

International Normal Labour and Birth Research Conference Series (INLBRC)

Terms of Reference

The INLBRC conference series was founded by staff at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) in 2001. Biannually, it is hosted and organised by a country authorised by the conference Steering Council. In the alternate years, it is hosted and organized in the UK by the UCLan team, when the event has the title '*International Labour and Birth Research Conference*' (ILBRC), due to concerns about the term 'normal birth' in the UK.

Note on language

In these Terms of Reference, we use the words 'women' and 'birthing people' to represent those who become pregnant and give birth. We are aware that some readers may prefer different terms, and we acknowledge the diversity and complexity of views and experiences that inform language choice in this area.

Aim

The International Normal Labour and Birth Research Conference (INLBRC) series is a multidisciplinary scientific event with a focus on generating, sharing, and optimising high quality research to share knowledge about the nature and outcomes of physiological labour and birth, and the impact of the context in which it takes place. The aim is to share emerging evidence, ideas, topics, theories and approaches in this field from around the world, across the whole methodological, professional and academic spectrum; to criticize emerging findings constructively; to inform public debate on the nature and consequences of modes of labour and birth and of the organisational and cultural contexts in which they occur; and to encourage exchange of ideas on applying research in maternity policy, systems and care provision around the world, and on critical future research questions in the field.

Values

The conference series is multi-disciplinary. Contributions are sought from all academic methodologies and disciplines across the arts, sciences and humanities; from all professional groups involved in maternity and neonatal care; and from service users.

The conference series is committed to increasing equity and diversity in its organisational groups, and in its delegates and keynote speakers and parallel session and poster presenters. It aims to do so by supporting research and the hosting of the conference in both high and low and middle income countries; by providing bursaries for delegates with particular access restrictions; by ensuring that the keynote speakers include those from more marginalised groups, and those at an earlier stage of their research journey; by constantly seeking to widen participation in the Steering Group and the abstract selection process; and by linking with global initiatives that aim to increase diversity in the field, such as the ICM Young Midwifery Leaders programme, and the QMNC Alliance. The Steering Council monitors progress on the inclusion of people with protected characteristics, subject to people being willing to share relevant personal data.

The conference operates through open competition for presentation of research papers and posters, subject to a blinded scientific review process, overseen by a Scientific Committee. Keynote speakers are also invited, on the basis of their contribution to the fulfilment of the conference aims, values and objectives.

Steering Council Terms of Reference

Role

The INLBRC Steering Council will direct and provide leadership around the strategic vision, content, and structure of the conference series.

Composition

The minimum number of members of the Steering Council is 14 and the maximum 21.

There is one sustaining member, 3-4 general members, including representatives of various scientific disciplines to maximise multi-disciplinarity, a maximum of 3 former conference chairs, 1-2 confirmed future conference chairs, 1-2 maternity service users with an interest in research, 1-2 early career researchers, and 1-2 professional organizations. Members can fulfill more than one role.

Term of office

Membership of the Steering Council is for a 3-year term with the opportunity to renew for a second term. Two consecutive terms is the maximum period of continuous service (six years) for all except the conference founder, the sustaining member. A former member may return to the Steering Council after three years away from membership. Former members can also join the Conference Series Emeritus Board, subject to approval of the Council.

Make-up of the Steering Council shall be reviewed once per annum, to identify new potential members and gaps in representation. Serving a second term is subject to agreement by the Steering Council, assuming that responsibilities of service have been met in the first term. Details of this are given under 'Responsibilities of Service' below.

Emeritus Committee

To ensure continuity of knowledge and experience relating to the Series, all those coming off the Council will be eligible to join an Emeritus Committee that will meet formally as a minimum once a year to advise the Council, at the time of the conference. Emeritus members can attend Council meetings as observers but have no voting rights.

Chair

The sustaining member will be the chair of the Steering Council. If there is no sustaining member, Council members will elect one of their number to chair. They will serve a three-year term that can be renewed once for another three years.

Administration and financing of the Council and Committee

It will be the responsibility of the Chair to ensure administration support for the Council. Where possible, 10% of each conference profits will be held in a central Series bank account, to ensure consistency of administration support between conference events.

All other activities of the Council will be undertaken on a voluntary basis.

Responsibilities of service

Each member commits to take individual and collective responsibility for carrying out the responsibilities of the Steering Council, and assisting the Chair in their role, on a voluntary basis. This includes

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participating in quarterly meetings of the Steering Council (usually remotely), attending annual conferences as frequently as possible, and attending the face-to-face Steering Council meeting held at the annual conference, if attending the conference. If a Steering Council member is unable to attend at least 50% of the meetings per year, and/or cannot engage (via attendance or by reading meeting recordings) with at least 75% of meetings, and/or undertake allocated responsibilities in between meetings, their continued membership will be subject to a simple majority vote among Council members.

To enable all members across the world to achieve the requirements, meetings will be held at a variety of times, and 'engagement' will include viewing of meeting recordings if attendance is not possible.

Appointment of new members

New members may be invited, or may apply, to join the Steering Council following the review of membership each year. This process will take account of the need for and value of diversity, and of including those from underserved/marginalised groups. The Council year will begin on January 1st annually. Each individual applying to join the Committee for the first time shall provide their CV and a 1-page statement of interest explaining their areas of expertise, research, use of evidence, prior experience of conference programming, any prior experience of attending the International Normal Labour and Birth Research Conference, how they feel they will contribute to the Council, and how they may enhance the diversity of the Council in terms of personal, professional and/or academic background, and/or country of residence. Leadership skills and experience would also be an additional benefit.

The decision to accept a new member will be made by a simple majority of the Council members, based on applications received as a consequence of nominations by Council members.

Transitional arrangements, 2023-2024

In transitional arrangements into this ToR, members in their first term who are on the existing Conference Series Steering Group as at December 1st 2023 and who successfully renew for another three years will start their second term on January 1st 2025. Those who are currently in their second term will move off the committee (and possibly into the Emeritus Committee) in a staggered manner between October 2024 (the date of the 2024 conference) and December 2025.

Table one: Steering Council structure and membership as at March 2024

Number	Type
1	Sustaining member
3-4	General members
2-4	Former chairs
1-2	Future chairs
1-2	Service users
2-3	Scientific disciplines
2-3	Organization rep
2	Early career researchers

Meetings

The INLBRC Steering Council will meet a minimum of 4 times per year. These will be closed meetings. The Chair shall ensure that notice is given at least 28 days in advance, and an agenda and papers are circulated in advance of the meeting. Times of meetings will be set and varied to enable members in different time zones to attend with a minimum of inconvenience. Action notes will be taken and circulated within 21 days of the meeting. Non-confidential notes of each meeting will then be made available on the Conference Series website once they have been approved for accuracy by the Council members.

Responsibilities

The Steering Council will:

- Provide strategic leadership to ensure the continuing success, positive influence and impact of the INLBRC globally.
- Approve the nation to host forthcoming conferences, at least 2-years in advance, and approve the conference lead/steering group and conference theme.
- Support and guide National Conference Committees by:
 - Providing a suggested conference organising timeline, and advice on planning processes, budget, venue, delegate accommodation, entertainment, advertising, marketing & promotion, technical support, funding and budgets, ticket prices and subsidises, prizes, university endorsements, abstract submissions, enrolment, logistics, equity and diversity, service user involvement, reduced fees/accessibility, and access to outputs for non-delegates.
 - Approve the list of keynote speakers. This will usually be a formality, but, in some cases, the Council could over-rule the speaker selection by a national conference group, if the speaker and presentation content are likely to violate the values and aims of the conference series.
 - Contributing to the selection of individuals to serve on the Scientific Review Committee for each conference.
 - Advising on the allocation of a proportion of the conference fees to support free or low-cost places for those who cannot afford the full fee, and on the processes for selecting applicants for such fee waivers.

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- Advising when challenges are encountered by National Conference Committees
- Review and approve the proposed venue, conference fee, dates, daily schedules, programme, and procedures.
- Review and approve the language used for the overall conference proposal and promotional materials.
- Ensure timely call for abstracts and review of abstracts.
- Approve applicants who provide commercial support for the conference either through sponsorship or through buying exhibition space, and applicants for charity (no or low cost) exhibition or similar spaces, in line with the Conference Series commercial sponsorship rules.
- Approve promotional materials.
- Support fundraising activities designed to underpin the costs of administering the Conference Series infrastructure, in line with the Conference Series commercial sponsorship rules
- Liaise with the National Conference Committees in the set up of their list of scientific reviewers for conference abstracts
- Ensure that the conference series is an organisation with memory, learning from its evolving history, and providing National Conference Committees with clear policies, guidance, templates and processes.
- Review terms of reference and membership every 3 years.

National Conference Committees (NCC)

Each country organising a conference on behalf of the international conference series shall establish a conference management committee, with a named Chair/Conference Lead and a minimum of two other named individuals at time of application. Expressions of interest to host a future conference, and the proposed Chair/Conference Lead, shall demonstrate that the proposed conference includes:

- A focus on physiological labour and birth
- Research and application to practice, education, and policy
- Service user perspectives
- Clinical, biological, psychological, emotional, ethical, sociological, anthropological, architectural, legal, epidemiological and other related professional and academic perspectives
- Diversity and input from underserved/marginalised groups in the conference committee, the list of scientific committee members, the selection of keynote and invited speakers, and in the arrangements for abstract submission and selection

The national conference committee will have one place on the Steering Council for the three years before and the three years after their conference.

Responsibilities

Subject to final approval by the Conference Steering Council, the national conference committee will:

- Agree the venue for the event in their country.
- Propose the conference title and focus, and associated keynote speakers.
- Propose a conference organising timeline, and arrangements for the planning processes, budget, venue, delegate accommodation, entertainment, advertising, marketing & promotion, technical

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support, funding and budgets, ticket prices, subsidises, waivers, prizes, university endorsements, sponsorship deals, exhibition arrangements, abstract submissions review and acceptance/rejection, enrolment, logistics, equity and diversity, service user involvement, accessibility, and access to outputs for non-delegates

- Set up the Scientific Review Committee specific to their event.
- Run the conference according to the agreements made.
- Provide a short report to the Council on key aspects of the event, and lessons learned/areas of good practice that could inform future events.
- Where possible, set aside 10% of event profits to support the administration of the Conference Series going forward

National Scientific Committee (NSC)

The Scientific Committee for each conference is made up of those skills and knowledge in research methods/methodology and/or in clinical or other relevant professional practice, and those with service user skills and knowledge, who are able to review scientific and other abstracts submitted for consideration. The tasks associated with the Scientific Committee are undertaken voluntarily. Committee members are invited by the relevant National Conference Committee, with support and input from the Conference Council.

The role of the NSC members is to objectively review and rate the abstracts allocated to them within the timescale agreed by the National Conference Committee.

The final list of NSC members should include enough members to ensure:

- three independent reviews of each abstract
- a full range of relevant expertise in terms of profession and academic discipline
- diversity, and inclusion of underserved/marginalised groups, professions and countries
- inclusion of junior, middle grade, and senior researchers