

PHCSG – Special Interest Groups – Terms of Reference

1 Purpose of this Document

This document is intended to lay down the rules of operation of SIGs operated by the PHCSG. It is hoped that these rules will balance the need to protect the confidentiality of SIG discussion to allow open discussion with the need to disseminate the results of SIG work.

It is intended that the document is circulated to all those participating in SIG activity at the commencement of such activity and that its contents are drawn to the attention of participants by the SIG Convenors at SIG meetings.

2 Purpose of SIGs

The PHCSG operates a number of Special Interest Groups whose purpose is to encourage and facilitate in-depth analysis and discussion between members of the PHCSG with a particular interest within the field of primary care informatics.

The SIGs are intended to provide an informal environment where ideas can be discussed freely and confidently until they reach a stage of development where they can be shared with the wider membership or the broader community as appropriate.

SIGs may operate through face-to-face meetings and/or through the use of any other appropriate means. SIGs are led by a Convenor appointed by the General Committee of the PHCSG with support from the Group's Administrator.

3 Participation in SIG Activity

All members of the PHCSG, willing to abide by these terms of reference are free to participate in any SIG activity and the SIG convenor will ensure that members of the PHCSG receive timely information and an invitation to participate in forthcoming SIG activities.

Participation in SIG is strictly limited to PHCSG members. However, in exceptional circumstances non-members may be allowed to participate where in the view of the Convenor such individuals can make a particular expert contribution to the work of the SIG cannot be reasonably expected to join the PHCSG. Such participants must agree to abide by these terms of reference.

Participants do so as individuals and any contribution they make will not be interpreted as representing the views of any organisation to which they may be affiliated unless they explicitly indicate otherwise.

In exceptional circumstances the Convenor may exclude from participation any member whose presence is likely to seriously inhibit the proper operation of a SIG or whom they believe will not abide by these Terms of Reference, where time allows such decisions should be referred to the PHCSG Executive Committee for confirmation.

4 Declaration of Interests

SIG Participants should make known to other participants any material beneficial interest they may have in the outcome of SIG discussions.

5 Confidentiality

The aim of SIGs is to develop ideas for dissemination to either/or the wider membership of the Group or the broader community. However, it is recognised that the participation of certain people is only possible if their individual contribution is not publicly disclosed and that in some cases it is not desirable for work in progress to be shared beyond those actively participating in a particular SIG activity. SIGs therefore will operate as follows:

1. The way in which SIGs discussions and conclusions are disseminated will be determined by the SIG Convenor in line with the guidance in section 7 below.
2. "Chatham House Rules" apply, i.e. nothing will be published, beyond SIG participants that identifies an individual's participation, views or contribution without their explicit consent.
3. Individual participants will not disclose details of SIG discussion or share documents and other material produced by the SIG other than with those participating in the particular SIG activity to which the documents relate.
4. Journalists who are established members of the PHCSG may attend SIG meetings as an ORDINARY MEMBER but may not use anything they learn for Journalistic purposes and may not contact other participants in relation to the subject of the meeting for such purpose other than with the consent of the Convenor who will only grant such consent after obtaining the permission of the PHCSG Executive and SIG participants concerned.

6 Intellectual Property Rights

Copyright and other Intellectual Property Rights relating to new IPR created by SIG activity will be vested in the PHCSG.

It is not intended that the sharing of existing IPR within SIG activity should result in any change of ownership relating to such existing IPR. However, participants should be aware that material disclosed in SIGs may be published by the PHCSG.

While the Group reserves its rights in relation to the IPR created by SIGs, in general the Group will make the outputs of SIG activity available for the benefit of the medical informatics community on a royalty free basis.

7 Dissemination of SIG Outputs

It is the Convenors responsibility to ensure that as a minimum all SIG activity should result in the timely a summary of activity and conclusions reached being available to all members of the PHCSG. This will be achieved by making relevant material available to the Group's administrator who will determine how it is best made available to the membership.

In addition to any other form of dissemination it will be normal practice, at the discretion of the Editor, for a report of SIG activity to appear in the Group's Journal – Informatics in Primary Care. However, given the long lead times with regard to publication in the Journal this should not normally be the only means by which SIG outputs are made available to the membership.

In addition to the above the Executive Committee in consultation with the Convenor may chose to publish material more widely and/or to issue press statements summarising the conclusion reached by SIGs.

No action in relation to the dissemination of SIG outputs will override the commitment to confidentiality in section 5 above.

8 Disputes and Interpretation

Any disputes relating to the operation of SIGs or interpretation of these Terms of Reference will be resolved by the Executive Committee of the PHCSG in consultation with the relevant SIG Convenor.