

Working and Special Interest Groups

Draft Proposals

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Working and Special Interest Groups – Draft Proposal

by Michael J. Burgess

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Contents

I	Preamble	<i>p. 1</i>
	<i>a.</i> the problem	<i>p. 1</i>
	<i>b.</i> working groups	<i>p. 2</i>
	<i>c.</i> special interest groups	<i>p. 3</i>
II	Structure and Co-ordination	<i>p. 5</i>
	<i>a.</i> working groups	<i>p. 6</i>
	<i>b.</i> special interest groups	<i>p. 7</i>
III	Examples	<i>p. 9</i>
	<i>a.</i> a presentation	<i>p. 10</i>
	<i>b.</i> a reconciliation group	<i>p. 11</i>
	<i>c.</i> a book club	<i>p. 13</i>
IV	Suggested Groups	<i>p. 9</i>
	<i>a.</i> working groups	<i>p. 10</i>
	<i>b.</i> special interest groups	<i>p. 10</i>

I Preamble

The Problem

For the membership-fee, a well-functioning society is expected to host presentations, talks and interactive events all of which require the time and effort of individuals and can often falter due to stretching too few people too thinly. Indeed merely running a society requires the committee to consider an inordinate number of issues at a depth that is not feasibly reached within an hour or two. These problems are easily solved with proper delegation and project management; to this end, this proposal offers 'Working Groups'.

Term times also impose limitations on university societies, restricting the number of events that can be held and thus requiring a well-defined vision and a strict hand in drawing up the main-event timetables. Courses are a means to provide extra information on specific topics; however, a more social equivalent is absent. 'Special Interest Groups' are proposed as a means of enticing prospective members and an outlet for society meetings and interests that cannot be accommodated for in courses and timetabled events.

Working Groups

Working Groups are groups of two or more society members that have been delegated a specific task. Tasks may range from drawing up course proposals, to writing presentations or more formal issues such as committee policy. Working groups report to the committee for review.

Special Interest Groups

Special Interest Groups cover the particular interests of members, which may be academic or light-hearted. Subjects range from 'book clubs' to 'science and philosophy groups'. The coordinator of the group reports to the committee on the group's activities and progression.

II Structure and Co-Ordination

Working Groups

The formation of a working group will typically be a member proposing an event or policy, this member may be interested in doing the groundwork or requests better-suited individuals take the responsibility. Any committee member has the power to create a working group on issues, which concern their post, however only the president has the power to create a working group on any issue and must delegate a committee member to sit on this group. The committee may recommend groups to the president whose role is then to form them.

Working groups are formed from one committee member in addition to at least one more person who can in principle be from the committee, general membership or completely external to the society.

The committee member sitting on the group (the co-ordinator) is ultimately responsible for ensuring deadlines are met and the work is at a reasonable standard. At committee meetings, the co-ordinator will reports on the group; however, other group members can be brought in to help. Reports may take the form of an oral summary of the work completed so far, or the final product for review.

Working groups will be given a deadline by which they must produce their final product and may be required to give periodic reports on their progress; these will be formally set by the president who acts as the co-ordinator of all groups. The committee is free to, and often should, advice the president on the most realistic courses of action. Periodic review meetings, in which the working group co-ordinator presents to the committee, can serve as times to provide suggestions and feedback.

Working groups on policy will provide their draft proposals to be voted on by the committee. The president may waive the requirement to vote on groups working on pre-scheduled presentations and events.

See the Examples section (III) for typical cases, which will generally act in a less formal manner than these guidelines propose.

Special Interest Groups

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