

# **Statutes of The Committee on the Systematics of Prokaryotes Described from Sequence Data.**

## **Article 1. Name.**

**1.1.** The formal name of the committee is *The Committee on the Systematics of Prokaryotes Described from Sequence Data*. Colloquially the committee is referred to as the SeqCode Committee.

**1.2.** The SeqCode Executive Board will function as a Task Group of the International Society for Microbial Ecology (hereafter ISME, <https://www.isme-microbes.org/>).

## **Article 2. Functions.**

The SeqCode Committee will

1. Maintain and promote the application of *The Code of Nomenclature of Prokaryotes Described from Sequence Data* (hereafter the SeqCode) as a publicly accessible 'living document' that evolves to meet the needs of the user community and reflects internationally agreed upon standards and regulations.
2. Maintain ancillary functions necessary for the operation of the SeqCode, including the SeqCode Registry (<https://seqco.de/>).
3. Provide transparent and democratic mechanisms for the emendation, interpretation and consideration of exemptions to the rules of the SeqCode.
4. Vote on matters put to it by the 'administrative components' of the SeqCode Committee.
5. Elect the officers and members of the Executive Board, Commissions and Working Groups and other administrative components as described below (Articles 5-9).
6. Promote the discipline of microbial systematics, and particularly the adoption of the SeqCode, through publication, online and physical meetings, education and outreach activities, social media, and other venues.
7. Engage with the wider community of microbiologists to ensure the SeqCode is sustained as a representative and community-driven initiative.
8. Receive reports from the administrative components, i.e., the Executive Board, Commissions and Working Groups of the SeqCode Committee.

## **Article 3. Membership structure.**

**3.1.** The SeqCode Committee is comprised of the SeqCode Community (Article 4) and the following five administrative components (Articles 5-9):

- (a) Executive Board.
- (b) SeqCode Legislative Commission.
- (c) SeqCode Reconciliation Commission.

- (d) Registry & Nomenclature Working Group.
- (e) Standards Working Group.

**3.2.** Each administrative component will meet regularly and not less than six times per year to ensure its responsibilities are being executed.

**3.3.** Each administrative component will operate autonomously but should meet collectively as needed, as well as carrying out functions via electronic forums. The format of plenary meetings of the full SeqCode Committee and public discussion forums will be determined by the Executive Board.

**3.3.** To ensure the SeqCode is a community-driven initiative, wider engagement and democratic accountability will derive from having key decisions voted on by the SeqCode Community (Article 4).

**3.4.** All elements of the SeqCode Committee are committed to strive to achieve full diversity of membership. No distinctions in terms of membership or of roles within the SeqCode Committee are to be made on the basis of disability, family status, gender identity or expression, geography, national or ethnic origin, political or philosophical opinions, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation except when aiming to increase representation of under-represented demographics.

**3.5.** Subcommittees on the taxonomy of specific groups (as permitted by SeqCode Rule 18a) will be formed as needed (Article 13).

#### **Article 4. The SeqCode Community.**

**4.1.** Membership of the SeqCode Community is open to those who are members of the ISME and/or have a demonstrable connection to microbiology (e.g., by employment or publication).

**4.2.** Terms of SeqCode Community membership will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Applications for registration as a voting member of the SeqCode Community can be made at any time during a term but end with the conclusion of that term. After each four-year term, members will need to reapply, starting in advance of 01 January 2027.

**4.3.** Applicants registering as a voting member of the SeqCode Community should provide the Secretary of the Executive Board with their contact details and a brief summary (50 words maximum) of their expertise in microbiology.

**4.4.** Members of the SeqCode Community consent to the contact and biographical details they provide being stored by the Secretary of the Executive Board and are expected to keep the Secretary informed of any changes in their contact details.

## **Article 5. The Executive Board.**

**5.1.** The Executive Board manages the constituent components of the SeqCode Committee. Functions of the Executive Board will include, but are not restricted to, the following:

1. To maintain a list of the SeqCode Community members.
2. Work with the officers of ISME to encourage recruitment to the SeqCode Community and promote the goals of the SeqCode Committee.
3. To consider exceptional applications for membership of the SeqCode Community from non-members of ISME.
4. To organise plenary meetings of the SeqCode Committee, in physical or online formats, as deemed necessary and not less than once per term (Article **10**).
5. To organise meetings, in physical or online formats, to promote the SeqCode and microbial systematics.
6. To consider proposals for subcommittees on taxonomy and to establish *ad hoc* 'Task & Finish' Working Groups as deemed necessary (Article **13**).
7. To organise elections of officers of the SeqCode Committee administrative components, including its own Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary (Articles **5-9**).
8. To maintain the Statutes of the SeqCode Committee as a publicly accessible 'living document' and consider any requests to amend the Statutes following the process outlined in Article **16**.
9. To receive and disseminate biennial written reports from the administrative components.
10. To report annually and as requested to the ISME Executive Board.

**5.2.** The Executive Board is composed of the following officers:

1. Chair (elected)
2. Vice-Chair (elected)
3. Secretary (elected)
4. Legislative Commission Chair (ex officio)
5. Standards Working Group Chair (ex officio)
6. Registry & Nomenclature Working Group Chair (ex officio)
7. Reconciliation Commission Chair (ex officio)
8. Member without Portfolio (elected, optional post)
9. Member without Portfolio (elected, optional post)

In addition to the elected and ex officio officers, ISME will be invited to delegate a non-voting observer to the Executive Board.

**5.3.** The elected officers of the Executive Board will be elected by vote of the SeqCode Community. To be eligible for election, candidates must be a member of the SeqCode Community and their nomination supported by two other members.

**5.4.** Terms of office will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Each term thereafter will be for four years. Officers may stand for re-election for a second term. No person may serve on the Executive Board for more than two consecutive terms in any capacity.

**5.5.** If an elected officer dies, resigns, retires or is removed from the Executive Board, a replacement will be elected by the SeqCode Community to complete the remainder of the current term of office.

## **Article 6. The SeqCode Legislative Commission.**

**6.1.** As defined in Rule 2 of the SeqCode, the Legislative Commission is the only body authorized to amend the SeqCode, following the process outlined in Article 11.

**6.1.a.** The SeqCode Legislative Commission will formulate proposals to amend the SeqCode as deemed necessary or as requested by the SeqCode Community.

**6.1.b.** The SeqCode Legislative Commission will receive and arrange discussion of proposals to amend the SeqCode.

**6.1.c.** The SeqCode Legislative Commission will maintain the SeqCode as a publicly accessible 'living document' and arrange issuance of new editions at timely intervals.

**6.2.** The Legislative Commission is composed of the following officers:

1. Chair (elected)
2. Vice-Chair (elected)
3. Secretary (elected)
4. Additional Member (to be elected at the start of the second term and then each term thereafter)
5. Optional additional Member (to be elected at the start of the second term and then each term thereafter)

**6.3.** Members of the Legislative Commission cannot be members of the Reconciliation Commission.

**6.4.** The officers of the Legislative Commission will be elected by vote of the SeqCode Community. To be eligible for election, candidates must be a member of the SeqCode Community and their nomination supported by two other members.

**6.5.** Terms of office will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Each term thereafter will be for four years. Officers may stand for re-election for a

second term. No member may serve on the Legislative Commission for more than two consecutive terms in any capacity.

**6.6.** If an officer dies, resigns, retires or is removed from the Legislative Commission, a replacement will be elected by the SeqCode Community to complete the remainder of the current term of office.

**6.7.** The Legislative Commission has the power to co-opt. However, co-opted members of the Legislative Commission who are not already part of the SeqCode Community are not entitled to vote in SeqCode Committee ballots. Candidates for co-option need to be approved by the Executive Board.

**6.8.** The Chair of the Legislative Commission will provide a written report on its activities to the Executive Board at mid-term (2 years) and the end of each term.

## **Article 7. The SeqCode Reconciliation Commission.**

**7.1.** As defined in Rule 3 of the SeqCode, the Reconciliation Commission is the judicial branch of the SeqCode Committee and is the only body authorized to render decisions on the application of the SeqCode. Examples of such matters include:

- (a) cases in which the consequences or interpretation of a rule are uncertain.
- (b) cases in which the application of a name is likely to endanger health or have serious economic consequences.
- (c) cases where the application of a rule is likely to lead to confusion.
- (d) proposals of neotype sequences (see SeqCode Rule 18c).
- (e) situations where the priority of names is unclear (see also SeqCode Rule 23c).
- (f) consideration of names proposed to be contrary to the General Considerations or Principles of the SeqCode (Rule 45).
- (g) other matters referred to it by the administrative components of the SeqCode Committee.

The process by which requests for a decision are to be handled is given in Article **12**.

**7.2.** The Reconciliation Commission is composed of the following officers:

1. Chair (elected)
2. Vice-Chair (elected)
3. Secretary (elected)
4. Additional member (elected)
5. Additional Members (up to four) to be elected at the start of the second term and then each term thereafter.

**7.3.** Members of the Reconciliation Commission cannot be members of the Legislative Commission.

**7.4.** The officers of the Reconciliation Commission will be elected by vote of the SeqCode Community. Candidates must be nominated by two members of the SeqCode Community, who will provide evidence of the candidates' relevant expertise. Candidates for the Chair of the Reconciliation Commission must be a member of the SeqCode Community. While other members of the Reconciliation Commission do not need to be members of the SeqCode Community, they are not entitled to vote in SeqCode Committee ballots.

**7.5.** Terms of office will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Each term thereafter will be for four years. Officers may stand for re-election for a second term. No member may serve on the Reconciliation Commission for more than two consecutive terms in any capacity.

**7.6.** If an officer dies, resigns, retires or is removed from the Reconciliation Commission, a replacement will be elected by the SeqCode Community to complete the remainder of the current term of office.

**7.7.** The Chair of the Reconciliation Commission will provide a written report on its activities to the Executive Board at mid-term (2 years) and the end of each term.

## **Article 8. Registry & Nomenclature Working Group.**

**8.1.** The SeqCode Registry has been established to record and maintain names that are formed or recognized under the SeqCode (Rule 4). The Registry & Nomenclature Working Group will

**8.1.a.** maintain and develop the functionality of the SeqCode Registry.

**8.2.b.** provide the nomenclatural expertise needed for curation of the SeqCode Registry.

**8.2.c.** provide the nomenclatural advice for those needing assistance in forming Latin names for novel taxa.

**8.2.** The Registry & Nomenclature Working Group is composed of the following members:

1. Chair (elected)
2. Secretary (elected)
3. Up to five co-opted members.

**8.3.** The Chair and Secretary of the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group must be members of the SeqCode Community. These officers will be elected by vote of the

SeqCode Community. Candidates must be nominated by two members of the SeqCode Community.

**8.4.** The co-opted members of the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group will be proposed by its Chair and Secretary. Members of the SeqCode Community may nominate themselves for co-option by writing to the Secretary of the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group. Candidates for co-option must be approved by the Executive Board. Co-opted members of the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group who are not already part of the SeqCode Community are not entitled to vote in SeqCode Committee ballots.

**8.5.** Terms of office will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Each term thereafter will be for four years. Officers may stand for re-election. No member (elected or co-opted) may serve on the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group for more than three consecutive terms in any capacity.

**8.6.** If a member dies, resigns, retires or is removed from the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group, a replacement will be selected in accordance with Articles 8.3 and 8.4 to complete the remainder of the current term of office.

**8.7.** The Chair of the Registry & Nomenclature Working Group will provide a written report on its activities to the Executive Board at mid-term (2 years) and the end of each term.

## **Article 9. Standards Working Group.**

**9.1.** The Standards Working Group will monitor technical developments in the generation and quality control of sequence data and will advise the SeqCode Community on recommendations for the minimum standards required by SeqCode Rule 18a.

**9.2.** The Standards Working Group is composed of the following members:

1. Chair (elected)
2. Secretary (elected)
3. Up to five co-opted members.

**9.3.** The Chair and Secretary of the Standards Working Group must be members of the SeqCode Community. These officers will be elected by vote of the SeqCode Community. Candidates must be nominated by two members of the SeqCode Community.

**9.4.** The co-opted members of the Standards Working Group will be proposed by its Chair and Secretary. Members of the SeqCode Community may nominate themselves

for co-option by writing to the Secretary of the Standards Working Group. Candidates for co-option must be approved by the Executive Board. Co-opted members of the Standards Working Group who are not already part of the SeqCode Community are not entitled to vote in SeqCode Committee ballots.

**9.5.** Terms of office will begin on 01 January 2023 and will continue for four years. Each term thereafter will be for four years. Officers may stand for re-election. No member (elected or co-opted) may serve on the Standards Working Group for more than three consecutive terms in any capacity.

**9.6.** Recommendations of the Standards Working Group will be ratified by vote of the SeqCode Community. Approved changes to recommendations for minimum standards of sequence data or other technical matters will be announced by the Standards Working Group through formal publication in an appropriate journal, such as ISME Communications, and updating of Appendix 1 of the SeqCode.

**9.7.** If a member dies, resigns, retires or is removed from the Standards Working Group, a replacement will be selected in accordance with Articles 9.3 and 9.4 to complete the remainder of the current term of office.

**9.8.** The Chair of the Standards Working Group will provide a written report on its activities to the Executive Board at mid-term (2 years) and the end of each term.

## **Article 10. Conduct of business**

**10.1.** The SeqCode Committee is committed to transparency and implementation of FAIR principles (<https://www.go-fair.org/fair-principles/>). Minutes of meetings will be prepared by the Secretary of each of the administrative components for circulation to the SeqCode Community and placed in the public domain via the SeqCode Committee web page and Registry.

**10.2.** Each member of the SeqCode Community will have one vote in SeqCode Committee ballots. Designation of alternates is not permitted. Votes will be collected via appropriate electronic means and compiled anonymously; independent tellers will be selected by the Executive Board. Outcomes will be determined on a plurality vote (relative majority) basis, including abstentions, of the members who voted in the allotted time. Ballots will only be deemed valid if a minimum of least 33% of the members participate, including abstentions. In the event of a tied vote, or abstentions being in the relative majority, the proposal shall not be approved. The Secretary of the Executive Board will circulate the results of voting to the SeqCode Community as soon as possible after the conclusion of voting, and an announcement will be placed in the public domain via the SeqCode Committee web page.



**10.3.** Plenary meetings of the SeqCode Committee will be organised by the Executive Board, in physical or online formats, as deemed necessary and not less than once per term. In addition, members of the SeqCode Community may request focussed meetings to be held on relevant topic(s) by writing to the Secretary of the Executive Board. The Executive Board will determine whether such meetings should be held.

## **Article 11. Amendments to the SeqCode.**

**11.1.** Amendments to the SeqCode must be proposed by publication of a peer-reviewed article in an appropriate journal, such as ISME Communications. The article should explain the rationale for any changes proposed. Those parts of the SeqCode that will be changed should be quoted and the proposed new wording clearly stated.

**11.2.** On publication of a proposal to amend the SeqCode, the authors of the proposal should alert the Chair of the Legislative Commission, who will initiate discussion of the proposal by the SeqCode Committee within three months.

**11.3.** A public discussion on the proposal, publicised as a minimum on the SeqCode Committee web page and Registry, conducted via an appropriately accessible electronic forum, will be held for a period of not less than three months and not longer than six months, to be determined by the SeqCode Legislative Commission. The discussion will be publicised by the Secretary of the Legislative Commission via appropriate electronic media, including the SeqCode Committee web page.

**11.4.** After the conclusion of the public discussion, an additional one-month period will be allowed in which the authors of the original proposal will be invited to submit a written response to matters arising to the Secretary of the Legislative Commission. Following that, any response and a summary of the public discussion will be compiled by the Secretary of the Legislative Commission and communicated to the Secretary of the Executive Board within one month. The Executive Board will disseminate the materials prepared by the Legislative Commission and arrange for a ballot of the SeqCode Community (as in Article **10.2**), with a decision within a maximum of three months.

**11.5.** The outcome of the ballot will be publicised as described in Article **10.1**. If considered appropriate by the Executive Board, the Legislative Commission will be asked to submit a summary of discussion, the outcome of the vote and its consequences for peer-reviewed publication, such as ISME Communications.

**11.6.** When changes to the SeqCode are approved, the text of the SeqCode will be updated (in accordance with article 6.1.c) and the revised version, clearly labelled with an updated version number, will be made available via the SeqCode website and Registry.

**11.7.** The Legislative Commission will update Appendix 1 of the SeqCode when changes to minimum standards for sequence data or other technical matters recommended by the Standards Working Group are approved by vote of the SeqCode Community (Article **9.6**).

## **Article 12. Rulings from the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission**

**12.1.** Matters requiring a decision from the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission (Article **7.1**) must be submitted to the Secretary of the Reconciliation Commission. Submissions must include a full and balanced summary of the matter requiring a decision. Submissions will be initially screened by the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission and may be returned to the authors if clarifications or additional details are needed.

**12.2.** The SeqCode Reconciliation Commission may rule that a request for a decision does not warrant further discussion, for example where the outcome is considered unambiguously evident from the SeqCode Rules. In such cases, the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission will explain its reasoning to the authors, who will have a right of appeal. Appeals will be submitted to the Secretary of the Executive Board within 3 months of the decision of the Reconciliation Commission being communicated to the authors. The Executive Board will determine whether a request should be discussed or not.

**12.3.** When a submission is deemed appropriate for wider discussion by either the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission or the Executive Board, responses from the wider community will be sought, publicised as a minimum on the SeqCode Committee web page and Registry, and conducted in an appropriately accessible electronic forum, with discussion open for a period of not less than three months and not longer than six months, to be determined by the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission. The discussion will be publicised by the Secretary of the Reconciliation Commission via appropriate electronic media, including the SeqCode Committee web page.

**12.4.** After the conclusion of the public discussion, an additional one-month period will be allowed for the authors of the original request to submit a written response to the Secretary of the Reconciliation Commission. Following that, the Reconciliation Commission will consider the matter and issue its decision within three months. Decisions will require a majority vote of members of the Reconciliation Commission.

**12.5.** Decisions of the Reconciliation Commission will be communicated in writing to the Secretary of the Executive Board, who will disseminate the materials prepared by the Reconciliation Commission (as in Article **10.2**). If 10 or more members of the SeqCode Community object to a Decision in writing to the Secretary of the Executive

Board within three months of its announcement, the Executive Board will arrange a discussion and ballot of the SeqCode Community to determine if the Decision is ratified or not.

**12.6.** The outcome of a ballot on decisions of the Reconciliation Commission will be publicised as described in Article **10.1**. If considered appropriate by the Executive Board, the Reconciliation Commission will be asked to submit a summary of the matter, its public discussion, its decision and its consequences for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, such as ISME Communications.

### **Article 13. Subcommittees and Working Groups**

**13.1.** Subcommittees on the taxonomy of specific groups (hereafter subcommittees) will function to:

**13.1.1.** Promote studies of the systematics and taxonomy of the taxa under their remit, including hosting meetings.

**13.1.2.** Make recommendations to the Standards Working Group of the minimum standards for the type sequences of the taxa under their remit.

**13.1.3.** Alert the Reconciliation Commission of any matters connected to the taxa under their remit that require the attention of the Reconciliation Commission.

**13.1.4.** Make recommendations to the SeqCode Committee regarding general matters relevant to the implementation of the SeqCode.

**13.2.** A subcommittee must adhere to the General Considerations, Principles and Rules of the SeqCode: it cannot legislate on classification but may contribute towards promoting the general acceptance of a classification.

**13.3.** The formation of a subcommittee will be considered if requested by five or more members of the SeqCode Community. Proposals to form a subcommittee should be submitted to the Secretary of the Executive Board, including a rationale for the subcommittee, a listing of the taxa to be placed under its remit, and a list of proposed subcommittee members (minimum of five). The Executive Board of the SeqCode Committee will approve or deny such requests. If denied, those proposing a subcommittee will have the right to appeal to the SeqCode Reconciliation Commission, who will have right of final decision.

**13.4.** The members of a subcommittee will elect a Chair and Secretary. Terms of office will be 4 years from inception, after which point new elections for Chair and Secretary will be held by each subcommittee. Officers may stand for re-election. There is no term limit on membership of a subcommittee.

**13.5.** New members may be elected to a subcommittee at any time by a vote of the existing members. Members of a subcommittee do not need to be members of the

SeqCode Community. However, membership of a subcommittee does not confer voting rights in SeqCode Committee ballots.

**13.6.** Subcommittees are encouraged to meet at least once a year at any location considered appropriate by the subcommittee's members or via an online forum. Members of a subcommittee are permitted to send alternates if unable to attend, subject to advance approval from the subcommittee Chair. The Chair of each subcommittee will provide a written report on its activities every two years to the Executive Board.

**13.7.** Subcommittees considered by the Executive Board to lack sufficient activity may be asked to disband if activity does not revive within one year of formal notification of the Executive Board's concerns. Subcommittees may disband if a vote of more than 66% of the members affirms that their work is no longer required.

**13.8.** The Executive Board of the SeqCode Committee may establish *ad hoc* 'Task & Finish' Working Groups as deemed necessary. The Executive Board will recruit a Chair and a minimum of three other members of the SeqCode Community to form a Working Group.

**13.8.1.** The remit of Working Groups will be specified by the Executive Board.

**13.8.2.** A Working Group will have the ability to co-opt additional members, who do not need to be members of the SeqCode Community. However, membership of a Working Group does not confer voting rights in SeqCode Committee ballots.

**13.8.3.** The Chair of each Working Group will provide a regular written report on its activities to the Executive Board at a frequency to be determined when it is constituted.

**13.6.4.** The Executive Board will determine when it is appropriate to disband a Working Group. Each Working Group will present a final report its activities and findings, which will be placed in the public domain (as per Article **10.1**) and, if deemed appropriate, formatted for publication as a peer-reviewed article in an appropriate journal, such as ISME Communications.

#### **Article 14. Conflicts of Interest.**

**14.1.** No one connected with a commercial organisation may use their connection with the SeqCode Committee to advertise or promote their commercial interests.

**14.2.** Officers must declare any potential conflict of interest when standing for election and inform the Chair of the Executive Board of any changes with regards to conflict(s) of interest during their terms of office.

#### **Article 15. Removal of officers.**

**15.1.** Members of the SeqCode Committee administrative components (elected or co-opted) may be removed from office by a vote of the SeqCode Community. Reasons for removal from office may include failure to perform the responsibilities of the office, using the office for purposes other than those specified in the Statutes, or violation of a conflict-of-interest statement.

**15.2.** Removal from office is initiated by a letter from five or more members of the SeqCode Community (or, if the Secretary is the subject of the complaint, to the Chair). The letter should detail the basis for removal. The officer will then have 30 days to respond. At the end of that time, the proposal to remove, and the officer's response, will be circulated to the members of the SeqCode Community for consideration. Outcomes will be determined on a plurality vote (relative majority) basis, including abstentions, of the members who voted in the allotted time. Ballots will only be deemed valid if a minimum of 33% of members participate.

#### **Article 16. Amendments to the SeqCode Committee Statutes.**

**16.1.** Proposals to amend the Statutes of the SeqCode Committee can be made by a minimum of five members of the SeqCode Community.

**16.2.** Proposals should be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Executive Board. The Executive Board will circulate proposals to the members of the SeqCode Community, with any commentary deemed necessary, for consideration for a period of not less than 3 months and not longer than 6 months. If deemed appropriate or specifically requested in the original proposal, discussions of the proposal will be conducted via an appropriately accessible electronic forum.

**16.3.** Following deliberation, the Executive Board will arrange a ballot of the membership of the SeqCode Community as to whether to accept the proposed amendments. If approved, the text of the Statutes will be updated and the revised version, clearly labelled with an updated version number, will be made available via the SeqCode website and Registry.

Approved by the SeqCode Steering Committee in consultation with the community members October 25, 2022