

ICES Annual Science Conference

Theme sessions and network sessions



ICES
CIEM

International Council for
the Exploration of the Sea

Conseil International pour
l'Exploration de la Mer

This document describes the purpose of theme sessions and network sessions at ICES Annual Science Conference (ASC) and the processes and timetable for choosing conveners and session content.

Theme sessions provide the main forum for talks and poster presentations at the ASC and showcase new and emerging marine science. They cover a range of defined science topics of relevance and interest to ASC participants and marine scientists in general. Network sessions aim to introduce, discuss, and get feedback on science, data, and advisory topics of relevance to ICES, and to engage existing or potential partner organizations internationally. As such, they may have more eclectic formats than the theme sessions and provide flexibility for engaging a large proportion of those people joining the sessions. Typically, there will be four times as many theme sessions as network sessions at an ASC. The timetable for proposing and selecting both types of session is the same.

ICES aspires to run an ASC that is attractive to marine scientists from ICES community and beyond, and provides many opportunities to participate. ICES recognises that funding support for ASC attendance is often conditional on presentation of a poster or talk. For these reasons, proposals for theme and network sessions on topics that are accessible to a broad range of marine scientists are encouraged. In practical terms, this means that topics are broad enough to cover at least one, and preferably more, of the sub-priorities in ICES Science Plan (indicated by bullets beneath the seven priorities: Ecosystem science, Impacts of human activities, Observation and exploration, Emerging techniques and technologies, Seafood production, Conservation and management science, Sea and society). Theme and network sessions based solely on the work of a single project consortium or expert group, for example, would not be suitable, unless the sessions were described in a way that openly encouraged submissions from scientists outside the project or expert group and working on related topics.

Theme sessions

Purpose

Theme sessions provide the main forum for talks and poster presentations at the ASC and showcase new and emerging marine science. Theme sessions address a range of defined science topics of relevance and interest to the ASC audience, ICES community, and the marine science community as a whole.

For speakers, the purpose of the theme sessions is to provide a welcoming and collegiate environment where they have an opportunity to present their latest scientific work to other scientists. The conveners help to place the presenters' scientific work in a wider context.

For poster presenters, the purpose of the theme sessions is to provide a welcoming, constructive, and brightly lit environment for them to showcase and share their work with other scientists. ICES will strive to provide sufficient space to accept all posters submitted to the ASC and approved by conveners.

By sharing their scientific work with the ASC attendees, theme session speakers and poster presenters increase the profile of their work, make new contacts, and benefit from feedback from peers. Contacts made during the theme sessions may lead to ideas for further research and opportunities for future collaboration.

Process

The selection of topics and convenors for theme sessions (with the exception of a “contributed papers” theme session) is achieved with a community process, where session topics are proposed by convenors following a call for proposals.

Each proposer of a theme or network session is asked to identify one science priority area in ICES Science Plan to which the proposal is predominantly linked, and to list other science priority areas that are also relevant.

Each theme session proposal must be supported by at least two convenors from different countries, with a maximum of three convenors for regular ICES sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organization (e.g. PICES). Theme session proposals are reviewed and selected by ICES Science Committee. Proposals including more than the specified numbers of convenors will not be accepted for review.

A subgroup of the Science Committee ranks the proposed theme sessions, based on an indicative vote on their quality by all Science Committee members. The group selects, in the first instance, the most highly ranked theme session linked to each of ICES seven science priorities. In the case of “Seafood production”, one session is selected for an aquaculture topic and one for a fisheries topic to reflect the relative scale of work related to this priority.

The group then selects the next best theme session proposals in each of four different science priority areas, excluding seafood production. This approach is used to achieve an overall balance of scientific topics among theme sessions while leaving some flexibility to accept excellent crosscutting proposals and excellent proposals whatever the topic.

One theme session is always reserved for contributed papers on any marine science topic of relevance to ICES, with two, up to a maximum of three, convenors identified by the Science Committee. The contributed papers session maximises opportunities for marine scientists to share science that is not directly related to the topics covered by other theme and network sessions.

Around nine months before the ASC, selected theme sessions are advertised on ICES website and a “call for abstracts” to the theme sessions opens. The call is for oral as well as poster presentations. The call remains open until approximately six months before the ASC. Convenors should be proactive in encouraging scientists to submit oral presentations and posters to their theme sessions. When the call for abstracts closes, the convenors are responsible for selecting the submissions, oral and poster, to be presented in their theme sessions.

Typically, each theme session is assigned 2–6 hours (with longer sessions divided into sub-sessions with breaks). Time is allocated based on the number of abstract submissions received. Typically, theme sessions account for 75–80% of the total number of sessions (combined number of theme sessions and network sessions) run at an ASC and five parallel sessions are held. With five parallel sessions, a four-day ASC includes 16, up to a maximum of 18, theme sessions. These numbers include one contributed papers session.

At the ASC, theme session convenors are responsible for hosting, introducing, and chairing their selected session as well as liaising with ICES Secretariat and ASC organizers to ensure it runs smoothly. Poster presentations are grouped by theme session in the poster display area and convenors should be available at the poster sessions linked to their theme sessions to

meet presenters and people viewing the posters. Some theme sessions include introductory and/or synthetic talks by the conveners, to place the presentations and posters in a wider context and propose ideas and directions for further scientific development.

Once the theme session is complete, conveners are responsible for writing a short theme session report. ICES Secretariat provides a template and associated guidance for this purpose. The report is posted on ICES website and used for reporting to the Science Committee and the Council. Theme session reports should be submitted within two weeks of the ASC ending.

Network sessions

Purpose

Network sessions aim to introduce, discuss, and get feedback on science, data, and advisory topics of relevance to ICES, and to engage existing or potential partner organizations internationally. As such, they may have more eclectic formats than the theme sessions and provide flexibility for engaging a large proportion of those people joining the sessions.

Outcomes of network sessions should be tangible, resulting in proposals for new collaborations, expert groups, lines of scientific research, data products, conferences, and future theme sessions, for example. All network sessions are expected to address topics that are accessible to, and will engage, a reasonable proportion of attendees at the ASC.

Process

Network session topics are proposed by conveners, following the call for proposals. Each network session proposal must be supported by at least two conveners from different countries, with a maximum of three conveners for regular ICES network sessions and up to four when the session is co-sponsored by another organization (e.g. PICES). Proposals including more than the specified numbers of conveners will not be accepted for review.

Each proposer of a theme or network session is asked to identify one science priority area in ICES Science Plan to which the proposal is predominantly linked, and to list other science priority areas that are also relevant.

Network session proposals are reviewed and selected by the Science Committee. The Science Committee will select the best network session proposal from within each of three different science priority areas, as defined in ICES Science Plan, and make one “open” selection based solely on innovation and excellence and relevance to ICES vision. Crosscutting proposals are encouraged and quality will be evaluated alongside the quality of proposals linked more closely to single priority areas. No more than four network sessions are selected.

Conveners of those network sessions selected by the Science Committee are notified around 10 months before the ASC and details of the sessions are posted on ICES website 9 months before the ASC.

Network sessions are scheduled for one hour but, occasionally, this time allocation may be increased to fit the ASC schedule. Network sessions normally account for 20–25% of the total number of sessions (combined theme sessions and network sessions) accommodated during an ASC. Network sessions are run as parallel sessions.