

International Collaboration on Advanced Vaccinology Training (ICAVT) Charter and Operating Procedures

1. Background and Introduction

At a workshop on 7–8 November 2018 the leaders of 26 advanced vaccinology courses met to carry out an extensive review of the existing courses worldwide, in order to identify education gaps and future needs and discuss potential collaboration.

These leaders agreed that there is an urgent need for a webpage (e-Portal) listing all existing advanced vaccinology courses worldwide to provide information for those seeking advanced vaccinology training. There was also strong support for the establishment of a network to link vaccinology courses worldwide, in order to facilitate contact, information exchange and collaboration. The network should be sustainable and flexible, with a Secretariat and information exchange platform to coordinate and move forward the agreed actions.

To foster collaborations between courses and create opportunities for pooling resources and increasing effectiveness through sharing experiences, lessons learned, and documentation, the International Collaboration on Advanced Vaccinology Training (Collaboration) was established informally in November 2018 and formalized in March 2022. The Collaboration provides a forum to communicate between courses and give more visibility to all courses with target audiences and potential partners. Importantly, all courses have their own specificities, independence and sovereignty, and adhering to the Collaboration will in no way alter this nor impede their autonomy.

For more information on the background, see Annex 2 below.

2. Collaboration Vision

The vision of the Collaboration is to help realize a vaccinology practice and educational setting that is global, collaborative, and complimentary, better serving those who operate within it and serve communities around the world through it.

3. Collaboration Mission

The mission of the Collaboration is to facilitate vaccinology education through the maintenance of a global list of credible advanced vaccinology courses so that interested audiences can better identify courses and programs that best suit their needs, and to support those courses by enhancing their visibility through the founding and maintenance of a Collaboration e-Portal, which will be updated by the Secretariat with help from Collaboration members.

4. Collaboration Objectives

To facilitate access to a global list of courses for interested audiences.

To enhance credibility and visibility for the various courses.

To enhance vaccinology courses by fostering the exchange of information and knowledge through:

- Promoting learning from each other
- Collectively generating information and knowledge on common topics
- Collectively promoting the use of new knowledge relevant to common issues impacting courses
- Sharing information and processes on how to organize the trainings, how to build tools (websites, portals, official summaries)
- Sharing of lectures between courses
- Sharing common goals

To capacity build in this field by:

- Promoting use of good practices
- Facilitating learning experiences
- Sharing technical resources
- Creating opportunities (virtual and in-person) for discussion on complex issues
- Fostering twinning or collaboration opportunities
- Regularly eliciting feedback from partners and key target audiences to ensure the relevance of the courses to the global needs or the needs of their respective audiences
- Identifying training gaps and seeding new courses where there is a gap
- Improving evaluation approaches and tools.

5. Collaboration Values

The Collaboration is founded on and seeks to further advance the following values: honesty; openness; transparency; accountability; collaboration; trust; mutual growth and facilitation; professional development.

Given these shared values, membership in the Collaboration is voluntary, based on shared goals, interests, and relationships of trust. In addition, all members are equal and respected.

6. Governance

The Collaboration shall be governed by a Steering Committee and supported by a Secretariat.

6.1. Purpose and Mandate of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee functions as the Collaboration's executive decision-making body and is mandated to act on behalf of its members.

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide strategic oversight and management of the Collaboration, and to ensure the development and implementation of an annual work plan that reflects the needs and priorities of its members, and that is consistent with the Collaboration's Vision, Mission, and Objectives.

The working language of the Steering Committee is English. Records of discussion of all Steering Committee meetings and conference calls will be taken by the Secretariat and made available to the Collaboration members on the e-Portal.

6.2. Composition of the Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of five members (including the Chairperson) appointed in their individual capacity, collectively representing different types of courses, including global, regional and national courses as well as short courses and long graduating courses, and courses from different regions of the world.

At least four of the WHO geographic regions should be represented on the Steering Committee.

There should be no less than two members of each gender represented on the Steering Committee.

Steering Committee members shall serve on a voluntary basis, commit the necessary time to serve on the Committee, and shall not receive remuneration for serving on the Committee.

Decisions are made by consensus among the Steering Committee members. In exceptional circumstances where no consensus can be reached, decisions can be submitted to a vote.

6.3. Membership on the Steering Committee

6.3.1. Steering Committee Members

A call for nominations will be posted on the e-Portal and sent through the Collaboration's emailing list two months prior to the end of term of a member.

Candidates should send a CV along with a letter of interest to the Secretariat.

To be eligible for selection, the candidates should meet the following criteria:

- Academic or administrative responsibilities in a course that is a member of the collaboration;
- Ability to communicate in English.

Candidates will be expected to be committed to the Collaboration's vision, mission, and objectives, and willing to devote the necessary time and effort to serve effectively. They should have the ability to incorporate the global perspectives in the interest of the broader network and have a keen interest in supporting vaccinology courses.

The renewal of Steering Committee members will be staggered to maintain continuity of experience whilst allowing sufficient time for induction of new steering committee members.

Valid applications for membership will be submitted to voting by members of the Collaboration (one vote per course or group of courses organized by the same institution(s))

Steering Committee members are expected to serve for three years from their date of appointment. A single term renewal may be requested by the Secretariat depending on needs.

Appointment of new members will officially be announced via email and posted on the e-Portal.

A Steering Committee member term may be terminated prematurely, on the member's own request or, in particular circumstances, by the Secretariat in coordination with the Steering Committee. Examples of such circumstances include: evidence of a clear conflict of interest; gross misconduct in contradiction to the values, vision, mission, and objectives; consistent failure to contribute, participate and/or attend collaboration's Steering Committee events, and conference calls.

In case of serious disagreement between Steering Committee members, a process to replace the entire Steering Committee can be triggered by the vote of four of its members.

6.3.2. Chairperson

Only appointed members from the Steering Committee are eligible for appointment.

Candidates may be suggested by other Steering Committee members, or may express interest in volunteering. The Secretariat will review all nominations for Chairperson and propose a final candidate to the Steering Committee for approval and appointment.

The Chairperson receives his/her authority upon appointment by the Steering Committee.

The Chairperson serves for a three-year term. A single term renewal may be proposed at the discretion of the Secretariat.

The Chairperson should rotate between courses/organizations so that the chairmanship is not handed from one person to the next within an organization.

In consultation with the Chairperson, a Vice-chair may be chosen from the Steering Committee members serving as an alternate in the Chairperson's absence.

6.4. Specific Responsibilities

6.4.1. Steering Committee

The main duties and responsibilities of the Steering Committee and its members are the following:

- Ensure that the collaboration is operating in accordance with its strategic objectives, and core values;
- Help the secretariat make executive decisions with respect to any issue in relation with the collaboration such as acceptance of new members and granting of access to the protected area of the e-Portal as well as development of the website.
- Make an active contribution to defining strategic direction, objectives, and annual work plans;
- Assist in the development and approval of tools - this may involve attending conference calls, leading technical working groups and providing information and feedback on papers and internal developments;
- Develop and monitor fundraising strategies;
- Attend relevant national, regional, and global meetings and provide feedback to the steering committee on issues relevant to the collaboration's mandate and work plan;
- Advocate for the collaboration and its members in the context of building capacities for advanced global vaccinology trainings;
- Approval of membership and termination of membership.

6.4.2. Chairperson

The Chairperson serves as the lead for the Steering Committee with specific duties of guiding, supporting and facilitating the functioning of the Steering Committee, ensuring that the group as a whole interacts effectively with the Secretariat and Partners (defined as non-course organizers either funding, technical agencies or constituent representatives such as international professional or corporate organizations).

In addition to the duties and responsibilities of a Steering Committee member, the Chairperson has the following specific duties and responsibilities:

- Lead the development of the collaboration's vision, strategic direction and work streams with the support of the Secretariat;
- Chair Steering Committee meetings providing overall leadership and guidance to the Steering Committee members;
- Chair meetings of the Collaboration;
- Support the effective functioning of the Secretariat in support of achieving agreed objectives and work plans.

6.5. Steering Committee Meetings

The Steering Committee will meet via Zoom teleconference calls on a 6-monthly basis with the flexibility for additional ad-hoc meetings as needed, but it can also conduct in-person meetings.

For decision-making purposes, all in-person meetings and conference calls require a quorum of at least 50% of members to be present.

7. The Secretariat

7.1. Purpose

The purpose of the Secretariat is to support the Collaboration through (1) facilitation, coordination, and implementation of Collaboration activities, meetings, and objectives, (2) pursuit of funding for its operation and the achievement of Collaboration objectives and activities, and (3) distribution of information through updates to the Collaboration website and e-Portal, production of a newsletter, and the hosting of meetings.

7.2. Funding and Conflicts

The Secretariat is currently provided by ADVAC with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation for a period of three years from March 24, 2022.

Changes in the sources of funding need approval by the Steering Committee with due consideration to the need of avoiding potential conflicts of interest.

Funding for the Secretariat should be strictly applied to supporting actual Secretarial costs, and should not be used to support other activities or courses orchestrated by the organization providing Secretariat services.

The Chairperson of the Steering Committee cannot belong to the course/organization providing Secretariat support.

A member of the Steering Committee can belong to the course/organization providing Secretariat support as long as this person is different from the person overseeing the Secretariat activities.

7.3. Designated Secretariat Organizations

In order to minimize disruptions in the running of the Collaboration, and to help strengthen corporate memory, it is desirable that there is stability in the Secretariat.

However, the Secretariat function can be renewed, or moved to another volunteer organization for periods of three years upon the request of either the Secretariat, the Steering Committee, or the Collaboration's entire membership.

Any proposed change in the organization designated to serve as the Secretariat will be submitted to a vote of the Collaboration. It is desirable that there is stability in the Secretariat.

7.4. Secretariat Responsibilities

The Secretariat is responsible for the following:

- Maintaining the regular administrative duties of the Collaboration, such as records of membership and records of discussions and meeting and updated email distribution lists.

- Coordinating requests for support and information from members;
- Identifying areas of possible synergy between members;
- Maintaining the existing e-Portal/website of the Collaboration and developing new elements; links, and resources such as job offers, internships;
- Promoting the Collaboration, and identifying new members;
- Producing and sending a quarterly update to keep members informed of Collaboration news;
- Setting up meetings for the Collaboration but also informal meetings and managing the planning and logistics of Collaboration teleconferences and meetings;
- Supporting the organization of adult education training;
- Mobilizing resources from interested partners to support Collaboration activities;
- Helping to improve specific courses;
- Fostering development of publications on progress and challenges recognized by the collaboration.

The Secretariat will not be involved in direct fundraising for specific courses.

8. Collaboration Membership

8.1. Joining

Membership is open to all advanced vaccinology specific courses without limitation with respect to the number of students trained per course/year. Courses should have obtained formal endorsement/accreditation from either a tertiary training institution and/ or a training accreditation institution (e.g. Continued medical education). Courses part of the initial core membership of the Collaboration are accepted as formal members of the Collaboration even if not accredited. It is expected that they can secure accreditation before a period of five years (from 24 March 2022), and they are strongly encouraged to do so as it is in their best interest.

Courses can be national, regional or global in terms of target audience. Courses can be short courses from a few days to a month time or graduating courses such as MSc, PhDs and DIU. They can be face-to-face, virtual or hybrid courses. For the time being, the Collaboration is limited to courses having a broad curriculum, and is not open to courses, even if advanced, focusing on a very narrow aspect of vaccinology. Courses organized by/for industry and intended exclusively for one company's employees are not eligible to join the Collaboration.

Membership of a vaccinology course does not mean endorsement of its content or any certification of the quality of the teaching approach by the Collaboration.

Joining requires at least one person designated as a contact with the Collaboration. However, the course as a whole (or groups of courses when several are organized by the same institution(s)) is/are a member of the Collaboration and all those in charge (to a limit of up to 3 persons per course leadership is set, and if courses are organized by two or more partners, it is the responsibility of the course leadership to determine who the representatives are) of the organization of the course are invited to participate in the Collaboration. It is therefore important that focal points disseminate information to other organizers of the courses they represent and that this information is shared when persons switch job.

Official joining by a course occurs with the signing of the Collaboration's Charter.

By signing, members commit to adhering to the Code of Conduct of the Collaboration for the sharing of resources (Annex 3).

Upon joining, members commit to respect and advance the Collaboration's vision, mission, and objectives in accordance with the agreed upon core values.

There is no limit to the numbers of courses that can apply to be members and no charge or membership fee for joining the Collaboration.

Partner organizations of the courses (see definition above) should not be formal members of the Collaboration to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

8.2. Member Responsibilities

Courses joining the Collaboration should:

- Timely reporting of any change of the course focal point contact details in order to avoid disruption in the interaction between the Collaboration and the course (when there is a change in course organizers the distribution list of the Collaboration will be adjusted accordingly and access to the restricted area of the e-portal will be withdrawn for those no longer part of the identified membership of the courses);
- Contribute towards the achievements of Collaboration objectives;
- Bring common concerns and challenges to the attention of the Steering Committee and/or Secretariat;
- Participate in Collaborative activities and surveys and sharing of information and resources;
- Respect the agreement on the sharing of information;
- Provide input on Collaboration documents, work plans or articles when requested;
- Promote the Collaboration to other eligible non-member courses as opportunities arise;
- Attend relevant Collaboration meetings and events as appropriate;
- Ensure the information posted on the course's website is up-to-date;
- Share useful information from their course with the Collaboration.

8.3. Member Entitlements

Being a member of the Collaboration offers the opportunity to:

- Be listed on the e-Portal;
- Identify needs for specific resources and assistance from the Collaboration;
- Participate in the Collaboration's meetings;
- Vote on strategic and critical issues when full engagement of members is required such as the scope of the Collaboration, appointment of Steering Committee members, confirmation of Secretariat structure, and any key project priorities/questions as defined by the Steering Committee. To ensure equity between courses only one vote will be accepted for each course (group of courses). It is the responsibility of the courses to identify the voting party/main member;
- Access resources from other courses shared on the e-Portal and resources from the Collaboration;
- Participate in twinning activities.

9. Partnerships and Partners

Course partners, co-sponsors, and/or funders such as the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (US-CDC), WHO, UNICEF, the European Center for Disease Control and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and other global partners, may attend Collaboration meetings and activities, but they are not official members and will not participate in decision-making.

Technical partners are informed of Collaboration activities during the teleconferences and meetings and via the e-Portal and electronic newsletter.

Organizations interested in supporting or being informed of the Collaboration activities should contact the Secretariat.

APPENDICES

Annex 1: LIST OF COURSE MEMBERS (AS OF.....)

Annex 2: BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE NOVEMBER 2018 WORKSHOP

At a workshop on 7–8 November 2018 the leaders of 26 advanced vaccinology courses met to carry out an extensive review of the existing courses worldwide, in order to identify education gaps and future needs and discuss potential collaboration.

The specific objectives of the workshop were to: perform a landscape analysis of the existing vaccinology courses, focusing on advanced training; examine the organizational and financial structure of vaccinology training globally; define target audience(s), education gaps and future needs; consider how best to facilitate post-course 'cascade' training; identify best practices for vaccinology training; promote the use of modern educational best practices and technology to optimize training courses; examine options to reduce costs and facilitate wider access to training materials; and explore opportunities for collaboration and synergy between training programs.

The importance of networking was stressed, both between courses and between alumni, bringing added value in shared knowledge and expertise. The content of courses should be based on routine needs assessments and tailored to meet the specific needs of the trainees and the context; courses should include basic scientific knowledge about vaccines and relevant technical competences linked to provide a holistic perspective. The financial sustainability of training courses is an ongoing challenge, particularly in the context of planning for the future work force.

There was agreement on the following specific points. Courses and training materials, including those for post-course cascade training, are needed in different languages in addition to English, and training materials must be kept up-to-date and revisions noted. Short courses are necessary, and in demand, for professionals who have very limited available time. The importance of effective communication for the success of immunization programs, and the need to include media training in vaccinology courses, were stressed. Ways to reach wider audiences effectively and efficiently need to be explored, including online distribution of e-learning materials, and encouraging post-course trainees to act as sources of reliable information and advocacy for vaccination. The existence of currently available courses should be made more widely known. Collaboration with industry was encouraged (how best to benefit from the link needs to be considered) and arrangements such as multi-company funding could be applied in situations where funding by a single company may be problematic. It was noted that different organizations present similar courses, and that mechanisms for collaboration should be devised to avoid repetition.

During this discussion session, there was agreement that there is a definite need for a webpage (e-Portal) listing all existing advanced vaccinology courses worldwide to provide information for those seeking advanced vaccinology training. Standardized information for all relevant courses worldwide (graduate and post-graduate courses) should be provided by each course organizer and kept up to date, with date of latest checking/updating noted. The information should include the location, dates, summary of the objectives and content, and a link to the course website. The site should be easy to find by online search via key words (including vaccinology, vaccines, immunization training, vaccinology training).

There was strong support for the establishment of a network to link vaccinology courses worldwide, in order to facilitate contact, information exchange and collaboration. The network should be sustainable and flexible, with a secretariat and information exchange platform to coordinate and move forward the agreed actions.

The workshop succeeded in carrying out an extensive review of current training in advanced vaccinology. Needs and opportunities were identified for strengthening and expanding the global coverage of vaccinology training, developing and sharing best practices, and the application of online and innovative approaches in adult education. The importance of collaboration and information exchange through networks of alumni and between vaccinology courses was stressed, and the need to provide useful information about existing courses for potential applicants. Creation of a web platform for information about available vaccinology training was proposed and strongly supported. The main conclusions of the workshop concerned: opportunities for strengthening and expanding the global coverage of vaccinology training; evaluation of vaccinology courses; updating knowledge after the course; how to facilitate post-course 'cascade' training; developing and sharing best practices; the application of online and innovative approaches in adult education; and how to reduce costs and facilitate wider access to vaccinology training.

Lack of sustainable funding is an ongoing constraint for vaccinology training and needs to be addressed. The COVID-19 crisis has created additional challenges and the need to adapt to crisis in particular in terms of approaches to deliver courses. Other challenges include: finding faculty that have enough time available to give lectures, finding new faculty on specific areas; bringing international speakers and communication and advertisement towards students; updating courses' content, adapting and improving teaching methods, creating a website, and defining clear processes that the course should follow.

Whilst many of the courses did not talk with each other for no particular reason, many expressed the fact that they would really like to interact with others to see how they manage issues.

To foster collaborations between courses and create opportunities for pooling resources and increasing effectiveness through sharing experiences, lessons learned, and documentation, the international collaboration on advanced vaccinology training was established in November 2018. The collaboration provides a forum to communicate between courses and give more visibility to all courses with target audiences and potential partners.

For a full report see: Duclos P, et al. Global vaccinology training: Report from an ADVAC workshop. *Vaccine*. 2019; Volume 37, Issue 22, Pages 2871-2881)

Annex 3: COLLABORATION CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SHARING RESOURCES BETWEEN COURSES

- The restricted area on the e-Portal is only for the use of Collaboration members, and access details should not be shared with anyone.
- Resources shared by the courses should only be used for educational purposes and not for any commercial purposes by the Collaboration members.
- Any course using the presentations/case studies/materials or any other relevant resources should, in its use, acknowledge the source of the document.
- Any course resources adapted for use should be recognized with the source/origin and shared with the authors of the original resources and the Collaboration members.
- The person/organization using any resources, i.e., examples used in case studies/exercises, is responsible for checking its use in terms of cultural appropriateness and for updating it as necessary. It is not the responsibility of the original authors/presenters.
- It is the responsibility of Collaboration members to take consent from the faculties/presenters to share the resources.
- It is the responsibility of the courses to ensure that individuals using the resources give recognition to the source.
- Comments and views expressed by faculties/presenters during the course do not necessarily reflect sponsors/partners' opinions or positions.
- For any resources translated into other languages, the person/organization translating will be responsible for the quality of the translation.
- All the faculties/presenters should adhere to the same standards across all the courses.
- In case of failing to comply with the code of conduct, the secretariat will have the full right to take necessary action.