

By-law 15

15. SPECIAL INTEREST SECTIONS

15.1 Determination of Special Interest Sections

A listing of Special Interest Sections proposed, established and their status within the Institute will be maintained as part of the Corporate Planning process.

The specific provisions applying to these Sections will be set out in Section business plans.

15.2 Establishment and Purpose

- (1) The establishment of a Special Interest Section shall be approved by the Council in accordance with the provisions of this by-law, but may be initiated by a Division or any group of Institute members.
- (2) The purposes of a Special Interest Section should be directed towards outcomes of benefit to the whole Institute or environmental practice generally. They are likely to be emergent opportunities that require dedicated focus over some time (e.g. CEnvP) rather than standing committee business. The purpose may be related to specific and time-dependent tasks and/or to a broad and ongoing role.
- (3) A proposal to establish a Special Interest Section must be accompanied by a business plan and include as a minimum:
 - (a) a proposed title for the Section, which shall be subject to ratification by the Council;
 - (b) a statement of the purpose and benefits of the Section;
 - (c) a statement of any eligibility criteria that may apply to membership of the Section;
 - (d) the names of a proposed Convenor and at least four other active members who are current financial members of the Institute; and
 - (e) an estimate of the annual cost of conducting the activities of the Special Interest Section, if it is intended to be funded from the Institute general account or Division account, or an outline of alternative financial arrangements in accordance with Section 15.3(6) of this by-law if the Section seeks to be responsible for its own finances.

15.3 Membership

- (1) Membership of a Special Interest Section shall be open to any member of the Institute who satisfies the conditions for membership for the Section and pays any additional levy that may be required.

- (2) Each Special Interest Section shall determine conditions for belonging to that Section, which shall be subject to Council approval. These conditions may include, for example, having an interest in the activities of the Section, specific qualifications or training, membership of another professional body, or residence in a specific geographical area.

15.4 Convenor

- (1) Each Special Interest Section shall have a Convenor (or equivalent person) who shall be appointed by the Council. The Council shall consider but is not bound to accept any nomination made by the Section. Unless the Convenor is a member of the Council, he or she shall be responsible to the Council through a nominated Councillor. The Section may appoint other office bearers as it sees fit.
- (2) The Convenor shall provide a written report to the Council at least annually on the activities and outcomes of the Section, the projected activities and tasks for the coming year, and any Institute resources required, as part of the Institute report, business planning and budget cycle. The Convenor may delegate his or her role in organising meetings and activities, but shall remain responsible for reporting.
- (3) The Convenor shall normally be appointed for the term of the Section's specific charter or for two (2) years, whichever is the shorter, but is eligible for re-appointment.

15.5 Finances

- (1) If a Special Interest Section requires specific funding from the Institute, it may be required by the Council to:
 - (a) appoint one of its members to act as treasurer for the Section;
 - (b) maintain its own books of account;
 - (c) operate its own bank account, which must have at least two office bearers as signatories;
 - (d) produce an annual budget which identifies any additional levy that may be required to fund its activities;
 - (e) produce an annual financial report in accordance with a format and schedule determined by the Council; and
 - (f) produce quarterly financial reports or other financial information as determined by the Council.

Alternatively, if the level of financial activity is low, the finances of the Section may be managed as a separate trust fund within the main Institute accounts.

- (2) All Special Interest Section funds, whether raised through levies or other activities, will remain the property of the Institute and will not be transferable to another organisation, should the Section cease to operate or establish itself as an independent organisation outside the Institute.

If, however, the Special Interest Section, at the time of its establishment, contributes funds to the Institute from an external source, any remaining funds in the Section's account up to the original cash value shall be offered to the Section in the event of it establishing itself as an independent organisation.

- (3) The Institute shall have no responsibility for expenditure incurred by or on behalf of the Special Interest Section which has not been specifically approved by the Council. Such expenditure, however, may be recovered through a Section levy which is subsequently approved.

15.6 Meetings and Activities

- (1) A Special Interest Section may communicate and conduct business by such means as it sees fit, including written and electronic communications, teleconferences and meetings. It may organise its own conferences or workshops on a financially sustainable basis, and may retain any profits from such activities for its own use.

Should the organisation of its activities involve a significant commitment of Institute resources, the Section may be charged for these services. A Special Interest Section may contribute profits from its activities to the main Institute or Divisional accounts as considered appropriate and agreed by the Convenor and Council representative.

- (2) A Special Interest Section may be offered its own sessions at Institute Conferences, subject to this being compatible with the theme and overall organisational arrangements for the Conference.
- (3) A Special Interest Section may produce its own publications, provided that these are funded through its own budget. The Council may approve seed funding to assist with preparation and printing if it supports the financial viability of the publication, on the understanding that this funding would be repaid from initial sales.
- (4) A Special Interest Section may make recommendations to the Council but is not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Institute. Such recommendations should be formulated by consensus with no formal voting or minutes.

In the event that a recommendation does not represent consensus, Section members may make opposing representation to the Council through the nominated Councillor. Neither the Convenor nor any Section member may purport to represent or make statement on behalf of the Institute without the prior approval of the Council.

- (5) All external promotion of the Special Interest Section shall indicate that it is a part of the Institute.

15.7 Services Provided by the Institute

- (1) A Special Interest Section will be offered the following services at no additional charge to its members:
 - (a) up to a page in the Institute newsletter or as appropriate;
 - (b) sufficient space on the Institute website to perform its functions;
 - (c) a section in the Annual Report of the Institute;
 - (d) listing in appropriate Institute promotional material; and
 - (e) limited Central Office assistance as determined in the context of other Institute priorities.

15.8 Termination

- (1) A Special Interest Section may be terminated by the Council:
 - (a) if it has completed any specific tasks for which it was established and has no ongoing function;
 - (b) at the request of a majority of members of the Section; or
 - (c) if the Section has not conducted any activity or reported to the Council for a period of not less than two (2) years.
- (2) Any funds of a Special Interest Section which is terminated shall revert to the main Institute or Divisional account whence they came.