



The IFGS Provisional Chapter Sanctioning Committee Handbook

Supplement 1 to the Society Sanctioning Committee Handbook

1999 version

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Introduction

This is intended to be a companion volume to the Society Sanctioning Handbook and the Four Step Plan for Provisional Chapter Advancement. Since Sanctioning is one of the most crucial tasks a Provisional Chapter learns, and since the SSC handbook assumes a basic level of knowledge of both the sanctioning process and IFGS in general, this supplement is designed to answer some of the first questions someone new to the IFGS might have about the sanctioning process, as well as provide a breakdown of how sanctioning works within the Four Step Plan for Provisional Advancement.

Further documents can be obtained from the SSC website at
or the EC website,

Any questions on this document or the SSC handbook may be directed to the SSC, at ssc@ifgs.org, or by mail to the IFGS Clerk; questions on the Four Step Plan should be sent to the Expansion Committee, at ifgsec@ifgs.org, or the IFGS Clerk.

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Abbreviations Used in This Document

We use a lot of acronyms and abbreviations, so to avoid confusion here are some of the more common ones, which may show up in this handbook. Definitions for these terms are found in the IFGS Fantasy Rules or the SSC Handbook.

CSC	Chapter Sanctioning Committee (same as LSC below)
EXSC	Executive Sanctioning Committee
EXPSUB	Experienced Subcommittee Member
GM	Game Master
GP	Game Producer
GSO	Game Safety Officer
GW	Game Writer
LSC	Local Sanctioning Committee
NPC	Non Player Character
PC	Player Character
RR	Registry or Bank Representative
SAS	Spells, Abilities, and Skills
SO	Safety Officer
SSC	Society Sanctioning Committee
Subcom	Game Sanctioning Subcommittee
TR	Treasury Representative
WD	Watch Dog

Chapter 1: What is Sanctioning

Sanctioning is the editing process which takes a game script, written by a game writer in the IFGS' modular style, and prepares a final product that is safe, organized, readable, and producible as an IFGS live-action role-playing event.

1.1. What does the Chapter Sanctioning Committee do?

So what does the sanctioning committee actually do?

The CSC takes a game script, in whatever form the game writer gives it to them, and reads it, looking at what the game writer is trying to do, what will potentially happen to the players, and what the NPCs, GMs, game staff, and producer will need to know in the encounters, plus a few other areas that arise only in the details. They look at the game plot as a whole, then at each encounter, then at the NPCs and traps and treasure, the levels of the PCs, the risk and mental and fighting stats of the game, and a whole host of other things that go into a game script. Once they and the Game Writer have agreed on everything that goes into the script, they assign one member of the CSC to be the Watchdog on game day, to make sure that everyone follows the script as much as possible and that any necessary changes (for those unexpected occurrences) have the CSC's approval. They also keep track of the game calendar, so that games are not scheduled too closely together or that too many of the same kind of game (in level, style, or risk) are not scheduled too often.

Sound complicated?

It isn't really. Most people getting into the IFGS have been role-playing gamers of some sort, and anyone getting onto a chapter sanctioning committee should have at least played, if not NPC'd or staffed, several IFGS games. This should give anyone a reasonable idea of what an IFGS game is like, from several standpoints. Once someone has an idea of what it's like to play a PC or NPC, or staff a game, they can start recognizing where things can go wrong, and what things work really well. And the more you participate, in any fashion, the better you are at it.

1.2. Why do games need to be sanctioned?

The SSC Handbook defines the responsibilities of those who sanction games with the following official sounding viewpoints:

1. From the viewpoint of the participants for fairness, safety, playability, and enjoyability.
2. From the viewpoint of the IFGS for adherence to rules and policies, playability, and portrayal of the IFGS to the public.
3. From the viewpoint of NPCs and Game Personnel for attention to detail regarding definition of magic items, possible NPC actions, etc.
4. From the viewpoint of the Game Writer to achieve as good a game as possible while maintaining the Game Writer's imagination and game view.
5. From the viewpoint of Game, Chapter, and Society Safety Officers; to make sure the game as written is safe for the players, non-players, and staff alike.

What do these actually mean for someone coming brand new into the IFGS? A lot, actually. Taking the points one at a time highlights the true responsibility of the Chapter Sanctioning Committee. Remember that these points deal primarily with the game scripts themselves; how games are run and played is a different, though related, area.

The first point deals with the participants, including players, non-players, and staffers, and how they want the games to go. All of them want the game to be fair, with no places where players or non-player characters are likely to feel cheated in some

way. Fairness from a sanctioner's viewpoint means that the script does not actively seek to make someone or a group of someones feel abused or uninvolved. The safety aspect means that there is nothing inherently dangerous in the script (like fire-breathing dragons without a pyrotechnics person available, or a dangerous ropes course) to either players or NPCs. This can also mean things as simple as six-PCs-on-one-NPC fights, which can be dangerous for the NPC. Playability refers to the involvement of the PCs, and how close to the rules the game is, or that all optional rules are announced. Enjoyability deals simply with how much fun the PCs and NPCs are likely to have.

The second point refers to the perspective of the IFGS as a national organization. Does the game follow the Society policies and rules, or announce where it differs? Is the game playable, so that IFGS members will enjoy it as a benefit of their membership? Does it offer a chance for good public relations, with a portrayal of the IFGS as an organization dedicated to safe, interactive role-playing? We have a national organization so that we can play games in the same style, under the same (or at least really similar) rules, across the country. The national tier of the IFGS is concerned with making sure that the Chapters can all play together, and play safely, covered by insurance.

The third point deals with the details of the script. Can a producer take this script a few weeks before the game (or in a worst case, the day of the game) and give it to an NPC with the understanding that everything that NPC (or Game Master, or NPC Coordinator) needs for their task during the game is available in the script, and easy to find?

Point four involves the Game Writer, the creative force behind the game. Everything that happens in a game will, good or bad, be credited to them, so they most of all need the help of the sanctioner to make sure that the game they have envisioned has as good a chance as possible of being the one produced. They need constructive comments, suggestions, and praise, as well as the occasional reality check.

The last point brings up safety, again. This is simply how critical safety is for an IFGS game. No one has a good time if someone gets hurt, and on game day the Safety Officers are the ones who will have to deal with any problems that crop up. Confined areas (with or without combats), complicated NPC costumes, complex effects like tentacles or multiple heads, many-on-one fights, ropes courses, pyrotechnics, strobe lights, fog machines, trip wires and other traps all present potential safety hazards. The script has to make as many suggestions as possible to recognize and minimize the problems these kinds of things can cause.

So what does all this come down to? Games have to be sanctioned because many heads are better than just one at spotting problems, recognizing safety hazards, noticing typographical errors, catching rules' problems, and realizing what could be entertaining. There are a lot of people counting on the sanctioning committee to make sure that the games they participate in are up to the standards set by the Society and by the Chapter for safety, fun, and style.

Chapter 2. How is a Sanctioning Committee set up?

There are around a dozen full chapters in the IFGS right now, and every one of them organizes their sanctioning committees a little differently. Each one has found a system that works well for them, and that accomplishes all the required duties set out in the SSC Handbook. A provisional chapter will need to discover exactly what works best for them given the number of sanctioners in the chapter, the availability of electronic communication, and other resource issues specific to the chapter.

It is also worth noting that most Sanctioning Subcommittee Members, the people who actually work on games, do not have to be otherwise involved in the CSC. They simply report back to the CSC on the progress of the games and let the members of the committee worry about game progress, paperwork, and the calendar.

2.1. How do you become a member of the Sanctioning Committee?

Being a member of the Local Sanctioning Committee (LSC) can mean different things in different chapters. There is not a correct policy. As long as the membership policy is fair, clear, consistent, and has the backing of the chapter board, many arrangements are possible. Most chapters are willing to appoint anyone who will help sanction games, since the workload can become overwhelming if the job is left to too few people. Once a CSC is well established, they may work out a tiered system of membership, wherein the Experienced Sanctioners form the voting core of the committee, and those still in training or working towards full membership requirements can offer input, but not vote on committee decisions. One method for this is to base membership on the number, classification, and origin of games the person has sanctioned, restricting full membership to those who have sanctioned a certain number of major and/or minor games original to the chapter, or games that had not been sanctioned previously if the member's sanctioning experience was in another chapter. Another method is to assign a mentor to novice sanctioners and have that person train and monitor them, then recommend to the committee when they think the novice has reached experienced status. It is useful to remember that voting in a Chapter Sanctioning Committee can be on everything from the resanctioning of a magic item, to the approval of new members, to the outcome of a protest. The persons who become voting members of your LSC will need to be able to work with game writers and producers, and act as Watchdogs, as well as make decisions that affect players in major ways. They should also have a sense of humor (that helps in a lot of places in the IFGS).

Regardless of any additional chapter requirements, to be a member of a chapter Sanctioning Committee the person shall be a member of the IFGS, and should be a member of the local chapter. This is for our tax status; if chapter officers and representatives are not IFGS members, we can get in a lot of trouble with the IRS.

The LSC member must be willing to attend sanctioning meetings and be willing to work on sanctioning IFGS games in a timely manner. Chapters may require attendance at scheduled LSC meetings to be a member of the LSC. This requirement would need to be carefully considered, however, given the geographical areas most chapters cover, and given the willingness of members from other chapters to help with game sanctioning. Requiring someone to attend meetings when they would rather do something else (like write or sanction games) is hardly productive. If you have voting members who regularly cannot attend meetings, see about shifting their status to something besides voting, so that committee business doesn't rely on them but they can still work as full committee members. Or consider allowing electronic voting if most of your LSC members have email. Having a lot of people on the committee doesn't do a lot of good if only three actually work on games, or if only a few can manage timely comments. Nothing is more discouraging to a game writer than having two or three people who are supposed to help with editing a game drop it for months at a time. This sends the message that the writer and the game are not important and aren't wanted. If you have an LSC member who regularly forgets to sanction game scripts or cannot seem to find the time to sanction games

the committee should strongly consider taking them off of game subcommittees permanently.

Chapters may require persons serving on a sanctioning subcommittee to be members of the local chapter. It is not a Society requirement. It is easier with the advent of email for IFGS members outside a chapter to sanction games, and the input of people who play a little differently can be very insightful, so this option needs to be looked at carefully. If you have another chapter close by that you often exchange games and/ or players with, consider setting up an exchange system within your CSCs to get games sanctioned in both committees at once, or just to get the input of both chapters and allow the comments of both chapters' CSCs on games without having to get committee permission every time.

2.2. What are the required duties of the Sanctioning Committee?

There are specific duties that the Sanctioning Committee must delegate among its members. The means to delegate the responsibilities is up to the chapter and the chapter board. As long as the process works, and is fair, the duty structure is up to the chapter. How you set this up constitutes the format of your Chapter Sanctioning Committee, and should be considered based not just on what resources are available now, but the form you want that committee to take over the next few years as the chapter goes from Provisional to Full. Keep in mind that you will not always have only three experienced sanctioners, or just seven people willing to do sanctioning (be optimistic...look at what would work well for twenty experienced sanctioners and fifty people willing and eager to help with games). Set up a system that can accommodate not only the limitations the chapter is currently under, but the benefits of increased membership and more active in-chapter writing and sanctioning of games later on.

These duties include the following:

1. Organizing and running the meetings of the committee.

Meetings need to be called, at least a few times a year, so that everyone can get an idea of what is going on. Regularly scheduled meetings, while not required, do allow a closer watch on the progress of games, the formation and maintenance of special subcommittees, and give game writers and their subcommittees a place to meet face to face to exchange comments and hammer out script problems. Such meetings also offer platforms for training new CSC members, holding writing and producing workshops, and improving chapter game continuity. Meetings are also where policy decisions are made and voted on.

2. Mediating conflicts between the sanctioning subcommittee and Game Writer.

These conflicts can be major or minor, but all should be taken seriously. Especially with novice game writers, who are working through their first creative anxieties, care should be taken to keep tempers in check and make sure that, while standards are upheld, creativity is not being stomped on. Conflicts over potential rules violations, game ratings, and the usage of monster types are not uncommon, and the CSC needs to make sure that they are dealt with quickly and fairly.

3. Keeping track of the progress of games in sanctioning.

Chapters will have upwards of a dozen games in various sanctioning stages during the height of game writing season (which is just prior to game playing season). It is critical that the CSC keep track of where each game is and how it's doing, so that no game gets forgotten or lost. Such an occurrence can be very discouraging to a new game writer, and hurts the chapter's chance to play.

4. Approving proposed dates to run games (keeping the calendar of events).

Often certain dates will be more coveted than others especially if there is only one weekend that month available for play between conventions and ren faires, or if there are two or more games coming out of sanctioning within a short period of

time. It rests with the CSC to make sure that the assignment of dates is fair, and good for the chapter. If the chapter is running an event at a con during the first part of the month and there is a choice between a low level game and a high level game for later that same month, the chapter would do better to run the low level game so that any new people picked up at the con can come out and play. As well, if there have been a number of lower level games run for newer people within the past few months, a chapter would do well to run a high level game for the more experienced players, both to give them a chance to play and to let the newer people get a chance to earn some CAP and NPC time.

5. Checking games into the process (logging information).

There is certain information the CSC needs to know, and keep on hand, about games from the time they enter sanctioning: the name of the GW, the name of the game (even if temporary), the levels of the game, the proposed stats, and the game classification (major, minor, room, etc.). The first two identify the game, while the latter ones will affect who is approved for the sanctioning subcommittee for the game. Games with high stats or levels, or games of a type not played before in the chapter would encourage the use of more experienced SC members, while lower level/stat games and games with familiar elements could help train novice sanctioners.

6. Assigning sanctioning subcommittee members to a game.

The sanctioning committee is a pool of people who are willing and able to sanction IFGS games. Someone has to let them know when they are needed, however, and make sure that they are not overloaded with games. Usually the game writer, or producer if a game from outside the chapter is going into sanctioning, will have people he or she would like to sanction the game, but sometimes they will ask the CSC to recommend someone, or the CSC will decide that the game requires changes to the requested list. This can be tricky, since some people don't work well with others, or have problems with style, as opposed to content. Sanctioning subcommittees need to work closely with game writers and producers in a creative way, and must be able to take as well as give criticism. They need to recognize when their comments are critical to a part of the game and when their comments are advice only, and can be ignored by the game writer. Most people can work well enough with anyone in this situation, but those who have areas in which they are not comfortable should be placed on other subcommittees.

7. Being the contact person for the Sanctioning Committee.

The CSC needs to be available to a lot of people, including game writers, the Chapter Board, players, and the SSC. The contact person needs to be readily available to all of these people, as well as to members of the sanctioning committee.

8. Distributing updates on Sanctioning from the SSC and Society Board.

The SSC regularly makes clarifications and motions dealing with sanctioning from the Society level, which must be approved by the Society Board. Most of these are printed in the Chainmail, but some will be sent directly to Chapter Sanctioning Committees for distribution to interested chapter members, or with notification of where to download them from the Society website. Society update notifications include the Duct Tape (the SSC's Chainmail column), and updates to the Bluebook, the SSC Handbook, and the Game Writers/Producers Handbook, as well as supplements like the Bestiary and Trap Books. It is important that the CSC notify members when these updates come out.

9. Taking minutes of Sanctioning Committee meetings.

When the CSC does meet, someone needs to keep track of who attended, what was decided, and how any votes went, so that any questions about CSC actions can be quickly and correctly answered. This also needs to be made a matter of public record (since IFGS committees cannot have closed meetings, except for game

sanctioning meetings) either in the newsletter, or by having it available for review in the chapter archive.

10. Keeping the records of the Sanctioning Committee: watchdog reports, games run in chapter, previous minutes, and other reports or documents that the chapter decides need to be kept.

We generate a lot of paperwork, and while not all of it is critical, it is all important for at least a little while. Many of these documents may already be kept by the Quartermaster or Registry Committee; if so, the CSC should work with them to make sure that these documents are available for review by anyone needing to get to them. Chapters may restrict some records, or require Sanctioning Committee or Chapter Board approval to obtain access to any of them; this usually occurs when the information in the records is sensitive, such as poor comments in game reports or evaluations, or restricted by privacy policies, such as contact information we are requested to not release.

11. Approving the selection of Watchdogs for games.

The SSC breaks down the duties of the Watchdog in the SSC Handbook, and the responsibility cannot be overemphasized. The WD for a game needs to know the game, know the Chapter and Society Sanctioning policies, and must be able to take charge and make decisions, even unpopular ones. It is their job to make sure the game is not changed from the sanctioned script without good cause, so that actions unfair to one player or team are prevented or reversed quickly. The CSC needs to look carefully at who holds this position for a game, and should take Watchdog reports very seriously; they are the first documentation checked if a safety call on our insurance or a protest comes out of the game.

12. Handling Protests at the local level

The first appeal of a decision made in game is done on the game course; after that, most of them (with the exception of Registry, Treasury, and Safety calls) will go to the Chapter Sanctioning Committee. The committee members need to take each protest seriously, since for someone to protest takes some effort. Protests must be considered from the point of view of all parties involved, and all parties should provide documentation to back themselves up. This is a delicate area and should be handled without loss of tempers and with respect for all involved, but with a commitment to the committee's decision.

13. Handling requests to resanction items.

Item resanctioning generally only occurs when there is a change in the BlueBook or Rulebook, or when a major error in the item's creation slipped past the Subcom. Items which originate in another chapter must have a request for resanctioning sent there first, as per the Resanctioning section of the SSC Handbook. The SSC will issue a Conversion Document to help with major changes after a revision of the Rules or BlueBook, but it is the responsibility of the CSC to make sure that items which become illegal with such changes are not used by PCs until they have gone through resanctioning. The CSC is also responsible for answering requests for resanctioning from other chapters in a timely manner.

2.3. What are the organizational options?

There are many organizational format options available to CSCs. Here are three of the more commonly used options, and how they break up the various duties of the sanctioning committee.

Method I: Officers

The sanctioning committee has defined officers. Generally, these officers should be Experienced Sanctioners, when such are available, and they should try to meet in some manner at least bi-monthly. This method spreads the workload among several people, but requires coordination and good contact among the officers to work well.

Chairperson

1. Organizing and running the meetings of the committee.
2. Mediating conflicts between the sanctioning subcommittee and Game Writer.
3. Keeping track of the progress of games in sanctioning.
4. Approving proposed dates to run games (keeping the calendar of events).

Controller

6. Assigning sanctioning subcommittee members to a game.
7. Being the contact person for the Sanctioning Committee.
8. Distributing updates on Sanctioning from the SSC and Society Board.
11. Approving the selection of Watchdogs for games.

Archivist

5. Checking games into the process (logging information).
9. Taking minutes of Sanctioning Committee meetings.
10. Keeping records of the Sanctioning Committee: watchdog reports, games run in chapter, previous minutes, etc.

Committee as a Whole

12. Handling Protests at the local level
13. Handling requests to resanction items.

Method II: Imperial Chairperson

The chapter has an imperial chairperson, who should be an experienced sanctioner if possible. All required duties of the Sanctioning Committee, except hearing protests and resanctioning of magic items, are handled by the Sanctioning Committee Chairperson. In this option, all other sanctioning committee members, experienced or otherwise, do nothing but sanction games, handle protests, and deal with resanctioning requests. This method does require a lot of work from one person, however, which can lead to burnout. It also places a lot of responsibility and influence with one person, which can lead to problems within the chapter if they make unpopular decisions.

A variant of this is the rotating Chairperson, wherein the responsibilities of the Imperial Chairperson are rotated among the chapter's experienced sanctioners on a set schedule (several months to a year), either by lot or by vote.

Committee as a Whole

12. Handling Protests at the local level
13. Handling requests to resanctioning items.

Method III: Executive Sanctioning Committee

The Executive Sanctioning Committee (EXSC) shares the required duties of the CSC. In such a case, there may be no set chairperson, or other officers. The organizing and running of meetings, as well as the taking of minutes, might be rotated through the executive committee membership. The keeping of archival information may also be shared, or possibly kept outside the committee (for example: at the quartermaster's storage area).

A person on the executive committee is assigned a duty, or all members of the executive committee are allowed to do the duty, but those person(s) have no authority to make final decisions. The rest of the executive committee is alerted in writing of a tentative decision, and if no one sends a negative response to the tentative decision within 48 hours, the decision is made. Such decisions blocked by an executive committee member are decided at the next meeting.

Such decisions include:

2. Mediating conflicts between the sanctioning subcommittee and Game Writer.
4. Approving proposed dates to run games
5. Checking games into the process (logging information).
6. Assigning sanctioning subcommittee members to a game.
8. Distributing updates on Sanctioning from the SSC and Society Board.
9. Taking minutes of Sanctioning Committee meetings.
11. Approving the selection of Watchdogs for games.

Such an arrangement usually designates one person to be the contact person for the Committee. This person might also keep a record of games in sanctioning and their status.

The EXSC handles the following as a group:

12. Handling Protests at the local level
13. Handling requests to resanctioning items.

This method obviously requires close contact among all CSC members, and regularly scheduled (and attended) meetings. It is a good option if there is a relatively small number of CSC members willing and able to work closely together, or if the CSC members are all readily available by email.

2.4. How do you train new member?

Training is one critical activity of the CSC that is not well documented; most chapters accomplish it by trial and error, but it does need to be done in an organized manner if possible. Training allows a chapter to set and maintain sanctioning standards, and thus game standards, that meet the needs of the chapter and the local game writers. The experienced members of the CSC need to work with new people to help them understand how the sanctioning process works so that they feel comfortable working within the system the chapter establishes.

Some ideas for training are:

1. Assign novice sanctioners to low level and minor games.

These games are generally going to be less complicated, require less detailed knowledge of the rules, and need less experience with the IFGS system as a whole to understand. They should be what novice CSC members cut their teeth on, the practice games in which they learn the basics of sanctioning, such as what to look for in encounters and from NPCs, before having to tackle rules variations or the somewhat unpredictable hazards of night games.

2. Require at least one meeting of the full subcommittee for a game.

One meeting, preferably face-to-face, of a subcommittee can generally sanction a game from start to finish. It also allows each member to give their opinion of each encounter, as well as the game overall, and gives the writer a chance to clarify sections or work out places where written notes just weren't communicating well. This kind of situation gives novice sanctioners a chance to ask questions and hear several different sanctioning styles and viewpoints.

3. Provide copies of all comments sent to the game writer to novice sanctioners as well.

This works along the same principle as the meeting, though not quite as well. The novice sanctioner gets to read the comments of more experienced people, and can compare their opinions of the script to his or her own, while getting a broader idea of what a writer needs from these comments by seeing which of them the writer incorporates and why some comments are left out of the script.

4. Provide before and after copies of game scripts to novice sanctioners. If a chapter has some of these available, especially if they are for games in which the sanctioner has participated, these are great tools. The first drafts of many scripts look complete at first glance, but contain sanctioning and rules holes that only thorough reading will discover. It also helps to realize that game scripts can sometimes change significantly between the first and final drafts.

5. Assign an experienced sanctioner and/or full CSC member to all games with a novice sanctioner.

Experienced sanctioners, whether or not they are full CSC members, are the people who have the skills to sanction a game quickly and well. Most of them can read and comment on a script in a matter of hours, and know how to explain to a game writer where an encounter or NPC needs to be worked on. Their methods and insight are important to training because they have figured out how to cut to the chase of a script, how to recognize problem areas and communicate that to the game writer.

Chapter 3. What are the basic tasks of the Sanctioning Committee?

3.1. What happens at meetings?

So just what does all this boil down to? What does the Sanctioning Committee actually work on? The primary things they do are keep the game calendar, sanction games through subcommittees, handle protests, and form special committees to work on things like game continuity and finding land sites. All these tasks are generally either initiated or taken care of at committee meetings.

Sanctioning Committee meetings are held when needed. Active chapters with a lot of games in sanctioning may have them once a month; others chapters may only need them every two months, or even every quarter. CSCs should determine how often they need to meet to effectively manage all of their duties, and announce the meetings as far in advance as possible. As previously noted, we cannot have closed meetings, except for game subcommittee meetings, so all CSC meetings, whether scheduled or called to deal with one issue, must be announced ahead of time in the preferred methods to all chapter members; this can include a chapter emailing list, newsletter, or phone tree.

As with all IFGS meetings, Robert's Rules of Order are in effect where established policy, Chapter or Society, does not cover a necessary procedure. It is a good idea for all committee members to at least be familiar with Robert's Rules, though most chapters don't worry with them on minor issues. Committee chairs should look through the section on "Chairing Difficult Meetings", however, since the advice listed there is excellent no matter how friendly the meeting actually is; most of it deals with how to organize an agenda and keep the meeting moving, which keeps everyone a lot happier. Meetings will tend to bog down when controversial topics are brought up, side issues start dominating the conversation, the agenda is non-existent or unclear, or the chair doesn't work to focus the discussion and move from one agenda item to the next.

The Chair (which here includes anyone who is tasked with running the meeting) should write up and distribute an agenda for the meeting at least a day or two ahead of time. It should include the topics to be covered and whether they are new or old business. The CSC will have a lot of standing old business, such as subcommittee reports (game and special), review of games in sanctioning and their progress, and review of Watchdog reports. These should be taken care of before any new business, since they can generally be gotten out of the way quickly. The game calendar should be another standing business item, since it indicates how well or not the committee is working; a full game calendar is something a chapter should work to keep, so long as such a goal includes games that meet the chapter's standards.

Once standing old business has been reviewed, the CSC should quickly move on to any new policy business, such as chapter handbook revisions, protests, or item resanctioning. Policy matters generally only involve the full members of the committee, and should take up only some of the time of a general committee meeting. If an issue looks as though it will take more time than originally thought, the committee may choose to table it and return to it at a special meeting called specifically to deal with it. If the meeting has been called specifically to deal with such policy matters, they take precedence. Otherwise, the business of the committee comes first.

Game Liaisons should be prepared to report on the status of their games at CSC meetings. Such a report can include everything from the game's status to comments on how well or not a novice sanctioner is doing to when the game might be ready to run.

Game Producers can take care of finalizing Watchdog and staffing positions at these meetings and request prop-repair parties, and Game Writers can bring subcommittee

problems before the committee as a whole, or officially ask permission to write games in someone else's lands, or get alternate rules sets reviewed.

Special subcommittees will also give reports at these meetings. The content and depth of the report will depend on why they were formed, but World Subcommittees can discuss continuity issues, upcoming publications, and any new additions to the Chapter World Map; Game Site Subcommittees can report on the pros and cons of any new game sites, and the current status of previously used game sites.

The ends of CSC meetings should always be something fun, like writer or producer workshops, a discussion of new entries for the chapter bestiary or world atlas, and game subcommittee meetings. Such events help to provide a positive outlook on sanctioning and give people a chance to meet and exchange ideas and ways of working.

3.2 What is the game calendar? The game calendar is the schedule of events for the chapter. This includes line courses, as well as tournaments, PR events like cons and ren faires, and room games. Since the chapter as a whole needs to know about these things in as timely a manner as possible, it is the CSC's responsibility to make sure that potential conflicts are minimized and that everyone is informed in time to plan to attend. In the case of some events like cons and faires, the Public Relations Committee of the chapter will also have input. The Game Calendar should be published in the Chapter Newsletter and/or posted on the Chapter's website with regular updates.

Calendar conflicts are pretty rare in most chapters, but can occur, especially in peak gaming season or if there is another chapter within a reasonable driving distance for play. Society recommends that nearby chapters cooperate whenever possible on game dates, since this allows more people to play more often. Chapters must decide for themselves what minimum requirements must be reached by games before they can be placed on the calendar, so that calendar conflicts may be handled in the fairest manner possible.

Many chapters require that a game reach a certain sanctioning status before it can go on the calendar, and that it be on the calendar before it can be advertised by flyers or in the newsletter. Other chapters, which have to reserve game sites sometimes a year in advance, require only notice of intent-to-write-a-game before placing it on the calendar. Again, chapter resources will dictate which option is best for a provisional chapter.

3.3. What are the Game Sanctioning Subcommittees? These are the groups that actually work on the games. They are considered subcommittees of the Sanctioning Committee and thus all of their decisions must be authorized by the CSC; they can recommend that a game go up or down in status, but the CSC has the final say. Of course, the CSC should also trust the subcommittee members enough to take their recommendation most of the time. There should be at least three people working on the game in addition to the writer and/or producer, but any number may actually read and comment on it. The idea is to provide as many eyes and minds as possible to catch errors and trouble spots, and offer suggestions so that the game is as good as it can be.

Subcoms are generally composed of at least one sanctioning committee member, who should act as the games Liaison to the CSC, and a number of people who may or may not be CSC members. As soon as they get the first copy of the game script, all of them should determine how they are going to return comments to the game writer (email, marked on the script, verbal at a meeting, etc.) and if they want to hold a face to face meeting.

With some scripts a subcommittee meeting is not necessary, but if a problem crops up that can't be worked out to everyone's satisfaction with the comments-exchange,

or if there is a particularly complicated encounter or set of encounters in the game, a face-to-face meeting is warranted, as it is if one of the subcom members is new to sanctioning. Game subcommittee meetings are also just a good idea in general. It usually takes only one productive subcommittee meeting, chaired usually by the game liaison, to sanction a game to Sanctioned-Pending-Production status. Once a meeting time and place have been set up (after chapter sanctioning committee meetings is a good time to try for), the subcommittee members and the game writer sit down together and start going over the game, first in general, then encounter by encounter. Make sure that positive things are said with any negatives; many people assume that all a game writer wants are the problem areas, but positive feedback is just as welcome, and at least as useful, since that helps the writer recognize places where people will enjoy the game, and ideas that might be used again or expanded on. Get input from all the subcommittee members, including and especially the novice members. They might not understand the intricacies of sanctioning yet, but they will certainly know what they like and don't like, and the more such places are discussed, the more likely they are to recognize why they like or don't like that aspect of the game.

Subcoms are where the primary work of the CSC, getting games ready to run, takes place. These are the most critical aspect of any sanctioning committee.

3.4. What are protests? A protest is the result of someone's unhappiness with someone else's actions on game day. Who can protest and the basics of how they are handled and appealed is outlined in the SSC Handbook, but CSCs, especially in provisional chapters, need to look at them carefully, and no chapter can afford to take them lightly.

Most chapters have a small surcharge, usually no more than \$5, for filing an official protest. This is to discourage frivolous protests and cover any potential phone, copying or mailing costs on the part of the chapter.

CSCs need to make sure that they notify all parties involved in a protest as soon as a date for a hearing of the protest is determined. They should also make sure that any documentation related to the protest, such as Watchdog reports, game reports or game scripts, are made available to all CSC members hearing the protest. Game personnel involved in the protested events need to be at the hearing if possible, and CSC members must make an effort to understand the viewpoints of all parties involved. Once all sides have been heard, the CSC may deliberate for however long is needed to reach a majority decision, or send the question on to the Chapter Board if they are unable to reach a majority decision. Any such action should be made public.

If someone protests the events of a game, they are not going to take it lightly, and neither should the chapter. If whatever happened was accomplished in a manner that was anything but fair, the individual has a valid protest. The kinds of actions most likely to get protested are player character deaths, loss of a PC's item(s), changes to the game script (especially if they were made only for one player or team), and GM calls not covered by the script. Game Writers can protest excessive changes to the final sanctioned copy of the game, if they determine that the Watchdog, NPCs or Producer have made changes beyond what they intended. Watchdogs can protest actions taken that they were not aware of that they should have had the chance to approve or disapprove; the WD is there to make sure that the game is run as the script was intended. If an NPC or the Producer, or even the Writer, authorizes changes on game day, the WD must approve them, and the necessity for them, before they are legal. WD protests must be taken very seriously, since they could lead to unsanctioning of the game by Society if the changes are severe enough. Game Producers and Game Safety Officers can protest decisions of the Watchdog on the grounds the Watchdog overstepped his/her authority; the WD's authority is spelled

out in the SSC Handbook. Any requests for clarification of this should be sent to the SSC.

In general, protests are not good. But they are not the dark cloud of doom that many people see them as. The protest system is in place so that misunderstandings don't escalate beyond a chapter's control. If someone is unhappy when they leave a game then something, somewhere has gone wrong. It could be as simple as a player out of their depth; it could also be a perception on the part of the NPCs that one team wasn't getting enough challenge out of the game. Protests allow cooler heads, third parties, and the facts to clear things up before too many feelings get hurt.

3.5. What is involved in resanctioning items?

This is covered pretty well in the SSC Handbook, but in short, you make an item's savvies consistent with the current rules and BlueBook. Usually, a CSC will assign any resanctioning to a special subcommittee who are comfortable with the BlueBook, and then approve or send back whatever they come up with.

Resanctioning needs to be done when the rules edition or BlueBook changes, and if an item is determined to have been incorrectly sanctioned to begin with. In the case of the former, the SSC will issue a Conversion Document noting the major changes and how to convert items that are affected. Some minor changes will not be noted but will still have to be converted over, so it is a good idea for CSC members to be conversant on the rules and BlueBook. If an item has been improperly sanctioned, it needs to be resanctioned as quickly as possible. If the item originated in-chapter, the CSC should resanction the item, by the current rules and BlueBook, then send a notice to the Chainmail if the changes would affect anyone not in their chapter (i.e. if the game had been played out-of-chapter, or if an out-of-chapter player had taken the item home).

If an out-of-chapter player requests resanctioning of an item from one of the chapter's games, the CSC needs to do it in as timely a manner as possible, and may decide to resanction the item for all versions, or just for that one.

3.6. How do the Sanctioning Committee and Game Writers interact?

The CSC is the check on the Game Writer, but, as with Congress, there must also be balance. The balance in the IFGS is provided by the rights of the Game Writer to be the sole creative force within the game; nothing changes that they don't approve, and the CSC has no right to require the GW to change anything not directly related to rules or safety. They can deny sanctioning on the game, but the GW then has the right to request a new game subcommittee from the Sanctioning Committee. The sanctioning committee has to make sure that what the GW creates is as good a product as it can be...within the limitations set by the GW. Most GWs are incredibly creative people who write because they enjoy it, not because you get a lot of fame or fortune from the task. Most people do not realize, going into sanctioning, that sanctioners are essentially editors, and editing, as with any job dealing with creative individuals, is not easy, can be a lot of fun, and is best learned by experience.

As members of the CSC and a particular GW's game subcommittee, the SC members need to remember a few pointers on dealing with Game Writers, especially novice game writers working on their first or second game.

1. GWs put a lot of work into their games and, as with all writers, a lot of themselves. So when you say you dislike something in the game, a writer is going to take it a little personally, especially if they haven't been exposed to much of the editorial aspect of sanctioning. You should always mix positive remarks with negative ones, and never give an unqualified negative remark; make sure the GW understands what aspect of the concept you didn't like, and why (if some aspect of the game is just that bad, talk with the Liaison or someone

else in the committee first, to see if they have any suggestions for dealing with it).

2. Be timely in your comments. It is very discouraging for enthusiastic writers to have a great concept for a game (even if it's only in their own minds) and to have someone dragging their heels on it; it suggests that their efforts aren't wanted, or aren't good enough.
3. Never actively discourage anyone from writing. With a little practice, anyone who tries can write a reasonable script, and many people improve dramatically between their first and third games.
4. Stick to your guns. If you have problems with the game stemming from safety or rules concerns, do not let a strident writer over-rule you by calling 'creative license'. 'Creative license' is not a license to injure or unnecessarily upset a participant. If nothing else, suggest they change the stats for the game, or place a note of the rules alteration on the flyer; such compromises happen all the time, and are often the best way to handle differences of opinion.
5. Do not let a GW threaten you with protests, either to the SC or anywhere else. There are provisions for Game Writers to handle grievances, and both GWs and game subcommittees are welcome to make use of them. Even if you are overruled, the matter has been thought out and the ramifications are understood.
6. If the subcommittee, Sanctioning Committee, or Chapter Board (if it gets that far) overrules you regarding a game, take it gracefully. It was not a contest, and you were trying to make sure the game was as good as you thought it could be, not win points against the Game Writer.
7. Offer suggestions. If you see a perfect spot for some lore, a neat trap, or something else the players will enjoy, mention it to the GW. Most writers welcome suggestions and will happily adapt good ideas into their game if at all possible.
8. Suggest ways to integrate the game into the Chapter's gaming world. If you have areas in the world, offer to let the GW use part of them for the game setting, or suggest an area that might be more suitable and offer to discuss it with the creator. Help the writer become involved in the world's history, and in the chapter's.
9. Go through the entire game, encounter by encounter, at least once with the GW. If there are rough spots in the game, here is when they will come out. Here is also where the GW can explain better to the game subcommittee the overview of the plot, and clarify any places that might still be causing problems.

Novice GWs especially can be incredibly enthusiastic, too enthusiastic on occasion. Don't let this overwhelm you or convince you to do something you'll regret later, but try not to dampen that enthusiasm too much. Enthusiastic game writers are prolific game writers, and, so long as they are willing to take direction, good game writers. They are a valuable and all too rare resource and should be nurtured whenever possible.

- 3.7. What other things does the Sanctioning Committee do?
- Special Subcommittees are the "Other" category of the CSC's job. Special subcoms cover anything from the Chapter's World Committee, to a Game Site Review Committee, to a Props and Costuming Committee, as a few examples. These are groups who work with the chapter's game writers and producers to organize information and resources for the good of the chapter, in ways not covered by the specified duties of the Chapter Sanctioning Committee. As subcommittees of the

CSC, these groups have a status within the organization of the chapter, access to the CSC's budget, and someone to whom they make regular reports.

Many chapters will set specific special subcommittees up with their own charter and official organization, especially subcommittees which deal with the public, such as a site committee, or which have a large workload, such as a world committee. Special subcoms which overlap with other Chapter Committees, such as a Prop and Costuming Subcommittee, which would overlap with the Quartermaster, might have representatives from both Committees and report to both; any turf questions would go to the Chapter Board.

Chapter 4. Sanctioning through the Stages.

4.1. Provisional One Sanctioning

Sanctioning Committee complexity increases as the chapter's need for it increases. This is defined at each stage of the provisional process.

At this stage, a provisional chapter needs only one aspect of a CSC: the game calendar. You are running Nationally Sanctioned Games, and any protests are handled by your Chapter Board and EC Liaison. The game calendar can be handled by someone also doing Public Relations or Newsletter, or by the Chapter Board. All a chapter should be worried about at this stage is learning how to run games and getting new members.

By the time the chapter reaches Provisional II, you should be able to run basic IFGS games, including room games and line courses, and should understand the production process from the basics of prop creation to NPC organization and advertising.

4.2. Provisional Two Sanctioning

This is the stage where the provisional chapter gets a sanctioning committee. You have to decide on the organizational structure, but shouldn't be worried about experienced sanctioners, membership requirements, or special subcommittees yet. Provisional Two Sanctioning Committees are learning how to write and sanction games, as well as how to organize and run the committee.

The Prov II Sanctioning Committee must be established with at least three members, preferably growing to at least seven members before the chapter advances in status. The Sanctioning Committee is in training, and will sanction games from their chapter under the supervision of the Society Sanctioning Committee. Games run by the chapter will still be minor or mini games (e.g. tourneys, indoor games, PR and Convention games) or one-day (8 hours or less) line-course (single-path, each encounter occurring in a predefined order) games. The only games that a Prov 2 chapter cannot run are World Course and Two-Day games, Night Line Course games, and Semi-closed and Closed World games.

The CSC should meet at least once with all interested chapter members, their EC Liaison, and their SSC Liaison, who will be assigned as soon as they reach Prov II. This meeting determines the CSC's beginning organization (which doesn't have to be the final version), the contact people, and how they want to start. They should also receive, from the Society Liaisons, a list of Prov II games, Nationally Sanctioned and written/sanctioned in other chapters, to start work on. This is also a good place to start encouraging people to write games, minor and room games especially, both for the writing and sanctioning practice. The prov should also set up a regular schedule of contact with the Society Liaisons, and the preferred contact method (email, phone, mail). This lets everyone know from the start how things are supposed to go. After this, the prov CSC will need to make regular reports to the EC and SSC Liaisons, and provide both with drafts of scripts in sanctioning so that any potential problems in the games, and the chapter's sanctioning technique, can be caught and corrected in time to prevent problems on game day. Society Representatives' comments on the games may also be used to help train new CSC members, and provide a comparative review of comments from provisional chapter members.

By the time your chapter reaches Provisional III, you should have a few experienced sanctioners, many somewhat experienced sanctioners, and several new game writers. You should also have a final concept for the CSC organization, and a need for Special Subcommittees. One of the first Special Subcommittees you should consider organizing is one to set up your Chapter's Gaming World, including the form it will take (Inclusive or Separate), how additions to it will be made, and what is considered official World material. This Special Subcommittee will also work closely with Game Writers to encourage their involvement with and use of the Chapter's World. A Game Site Subcommittee would also be a good idea at this point, since your

chapter has probably made use of most of the easily available game sites by this time and will be wanting something new and different to play on.

4.3. Provisional Three Sanctioning

At this point, a chapter is almost ready to work without oversight. The EC Liaison will still review games from the chapter, as will the SSC Liaison, but this should be limited to major games written in-chapter. At Phase III the Provisional Chapter's Sanctioning Committee must have at least five active members (preferably more), so that CSC members can play in at least half of the Chapter's productions. The Provisional CSC will continue to sanction members' submissions with minimal supervision from the Society Sanctioning Committee and Expansion Committee. The CSC should have an idea of what final format the organization will take, and how best to train new people coming into the CSC. You should also understand the differences between working with new game writers and established game writers, how to time game dates to allow the most benefit to players and the chapter, and how to involve the Chapter's Game World in the plots of game writers and the lives of PCs.

The Provisional Chapter may now also produce two-day or overnight line games, braided course games and World Course games. The chapter may now also run Closed and Semi-Closed World games. These are the final hurdle for most chapters, and learning how to sanctioning and produce these types of games will put the polish on a well-working CSC, or show the flaws in one that needs a little more practice. Chapters should consider doing a lot of research in other chapters that have run similar games to find out any unforeseen problems they encountered (like losing props in a night game) or any good methods they found to help with the production of such games. A Prov 3 chapter is essentially a Full Chapter that is still being reviewed by the Expansion Committee, and their CSC should be well-organized, knowledgeable, and able to accomplish the sanctioning and production of a game with minimal complications.

Chapter 5. How does all this work with the Four Step Plan?

The CSC for a provisional chapter needs to keep track of the Chapter's Standard and Game Writing Points as they pertain to the number and type of games run, so that they can encourage the Chapter's GWs and GPs to write and run games that will provide the most benefit for the Chapter. To some extent, this is number crunching, but provisionals can become bogged down in the requirements if they don't keep track of where they are and what they need to do to get to the next step. The CSC is a big part of that, since they are in charge of the games being run, and they should know as well as the Chapter Board what is needed to progress under the Four Step Plan.

5.1. Game requirements under the 4 Step

Phase	Credits	Writer Credits	Members Required	Minimum Games Run
Phase 1	-	-	5 (10)	-
Phase 2	20	-	15	3
Phase 3	50	6	25	5
Full	80	14	30	10

Points are divided into two types, Standard Points and Game Writing Points. The requirement of Game Writer points is there to encourage the chapter's members to write their own games, both to build the chapter's individual game setting and to start learning the process while under the supervision of the Expansion and Society Sanctioning Committees, who will be able to offer suggestions, information, and encouragement to new writers. New games take more sanctioning than games that have been run once or twice already, and dealing with new game writers, or even with game writers in general, is more involved than dealing with a producer alone. Game writers can change anything in a game, whereas producers are limited in what they can change in someone else's game, without going to a lot of work to get that person's permission. This gives the chapter a much better idea of how to deal with in-chapter games once they reach Full and are on their own.

This set of requirements for Achievement Points also makes it much more beneficial for the experienced producers to help train the newer ones. This makes the provisional much more well rounded and keeps everyone playing. It also is a boon for new producers, who may be overwhelmed by the perceived magnitude of organization required to produce. Having someone willing to offer suggestions, help call NPCs, and suggest options for props will take a lot of the burden off of a new producer. Remember, one half of the points for each provisional level must come from producing games (the reason we all do this is games, after all...), and any way a chapter can find to encourage people to produce will help.

Table 1 shows the many ways in which a provisional chapter can earn the required points for game writing and producing. First run games with new producers generally get the most points, so if you are optimizing, look there first. It is also good to note that, even if there isn't time to get a major line course together for next month, running a minor game or a room game will still earn points, as well as getting someone practice with production. And if that minor or room game is written by someone in chapter, it will be all the better. Having an established shell for a room game will allow writers a more restricted and limited venue to try out their first game concepts on, and can be a ready way for the chapter to get together in those months when a different game just isn't possible. A shell, by the way, is a game outline into which different plots can be fit. Most shells are guildhalls, taverns, or inns, with a few set NPCs, like the owner/manager, a server, and a bouncer. The plots are the encounters that come to the tavern on the particular day/night the PCs are visiting as well. Establishing one of these takes little effort on the part of a writer, and setting simple guidelines with lore for what can and cannot happen in the shell allows several writers to make use of the setting without stepping on toes. These places also make excellent hangouts and well-known meeting points for

characters (“I’ll meet up with you at the Adventurers’ Guildhall in Montaigne; they’ve got great food, and a steady supply of healing potions. We’ll need them for that jaunt into Peltast...”). Sanctioning for games using shells doesn’t take as long, either, since only the new plot needs to be looked over once the shell is sanctioned.

Table 1: Achievement Points Awarded

Chapter produces a first run ⁴ Minor or Room Game	2
Chapter produces a second or later run Minor game with a different Producer than the earlier runs	1
Chapter produces a first-run Major Game	4
Chapter produces a second or later run Major Game with a different Producer than the earlier runs	2
A first time Producer runs a game	2
Game produced is written by a first time writer ³	1 GameWriting Points
Game produced is written by a chapter member	2 GameWriting Points
Members organize at least one standard and original gaming world for use in their chapter. ²	2
Chapter has more than 10 experienced Sanctioning Members (as defined by the Sanctioning Handbook) ¹	4
Chapter has a monthly newsletter for an entire provisional level	2
Chapter runs a PR event that attracts more than five new members (available once per Provisional level)	1
Chapter has an itemized inventory of their Quartermaster ²	2
Chapter runs a game with 50+ attendees ⁵	1

1. This award is available once only and is awarded at any PACS.

2. These points are only available at Phase 3 and may only be applied toward Full Chapter Status

3. These points are applied specifically as Game Writing points. They also count as Standard Points. Game Writing points may only be counted once. (ie. If a Provisional Chapter re-runs a game written by a member it only counts as standard points.)

4. First Run is defined as any game that has never been run before in the provisional chapter

5. These points are available once per Provisional level.

The establishment of a gaming world is also important enough to give a chapter points. An established gaming world gives a chapter cohesion, offers Game Writers an opportunity to expand the scope of their games, and to connect their games with others in the chapter, and gives players a better understanding of the world of their characters. Characters who play in a world will come to know that world, know what to expect from that world, and will react faster and more naturally to threats to or events in that world.

And what does the chapter newsletter have to do with Sanctioning? A lot. One of the biggest reasons chapters don’t put out monthly newsletters is because there is nothing to put in them that often. When people are writing and running games, the chapter newsletter is one of the best and fastest methods of getting the word out on player drafts, upcoming games, lore, and in-character posturing. This helps the chapter members keep up with what’s going on, get to know each other better, and gives them a place to learn about the chapter’s world, both the characters and places they are likely to find. One suggestion that has worked well for chapters is to have theme newsletters every so often. Songs of the world (many of which can be parodies of songs from our world), laws of the lands, a historical look, and other similar

topics provide a chance to add to the chapter world, give game writers new lore and information to work into games, and give player characters some basis for roleplaying.

PR events will involve sanctioned games whenever possible. After all, how better to show someone what the IFGS is than to take them through what we do. It is a good idea for chapters to work up some games for PR purposes. Such games need to be light on NPCs and props, low level, and heavy on PC involvement. It also helps if there are games for both indoors and out, since you never know what kind of space (except small) will be provided for your event. Costuming, players props (such as flags, beanbags, item reps, and weapons/shields), and other noticeable aspects of IFGS gaming need to be emphasized in these productions, and will help get people interested.

An itemized Quartermaster is an incredible boon to writers and producers alike. If the people writing and running the games know what already exists in the chapter's inventory, they can write and run games to make the most use of that available base, allowing chapters to either cut game costs, or make more of a profit which can be used for such long-term goals as the purchase of radios or land, or the rental of storage sheds for the Quartermaster inventory. If an itemized Quartermaster isn't possible, at least have a Prop Party every few months to throw out unusable props, repair damaged props, go through things like fabric and costuming to check for wear and mildew, and keep everyone updated on what's in the inventory.

The last thing on the list in Table 1 is running a game with more than 50 participants. Believe it or not, some chapters consider a game small if it runs with less than 50 participants. These are chapters with membership numbers in the hundreds. Most chapters are not that lucky, but can generally manage at least one or two games every few years with numbers that impressive. It helps if you have a sister chapter nearby that will work with you to provide teams and NPCs. These games are also made possible by extensive phone solicitation of people, current and former members alike, and anyone who expressed any interest at the last PR event. Get a copy of the member phone list and call people. Put out a message on the national or local email list, or both. Challenge players, promise a fun game, let people know what you are offering for their weekend. If the budget will allow for it, print up postcards with the game information (including the teaser from the flyer, game date, and draft information) and mail them to the membership. Mailing labels are not that expensive, and postcards are less than a quarter a piece. Go for the Six Month CAP Bonus if you wrote the game and allow that time for advertisement and lore dissemination in the newsletter. This gets both players and NPCs hyped for the game, and gives everyone time to be thoroughly prepared. It can also be a lot of fun to build up a game that much, just for the anticipation.

The EC is always looking for other ideas that can offer a provisional chapter a chance to grow, and in doing so, earn points towards advancement. If your chapter comes up with an idea that you think is worthy of points, send it to the EC. Providing original games to the game library and updating games already submitted to the game library will provide a chapter with more games, and have been suggested as additional point qualifiers. Each of the point awards listed above is important to a provisional chapter, for building camaraderie, enjoyment, and enthusiasm for the game. And we are all here to play the game.

5.2. The EC Liaison By the time the provisional chapter gets a CSC, you should be very familiar with your EC Liaison. This is the person your chapter has been in contact with from the beginning. They should have provided you with games from the Nationally Sanctioned List at prov one, and gotten you all the information available on game production and PR.

They are one half of the Society Representation on your CSC (the other half is the Society Sanctioning Committee Liaison), and one of the two people who will help to organize and jump start your CSC. They help keep track of which games your chapter has run, provide suggestions for games you might want to play, and help to oversee the sanctioning of your games through Phase 3. They should be experienced sanctioners in their own chapters, and will have experience in other areas such as game producing, public relations, registry, and safety.

The CSC needs to establish a contact method with the EC Liaison to keep them informed of committee meetings, game status, watchdog reports, and the chapter's game calendar.

5.3. The SSC Liaison

Assigned to the provisional chapter at Phase II, the SSC Liaison answers questions and offers advice on sanctioning issues, from the chapter's policies to how games are sanctioned and written. This person should be the chapter's primary source for sanctioning information during Phase II, and should be an established resource for sanctioning clarification and help during Phase III. They will also make the recommendation to the SSC regarding a chapter's sanctioning skill at the time of their request for advancement, and the SSC will send their recommendation to the EC.

The SSC Liaison is the primary person who helps a provisional two chapter set up and organize their CSC, based on suggested methods in the SSC Handbook. They also help the EC Liaison oversee the provisional chapter's sanctioning of individual games, offer suggestions to clarify policy in the SSC Handbook, and help the CSC members learn how best to handle various script issues, from how to judge ratings to convincing a novice GW that the chapter just can't support a siege game with a full size castle right now. They will offer suggestions based on their experience as a sanctioner on their own chapter's CSC, and usually as a game writer, since most people involved in sanctioning eventually get the bug and start writing their own games. The SSC Liaison can also put beginning writers in touch with other writers who have written games in the style or risk level they are wanting to try, and can offer production suggestions. Provisional chapters should set up a contact method with their SSC Liaison and keep it active, whether by email or phone.

Chapter 6: The Expansion Committee Policy on Provisional Chapter Sanctioning

This is the official policy adopted by the Expansion Committee, agreed to by the Society Sanctioning Committee, and approved by the Society Board, on how Provisional Chapter Sanctioning should work. This doesn't make it set in stone, but it's close. Problems with the format should be taken to your EC Liaison. Suggestions for improvement are always welcome.

Phase I Chapters Although chapters in this phase are not allowed to sanction games, they are to be encouraged to appoint a chapter Sanctioning Committee Chair. At phase I, the only function of this position is to control the game schedule and approve dates for all games the chapter runs. After games are run, the chapter must submit watchdog and registry reports to their EC liaison.

If any protests are raised from the running of a society Sanctioned Pending Production (SPP) game, the local Sanctioning Chair should forward them to the chapter board. If the chapter board cannot resolve the protest, they can forward it to the Society Sanctioning Committee (SSC). The chapter's EC liaison should be kept informed at each step of this process.

Phase II Chapters It is during this phase that the provisional chapter will build its local sanctioning committee. Because this phase is most critical to the growth of the chapter sanctioning committee, this is also where the Society Sanctioning Committee will be most involved. No more than 60 days after a chapter advances to Phase II, the Society Sanctioning Committee will assign a liaison to them. This liaison functions as described below and as the primary society point of contact for the Provisional Chapter Sanctioning Committee (PCSC) when it comes to sanctioning issues.

Note: Until a Provisional Chapter gains Phase III status, the terms 'experienced' and 'inexperienced' as defined by the SSC Handbook and applied to sanctioning committee members are irrelevant to a member's service on the PCSC or any subcommittees.

Each game written in-chapter and each game written out-of-chapter which is not SPP will go through the following process. This process is designed to train the PCSC in a number of areas including, but not limited to: sanctioning scripts, working with new game writers, and functioning as Watchdog (WD). Reasonable exceptions to this process can be made at the discretion of the chapter's Expansion Committee (EC) liaison; if such an exception is granted it must be reported to the chapter's SSC liaison immediately.

Phase II sanctioning process:

1) Producer or writer requests sanctioning on a game

The producer (in the case of an out-of-chapter game) or the game writer (in the case of an in-chapter game) submits a request to the PCSC to have their game sanctioned

2) PCSC notifies the SSC liaison and a subcommittee is formed

The PCSC chair forms a subcommittee (with the input of the SSC liaison) and forwards the script to the SSC liaison for the chapter. For the first several games, the formation of this subcommittee will probably

be done with the help of the EC and SSC liaisons. It should consist of at least one experienced local sanctioner (if available) and at least one inexperienced local sanctioner. If possible, a third local subcommittee member should also be included.

3) SSC liaison forms a Society Oversight Subcommittee (SOS)

It is the task of the SSC liaison to the chapter to assemble an SOS for the game. This should be a group of three experienced sanctioners (using the definition in the society sanctioning handbook) at the society level who will oversee the PCSC's sanctioning of the script. It is the job of the SOS to help novice PCSC members learn the sanctioning process, with the assistance of experienced PCSC members where appropriate. The SSC liaison for the chapter will offer one of the seats to the EC liaison for the chapter in the interest of keeping the EC as involved as possible in the development of the chapter; the remaining seat(s) can be filled by any willing experienced sanctioner. (The SSC liaison may also pass up a seat on the SOS, however, she should stay in close contact with the SOS to keep abreast of the current state of the PCSC.) The third member of the SOS can be any experienced sanctioner who is a current member of the IFGS, and is selected by the SSC liaison.

4) PCSC subcommittee and SOS members give comments on the game

By the most expedient means available (email, phone, fax, etc.) the PCSC members and the SOS give comments to the game writer or producer. All the comments should also go to all PCSC subcommittee members and all SOS members. It is very important that the SOS comments give as much information as possible about WHY the comment is being made. It is through these comments that the PCSC members will learn what sorts of things sanctioners look for and comment on.

5) New version of the script is submitted

The game writer or producer submits a new version of the script to the PCSC subcommittee for the game. This new version is forwarded to the SOS for the game.

6) Status change or more feedback

If the PCSC or SOS feel that the game is ready to change status (as defined in the society sanctioning handbook), and the status change is approved by the SOS, the game's sanctioning status is changed, and we go either to step 4 or step 7, whichever is appropriate.

7) Game reaches Sanctioned Pending Production status

The SOS gives the chapter to go-ahead to schedule and announce the game.

8) Watch Dog assigned for the game

The PCSC and SOS approve a Watch Dog for the game, and note any problem areas of which the WD needs to be careful.

9) Game is Sanctioned and run

The Watchdog, PCSC, and SOS discuss the game and any areas which caused problems. A Watch Dog report for the game is generated and copies are sent to the SSC liaison and the EC liaison for the chapter.

Again, the intent is to help the PCSC through the process of sanctioning games in order to teach that process to them. As the PCSC becomes more experienced, this process will run more smoothly. The SSC liaison may, at her discretion, allow the PCSC more autonomy in the process if she feels they are ready. At every point along the way, however, the PCSC is encouraged to hold face to face meetings with game writers and producers, since this both speeds up the process and increases the quality of the games produced by the sanctioning process.

Phase III Chapters Chapters in this phase have an established local sanctioning committee, including experienced sanctioners as defined by the society sanctioning handbook. It is up to this committee to perform sanctioning of games, and up to the EC liaison for the chapter to oversee this sanctioning. Any change of status on a game to "Intent to Sanction" or "Sanctioned" must be approved by the EC liaison. When the

sanctioning of each game is complete, the EC liaison should forward a copy of the final game to the SSC liaison for the chapter, as well as his comments on the sanctioning readiness of the chapter. The PCSC must also submit the game's watchdog report to their EC liaison (who will in turn forward it to the chapter's SSC liaison.)

In the event that the EC Liaison detects a problem with the PCSC, he can, at his discretion, request the help of the SSC to help solve the problem. At no point, however, should the chapter's Sanctioning chair be left out of this discussion. It is at least as important to notify the provisional chapter of the suspected problem as it is to notify the SSC.

Appendix A: How to Give Comments to a Game Writer

How to Give Comments, or What Game Writers Need to Hear

Outline/Storyline

Most sanctioning subcommittees, you know, the ones that have to slog through hours and hours of scripts to make sure that the games we play are worth playing, learn the hard way how to give comments to a writer. The ones who do the best to begin with are writers themselves and know what information a writer is looking for at each stage of script development. The rest of us have to bumble along until sometime when the light dawns (usually with a crashing sound as the coffee mug drops over onto the script we've been using as a pillow) and we realize what we can actually do to help a game writer put together a good game.

So to save some time (and coffee stains), here are a few ideas for how to give comments, and what kind of comments to give if you are sanctioning an IFGS script, at any stage.

This stage of script submittal can come in several forms: the Cool Idea, the Encounter List, and the Short Story. Each has its own merits and problems, but one critical thing to remember at this point is that anything a writer hands you will have merit and should be addressed. Some game writers can move from outline to full script in a remarkably short period of time with a little motivation, and no idea should just be dismissed out of hand. Especially for novice game writers, that kind of dismissal can be devastating.

Subcom Submission:

The Cool Idea is usually a short description, no more than a paragraph or two, sketching out the basic plot for a game. It may have no more than one or two encounters mentioned, will rarely have specific NPC's (maybe some generic bad guys like orcs, goblins, bandits, or slavers), and probably no magic items or treasure listed at all.

Comments Needed

Good idea/bad idea. Is this a reasonable game plot or should they just chuck the whole thing and go back to saving princesses? Is there something on which they could hang the plot to improve the idea? Is there an NPC, magic item, or location that would make the whole concept fall into place? Would you be willing to help work through this with them?

Subcom Submission:

The Encounter List is a little more detailed, usually having specific encounters mentioned in a reasonable order, with a brief description of each. May mention NPC's or NPC types (knight needed, bandit king here), some specific treasure or physical encounters.

Comments Needed

Good idea/bad idea. Is this a reasonable game plot or should they just chuck the whole thing and go back to trap gauntlets? Can the encounters be rearranged to work better? Do they need to add/remove encounters? Would you be willing to help work through this with them?

Subcom Submission

The Short Story is a combination of the other two, usually having specific encounters mentioned in an order, but with fairly detailed descriptions of each. May mention NPC's or NPC types, lore for specific encounters, some specific treasure or magic items, and specific mental and physical encounters. Usually runs several pages in length.

Comments Needed

Good idea/bad idea. Is this a reasonable game plot or should they just chuck the whole thing and go back to buckling swashes? Is there specific lore, items, concepts, or places in the world that would improve their idea? Are there certain NPC hooks that could better an encounter, or should the encounter order be changed? Would you be willing to help work through this with them?

Primary Submission This is the sanctioning submission in which the writer has put the most effort: the actual encounter formatted, lore included, NPC-statted, treasure calculated game script. Version one. This comes in varying stages of completion, but should have at least the information listed in the SSC Handbook for an Active game.

Subcom Submission

At this point, there should be a lot to look at. The encounters should each have a name, a number, a description, NPC's (where applicable), lore (where applicable), miscellaneous spell/ability/skill results (where applicable...see a trend here?), and any treasure/gold (where applicable). It may contain these items in varying concentrations, and at various stages of completeness (you may see the occasional 'insert lore here'), but it should have most of them.

Comments Needed

This is where the sanctioning subcommittee becomes the writer's best friends: it is your job to tear the game apart, word by word, until it is the best it can be. DO NOT be insulting, or rude, or demanding. DO be thorough. No one wants to go through a game that has only been half-heartedly sanctioned. Even the best writers will miss things, especially after they've been staring at the script for months.

- Go through the game as though you were on a team playing; create teams with varying composition to go through each encounter. Did the fights seem too easy if you had in two spellcasters, or more than one fighter? Is there one encounter where only a monk is going to be able to get the information or item needed? This information will affect the game writer's recommendations for team composition and loremasters, and might suggest that they change the game's stats or alter an encounter or two.

- Go through the game as a game master. Is the information you need to tell the players available in each encounter? What if you have a druid on the team and they want to talk to plants? What if there is a thief using Hearing? Can you find the description of the poison or trap effects quickly enough to keep the flow of the game? This is where the writer figures out how to place the information in each encounter where it can be found easily, and what information is really needed in the encounter. It can affect formatting and lore input.

- Go through the game as an NPC. Can you understand what you are supposed to do to set up the encounter? To play out the encounter? Is there somewhere that could give you a little more direction? Would a map of the encounter help? Would a better description of the NPC personality help? Do you know what spells/abilities/skills you will and won't use, and why? Can you determine how you should react to the PCs? This lets the writer decide if they want to use generic NPCs or go for more personalized, detailed parts. It also helps them organize the encounters better, and may alter the running of the encounter, or the NPC descriptions if the NPC actions in the encounter make it too hard/easy.

Revisions This is what takes the longest in the sanctioning process: getting enough people to agree that things are okay the way they are to put a game through whatever stages the local sanctioning committee has up to Sanctioned Pending Production. It is here that the writer and the subcom, in cooperation with each other, work to lock down the storyline, make sure the elements of the game work together, fit the game into the chapter's world, and resolve any potential problems with letting the game loose on a chapter's character population.

What does the writer need here? Mostly, they need a subcom that can move beyond trivialities to the important stuff. So long as the writer is playing in their own land or by whatever continuity rules the chapter has set up, don't worry too much about the introduction of green unicorns to the players. Focus more on how the game can potentially affect groups of PCs, or lands, or history, or religions. Make sure that there aren't rules loopholes, or worse yet, plot loopholes that the inevitably underestimated PC will immediately spot and either exploit or pull themselves out of character to avoid exploiting. Can you come up with contingencies for a knight

breaking strictures in encounter six, or a lawful good PC having to 'lose' the game to keep true to their alignment? Are those possibilities adequately reflected in the risk of the game?

Final Submission

This should be the whole enchilada, the final copy, the last version the writer will need to make major changes to...at least until you're finished with it. This is the version that has taken months to rework, and will hopefully be ready to run soon. This is where it gets hard.

Subcom Submission:

This is everything. There should be nothing left out of this script, not an appendix, a bit of lore, a gold piece, or that last optional pixie. Everything in the Sanctioned-Pending-Production checklist in the SSC Handbook should be in there.

Comments Needed

Now comes the fun part: the group effort. Once this kind of submission is available, get the whole subcommittee together in one place, whether or not you have to have someone on a speaker phone, and go through the script. Discuss each encounter, what you liked and didn't like, how you think it will run, what problems might occur with it, whether or not the NPCs can be improved, if the game masters need to be warned about any aspects (like traps, poisons, timed events), any potential production problems, any potential PC problems (like that place in encounter four where the knight of Selimnar could break a stricture), and what part each of you wants to play (hey, subcommittees get first pick). With three or four people, including the writer, going through the script, you can brainstorm through any remaining sticky spots, start a preliminary production timeline, set staffing positions and NPC spots, and generally get a good start on having everyone gung-ho on the idea of the game and its outcome.

Conclusion

Sanctioning a game can be a lot of work, no arguments there. But by giving a writer detailed comments based on the information provided, the game can be improved so that everyone has more fun. Here are a few examples of unhelpful feedback.

1. *I don't like this.*

Okay, we know you have an opinion. Not much help with the writer, though. Why not? What's the problem? Can it be fixed or are you just going to be stubborn about it? If it's stylistic, do you want to get off the subcommittee, or can you overcome your distaste of Dark Silly games and actually be constructive?

2. *Looks good.*

Great, glad to know it, now go and read the game, please! No game is ever without its problems. If you give something this vague, the writer gets the suspicious impression that you've glanced at the game, zipped through the encounters, or maybe not even read it. No matter what, this is not helpful.

3. *This is too rough/easy.*

This irritates writers to no end, because it doesn't give them suggestions for improving things, or even a reason why you think this. Should they change the game stats? Or would it be easier to drop an NPC or add a mental puzzle? Is this a personal problem with low/high risk/mental games, and if so, can you overcome it long enough to cooperate with the game writer, or do you need to be off the subcommittee?

Everyone needs a little help now and then, and writing an IFGS game is a daunting task at the best of times. Any assistance you can offer a writer, any constructive feedback, makes their job easier, and our games better. And anything that lets us wander around on weekends in funny outfits waving foam weapons and beanbags while pretending to be people and things that never existed can't be too bad, now can it?

