

MP004: Issue 6

Regulations and Guidelines for Special Interest Groups

Approved by Council

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Scope

This procedure defines the general requirements for the governance of The Society's Special Interest Groups. It supplements the Rules and the Management Manual.

Contents

1. Purpose
2. Constitutional Position
3. Responsibilities
4. Formation of Groups
5. Names of Groups
6. Objects - Purpose
7. Membership of Groups
8. Membership Data and Data Protection
9. Finance
10. Elected Officers and Committees
11. Meetings and Groups Events
12. Health and Safety
13. Groups Publications
14. Annual Report
15. Revisions to Group Regulations and Rules
16. Insurance
17. Provision for the Disabled
18. Vested Interests

Associated Documents: MP001; FP003; MP009

1. Purpose

The purpose of these Regulations and Guidelines is to ensure that the Special Interest Groups (Groups) of the Society conduct themselves for the benefit of The Society's membership, efficiently, effectively and with due regard to the Rules and the legal and other responsibilities of The Society as a registered educational charity.

2. Constitutional Position

Special Interest Groups are formally part of The Society and as such must comply with the law concerning charities and finance (e.g. VAT) where these apply to The Society. Non-compliance will be an offence for which ultimately the trustees (Council) are liable. The framework within which Groups operate is defined in this document, in the Rules, the Management Manual (MP001), and the Group Constitutions as approved by Council.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Council

- is responsible for ensuring that Groups comply with the Law.
- is responsible for agreeing the establishment or disbandment of Groups, and for these guidelines that govern the management and administration of all Groups.
- is responsible for formally approving any additional rules or 'Constitution' that a Group may require to define its activities.

3.2 Groups

- Groups are responsible for complying with instructions issued by Council.
- The Group Chairman is responsible to Council for compliance with instructions and guidelines and in particular Health and Safety procedures.

4. Formation of Groups

- 4.1 A proposal for the formation of a new Special Interest Group may be made to Council by individual members, or members of Council. The proposed name and object(s) of the new Group must be clearly described. The proposal must also include the names of members prepared to serve as Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer until elections for these posts take place, which must occur within 12 months of Council's approval to proceed with the formation of the Group.
- 4.2 Proposals for amalgamation of Groups or disbandment of a Group may be made to Council by the relevant Group Officers.
- 4.3 On its formation a Group shall document its 'Constitution' within The Society's controlled document system and submit the document to Council for approval. Applicable Rules and Guidelines should be referenced within the Constitution document. A draft constitution is available for Guidance.

5. Names of Groups

A Group will be known as e.g. The Royal Photographic Society – Nature Group.

In all printed, electronic or other graphic display each Group will follow the Corporate Guidelines for its identity and use of The Society's arms.

6. Objects – Purpose

The objects of the Group must conform to, and lie within, the overall objects of the Society as set out in The Charter of Incorporation.

7. Membership of Groups

- 7.1 Only members of the Society, either subscribing or honorary, shall be eligible for membership of a Group and shall automatically become members of the Group upon payment of the Group subscription. Group membership subscriptions are collected via the Society's Membership Department.
- 7.2 Members shall cease to be members of a Group when they cease to be a member of the Society or upon non-payment of the Group subscription.

8. Membership Data and Data Protection

- 8.1 The Society has notified the processing of personal data to the Information Commissioner and is registered as a Data Controller on the Data Protection Register. The purpose of the Data Protection Act 1998 and associated legislation is to protect personal information held about individuals ("Data Subjects") and to enforce standards for the storage and processing of such data. Group records are covered by the Society's notification. The statutory rights of Data Subjects (e.g. access to data) must be respected. The Society will take the necessary steps to comply with legislation and will advise Groups of changes to the requirements.
- 8.2 Members' personal data must be protected from unauthorised access. For example, electronically stored data should be secured at a minimum by password protected access with data encryption where relevant.
- 8.3 Data held must only be used for Society business and not communicated to third parties.
- 8.4 Communications by email to a mailing list should use the bcc facility or equivalent to hide the email addresses of other recipients on the distribution list.
- 8.5 The Society's Membership Database is the definitive record of Society and Group membership and it is the responsibility of the Group to assist the Membership Department in maintaining the accuracy of the records by notifying any changes or errors of which they are aware.

9. Finance

Because the Groups are formally part of The Society all assets including money held by the Group are part of The Society's assets. Similarly, debts and commitments made by the Group are ultimately The Society's responsibility.

The Society will not use the Group assets or seek to influence their use except where failure to do so could adversely affect the interests of The Society.

Regulations and Guidelines for the delegation and control of finance in the Regions and Groups are set out in document FP003 which deals with the following topics:-

- Banking arrangements, limits and signatories for cheques
- Group subscriptions
- VAT
- Accounting Records
- Approval for major expenditure
- Financing of events
- Allowable expenses and fees
- Pricing guidelines for events
- Arrangements for sub-groups

10. Elected Officers and Committee

- 10.1 Each Group shall have three officers, a Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, who must be members of The Society.
- 10.2 Each Group shall elect a representative to the Society's Advisory Board. It is recommended that it should be the Chairman unless exceptional circumstances prevail.
- 10.3 Each Group must have a committee of not less than three members, and the quorum for meetings shall be three, or 1/3 of the committee membership, whichever is the greater. Such a quorum must include two of the officers. All Group committee members must be members of the Society.
- 10.4 The Society's President, Hon. Treasurer, and Director General shall be ex-officio members of all Group committees and should receive all significant committee papers, via the Director General.
- 10.5 The length of service for elected officers and committee members shall follow the regulations in the Management Manual (MP001). Council may approve exceptions where a Group finds itself in special circumstances.
- 10.6 The Officers, other committee members and the Advisory Board representative shall be elected annually at the Group's Annual General Meeting.
- 10.7 The election shall be by a simple majority of those present at the AGM who are current members of the Group. Arrangements for proxy, postal or electronic voting are at the discretion of the Group subject to being defined in the Group's Constitution and being approved by Council.
- 10.8 Each Group shall appoint a member of the Committee with responsibility for liaison with the Regions, and contact details shall be circulated to all Regional Organisers.

11. Meetings and Group Events

11.1 Annual General Meeting

Each Group shall hold an Annual General Meeting of the members.

11.2 Sub-groups

When a Group establishes local Sub-groups only members of the Group may be members of the Sub-group. No additional subscription is payable. With this exception these Regulations, including the Regulations and Guidelines for the delegation and control of finance in the Regions and Groups (FP003) will apply.

11.3 Collaboration with Regions

Collaboration between Regions and Groups is encouraged as a means of providing the optimum opportunities for members to participate in the Society's activities. Regional Organisers are asked to seek maximum collaboration with Groups in their Regions. Collaboration can only work if it is two way and Group Officers are encouraged to be responsive to, and work with, the Regions where appropriate.

11.4 Anti-clash Policy

A meeting held on the same day within 50 to 80 miles may be considered to constitute a clash. Groups are asked to post their events on the web site and to avoid a clash with other Society events in the same area.

12. Health and Safety

The Society's Health and Safety Policy, responsibilities and rules are set out in the Health and Safety Manual. It includes information on the legislation and guidance on aspects of safe practice such as display screen equipment, electrical safety and manual handling. The Manual is available from The Society's headquarters.

The basic Safety Rules for Society events are given below.

12.1 Fire Precautions

Volunteers responsible for organising public meetings must ensure that they are aware of the following:

- The location of fire alarm points and how to use them.
- How to contact the emergency services.
- Location of fire extinguishers and how to use them.
- Building emergency exits.
- Fire assembly points.

The location of the fire exits and the assembly point must be announced at the beginning of every public meeting.

A register of those present at a meeting must be kept or a Fire Marshal appointed.

The register is to enable the organiser of the meeting to perform a roll call and establish that the building has been evacuated in order to provide advice to the Fire Services attending the fire.

Alternatively the role of the Fire Marshal is to check, as far as it is safe to do so, that the building or part of the building in use by The Society has been evacuated and to advise the fire service accordingly.

Volunteers must not put themselves at personal risk in carrying out these instructions.

12.2 Electrical Equipment

Trailing leads must be taped down or covered to eliminate a trip hazard.

Equipment must be correctly fused and free from mechanical damage.

If the building does not have installed Residual Current Devices then any extension lead must be connected to the mains supply using a portable Residual Current Device.

12.3 Accidents

Any accident or near miss must be reported to the Director General to be entered in the Accident Book.

12.4 Field Trips

A risk assessment is required before any field trip. A form is available from the Director General to assist with the assessment and as a record.

13. Group Publications

13.1 Group publications must conform to the Corporate Identity Guidelines MP009.

13.2 Groups may only offer subscriptions for their magazines, newsletters or other publications to non-members of the Society with the prior approval of the Council.

13.3 Please send a pdf version or web link to reception@rps.org for distribution to Council, the Advisory Board and staff. Additionally please send 2 hard copies for the attention of: The Director General, The Royal Photographic Society, Fenton House, 122 Wells Road, Bath BA2

3AH. Alternatively 40 hard copies of the publication may be sent for the attention of The Director General.

14. Annual Report

The Group Chairman should arrange for the following information to be submitted to the Director General by 31 January each year for the previous calendar year: minutes of the Group AGM, including a summary of activities and financial statement for the year; estimate of volunteer hours; record of member and non-member attendees at activities for the Society's 'public benefit' statement in the Annual Report. Relevant forms are available from the Director General.

15. Revisions to Group Regulations and Rules

- 15.1 Council will review Group Governance with the Management Manual every two years.
- 15.2 Changes to Group Rules and constitution may be requested by the Group but require the approval of Council before they are implemented.

16. Insurance

All Group events are insured under the Society's overall insurance cover. This cover applies to both the individual and the premises but does not cover members' equipment where loaned for such an event. The cover is limited to £5 million with an excess of £250.

17. Provision for the Disabled

- 17.1 It is Society Policy that wherever possible Society events and activities will cater for all participants regardless of their physical limitations. It is however recognised that in some situations such as field trips this will not always be practical. Groups which run regular field events should aim to cater for the physically impaired at least once a year. The elderly will often also benefit from these considerations.
- 17.2 In situations where the attendance of a carer is essential no admission charge should be made for the carer. However, the carer would be expected to pay for food and accommodation.
- 17.3 The minimum requirements are:
 - Wheelchair access i.e. no steps to negotiate, and doors wide enough for wheelchairs to pass through (this requires at least a standard 30inches/760mm wide door with room to manoeuvre on the other side).
Note: Level access also caters for the visually impaired.
 - A disabled toilet facility.
 - A hearing loop or, as a minimum, a public address system.

The publicity for an event should make it clear whether the event is suitable for the disabled. See <http://www.graphicartistsguild.org/resources/disability-access-symbols/> for suitable signage.

Further advice and guidance can be obtained from The Society's Headquarters, including contact details of members who have specialist knowledge in this area.

18. Vested Interests and External Contacts

18.1 Vested Interests

To protect individuals from any accusation of using their position in The Society for personal gain, a Volunteer should not be part of a decision making process which agrees to pay a fee to the Volunteer providing services to the Society.

Should a Committee on which you serve wish to consider engaging you and paying a fee, the following will apply:

- You must declare an interest to the Committee and withdraw from the discussions
- The declaration of vested interest must be included in the Minutes of the meeting
- You must not be involved in any way in appointing yourself as providing a service and the level of fee to be paid.
- The Chair of the Committee must notify the Director General with full copies of the correspondence, and receive consent in writing.
- Payment of Society expenses is not included in this item.

18.2 External Contacts

Volunteers must avoid entering into commercial arrangements with third parties where these arrangements exceed their normal Volunteer responsibilities as a Regional or Chapter Organiser or Special Interest Group representative. Outside this remit, the Director General should be approached to give prior approval to such arrangements; this approval will only be given if the proposed arrangements are considered to be of overall benefit to The Society. Before contacting Corporate Patrons please contact the Director General so The Society is seen to be working as one organisation, not disparate part.