POLICY ON SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to define the requirements for the establishment and operation of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) within the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM; the College).

Special Interest Groups come under the jurisdiction of the governing body to which they are accountable. Liaison between SIGs and any other College entity is, ordinarily, conducted via the Executive Director of Policy and Research.

2. TERMINOLOGY

**College Member**
means a person admitted as a member of the College pursuant to the provisions of the ACEM Constitution and associated regulations, and, for the purposes of this policy, also includes trainees.

**External member**
means a person (not being an ACEM member or trainee) whose appointment to a SIG would, in the opinion of the governing body, enhance or promote the work of a particular SIG – for example, a representative from another organisation, a consumer representative, a person with a special expertise in a particular area.

**Governing body**
means the ACEM Board, the Council of Advocacy, Practice and Partnerships (CAPP), or the Council of Education (COE), which has overall responsibility for and authority over the SIG in question.

**Special interest**
means a particular identifiable academic pursuit or area of clinical practice within the body of knowledge that is emergency medicine and formally designated as such by the applicable Council and/or ACEM Board.

**Trainee**
means trainees enrolled in and undertaking the FACEM Training Program and, for the purposes of this policy, also includes Emergency Medicine Certificate and Emergency Medicine Diploma trainees, and Specialist International Medical Graduates (SIMGs) undertaking College requirements for the purpose of attaining eligibility for election to Fellowship of the College.

3. SIG MEMBERSHIP

3.1 Composition

A SIG shall include a minimum of 20 FACEM members, with no maximum limit on the total number of College members.

At its discretion and upon a written request from the SIG executive, the governing body may grant approval for the SIG to include specified external members.

**Applications for membership**
Applications for membership of a SIG shall be submitted using the appropriate College form and must be accompanied by all additional information as may be specified on that form.

3.2 SIG Executive

Each SIG shall have an executive consisting of a minimum of two (2) and a maximum of four (4) FACEM members. The executive shall be responsible for conducting the business of the SIG.

The SIG executive shall have a Chair and a Deputy Chair, who shall be the entity’s office bearers.
Appointments to Executive

The members of the SIG executive shall be appointed by the governing body on the nomination of the College members of the SIG for a period of two (2) years. The term of office of the SIG executive shall be in accordance with the provisions of the College Policy on College Entities (COR334) as from time to time updated.

Period of Service

The Each special interest group executive shall hold office for two (2) calendar years, in line with the terms of office of CAPP entities.

Casual Vacancies

A casual vacancy arising in the SIG executive shall be filled in accordance with the provisions of the College Policy on College Entities (COR334) as from time to time updated.

3.3 Revocation of Appointments

The appointment of any member to the SIG executive may be revoked at any time by resolution of a majority of members present at any meeting of the governing body of which notice had been circulated to all members of the governing body and the SIG executive member at least fourteen days prior to the meeting.

4. FORMATION OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

(a) A request, made on behalf of at least 20 Fellows of the College, may be made to the governing body for the formation of a SIG within a specific area of special interest. Any such request must be submitted in writing to the Chair of the applicable governing body and include:

   (i) a written statement of up to 150 words on the reasons for the request and the nature of the special interest they intend to pursue, and

   (ii) written evidence of sufficient expressions of interest for membership of the proposed SIG.

(b) Where formation of a SIG is approved, the governing body shall appoint the first SIG executive, which shall hold office until the date at which the entities of the governing body are next scheduled to be confirmed following a ‘spill’ process. Any such period served shall not count towards the maximum successive terms permitted under the Policy on College Entities. Thereafter, appointment to the SIG executive shall be made in accordance with clause 3.2 of this policy.

5. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY

5.1 Role

The primary role of a SIG is to promote and advance the objects of the College within its area of special interest. In particular, this may include matters such as:

(a) to promote communication between practitioners with an interest in the area of special interest

(b) to promote education and scientific meetings focussing on the area of special interest

(c) to facilitate and encourage research in the area of special interest

(d) to propose issues or recommendations for the consideration of the applicable governing body.
5.2 Responsibility

Each SIG shall:

(a) advise the governing body promptly of any matter arising in the area of special interest likely to affect the interests of the College or its members, and

(b) make suggestions to the governing body for appropriate action in relation to the such matters.

6. AUTHORITY

A SIG may only act in accordance with its Terms of Reference and having regard to all applicable College policies. Pursuant to Section 5.2(b), a SIG does not have any authority to make decisions that are binding on the College, including in regard to the commitment of resources to activities of the SIG.

6.1 Limitations on Authority

A SIG expressly does not have authority:

(a) to initiate any action or communication of any opinion on any matters to any person or authority or organisation, except in situations where communication with medical or political bodies is undertaken as an endorsed representative of the College as part of the relationship between the College and that body

(b) to decide any issue or matter, but only to make recommendations

(c) to waive, vary or otherwise depart from:
   - its terms of reference
   - the terms or requirements of any approved policy or regulation, and
   - the requirements of the Constitution and any relevant legislation.

(d) to bind or enter into any contract or other liability on behalf of the College.

7. STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS

SIG members are to act in accordance with the standards of conduct and ethics appropriate to the aims and purposes of the College and the SIG at all times.

In particular, members are to comply with the provisions of the following:

- Code of Conduct (COR235)
- Member-Staff Relations Policy (COR304)

8. TERMS OF REFERENCE

(a) The terms of reference of a SIG shall be determined by its governing body, and may include any requirement, limitation or other condition as the governing body deems appropriate

(b) In respect of each SIG, the terms of reference shall include the following:

- the membership criteria
- specified membership of the SIG
- the roles and responsibilities of the SIG, and
• the group’s terms of operation and duration.

8.1 Lines of Reporting

(a) Each SIG shall report on its activities to the governing body following the meetings of its members, or as required by the governing body.

(b) Any SIG whose role involves providing recommendations on the disbursement of College funds, whether by way of bursary, scholarship, monetary assistance or otherwise, shall:
   • provide these recommendations to the Board via the ACEM Foundation, and
   • report on these and its other activities to the governing body.

9. CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

9.1 Meetings of Membership

Each SIG shall hold at least one (1) meeting of the group’s membership annually and may hold such further meetings as and when the executive deems it necessary or appropriate. The meeting of the SIG membership should be held at the ACEM Annual Scientific Meeting.

9.2 Meetings of Executive

Meetings of the SIG executive shall be held at least once a year, but shall meet more frequently where necessary. Meetings may be held by teleconference, with up to one (1) meeting held face-to-face annually.

9.3 Quorum

(a) The required quorum for the transaction of business at an executive meeting is:
   • where the executive consists of either two or three members – two (2) members; or
   • where the executive consists of four members – three (3) members.

(b) The required quorum for any meeting of the SIG membership shall be two (2) members of the executive and at least five (5) other College members

9.4 Voting Rights

All SIG members, including both College members and External members, in attendance at a meeting of the SIG membership shall have equal voting rights.

SIG members may attend a meeting of the executive in an observer capacity; members in attendance do not have voting rights.

9.5 Record Keeping

Each SIG shall keep adequate and proper records and minutes of its meetings (both executive and general), which shall include details of the nature and extent of any conflict of interest and those present at the meeting.

A copy of such minutes shall be forwarded to the relevant College Executive Director immediately following the relevant meeting for making available to the next scheduled meeting of the governing body of the SIG.

9.6 Reporting Obligations

For the reporting obligations of special interest groups, see clause 8.1, Lines of Reporting.
10. EXPENSES

Expenses incurred by members in relation to attending any meeting of the special interest group are the responsibility of the member.

11. DISSOLUTION OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The governing body or the ACEM Board may dissolve a SIG by resolution of three-fourths of members of the governing body present and voting if, in the opinion of the governing body, the SIG:

(a) has been guilty of conduct detrimental to the interests of the College

(b) is unable to elect an executive, or

(c) membership drops below the minimum threshold level of 20 FACEM members.

12. DOCUMENT REVIEW

Timeframe for review: every two (2) years, or earlier if required.

12.1 Responsibilities

Document authorisation: Board
Document implementation: CEO
Document maintenance: Manager Standards

12.2 Revision History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date of Version</th>
<th>Pages revised / Brief Explanation of Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>v4</td>
<td>Sep-2014</td>
<td>Approved by the Board. This policy replaces the following: • Guideline G16, Guidelines for Special Interest Groups • Regulation 10.11 – Special Interest Groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v5</td>
<td>May-2017</td>
<td>Substantive revisions throughout</td>
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