



The
Research
Ethics
Association

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP GUIDELINES

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Special Interest Group Guidelines

Guidelines for Special Interest Groups (SIGs): Preamble

Introduction

These guidelines provide a comprehensive framework to facilitate the smooth and effective functioning of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within the Research Ethics Association (REA). While these guidelines are not defined as policies, they serve as essential reference points and best practices that guide the roles and responsibilities of SIG convenors, secretaries, committee members, and visitors. The guidelines aim to advocate a collaborative and productive environment for all participants, ensuring that the SIGs contribute meaningfully to the collective growth of the REA community.

A Shared Commitment

The REA recognises the value of SIGs as platforms for shared learning, professional networking, and the advancement of research ethics. These guidelines are designed to encourage SIG leaders, members, and visitors to align their actions with the principles of professionalism, inclusivity, and efficient coordination. While SIGs enjoy a degree of autonomy, adherence to these guidelines contributes to the overall success of the REA and enhances the experience for all involved.

Guiding Principles

The following principles underpin the SIG guidelines:

- i. **Collaboration:** SIGs are built on collaborative efforts. The guidelines encourage SIG committee members to work together cohesively and capitalise on the collective expertise to create engaging and insightful events.

- ii. **Transparency:** Open communication and transparency are vital. SIG convenors are responsible for ensuring that meeting details, agendas, and other pertinent information are communicated in a timely and transparent manner.
- iii. **Responsibility:** SIG committee members hold key roles in organising events and maintaining the SIG's vitality. They are entrusted with responsibilities such as scheduling, record-keeping, and facilitating a welcoming environment.
- iv. **Professionalism:** All participants, including SIG leaders, members, and visitors, are expected to uphold professional conduct during SIG events. Discussions should be on topic, productive, and respectful of diverse viewpoints.
- v. **Engagement:** Active engagement is encouraged. SIG members are urged to actively contribute to discussions, propose topics, identify speakers, and play an active role in promoting SIG activities.
- vi. **Continual Learning:** SIG events should promote knowledge sharing and continuous learning. The guidelines encourage the development of informative and diverse event programs that cater to the interests and needs of the SIG members.
- vii. **Inclusivity:** SIGs should strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all participants, irrespective of their background, expertise, or affiliation. Creating an environment where all voices are valued is essential.

Voluntary Adherence

These guidelines are not formulated as policies with strict enforcement but rather as a collective understanding of best practices. SIG convenors, SIG REA members, and visitors are encouraged to voluntarily embrace these principles to ensure the success and vibrancy of their respective SIGs. The REA appreciates the dedication of all SIG participants and their commitment to upholding the values that contribute to the growth and impact of the broader research ethics community.

By collectively embracing these guidelines, REA and its SIGs can continue to adopt a culture of excellence, knowledge sharing, and collaborative growth in the field of research ethics.

Effective Date: 17/08/2023

Running a Special Interest Group

1. Running a Special Interest Group (SIG)

1.1 Committee Formation and Roles

The Special Interest Group (SIG) is managed by a committee elected annually by SIG members. However, if a new SIG group is created, then the new SIG proposers become the SIG convenors until the first Regular General Meeting (GM) in two years' time since the creation of the new SIG group. At this point, existing SIG members will vote for the new committee (Convenor(s), committee members and if needed, a SIG secretary).

The committee consists of one to two Convenor(s), a secretary and up to five additional members for officer roles whose roles can be determined according to the needs of the SIG group convenors and its members (i.e. a Events co-ordinator or a SIG membership officer etc). The committee can co-opt up to five members for officer roles. The Convenor(s), secretary and up to five officer members must be active members of the Research Ethics Association (REA). Decisions are made by majority vote, with the Convenor having the authority of a casting vote in case of tie-breakers.

1.2 Convenor(s) Responsibilities

The Convenor(s) holds a pivotal role in leading the SIG's activities:

- i. Providing a clear vision and strategic direction for the SIG.
- ii. Ensuring committee members understand their roles and responsibilities.
- iii. Organising and overseeing committee meetings in accordance with the SIG's constitution.
- iv. Collaborating with committee members to create agendas for meetings.
- v. Chairing committee meetings, ensuring discussions are focused and productive.
- vi. Managing time efficiently during meetings, allowing comprehensive discussions.
- vii. Ensuring accurate minutes are taken, maintained, and reviewed at subsequent meetings.
- viii. Chairing SIG meetings or nominating an alternate in their absence.
- ix. Facilitating speaker setup, welcoming attendees, and managing Q&A sessions.
- x. Maintaining event timelines and coordinating networking opportunities.
- xi. Expressing formal gratitude to speakers via email after SIG events.

1.3 Secretary Duties

The Secretary's role involves various administrative tasks to ensure smooth SIG operations:

- i. Coordinating and scheduling committee meetings, providing at least 14 days' notice.
- ii. Distributing agendas and pertinent documents 3-5 days ahead of meetings.
- iii. Compiling minutes for all committee and General Meetings.
- iv. Sharing AGM minutes with info@ethics-association.org.
- v. Recording attendance during meetings and events.
- vi. Updating the SIG's upcoming events on the REA website.
- vii. Managing speaker reimbursements and collecting attendee contact details.
- viii. Sharing appropriate meeting materials on the REA members portal.

1.4 Committee Officer Members' Responsibilities

Committee Officer members play an essential supportive role in organising SIG activities:

- i. Contributing ideas for suitable topics, identifying potential speakers, and suggesting suitable venues.
- ii. Assuming the role of meeting organiser for specific events, including logistics like venue booking, speaker invitations, publicity, and attendance management.
- iii. Designating a summary writer who provides a summary of the SIG meeting within a week and a comprehensive write-up for publication in Inside OR.
- iv. Actively participating in SIG activities, fostering an inclusive and welcoming environment for participants.

2. Special Interest Group and Network General Meetings

2.1 Regular General Meetings (GMs)

A GM must be held by the SIG at least every two years. The Secretary must notify SIG members at least 21 days in advance. The GM agenda includes:

- I. Approval of previous GM minutes and any Extraordinary General Meetings' minutes.

- II. Receipt of reports from the Convenor(s) and Secretary.
- III. Election of the committee for the next term.
- IV. Voting occurs via a show of hands, with secret ballots used for committee elections. Only fully paid REA members can vote, and a quorum of five or one-third of the membership is required.

2.2 Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs)

The Secretary calls an EGM within three months of receiving a written request signed by at least eight SIG members. A 21-day notice is given, outlining the meeting's purpose. Resolutions altering the constitution need approval from REA co-founders. Only fully paid members can vote, with a quorum of five or one-third of the membership.

2.3 Reinvigoration or Termination of a Moribund SIG

If a SIG remains inactive for two years, members may take steps to rejuvenate it:

- i. Replacing the Convenor with the involvement of the Secretary and two other fully paid REA members.
- ii. Polling existing members for insights into the lack of activity.
- iii. Following the process to establish a new SIG if necessary.
- iv. If revitalization efforts prove futile, the SIG undergoes review by the REA Governance officer and co-founders. After termination, the SIG's history is archived on the REA website.

3. Organising a Meeting or Event

3.1 Planning the Programme

The SIG committee's primary role is to design a diverse and engaging program of activities:

- i. Consider formats like afternoon or evening meetings, full-day events, or virtual meetings.
- ii. Collaborate with relevant bodies for joint events.
- iii. Plan well in advance for optimal participant engagement.

3.2 Support from the REA

The association offers valuable support for SIG activities:

- i. Logo usage and promotional assistance.
- ii. Technical support for online events.
- iii. Email support via the mailing list.
- iv. Material production like name badges, literature, and flyers.
- v. Templates for event-related documents available on the SIG's Basecamp page.

4. Advertising SIG and Network Meetings

4.1 Promotional Strategies

Promote SIG events effectively:

- i. Post event details on the SIG webpage.
- ii. Email SIG members by sending your email you would like sent out to info@ethcis-association.org.
- iii. Utilise social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook to generate interest and discussions.

4.2 The REA Website

The Secretary (at least the SIG convenors) should post details of the planned meeting(s) on the SIG website page using their login details and creating a post on their SIG page. If you do not have access to your page, please send the details through to the REA to update.

4.3 Emailing Members

You can also email SIG members directly, by sending your email you would like sent out to info@ethcis-association.org.

4.4 Use of Social Media

Special Interest Groups are encouraged to make use of social media to both promote planned meetings and encourage discussion around topics. The REA has a presence on the following platforms with the handle @EthicsREA: LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Posts can be shared on all of the society's social media channels to promote meetings and generate discussion. Send your post request to your REA point of contact.

If a SIG group would like their own Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook or Instagram page, this is something that the REA admin team can create for you. Please do not create your own SIG social media page. If you would like one set-up, please email info@ethics-association.org.

4.5 LinkedIn

LinkedIn provides a good platform to promote upcoming meetings or start a discussion around a certain topic. Please note, this is a closed group and if you are not already a member you will have to request to join the group. Also, you may want to post to other LinkedIn groups that you or other committee members or speakers belong to.

4.6 Twitter

Twitter is REA's preferred social media outlet. Twitter is a good way to stay up-to-date on current events and hear about what other people are doing professionally – for example, papers, blogs, comments, and opinion pieces. Twitter can be a good way to have an interaction with your favourite commentators; it's a good way of networking and staying abreast of the latest trends in Research Ethics. Please encourage all committee members, speakers, and other members with Twitter accounts to tweet from their own accounts. The REA will retweet any tweets if you tag us @EthicsREA.

4.7 REA Newsletter

A write-up of any SIG event can be submitted to info@ethics-association.org (cc in your point of contact) no later than the first of the month to be included in the next month's issue of the

newsletter. If you have any articles that are relevant to your special interest group and would be of interest to the REA community, please submit a draft to info@ethics-association.org.

4.8 Additional

Other ways of promoting meetings include social media, encouraging members and speakers to tell colleagues, and contacting your own non-SIG-member colleagues.

5. Communicating with Group Members

5.1 Member Engagement

Keep SIG members engaged and informed:

- I. Regularly update SIG webpages to maintain relevance.
- II. Use email lists to communicate with members while adhering to GDPR guidelines.
- III. Submit relevant documents to info@ethics-association.org so that they can be uploaded onto the Document Repository on The REA website.
- IV. Consider utilising platforms like meetup, Eventbrite etc for event promotion and interaction.

5.2 Mailing Lists

The REA maintains email lists on behalf of SIGs. These contain all of The REA members who have indicated an interest in the SIG. Interested non-members can also be included in the list. Officers of the SIG can request a list of members of the group from their point of contact in the REA office. The lists are updated to include any new members, members who have updated their preferences, and any non-members who have been added to the database following the submission of an attendance list. All officers of the SIG will be required to complete a data protection agreement form and brief online training before they can access the personal data of the members of the group.

5.3 Contacting Your Mailing List

To contact the mailing list for your SIG, an email must be sent out via info@ethics-association.org. To schedule an email to be sent to your SIG list, please send us an email with your message. This can take up to five working days to be sent out. The email distribution list should not be used to advertise jobs and other such opportunities unless they have been advertised formally through REA.

5.4 Data Protection

The REA's Data Protection registration only covers lists held by the REA at the office. Any Special Interest Group that holds a mailing list other than the one held at the office must register that mailing list with the Data Protection Registrar or Governance Officer (which includes the REA co-founders). In such a case, the Officers of the Special Interest Group are responsible for compliance with GDPR guidelines. The REA recommends that Special Interest Groups do not hold a separate mailing list.

5.5 Document Repository/file sharing on the SIG webpage

You are encouraged to add items to Document Repository/file sharing on The REA website that will be of use/interest to members. Items added under your SIG category will generate links on your SIG page on the REA website making it easy to access the documents.

5.6 Meetup

Some SIGs use the website Meetup as another way to promote events and communicate with their members. The REA has a Meetup account where groups can be added and the Officers of the group can be made organisers so that they may manage the group themselves. Please contact info@ethics-association.org for further details.

These comprehensive guidelines outline the intricate roles, processes, and responsibilities involved in effectively running a Special Interest Group within the Research Ethics Association.