

Terms of Reference for BLS Scientific Committee

Revised December 2018

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To act as the scientific committee for the annual conference (to set up abstract submission, peer review submissions, judge presentations at conference, and recommend awards for best overall and best 'novice' posters, best overall and best 'novice' oral presentations)
- 1.2. To ensure optimum membership of the BLS Scientific Committee and to represent the scientific committee on the BLS Committee.
- 1.3. To act as the scientific committee to assess applications for the Lymphoedema Research Grant (LRG) including the Caroline Badger Clinical Research Fellowship Award (CBCRFA) and receive progress reports.
- 1.4. To coordinate responses to enquiries from BLS members and others regarding the evidence base and act as expert reviewers to external agencies (such as NICE, NHS England).
- 1.5. To develop and maintain communications about research and the evidence base within and without the BLS, such as encouraging a focus on members' research activities in the BLS newsletter *News & Views*, maintaining the SC pages on the BLS website and communicating selected research publications to the membership.

2. Membership

- 2.1. Ideally, there will be a maximum of 10 members, comprising 9 full members and 1 honorary member. Adequate expertise and stability are essential for the effectiveness of the Committee. It is therefore hoped that members will remain on the Committee for a period of 5 years after which their tenure may be reviewed and extended for a further period of 5 years (see 2.5). A Chair and Deputy Chair will be selected from within the BLS membership. It is anticipated that the Deputy Chair will fulfil this role for 3 years before taking up the role of Chair. The tenure of the Chair and Deputy Chair roles will usually be 3 years.
- 2.2. Essential criteria for membership of the Scientific Committee are: full membership of BLS; a first degree or equivalent; experience of writing for publication; experience of poster and oral presentation. Holding a higher degree is a desirable criterion.
- 2.3. There will be 1 "honorary" member of the Scientific Committee in addition to the 9 full members. This person will not have the experience to meet the criteria for full membership but, for example, may be someone carrying out an MSc. This membership will be for 2 years, following which the person will either become a full member or will step down. The honorary member would not be a "voting member" but will be asked to comment on the abstracts with the support of a named mentor from the Scientific Committee. The aim of this role would be to enable a BLS member to develop skills which would make them eligible for full Scientific Committee membership.
- 2.4. At least one Committee member but no more than two will stand down each year.

- 2.5. The annual recruitment of at least one new member each year will ensure that the Committee is not static and those with less experience are facilitated in developing their skills. It is desirable that a mix of skills and abilities is represented on the Committee, i.e. different disciplines, research experience. The process of appointment will be by an expression of interest by email to the Chair by the end of October, i.e. following the annual meeting at the BLS Conference. The vacancy will be advertised in *News & Views* and on the BLS website. The Chair will send a "proforma" for completion by the applicant, including a "mini-CV" and a checklist of the criteria for Scientific Committee membership.

If there are more eligible applicants than vacancies, then existing Committee members will choose the new applicant by vote. If particular expertise is sought to ensure that the group fulfils its function, this will be made clear at the time of seeking applicants.

New members will take up their place on the Committee shortly after this so that they can take part in the review of abstracts etc for the next conference.

The tenure for Scientific Committee membership will normally be for 5 years, although it is recognised that members could be re-nominated for a further term in order to maintain a balance of experience and different professionals on the Committee.

- 2.6. The Vice Chair will be elected from the Scientific Committee membership and will provide support to the Chair, particularly if there were issues requiring a "Chair's vote" due to the lack of consensus. The Vice Chair will be "Chair Elect" and take over the role of Chair when the Chair steps down.
- 2.7. The Chair of the Scientific Committee will be co-opted onto the BLS Committee as a means of communication between the two.
- 2.8. In recognition of their work for BLS, Scientific Committee members are able to claim expenses from BLS for conference attendance: either travel expenses or one night's accommodation.

3. Meetings

- 3.1. The Committee will meet annually at BLS Conference. A second meeting may take place after initial assessment of conference abstracts in July so that firm decisions can be made.

4. Operational issues

- 4.1. Most business to be conducted by e-mail: with copy to BLS Admin.
- 4.2. Notes of annual meeting to be kept, circulated to Scientific Committee Members and a copy sent to the office for circulation to the BLS Committee.
- 4.3. The Chair (or Vice Chair) of the Scientific Committee will present a written and verbal report on its activities at the Annual General Meeting.
- 4.4. Applications / abstracts - BLS Admin to keep comments for 1 year after conference;
- 4.5. Decision-making methods by majority decision with the Chair taking decision if there is a "tied" vote, following discussion with the Vice Chair.
- 4.6. Advice from external experts, e.g. statistician when necessary, should be available.

- 4.7. Liaison with Conference Committee re abstracts and conference programme: need for Chair of Scientific Committee & Conference Committee to work together on this. The number of slots available for oral presentation will be decided by the Conference Committee and communicated to the Science Committee.
- 4.8. Abstracts of invited speaker presentations will also be sent to the Scientific Committee Chair for information.
- 4.9. Applications will be invited for the LRG including the CBCRFA by an agreed date. Following agreement by the BLS Committee, applicants will be informed in writing and the membership will be informed through News & Views and the BLS website.
- Interim Reports from successful applicants will be noted and forwarded to the SC Chair with any concerns about progress or the process being highlighted.
- 4.10 Any member of the Scientific Committee who submits an abstract for the conference or application for a research award will be excluded from the review process in relation to their own work to ensure there is no conflict of interest

Beverley de Valois
Chair, BLS SC
December 2018