	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

**C2 Seminars**

	TCOM: COM	Seminar subject and location	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

**D Proficiency Tests**

	TCOM: COM	Proficiency Test Subject	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

**E Questions to the Committee**

	Subject of question	Date	From (country)
1	Subject	YYYY	
2	Subject	YYYY	

**F Special Projects**

	TCOM: COM	Project title/Subject and collaborating committees	Proposed finalisation	Progress report Date: YYYY
1			YYYY	
2			YYYY	

**Committee Membership Lists**

The list of committee members is part of the working programme; changes recorded for the annual report shall be highlighted and dated

TCOM: COM	Name	Country	Change and date
Chair: 1	Firstname Lastname	CC	YYYY
Vice-Chair: 2			
Members: 3			

**Additional information for the annual report and issues of Common Technical Interest**

The committee should present here any additional relevant information regarding activities. In addition, information regarding issues of common technical interest, and world-wide developments in the committee's field of activity should be listed.

Date	Subject	Comments
mm.dd.yyyy	Short subject description	Comments by the TCOM