



INCOSE UK Policy for Groups

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define how INCOSE UK Groups are to be created and managed.

2. Aims

INCOSE UK promotes the formation of Groups to address subjects of particular interest to Systems Engineering in the UK, or to provide a local focal point for members to meet up in a convenient geographical location. They also support the Continuous Professional Development of members.

3. Definitions

The primary aims and objectives of Groups are:

1. To Develop Outputs / Publications

The focus of this type of group is on specific technical topics where INCOSE UK members have expressed an interest in developing guidance material for publication. The intention is the group may be stood down once it has achieved its objectives.

2. Specific Technical Topics

The focus of this type of group is to explore a subject area rather than producing guidance material. The intention is the group will persist for as long as there is sufficient membership interest in the topic to sustain a viable group (as a general guideline, the committee should not outnumber the rest of the regularly engaged group members).

3. Geographical Focal Point for Members

The focus of this type of group is to provide a vehicle for members to meet up, but with no specific technical focus. The intention is the group may also act as hubs for outreach activities with non-members and other local branches from other professional societies from time to time. The group will persist for as long as there is member interest and a functional committee in the geographic area.

Details of the current set of INCOSE UK Groups can be found on the INCOSE UK website.

4. Governance

Depending on the activities and aims of the Group they fall under the remit of:

1. The Outreach Director if they are involved with outreach activities. This includes groups focusing on Specific Technical Topics and those providing a Geographical Focal Point for members;
2. The Technical Director if they are involved in creating outputs / publications.

4.1. Formation

Groups may be initiated by individual members, at the request of the UKAB, or at the direction of the Council. All Groups must be approved by the Council. For further information refer to the "Guidance: Setting Up a Group" on Page 7 and the "Setting up a Group" section on the INCOSE UK website.



4.2. Charter

All Groups shall have a charter, which clearly states their aims and objectives. This must be approved by the Council as part of the process of setting up a group and should be subject to periodic review to ensure that the group is operating within appropriate boundaries.

Where appropriate, this must include a draft set of initial intended outputs.

The charter will also state how the group is to be run and shall include details on:

- The Committee
- Chair / Co-chairs
- Secretary
- Treasurer (if the Group intends to hold events where payments are required)

Further information can be found in “Guidance: Group Charters” on Page 8.

4.3. Committee

All Groups shall have a committee to run the group. All committee members must be current members of INCOSE UK. As a minimum a group must have at least two committee members to fulfil the mandated set of positions. The committee must have nominated individuals to act as Chair and Secretary of the group. In some cases, it can be good practice to have two co-Chairs for a group to share the load. Where a group is expecting to run events that will incur costs to INCOSE UK it must also have a nominated individual to act as the treasurer to handle any financial matters with the INCOSE UK Secretariat. The responsibilities associated with each role are defined in “Guidance: Group Committee Roles and Responsibilities” on Page 9.

It is recognised that some Groups may have regular involvement with external parties when planning their activities. This is fine, but such people cannot take on formal positions within the group committee or claim to act on behalf of INCOSE UK.

Where a Joint Group is formed, the composition and membership of the committee shall be captured in the MOU with the other organisation and flowed down into their group charter.

5. Support to Groups

This section sets out the support that is provided to Groups to help them undertake their activities.

5.1. Working Sessions

Groups focused on developing publications are expected to hold working sessions, where members collaborate (physically or virtually) in order to make progress on their declared outputs.

Specific sessions are made available to these Groups at the Annual Systems Engineering Conference (ASEC) during the technical programme, to enable Group members to meet up whilst at the event. To book space for a Group session at ASEC the Group Chair / Co-Chair / Secretary should contact the INCOSE UK Events Team.

5.2. Website

The INCOSE UK website has a specific area set up for Groups. This has both public facing elements available to guests and logged in members, and specific areas for group administration and to support group activities – including a wiki area (see www.incosewiki.info).



All Groups are expected to use the provided website functionality wherever possible. Any divergence from using the INCOSE UK website functionality requires a waiver from the Technical Director, supported by evidence developed in conjunction with the Secretariat to demonstrate that this is acceptable and appropriate.

A set of user stories has been developed to underpin the new Groups functionality and the guidance for the Groups area of the website. Groups are encouraged to adopt these to provide common ways of working across INCOSE UK.

A guidance document “INCOSE UK Group Admin Guide” (available in the Group Chairs Forum documents area on the INCOSE UK website) provides step-by-step instructions for a variety of common tasks, using screenshots from the website.

5.3. Online Collaboration

INCOSE UK has an account with an online collaboration tool which is available for Groups to use to enable remote meetings. The account is managed centrally by the Secretariat and is subject to a set of usage guidelines which they maintain. Each group may nominate up to two people (INCOSE UK members) who will be given access to the INCOSE UK online collaboration tool account in order to schedule and host online meetings.

6. What we Expect of Groups

6.1. Reporting

All Groups shall provide a summary of activities to the respective Director dependent on the nature of the activities.

An end of year report shall be submitted by the end of March each year, to allow for incorporation into the overall INCOSE UK Annual Report. The format of this report is to be agreed with the relevant Director and is expected to include a high-level summary of activities, outcomes, outputs (if applicable) and engagement.

Groups are also expected to support the respective Director in preparing highlights for the Annual General Meeting, which usually takes place in November each year.

Each Group shall provide a poster at least 6 weeks in advance of the Annual Systems Engineering Conference each year, to be printed and displayed to delegates at the event.

6.2. Leadership Engagement

Group chairs will be invited to attend the Joint Leadership Meetings, typically held twice a year in April/May and November. These meetings are an opportunity to engage with other groups, the Council and the UKAB, and to share good practice.

The respective Directors are responsible for liaising with the Groups to ensure that they are kept informed of any current or future INCOSE UK activities or issues which should be raised during Group meetings, potentially including “lines-to-take” where appropriate.

The respective Directors host a Group Chairs’ meeting at the Annual Systems Engineering Conference (ASEC), where Group Chairs can share ideas with each other and with the respective Directors.



6.3. Meeting Attendance

In general Groups exist for the benefit of members, and hence attendance should be predominantly by current members. However, UKAB companies can nominate their own employees to attend such groups where they will bring specific expertise, and it is recognised that it may be appropriate to invite external guests (non INCOSE UK members) from time to time where they bring valuable expertise.

Groups that provide a geographical focal point for those engaged in Systems Engineering are expected to be attended by a more diverse audience of members and non-members as they may also act as an outreach hub. Other Groups, particularly those engaged in exploring specific topics, will also tend to attract a wider attendance including non-members, and this must be captured in their charter.

Note that regular Group Meetings are not classified as Events.

6.4. Finance

Where possible, Groups are expected to make use of meeting venues that are made available at no charge from employers or other related organisations. Should a Group need to hire a venue for an event, or plan to incur a financial outlay, the group Treasurer shall seek approval from the INCOSE UK Finance Director.

6.5. Branding

All Groups have been provided with a customised version of the INCOSE UK logo for their use. Any material produced by Groups for public release must comply with INCOSE UK branding guidelines. Further guidance can be provided by the Communications Director and the Secretariat.

6.6. Data Protection

All Groups must comply with the INCOSE UK Policy on Data Protection. This ensures that INCOSE UK remains compliant with UK GDPR legislation at all levels of the organisation.

All event promotion, registration and attendance monitoring relating to Group events and working sessions must comply with this policy.

6.7. Publications

Any products, outputs / publications, produced by INCOSE UK Groups will be subject to a technical review process, under the control of the INCOSE UK Technical Director. This includes establishing IP rights and ensuring that appropriate material release forms are signed to enable publication and distribution by INCOSE UK. The preferred default is that copyright is assigned to INCOSE UK Ltd.

In the case of material produced by a Joint Group the IP and copyright shall be formally agreed, and approved by the INCOSE UK Council, prior to undertaking significant development work.

Groups are strongly encouraged to engage with the Technical Director before starting work on a new product to understand whether the output will be for members-only or for public release.

Groups are not permitted to provide members-only material to other organisations outside of INCOSE UK without the express permission of the INCOSE UK Council.



6.8. Events

Groups providing a geographical focal point or exploring specific topics are expected to run events for their members to attend. These Groups are expected to run at least three events each calendar year.

Group events are expected to run at no cost to INCOSE UK, making use of facilities provided by employers or other related organisations wherever possible.

Groups are requested to make attendees aware of INCOSE UK and its objectives and activities as part of each group event.

Where a Group event is expected to be larger than usual (e.g. more than 40 attendees), or has the potential to cause significant reputational risk (e.g. due to the topic, or due to the invited speakers) then this must be reported to the Outreach Director and the Secretariat so that appropriate mitigation actions can be put in place.

6.9. Joint Events

Groups may wish to run joint events with other societies or appropriate organisations. Any such events must be supported by a business case submitted to the Outreach Director and approved by the INCOSE UK Council. See “Guidance: Setting up a Joint Event” on Page 11.

6.10. Hybrid Groups

In some circumstances, Groups have sought to spin off a Group with a different focus. Where this happens, a distinct Group shall be created with distinct identities and separate charters, although some intermixing of members within the two committees is anticipated.

6.11. Joint Groups

In some instances, it may make sense to run a Group in collaboration with another organisation, in order to reach the right set of stakeholders. All Joint Groups must develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the parties, which must be approved by the INCOSE UK Council prior to the Joint Group commencing formal activities. The MOU will clearly identify aims, objectives, sharing of material, distribution rights, points of contact, terms of reference and other relevant information.

6.12. Conduct

All members who undertake leadership roles within Groups must act in the interests of INCOSE UK and in accordance with the Code of Conduct. This includes acting within the scope of this policy, not entering into commitments or agreements with third parties which would require additional levels of approval by INCOSE UK Council members and not misrepresenting INCOSE UK views.

6.13. Complaints

If a Group Member is unhappy about the way that a Group is being run, then they should raise this with the Group Committee for resolution. If that results in an impasse, then the matter should be escalated to the relevant Director for discussion at Council.



6.14. Closure

Should the Group committee form the opinion that the Group no longer serves a purpose (e.g. a Group has no obvious further outputs, vacant committee positions are not being filled or is suffering from very low attendance) then they shall inform the respective Director. The future of the Group will then be discussed by the INCOSE UK Council and the UK Advisory Board, in order to form a view on the desirability of its further continuation.

A Group may be placed into a “dormant” state rather than formally closed if it is felt that the group has the potential to be restarted when circumstances change.



Guidance

7. Guidance: Setting Up a Group

If you would like to set up a Group, follow these guidelines:

Decide on the specific purpose of the Group.

Write to the Secretariat outlining the ideas underpinning the proposed Group. It will then be raised with the INCOSE UK Council for approval.

Issue an Expressions-of-Interest email for the Group to the INCOSE UK membership. This email should announce the general idea behind the Group and ask for expressions of interest.

The email can be sent out by using the help of the Secretariat. Once you have an idea of the number of people interested, schedule and call a kick-off meeting (again using the Secretariat). You will usually be expected to arrange the venue or set up an on-line meeting (using the contacts who have expressed interest).

At the kick-off meeting agree a broad programme of activity. If the purpose of the Group is to develop a publication or other outputs, then try to establish what tangible outputs the group should be (these Groups should not be mere talking shops). Once these objectives are reasonably well-established, develop a Charter, including a set of aims and objectives, and some terms of reference.

Create an INCOSE UK website presence with the help of the Secretariat. The page should explain what the Group is doing, what it has produced or what its events programme looks like, who the main point of contact is and what people should do if they wish to join the Group. Note that the website has Wiki capabilities, which should make distribution of papers and material easy.

At the request of the respective Director, produce summaries of Group activities so that the INCOSE UK Council can be kept informed of the Group's activities.

If the Group ever feels it has achieved its mission, do not be afraid to wind the Group up - but please leave it in a good final state!



8. Guidance: Group Charters

Whilst every Group will be slightly different, there are some common elements that should exist in each of their charters. Several variations in the nomenclature exist at the moment, and the preferred term is given first:

Aim/Purpose – Describes the reason for the Group’s existence. In some cases, it may be necessary to support this with a **Context/Background** statement to situate the Aim.

Objectives/Mission – Provides a list of things that the group intends to do.

Outputs (if applicable) – Provides a list of current and planned outputs (with indicative dates if it is sensible to do so).

Committee Roles – Defines the set of roles on the Group Committee. Terms of Reference need to be defined for all roles, in compliance with this policy, but can be held elsewhere (or simply point back at this document).

Other Information (optional) – Provides any other information which may be relevant, such as links to collaborating INCOSE WGs or useful information sources.



9. Guidance: Group Committee Roles and Responsibilities

Each Group is different, and each is likely to form its committee in a slightly different fashion. The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer (for Groups likely to hold events) roles are mandatory, noting that the Secretary role might be floating rather than fixed to a particular individual.

9.1. Chair

All Group Chairs are responsible for organising and running the Group, ensuring that all agreed tasks and actions are undertaken, and providing additional support to other committee members where necessary. Ensures that the Group Committee complies with the INCOSE UK Groups Policy.

Ensures that all Group Members act in the best interests of INCOSE UK.

For Groups developing publications the Group Chairs are responsible for identifying, prioritising and initiating technical activities within their assigned area of interest with primary input from the Group Members as well as guidance and assistance from the Technical Director.

For other Groups, the Chairs are responsible for ensuring that a relevant and interesting forward programme of events is developed and delivered by the group committee, for the benefit of the wider group.

9.2. Treasurer

The Treasurer is responsible for any financial matters relating to the Group; collecting monies, paying bills, accounting for any funds supplied from INCOSE UK etc. The Treasurer must prepare an annual financial report at the end of each financial year (31st March) to account for income, expenditure and propose a budget for the following year. This report must be forwarded to the INCOSE UK Finance Director. Requests for funding or any financial issues should also be documented and brought to the attention of the INCOSE UK Finance Director.

9.3. Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for ensuring that accurate meeting minutes are kept, including decisions and actions. These minutes must be provided to the Secretariat or uploaded to the group management area of the INCOSE UK website (see "INCOSE UK Group Admin Guide"). This provides continuity for the Group should there be a change in the composition of the committee.

The Secretary is also responsible for ensuring that actions are reviewed and resolved at each committee meeting.

9.4. Other Roles

Groups are allowed to create any other roles the committee determines to be necessary. Such roles can be temporary or permanent, depending upon the need. Whilst it may often be necessary to appoint or co-opt members into roles to start with, all roles should be open to all members of the Group, and their replacements should be elected with each INCOSE UK member in the Group able to cast a vote. All roles on the committee shall have written terms of reference which are agreed with the relevant Director, subject to regular review, and available to members.

Various other roles have existed within Groups over the years and have provided a purposeful role for committee members beyond the core roles. This includes the following set of roles.



9.4.1. Co-Chair

Some Groups, particularly those developing publications, have appointed a pair of co-chairs to run the Group rather than a single Chair. This is typically due to sharing the workload. Where a Joint Group has been formed with another organisation it is normal that each organisation provides a co-chair.

9.4.2. Workstream Lead

Where a Group is pursuing multiple parallel outputs, it has proved useful to allocate specific workstreams to particular individuals to manage on behalf of the Group.

9.4.3. Event Coordinators

Where a Group is running a programme of events, it is useful to allocate specific events to different individuals so that they can develop the scope and approach speakers in advance, rather than tackling each event as it comes along. Where this may involve joint events with other organisations, the event coordinator must follow the relevant policies and guidelines (see “Guidance for Setting Up a Joint Event”).

9.4.4. Communications

Since there is minimal budget for INCOSE UK Secretariat support to day-to-day Group operations, having an individual to maintain the membership lists, send out emailers, and collate feedback is a useful role within a Group.

This must be done using the INCOSE UK online environment, which provides functionality for maintaining membership lists, sending emails, and setting up events (see “INCOSE UK Group Admin Guide”). Where a Group is currently using a solution which is not compliant with this, they will need to provide and agree a transition plan in order to be eligible for a waiver.



10. Guidance: Setting up a Joint Event

Before making any commitments with third party organisations, approval will be needed from the Outreach Director, which includes ratification by the INCOSE UK Council. The following information needs to be submitted as an informal business case for the proposed joint event:

- Aims
- Objectives & Outputs
- Date & time
- Benefits to INCOSE UK
- Benefits to the other organisation
- Mutual outcomes
- Commitment needed from INCOSE UK (what?, who? when?)
- Commitment offered by the other organisation
- Financial model (projected attendance, indicative costs (both fixed & variable), event pricing)
- Cost and pricing arrangements with the other organisation

Where such an event requires a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to be agreed with a third party, this will be developed and agreed by the Secretariat in conjunction with the Technical Director or Outreach Director depending on the nature of the event.