

GUIDELINES FOR ISSMGE TECHNICAL COMMITTEES AND ISSMGE HONOUR LECTURES

(Reviewed July 2026)

These guidelines provide a framework for the operation of Technical Committees (TCs) within the ISSMGE. They should be read in conjunction with ISSMGE statutes and bylaws. The ISSMGE has 40 technical committees, each dealing with specific subject areas in the field of geotechnical engineering. Overall authority of the ISSMGE TCs is vested with the ISSMGE President and Board, with operational oversight provided by the Board level *Technical Advising and Outcome Committee* (TAOC).

The mission of the TCs is to provide a forum for active participation by the individual members of the ISSMGE, and to promote the objectives, activities, and results of the TCs throughout the ISSMGE membership. The TCs are a forum for discussing, developing, and applying specialist geotechnical knowledge related to the behaviour of geo-materials, geotechnical engineering, and engineering for society.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of a TC are to:

1. Develop and disseminate knowledge and practice within the topic of the TC to the membership of the ISSMGE.
2. Establish guidelines and technical recommendations within the topic of the TC.
3. Assist with technical programs of international and regional conferences organised by the ISSMGE.
4. Interact with industry and overlapping groups working in areas related to the specialist area of the TC.

CREATION, MAINTENANCE AND DISSOLUTION OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

TCs may be instituted at the request of a group of members interested in a specific topic and with the knowledge and agreement of the President and Secretary General. The topics and number of TCs are set to meet the perceived needs within the geotechnical community. The President of the ISSMGE will consider the recommendations of the TAOC and will decide to maintain or dissolve existing TCs and to create new ones.

Technical Committees continue their work independently of the term of office of the President of the ISSMGE. The TC Chair continues his/her work through the change of ISSMGE President, until otherwise directed by the President after consultation with the TAOC.

ISSMGE members, in liaison with their Member Society (MS), may also request the President and/or the TAOC-at any time to consider the formation of a new TC.

The ISSMGE President, after consultation with the TAOC, may elect to dissolve any TC whose mandate has been fulfilled or is perceived as being inactive or ineffective.

A new TC requires a formal proposal to be submitted to the TAOC for endorsement. A new TC will have a two-year probation period at the end of which the officers of the TC will submit to the TAOC a detailed activity report. This report will be discussed by the TAOC and the ISSMGE Board and, if agreed, the establishment of the new TC will be approved. If the report is deemed inadequate, the TAOC will communicate to the TC Chair the future actions, which may include termination of the TC.

MEMBERSHIP

All office bearers (the TC Chair, Vice-Chair, if any, and Secretary) and members of TCs must be members of the ISSMGE and must remain in good standing throughout their term of service. Exceptions can be made in cases where particular expertise outside of soil mechanics and geotechnical engineering is required for continued knowledge development of a TC. Such exceptions must be approved by the TAOC.

An ISSMGE member can belong to more than one TC.

TC Chair

The choice of a suitable Chair is crucial to the effective operation of the TC. The Chair should have sufficient knowledge of the subject area, should be well respected by the geotechnical community and the TC itself. He/she should make a firm commitment and have the necessary capacity to organise the activities of the TC. This applies to existing Chairs, succession Chairs and Chairs of new TCs. A new Chair who has some responsibilities in other TCs (Vice-Chair or Secretary) should resign from those positions.

The term of office of a TC Chair is 4 years and can be renewed, for just one additional term, leading to a maximum Chairmanship of 8 years. At the end of the first term, the TC Chair must call for a motion of confidence. The TC Chair needs to be supported by the simple majority of the votes to continue in office for a second term. Only the TC members with the right to vote can participate in this process.

At the end of the second 4 years term, the TC Chair needs to organize an election to select a new TC Chair. It needs to be an open call among all the TC members (i.e., MSs nominated, Chair nominated and MS corresponding) potentially interested in the TC Chair position. Before starting the election process, the TC Chair needs to contact TAOC Chair to coordinate it. The annex I presents the election protocol to be followed to select the new TC Chair. On completion of the voting and scrutiny processes, list of the nominated candidates (in the order they were voted) is shared with the TAOC chair for his/her consideration. Usually, the new TC Chair is the person who received the maximum number of votes. Normally, the selected candidate shall have the support of at least 50% of the TC members. Once approved by the TAOC chair, the selected personality asks for an official support from his/her member society, which he should forward to the TAOC Chair. Once this official support is received, the TAOC chair proposes to the ISSMGE president the nomination of the selected personality. Based on the TAOC Chair's suggestion, usually, the ISSMGE President officially appoints the new TC Chair.

The TAOC may advise the President to replace a Chair who is inactive. The authority to replace a TC Chair is vested only with the ISSMGE President, who may consult the Board. Examples of an inactive TC Chair include one who fails: to respond to queries by the ISSMGE President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary General or the TAOC; to demonstrate satisfactory progress; to comply with these TC guidelines; or respond within agreed timelines.

In coordination with the relevant Vice-President, the TAOC takes responsibility to confirm that the host MS will support the new TC, providing as necessary the administration to ensure efficient operation of the TC.

TC Chair nominated members

The Chair nominates the Secretary for the TC. He/she may also nominate a TC Vice-Chair. To reflect the international nature of TCs, TC Chairs are strongly encouraged to ensure that their leadership team is composed of members of societies from different ISSMGE regions.

In addition to the Secretary and Vice-Chair, the TC Chair may nominate up to four (4) members from various countries to reflect the international nature of the TC. These individuals should be important specialists seen as essential to ensure satisfactory progress in TC activities. Considering that some of

the TCs deal with multidisciplinary problems, in exceptional circumstances, the TC Chair may appoint a non-ISSMGE Member, provided he/she is an internationally recognised expert able to contribute significantly to the activity of the TC.

At the end of the term of office of a Chair, the Chair nominated members will be removed from the TC database. They can be reinstated to the general membership by contacting their MS (see below) or by being re-nominated by the incoming Chair.

General membership

Each MS may nominate up to two (2) members to serve on each TC. Normally, the length of their term of appointment is 8 years. It can be renewed for 4 years, upon proposal of the TC Chair and approval by the TAOC. Approval will be based on evidence of active and essential participation.

When a new TC is created, the Secretary General of ISSMGE invites each Member Society to nominate members. At any time, a MS may nominate new member(s) or replace its member(s) in a given TC.

It may be that a MS wishes to have more than two (2) members on a TC. Other individuals may be added, and these are termed Corresponding Members. The Corresponding Members may attend TC meetings but have no voting rights.

Nominations and a brief CV for members and corresponding members should be entered by the MS to the online TC database. Only nominations from MSs in good standing with the ISSMGE will be considered. Only individuals whose details have been entered onto the TC database by their MS are considered as members of a TC. In cases where an MS does not respond to an individual's request to join a TC, the TC Chair may appoint the individual as a corresponding member. This may only be done after reasonable attempts have been made to contact the MS, including an initial request from the individual and, if necessary, a follow-up from the ISSMGE Secretary General, copied to the TAOC and TC Chair. The official membership of a TC is that appearing on the ISSMGE website.

At the start of their term of office, the Chair should send an invitation to each TC member to confirm their availability and their willingness to participate in and advance the activities of the TC. The Chair may invite individuals to join the TC. The mechanism of joining is for the individual to contact their MS and ask that they be added to the TC database.

TC members are obliged to respond when requested to do so and to carry out delegated activities as agreed. The TC Chair may suggest to the ISSMGE President and the TAOC to remove or replace inactive members. An inactive TC member is one who fails to respond within a reasonable timeframe to requests from the TC Chair, giving due consideration to extenuating circumstances.

In the case of inactive TC members, the TC Chair shall proceed as follows: (1) he/she first contacts the TC member; (2) if no response, he/she contacts the MS and the ISSMGE Vice-President for the Region, asking the MS to verify the member's status and, if necessary, to replace the member. If there is still no action, the TC Chair will advise the TAOC to instruct the Secretary General to remove the inactive member from the TC database.

It is expected that all TC members liaise with their MS in order to report all appropriate information about the activities of the TC.

Involvement of Industry

The ISSMGE caters for the needs of all members of the geotechnical community. The composition of TCs should hence ensure a mix of academics, researchers, and practitioners on the committee appropriate to the subject area of the TC. As a guideline, practitioner involvement should preferably exceed 25% on any TC, increasing to 50% or more in the case of TC of a mainly practical nature.

ACTIVITIES OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

Terms of Reference and Task Forces

At the commencement of a new TC or following the appointment of a new Chair, the Chair submits the Terms of Reference (work plan and proposed deliverables) to the TAOC for approval. The TAOC consults with the ISSMGE President on the scope of work and reverts to the Chair with comments. Once approved, the Terms of Reference are circulated to the TC membership by the Chair and uploaded to the ISSMGE website by the Secretary General.

The Terms of Reference should be reviewed regularly and updated as appropriate, subject to approval by the TAOC. The TAOC will regularly (at least biennially) liaise with the TC Chairs to ensure that the Terms of Reference are both current and available on the ISSMGE website.

The Terms of Reference should include activities contributing to achieving the following aims:

Objective 1

Develop and disseminate knowledge and practice within the topic of the TC to the membership of the ISSMGE.

1. Organise specialty conferences, symposiums, workshops, and short courses.
2. Encourage preparation of keynote lectures, state-of-the-art lectures including new technologies, general reports for conferences organised by the International Society, regional conferences and conferences organised by Member Societies.
3. Develop ideas for broad participation of ISSMGE individual members through, for example, prediction events, surveys, or other means.

Objective 2

Establish guidelines and technical recommendations within the topic of the TC:

1. Collate available standards, codes, and guidelines, and translate non-English ones into English, if necessary.
2. Prepare overviews of the standards, codes, and guidelines.
3. Evaluate the similarities and the differences.
4. Make guidelines and recommendations for practice (can be procedural ones for new complex problems and/or technical ones for specific items).

Objective 3

Assist with technical programs of international and regional conferences organised by the ISSMGE:

1. Present the findings of the TC in main sessions or discussion sessions.

Objective 4

Interact with industry and overlapping groups working in areas related to the specialist area of the TC:

1. Identify overlapping organisations and decide how to interact with them.

Though the lifetime of a TC is not linked to the period of a Presidency, an incoming President will agree with each TC its Terms of Reference and work plan for the Presidential period.

The TC Chair is encouraged to develop task forces for specific activities and assign the responsibility to TC members to lead these activities. These TC members will be known as Leaders of the specific

Task Forces of that TC. The Leaders of the Task Forces of a TC, together with the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary form the Executive of the TC.

The Chair is to submit a list of proposed TC meetings to the Secretary General and to the TAOC through the Vice-President of the region to which the Chair belongs. Although these meetings may change, it is important to notify the general membership at an early stage of potential meetings to allow for appropriate planning and coordination of ISSMGE events.

Responsibilities of TC

A TC is responsible for discussing, advancing, and developing knowledge in its specialist subject area. Wherever possible, it should seek to synthesise this information into a form that is of use to the geotechnical profession and to disseminate it to the membership of the ISSMGE, as articulated in the Objectives above. There should be a balance between the advancement of academic research and the translation of appropriate research findings into practice.

Activities

TCs may use a variety of means for achieving their objectives. Typically, these would include specialist discussions, symposia, academic/practitioner forums, speciality conferences, surveys, etc. Active involvement by the TC in International and Regional Conferences organised by the ISSMGE is strongly encouraged.

All conferences, symposia, etc. organised under the auspices of the TC must adhere to the principles outlined in the ISSMGE conference manual. The TC shall seek approval from the TAOC, President and Secretary General before it gives official endorsement to any conference or activity organised by bodies outside the ISSMGE.

Deliverables

The Terms of Reference of the TC should include tangible deliverables such as reports, seminars and proceedings or other demonstrable outputs. Particular emphasis should be placed on coordination of research efforts and the translation of research findings into practice.

Within a Presidential period, each TC is required to submit two reports to the ISSMGE Board: an interim report in time for the mid-term Council meeting and one administrative report 6 months prior to the International Conference for presentation at the Council meeting. Both reports are to be submitted to the TAOC and the Secretary General. The format for the two administrative reports will be provided by ISSMGE.

ISSMGE HONOUR LECTURES ESTABLISHED BY TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

Criteria and process for creating and naming ISSMGE Honour Lectures

The establishment of a new ISSMGE Honour Lecture should normally be initiated by a TC. If a new ISSMGE Honour Lecture is proposed by other than a TC, the President will select a TC to deal with the matter. No TC may have more than one Honour Lecture.

The TC proposing an ISSMGE Honour Lecture shall have the support of at least 75% of its members prior to submitting a proposal. In that process, the TAOC shall provide advice, prior to the President and the Board considering the proposal.

As part of establishing an ISSMGE Honour Lecture, a decision will be made on the frequency of delivery (yearly, biennially or at other intervals). Normally, the venue for the lecture shall be within a regular conference arranged by a TC. The following are criteria for selecting the topic and title of the ISSMGE Honour Lecture:

1. The topic of the ISSMGE Honour Lecture shall reside with the TC.
2. The ISSMGE Honour Lecture shall enhance dissemination of knowledge within the field of the TC.
3. The title of the ISSMGE Honour Lecture may be the name of a person (or several persons) who made acknowledged and significant contributions to the topic in different continents. This person should also have played an active role in disseminating his/her works through publications in leading and reputable international journals and by lectures in different continents. The person may or may not be living.
4. If the title of the ISSMGE Honour Lecture is the name of a person, the TC should prepare a list of three alternative nominees. The proposed nominee shall be decided by a simple majority of the TC members. The nominees shall form part of the proposal. The final decision on all aspects of the ISSMGE Honour Lecture resides with the President in consultation with the Board.

The lifespan of an ISSMGE Honour Lecture shall normally be a minimum of 8 years. If a TC is dissolved, the ISSMGE Honour Lecture will also cease.

Criteria and process for the selection of the ISSMGE Honour Lecturer

The TC recommends the name of the ISSMGE Honour Lecturer (HL). The Lecturer shall be a member of the ISSMGE and be recognised as a national or international expert within the field of the topic. This would normally mean that the Lecturer has published several papers, books, or other publications on the topic. Alternatively, the Lecturer may have made a recent major contribution to the Topic.

The selection criteria shall not include nationality of the Lecturer, i.e., a Lecturer may come from the same country or continent as the previous Lecturer. There are no requirements as to education or position. Practicing engineers and persons from academia are equally eligible. The annex II presents the election protocol to be followed to select the new ISSMGE HL. On completion of the voting and scrutiny processes, the list of the nominated candidates (in the order they were voted) is shared with the TAOC Chair and President for their consideration. Usually, the new ISSMGE HL is the person who received the maximum number of votes. Normally, the selected candidate shall have the support of at least 50% of the TC members. Once approved by the TAOC Chair and President, the TC Chair shall inform the TC members about the election outcome.

The TC Chair shall first inform the ISSMGE President and the TAOC the name of the selected Lecturer. If there is some disagreement with the proposed Lecturer, one or several alternative candidates should be proposed to the TC Chair. If an agreement cannot be reached, the TC chair should make the final decision in consultation with the Chair of the TAOC.

ISSMGE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING TC

The ISSMGE has established an *Outstanding TC Award* to be presented at the quadrennial International Conference. It is the responsibility of the MS, in conjunction with the regional Vice-President, to apply for the Award on behalf of the TC and to present the achievement of the TC in light of the criteria for the Award (see Awards Committee for application and award criteria).

FUNDING OF TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

In agreeing to host the TC, the host MS accepts responsibility for providing the necessary administrative support for the operation of the TC. Members' costs are borne by the members or their sponsoring organisations or MSs.

Under exceptional circumstances, application for funding or other resources for specific activities may be made to the MSs.

OMBUDSMAN

The TAOC is the first point of contact for matters related to the ISSMGE TCs. If a MS disagrees with the decision of the TAOC and wishes to appeal the case, the President will serve as the ombudsman and will be the final authority.

JOINT TECHNICAL COMMITTEES

Joint Technical Committees (JTCs) are hosted by one of the Sister Societies of FedIGS. They are formed where the subject area of the TC extends into the fields of interest of several Sister Societies. The rules governing the formation and the operation of the JTCs are agreed among the Sister Societies (see FedIGS Cooperation Agreement).

Annex I

Method for the selection and appointment of a new TC chair

The principle of nominating new chairs is globally described in the Guidelines and further detailed here. The new chair is selected based on his/her expertise in the field, his/her willingness to serve the TC fruitfully, and his/her potential acceptance by the TC members. To ensure full acceptance of the future chair, it is strongly recommended that the acting TC officers be neutral to manage a clear and transparent selection process, without any suggestion, endorsement, or support for any of the candidates. It should also be recalled that the willingness of any supporting member society or region to keep a TC within their country or region is irrelevant and not acceptable.

It is suggested to process as follows for the selection and nomination of a new TC chair:

- The TC Chair needs to contact the TAOC Chair to inform him/her that the process of selecting a new Chair will start.
- The process is started by an open call for candidates organized by the TC officers among all the TC members (MSs nominated, Chair nominated, MSs corresponding, officers).
- Candidates interested in the position are invited to prepare, within a given deadline, a document that shall include the candidate's short bio (half a page) and a vision statement (half a page), that is to be shared through the TC emails-list.
- Organising and overseeing the voting and scrutiny processes can be made either by the TC officers or by a devoted TC subcommittee.
- If possible, a TC meeting (in person or virtual) can be set up to allow the candidates shortly present themselves and their vision.
- Only the TC members with right to vote (i.e., MSs nominated members, TC Chair nominated members, TC Secretary, TC Vice-Chair, and TC Chair) are allowed to vote.
- The voting and scrutiny processes is conducted online* with a minimum 2-week election period.
- The process is followed and the list of the nominated candidates (in the order they were voted) is shared with the TAOC chair for his/her consideration. Usually, the new TC chair is the person who received the maximum number of votes.
- Once approved by the TAOC chair, the selected personality asks for official support from his/her member society, which he should forward to the TAOC chair.
- Once this official support is received, the TAOC chair proposes to the ISSMGE president the nomination of the selected personality
- Based on the TAOC chair's suggestion, normally, the ISSMGE president officially appoints the new TC chair

* The system to be used for voting and scrutiny will be coordinated with the ISSMGE. The TC officers in charge of the voting and scrutiny process need to contact the TAOC for instructions in this regard.

Annex II

Method for the Selection of the ISSMGE Honour Lecturer (HL)

The principle of nominating ISSMGE Honour Lecturer (HL) is globally described in the Guidelines and further detailed here. The Lecturer shall be a member of the ISSMGE and be recognised as a national or international expert within the field of the topic. This would normally mean that the Lecturer has published several papers, books, or other publications on the topic. Alternatively, the Lecturer may have made a recent major contribution to the Topic. The selection criteria shall not include nationality of the Lecturer. There are no requirements as to education or position. Practicing engineers and persons from academia are equally eligible. It is strongly recommended that the acting TC officers be neutral to manage a clear and transparent selection process, without any suggestion, endorsement, or support for any of the candidates.

It is suggested to process as follows for the selection and nomination of a new ISSMGE HL:

- The TC Chair needs to contact the TAOC Chair to inform him/her that the process of selecting a new ISSMGE HL will start.
- The process is started by an open call for candidates organized by the TC officers among all the TC members (MSs nominated, TC Chair nominated, corresponding, officers).
- Candidates interested in the opportunity are invited to prepare, within a given deadline, a document that shall include the candidate's short bio (half a page) together with a preliminary lecture title and abstract (half a page), that is to be shared through the TC emails-list previous to the election process.
- In that process, the TC shall consider at least three alternative candidates.
- Organising and overseeing the voting and scrutiny processes can be made either by the TC officers or by a devoted TC subcommittee.
- Only the TC members with right to vote (i.e., MSs nominated members, TC Chair nominated members, TC Secretary, TC Vice-Chair, and TC Chair) are allowed to vote.
- The voting and scrutiny processes is conducted online* with a minimum 2-week election period.
- The process is followed and the list of the ISSMGE HL candidates (in the order they were voted) is shared with the TAOC chair and President for their consideration.
- Usually, the new ISSMGE HL is the person who received the maximum number of votes.
- Normally, the selected candidate shall have the support of at least 50% of the TC members.
- Once approved by the TAOC chair and President, the TC Chair shall inform the TC members about the election outcome.

* The TC officers in charge of the voting and scrutiny process need to contact the TAOC to coordinate the system to be used for voting.
