

International Geography Olympiad (IGEO) Task Force report to International Geographical Union Executive Committee 2022

Current Committee (2020-2024)

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At an extraordinary meeting of the International Board held on 20th January 2021 it was agreed that Steering Committee members of the Task Force and the co-chairs should remain in place until 2024, completing their two terms.

Objectives

The International Geography Olympiad (iGeo) is an annual competition for the best 16 to 19 year-old geography students from all over the world.

The aims of the Olympiad are to:

- stimulate active interest in geographical and environmental studies among young people;
- contribute positively to debate about the importance of geography as a senior secondary school subject by drawing attention to the quality of geographical knowledge, skills and interests among young people;
- facilitate social contacts between young people from different countries and in doing so, contribute to an understanding between nations.

Meetings

2 nd February 2022	Extraordinary International Board meeting (online)
10 th February 2022	Co-Chair and Local Organising Committee (Paris)
12 th July 2022	Task Force meeting (online)
	International Board Meeting (online)
16 th July 2022	Task Force Meeting (online)
	International Board Meeting (online)
22 nd September 2022	Extraordinary International Board Meeting (online)

Major Activities

- After extensive discussion and consultation, the Task Force agreed with the Local Organising Committee to hold the 18th IGEO online. This decision was ratified by the International Board by email. We understand how disappointing this was for the Local Organising Committee and the Task Force would like to record its thanks for all the hard work which went into holding the Olympiad online.
- We continue to see an increase in the number of countries participating in the competition. In 2010 there were 27 countries taking part; in 2015 this had increased to 40 and by 2019, at our last face-to-face Olympiad there were 43 participating countries. In 2022, 54 countries and 209 students took part in the online Olympiad. They were supported by 105 leaders.
- Following the expulsion of the Russian Geographical Society from IGU membership, the Task Force, after widespread consultation, excluded the team from Russia from attending IGEO22.
- Three members of the Task Force were invited to present a session at the IGU Congress in Paris. Sue Lomas was present and Professor Alexey Naumov and Dr. Sumin Shen presented remotely. We presented papers on the importance of fieldwork; the consistency and challenge of the tests and the opportunities for students to share cultural background and identity.
- The Local Organising Committee for 2023 (Indonesia) have kept the Task Force fully informed about their preparations for IGEO 2023. Venues have been approved and we are looking forward to holding a face-to-face competition again.
- In September, an Extraordinary International Board meeting agreed to set up two sub-groups (i) to review the Statutes (which were last addressed when the Olympiad was bi-ennially) and (ii) to review the content and structure of the tests, to ensure that we are testing the most up-to-date geography that our students are studying.
- Thailand has been approved by the International Board as the venue for the 2025 IGEO.

Future Activities

- We will work closely with the Local Organising Committee of the IGEO 2023 in Indonesia to provide a robust and inclusive competition.
- We will seek to increase the number of countries and therefore students, who participate in the IGEO. We will do this through links with other IGU Commissions and committees.
- We will continue to seek host countries for the IGEO events that are held in the odd-numbered years when there is no IGU Conference or Congress.

- We will hold a transparent and equitable process to find new members of the Task Force who can continue to guide the IGEO in future years.
- We will continue to review and reflect on our test structures and content to ensure that they are fit for purpose in identifying the best geographers in the world through the working group.

- **Finances**

We are grateful for the continued financial support of the IGU. An administrative grant of \$1,500 US is paid to the Task Force, annually. The Task Force also receives a grant from the Local Organising Committee of the Congress or Conference in even numbered years. This currently stands at \$7,500 US.

Partnership and Networks

The Task Force works closely with the Local Organising Committee (LOC) of the host country from two years' before the relevant IGEO. The Chair of the LOC sits on the Task Force. The Chair of the LOC remains on the Task Force for the year following their IGEO to offer assistance and share good practice.

We work closely with the Young and Early Careers Geographers Task Force who contribute to the judging of the poster competition.

We were grateful for the support of the Showbie online package which enabled students to complete their papers in their own countries, upload them to the site. Scripts were then marked by leaders from countries across the globe.

The Task Force is grateful for the support of Professor Barbaros Gonençgil, Secretary General of the IGU. He has always shown a keen interest in the student and their studies and was also the Chair of the Local Organising Committee for 2021.

Sue Lomas OBE DL FRGS

Dr. Sumin Shen

December 2022