

Guidelines for Observers of Incoming Countries at the International Chemistry Olympiad

Background Information

The **official Regulations** cover nearly everything concerning the International Chemistry Olympiad (IChO). The current regulations are available from the web site of the Steering Committee, and they should be read in advance.

The **International Jury** (in short **Jury**) consists of the mentors of all participating delegations. Besides its many other roles, the Jury is in charge of the actual competition. (See Regulations §§ 6,7)

A meeting of the Jury is called a **Jury session** (or sometimes “Jury meeting”).

The **Steering Committee** is a group of about 12 experienced persons who have been head mentors for a long time or were appointed chairs of the previous, the current, or future Olympiads. The Steering Committee coordinates the ongoing and strategic work involved in the organisation of the IChO. (See Regulations § 8)

During the Olympiad, the Steering Committee will invite you to report about the situation in your country relating to your own National Chemistry Olympiad.

The **Scientific Board** (or “Scientific Committee”) is the group of professors and scientists who authored the exam problems for the current IChO. This board is set up by the host and is also responsible for the marking of the students’ examinations. The members are called “authors”. (See Regulations §§ 10 to 14)

Countries not automatically invited to the IChO must apply to the organizer by the end of November preceding the Olympiad. The organizer invites these countries to the Olympiad based on the recommendation of the Steering Committee. Newly invited countries must send an observer to two consecutive Olympiads before its pupils can participate in the IChO. The observer participates in Jury meetings and all Olympiad procedures as a non-voting member in order to learn about the content and procedure of the competition.

It is the responsibility of each delegation, including observers, to make their own travel arrangements, including a **visa** and **health insurance** to travel to the official arrival location of the host country.

Day 1

Arrival and Registration

At the registration, you will receive a badge and a bag with informational material including the timetable of the IChO where all events are scheduled, and likely also other “welcome” materials.

Day 2

Opening ceremony, laboratory inspection and practical problems

After the opening ceremony, the mentors and observers are separated from the students. The mentors and observers inspect the laboratories and check that their students have all the equipment and chemicals they are supposed to have, and that everything is in good working order. The mentors then receive the draft version of the practical problems (problems + the expected solutions + marking scheme). The mentors check the problems and have the opportunity to talk to the authors individually. You should visit this meeting to appreciate how

misunderstandings can be cleared, how mistakes are corrected and how the problems are improved. This meeting with the authors saves a lot of time in the following session.

The 1st Jury Session can last until late in the night. The practical problems (problems + the expected solutions + marking scheme) are discussed in detail and perhaps improved until the final version is agreed upon by an official vote of the Jury.

Day 3

This is the day set aside for **Translation** of the practical exam. It is a very busy day for mentors who have to translate the English version of the practical problems into the language of their students.

This is a day with a great amount of time for your private use, although you should visit the venue of translation and observe the translation work. The English speaking countries are the first to finish their laying-out of the problems, so take the opportunity to talk to them.

Day 4

Day 4 consists of a morning of excursion for the mentors and observers while the students perform the practical exam. At noon, the mentors receive the copies of the theoretical problems (problems + the expected solutions + marking scheme). The same process as on day 2 now happens: the mentors study the exams, meet with the authors and discuss the problems (problems + the expected solutions + marking scheme) in the **2nd Jury Session** until an agreement is reached.

It is expected of you to visit not only the 2nd Jury Session but also the meeting with the authors.

Day 5

Translation of the theoretical problems occurs in the same manner as on Day 3. There is again a lot of time for your private use.

Day 6

The students take the theoretical test. Mentors and observers are totally free to do what they want, and the organizer will likely offer sightseeing tours. In the evening, there is a **Reunion Event**, where the students reunite with their mentors with whom they have had no contact since Day 2.

Day 7

In the morning, the mentors get the copies of the students' exams. They mark them following the marking schemes which the Jury approved in the 1st and 2nd Jury sessions. As this process does not last the whole day, the host may offer an excursion.

In the evening, the **3rd Jury Session** (so called **business meeting**) occurs, where there are discussions about any general problems of the IChO and decision making if necessary. This Jury session also includes the election of members of the Steering Committee, and an announcement by the host as to how the arbitration is organized.

Day 8

Day 8 contains the **Arbitration** between the marking of the authors and the marking of the mentors. The marks of the authors are handed out to the head mentors before arbitration,

and the mentors determine any differences in the grading. Each delegation then has about one hour of time to talk to the authors and agree upon the marking. (Mentors will not intervene if the authors give more points than expected!) (See Regulations § 14))

With more about 70 participating countries, this arbitration procedure lasts the whole day. In the past, observers of incoming countries often joined one author and followed the entire procedure for the duration.

Before the 4th Jury session, the head mentors receive the final marking of their students to check whether the transfer of the points to the computer files is correct. In the evening, the **4th Jury Session** is held, including topics such as the decision about the allocation of the medals and other general topics (continuation of the business meeting).

Day 9

Day 9 is the day of the **Closing Ceremony**, perhaps with cultural events, followed by a **Farewell Party**.

Day 10

This day typically involves the departures of all of the delegations.

- This guideline was prepared by Wolfgang Hampe and adapted at the SC Meeting in Tokyo in December of 2009, and it was revised by Bryan Balazs in December of 2010.

Guidelines for observers of incoming countries (2010 Revision)

Reference:

<http://www.ichosc.org/documents-of-the-icho/information-for-observing-countries>