AEA-E Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
June 2023

A Special Interest Group (SIG) is a network or community of AEA-E members, all sharing a common interest and/or expertise in a particular area or issue related to assessment. Membership is open to all AEA-E members, including employees of corporate members.

AEA-E members will be invited to join their chosen SIGs upon joining the Association and at each renewal of membership. No charge is made for SIG membership. There is no limit to the number of SIGs that AEA-E members may join.

Council will determine how many SIGs can be supported by the Association at one time. Any SIG that is unable to gather or sustain the support of a sufficient number of AEA-E members will be wound up at the discretion of Council.

The purpose of an AEA-E SIG is to:

- provide a focal point for AEA-E members who share a common interest in a particular area of assessment;
- provide a forum for those members to exchange of ideas, knowledge and information in relation to the special interest;
- draw together and develop a range of specialist skills, knowledge and professional competences related to its particular field to support best practice;
- act as an expert resource to AEA-E and its members on knowledge, practice and the development of policies and strategies related to its particular field;
- attract new members to AEA-E.

A SIG's Steering Committee (SC) is responsible for initiating, organising, delivering and monitoring activities, and for reporting to AEA-E as required. It is expected that SIGs will be largely self-supporting/administrating.

There follows below:
1. **Guidance on setting up a SIG (p2)**
2. **A proposal form for new SIGs (p3)**
3. **Guidance on managing a SIG (p4-5)**

Setting up a SIG

Any AEA-E members wishing to set up a new SIG should use the form below (p3) to make a proposal to Council. Any such proposal must be submitted to council by 12th December in the submitting year, for consideration by Council in January of the following year. The proposal should include a proposed title for the SIG along with a brief (250- to 300-word) description of the focus and intent of their proposed SIG. The proposal should have the support of at least 10 members of AEA-E, including the proposed Chair of the SG and at least two proposed SG members.

With the approval by Council of a new SIG:

a. A SIG webpage will be set up by the AEA-E web team, with a link for members to join the SIG, with text provided by the SIG Steering Committee.
b. The SIG Chair will draft an email to AEA-E members inviting membership of the new SIG, which will be sent by AEA-E to all members.
c. The SIG SG will immediately begin to meet regularly to initiate and organise the activities of the SIG to bring members together at and between AEA-E annual conferences. If required, the SG will invite expressions of interest in joining the Steering Committee from amongst its SIG members.
d. The SIG will be formally 'launched' at the first available annual conference.

AEA-E will support the establishment and maintenance of the SIG by:

a. encouraging membership of the SIG amongst individual members and employees of corporate members;
b. providing a visible and convenient meeting point at AEA-E annual conferences that will be used by the SG to promote the SIG during the welcome reception and during breaks throughout the conference;
c. providing funding only for a SIG banner with the prior approval of Council;
d. erecting and dismantling the SIG banner at each annual conference, transporting it to and from the conferences, and ensuring its safekeeping between conferences;
e. promoting the interests of the SIG at the AEA-E annual conference, for example by seeking to group SIG-related conference presentations within the conference programme as SIG-themed papers sessions where possible;
f. providing a platform and support for SIG webinars and similar online activities between conferences;
g. communicating with AEA-E and SIG members on behalf of the SG;
h. providing general advice and relevant information to the SG, and attending SG meetings on request.

![aea EUROPE logo]

Proposal form for a new AEA-E SIG (please add rows if required)

Proposed title of SIG:	
Description of focus and intent (100-150 words):	
Name, address and email address of proposed Chair, along with brief description of evidence of sustained involvement in AEA-E, such as involvement in AEA-E committees, attendance or presentation at AEA-E conferences, etc.	
Name, address and email address of additional Steering Committee member.	
Name, address and email address of additional Steering Committee member.	
Names and email addresses of additional AEA-E members who support this application and would intend to join this SIG if this proposal is accepted by Council.	

Note that there must be a minimum of 10 AEA-E members on this proposal form, including the Chair and Steering Committee members, before it can be considered by Council.

Please send the completed proposal form to: Linda Wye (Executive Assistant to Director of Assessment Research & Innovation, Centre for Education Research and Practice, AQA) at LWye@aqa.org.uk.

Managing a SIG

Each SIG is organised by **a Chair and up to 9 further Members** of a Steering Committee (SC) who share appropriate roles and responsibilities associated with the SIG. **The Chair and any other Member of the SIG SC must be current members of AEA-E and of its SIG.**

It is expected that SC Members will normally serve for a 3-year term and the Chair will normally serve for a 2-year term. A shorter term is also acceptable in each case, as is re-appointment at the end of each term although consideration should be given to the new energy and ideas that can be brought to SCs by new Members. SC Members should endeavour to ensure that terms of office are staggered for continuity purposes, for example by volunteering to serve for a shorter or longer term.

The main role of the SIG SC Chair is to co-ordinate, oversee and develop the mission and activities of the SIG which should include organised activities between as well as at AEA E annual conferences. Responsibilities of the SIG SC Chair will include:

- Organising regular online meetings of the SIG SC at a frequency that facilitates the effective working of the SC, and, if possible, organising one face-to-face meeting of the SC at each AEA-E annual conference
- Preparing and circulating agendas for all SC meetings
- Ensuring that minutes of SC meetings are kept, and agreed actions are allocated and taken
- Organising and chairing a SIG Annual Review meeting soon after each annual conference, to provide an opportunity to report to SIG and AEA-E members and obtain feedback on the activities of the SIG during the past year, and to invite ideas for the future
- Taking direction from the AEA-E Council and providing information to Council on request, which will include providing an annual report on SIG activities

Members of the SIG SC should be willing and have the capacity to take responsibility for such activities as may be required to allow the SIG SC to meet its aims and as agreed by the Chair and Members of the SC (allowing for individual capacities). For example, to:

- Promote SIG membership by any suitable means
- Communicate effectively with SIG and AEA-E members, eg by email and via social media
- Provide opportunities at and between AEA-E annual conferences for SIG members to exchange ideas, knowledge and information relating to the special interest of that SIG
- Contribute to SIG activities at the annual conference which will include participating in informal discussions at the designated SIG meeting place and may include chairing of SIG-themed papers sessions
- Contribute to coordinating and organising SIG submissions to the AEA-E annual conference by preparing submissions for peer review according to published processes for conference submissions, and by contributing to delivery of those activities as required

Expressions of interest in joining the SIG SC should be sought from among all SIG members at least annually. If, following such a call, there are more volunteers than there are places vacant, then an election process should be managed by AEA-E that ensures all current SIG members can express an interest in joining the Steering Committee and can vote for their preferred candidate. Any issues of leadership and continuity should be discussed with SIG members at the SIG Annual Review meeting.

The Chair of the Steering Committee shall be appointed by the members of the SIG SC. When the role of Chair is vacant any Member of the SC that has served for at least 1 year may volunteer to be Chair. If there is more than one volunteer for the role, SC Members may agree that the volunteers should operate as Co-chairs, or that the Chair will rotate between them on an annual basis; if the SC prefers to appoint a single Chair, and there is more than one volunteer for that role, then all members of that SIG shall be asked to vote for their preferred candidate in an election process managed by AEA-E.

The Chair and other SC Members should work within all policies, guidance and advice provided by AEA-E, and ensure that any risks to individuals or organisations are minimised. By assuming the position of Chair or SC Member, individuals are committing to fulfilling the above responsibilities and obligations. AEA-E reserves the right to take whatever action may be necessary to protect its legal, financial and reputational position. Such matters will also form part of any review of SIG activities that is undertaken by Council.

Questions?

If you have questions about any of the above, or would like to discuss anything to do with setting up or managing an AEA-E SIG, please get in touch with Lesley Wiseman, AEA-E Council member with responsibility for SIGs, at lesley.wiseman-orr@glasgow.ac.uk.