Handbook for Special Interest Groups (SIGs)
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Handbook October 2018
Purpose of the handbook
This handbook provides new and existing Special Interest Group (SIG) Chairs and Committees with a set of guidelines and information for organising and running a SIG, promoting the aims of HERDSA and supporting the HERDSA membership.

About HERDSA
The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) is a scholarly society for people committed to the advancement of higher and tertiary education. It was established in 1972 to promote the development of higher education policy, practice and the study of teaching and learning. HERDSA encourages and disseminates research on teaching and learning and higher education development. It also works to build strong academic communities. The current constitution was adopted in 2017.
HERDSA works to:
• advance educational policy and practice in the higher education and tertiary sector
• facilitate and promote the enhancement of teaching and learning
• encourage and disseminate research on higher education and tertiary teaching, learning, development, research, leadership and policy matters
• recognise and reward outstanding contributions to higher and tertiary education
• encourage collaboration and the development of professional communities in higher and tertiary education
• assist its members in their ongoing professional development.

What is the role of a Special Interest Group (SIG)?
A SIG is a group of HERDSA and non-HERDSA individuals who act as an international network to pursue scholarly work on furthering the research and development of teaching and learning in Higher Education. A SIG will usually focus on a topic of collective interest and create opportunities for dialogue, promote scholarly research on the topic, and provide support to HERDSA members interested in and engaged in the selected scholarly focus.

Establishing a SIG
Financial members of HERDSA are encouraged to establish a SIG if one does not already exist. There is a formal procedure to follow which involves referring to the SIG Terms of Reference (Appendix A).
Initially a SIG may start off as an informal group of individuals who identify a common interest. Once the group has a leader and has defined a group purpose, then the Chair can apply to the HERDSA Executive for formal approval as a HERDSA SIG.

**Membership of a SIG**

The HERDSA SIG will comprise the following membership:

- Chair appointed by the SIG and endorsed by the HERDSA Executive for a period of two years with the possibility of re-election
- Committee members (comprised of Chair and a representative sample of the membership who will support the Chair in running the SIG): minimum of two people. The Chair and Committee members must be current HERDSA members
- HERDSA members and other individuals interested in the HERDSA SIG
- HERDSA members and other individuals can belong to more than one SIG.
- Each individual HERDSA member can choose to renew their SIG membership annually
- Members, including the Chair, will have voting rights for matters contained within this Terms of Reference Roles and Responsibilities. Decisions will be made by consensus, if in the event of any unresolved decisions; the decision of the Chair will be final. Members of the SIG who are not members of HERDSA will not have voting rights on matters related to HERDSA, as determined by the Chair
- The Chair, by agreement with other members of the HERDSA SIG, may co-opt individuals for specific tasks as required. These members will hold an observer status.

The HERDSA SIG Committee will be accountable for:

- Shaping the strategic direction of the group
- Maintaining communication between SIG members
- Identifying budgetary requirements to run the group, if any, and planning self-sustaining approaches for meeting these needs. The SIG will account for any financial handling to the HERDSA Executive
- Liaising with conference conveners to schedule meeting(s) at the annual HERDSA Conference
• Preparing an annual report for the HERDSA Executive.

**Funds**
There are no direct funds allocated to SIGs but a SIG Chair can apply to the HERDSA Executive for funds that are related to SIG related event costs; catering; speaker costs; or similar. Each proposal for funding will be considered individually.
In applying for funding the SIG Committee needs to consider:
  • How the event or activity promotes the aims of HERDSA and the SIG
  • Value for money
All approved expenditure should be minuted and a record kept.

**Communication**

**HERDSA Executive**
The HERDSA Executive recognises that the SIGs can connect members and the wider tertiary education community and is keen to foster communication and interaction between SIGs and the Executive. The Networks Portfolio has an Executive member responsible for liaising with the SIG Chairs. For more information on the Network Portfolio Roles and Responsibilities see Appendix A.
The SIGs, through the SIG Chairs, are encouraged to bring issues to the attention of the Executive. This should be done through the SIG Liaison Executive member of the Networks Portfolio.

**A SIG Facebook page**
A SIG can set up their own Facebook page.

**HERDSA Notices**
The SIG can also use the weekly HERDSA Notices to promote events. To submit an announcement for this list, complete the online form at [http://www.herdsa.org.au/herdsa-notices](http://www.herdsa.org.au/herdsa-notices).

**SIG web presence**
The SIGs have an online presence on the HERDSA website. Here the SIGs can:
  • Provide a short overview of the SIG and its purpose
  • List the members of the SIG and their email contact details
The SIG Chair is responsible for ensuring that the information on the HERDSA website is accurate and up-to-date. Contact the HERDSA Office to update information (office@herdsa.org.au).

**HERDSA Connect**

HERDSA Connect (formerly HERDSA News) is a magazine style publication of HERDSA that provides topical articles on educational research and development programs and activities and keeps members in touch with the HERDSA network. It is published three times a year with a printed version distributed to all HERDSA members and a digital version available on the HERDSA web site. HERDSA Connect will have a dedicated regular space for SIGs. For each of the three issues per year each SIG Chair provides approximately 200 words to the Editor of HERDSA Connect. This should include:

- A summary of SIG activities
- News of any upcoming activities (having regard for the time delay in publication)
- Significant achievements or accolades of any SIG members
- Any other relevant information
- Name and current contact details of the SIG Chair
- A relevant landscape style high quality image

Any questions about HERDSA Connect can be directed to the Editor (Maureen Bell - mbell@uow.edu.au).

**Brochures and publicity material**

The HERDSA office can provide SIGs with promotional material about HERDSA, HERDSA publications and initiatives including the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme and the HERDSA SoTL modules for display at local events.

**HERDSA Conference**

The HERDSA conference is the ideal place for SIG Chairs to meet face-to-face with one another and to engage with new and existing members of their own SIG. A session at the conference is allocated to SIGs and their members. This session should be organised through the Networks Portfolio SIG liaison executive member who will liaise with the conference planning committee.
Current HERDSA Special interest groups (SIGs)

Currently, there are three SIGs:

1. **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Education SIG** which was created as a vehicle to promote teaching, learning and research in integrated STEM education;

2. **Assessment Quality SIG** which aims to better understand what constitutes meaningful assessment with a particular focus on how to apply effective quality improvement of assessment.

3. **Academic Development SIG** is a platform for those who are engaged in academic development, professional development, teaching and learning support, and similar activities to support academic staff, as well as the teaching and research in these areas.

More information about the SIGs and how to contact them can be found on the HERDSA website. SIGs are responsible for maintaining current text on their SIG for the HERDSA website column.

Connecting with other scholarly networks and organisations

SIGs can engage with, promote and support the work of other scholarly organisations and even hold joint events. These networks include organisations such as:

- **ACEN** – Australian collaborative education network - [http://acen.edu.au/](http://acen.edu.au/)
- **Ako Aotearoa** - [https://ako.ac.nz/](https://ako.ac.nz/)
- **ALTF** – Australian learning and teaching fellows - [https://altf.org/](https://altf.org/)
- **Ascilite** - Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education - [https://ascilite.org/](https://ascilite.org/)
- **CAULLT (formerly CADAD)** – Centre for Australian University leaders for learning and teaching - [https://www.caullt.edu.au/](https://www.caullt.edu.au/)
- Promoting excellence networks such as:
  - Vic/Tas - [https://vtasnetwork.com/](https://vtasnetwork.com/)

Useful contacts

Allan Goody, President – agoody56@gmail.com

Jennifer Ungaro, HERDSA Office – office@herdsa.org


HERDSA Connect, Maureen Bell - mbell@uow.edu.au
HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group

Terms of Reference

The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group has been established by the HERDSA Executive in accordance with the HERDSA Constitution Article 5, Clause c, (iv).

1. Role/Purpose

The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group will act as an international network for HERDSA members and other interested individuals who are committed to pursuing scholarly work on furthering the research and development of teaching and learning in Higher Education. Its mission is to create opportunities for dialogue, to promote scholarly research on the topic, and to provide support to HERDSA members interested in and engaged in [name the special interest].

2. Term

These Terms of Reference are effective from 8 July 2014. Review of these Terms is outlined in section 7.

3. Membership

The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group will comprise the following membership:

3.1 Chair appointed by the SIG and endorsed by the HERDSA Executive for a period of two years with the possibility of re-election.

3.2 Committee members (comprised of Chair and a representative sample of the membership who will support the Chair in running the SIG): minimum of two people. The Chair and committee members must be current HERDSA members.

3.3 HERDSA members and other individuals interested in the HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group.

3.4 HERDSA members and other individuals can belong to more than one SIG.

3.5 Each individual HERDSA member can choose to renew their SIG membership annually.

3.6 Members, including the Chair, will have voting rights for matters contained within this Terms of Reference Roles and Responsibilities. Decisions will be made by consensus, if in the event of any unresolved
decisions; the decision of the Chair will be final. Members of the SIG who are not members of HERDSA will not have voting rights on matters related to HERDSA, as determined by the Chair.

3.7 The Chair, by agreement with other members of the HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group, may co-opt individuals for specific tasks as required. These members will hold an observer status.

4. **Roles and Responsibilities**

The mission of the HERDSA [include name] Interest Group is compatible with the goals of HERDSA, particularly in terms of promoting cross-disciplinary conversations to create synergies, to facilitate the collaboration of scholars in different countries, and to support the flow of new findings and applications across national boundaries.

The membership guidelines in section 3 above support the functioning of the SIG. The SIG will be responsible for its own internal organisation.

The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group will:

4.1 Identify national and international [name the special interest] issues, aspects or topics for exploration and the development of new knowledge.

4.2 Provide advice and guidance to the HERDSA community on how to pursue [name the special interest] issues, aspects or topics.

4.3 Support the development of initiatives and practices, such as smaller projects within the SIG and/or research/collaborative writing groups, to stimulate the advancement of [name the special interest] in higher and tertiary education.

4.4 Foster collaboration nationally and internationally to enhance partnerships in the pursuit of advancing higher and tertiary education.

The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group committee will be accountable for:

4.5 Identifying budgetary requirements to run the group, if any, and planning self-sustaining approaches for meeting these needs. The SIG will account for any financial handling to the HERDSA Executive.

4.6 Shaping the strategic direction of the group.

4.7 Maintaining communication between SIG members.

4.8 Liaising with conference conveners to schedule meeting(s) at the annual HERDSA Conference.

The role of the Chair of the HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group is:
4.9 To lead the [include name] Special Interest Group, register the SIG with the Executive, organise meetings, liaise with HERDSA Office and Executive, organise fair and transparent elections for committee positions within the SIG and facilitate induction of new members, report to the HERDSA Executive as required. The Chair will hold the list of members and register the list with the HERDSA Executive every two years.

The role of the committee of the HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group is:

4.10 To support the Chair and committee members of the [include name] Special Interest Group, contribute to decision making and leadership within the SIG and its subsidiary special interest groups, if any.

5. Meetings

5.1 Meetings will be held annually at HERDSA Conferences and subsequently convened electronically bi-monthly or as determined by the Chair.

5.2 A record of attendance will be required as evidence of meetings.

5.3 Any recommendations for approval which fall outside of this Terms of Reference shall be referred to the HERDSA Executive for consideration.

6. Reporting

6.1 The HERDSA [include name] Special Interest Group shall provide a brief report or minutes to the HERDSA Executive annually or as required by the Executive.

7. Amendment, Variation or Review

7.1 These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied or modified after consultation with members and approval by the HERDSA Executive.

7.2 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed six months after approval of the Terms of Reference by the HERDSA Executive and subsequently reviewed biannually thereafter.
APPENDIX B

HERDSA NETWORKS PORTFOLIO

PORTFOLIO ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The primary role of the Networks Portfolio is to grow and enhance interactions and collaborations within the HERDSA community. Branch and regional networks are strongly encouraged within HERDSA and Portfolio responsibilities involve liaising regularly with the branches to support opportunities for shared research, visiting scholar presentations and communicating with other groups and branches. Networking between HERDSA members and with other professional groups occurs through the Special Interest Groups.

HERDSA BRANCHES

Branches are an important part of the HERDSA community. HERDSA Executive members, within the Network portfolio, have a central role supporting Branch Chairs and developing community between the branches. They are the conduit between the branches and the National Executive, advocating their needs back to the Executive. This role comprises the following responsibilities:

- Supporting Branch Chairs through the provision of a Branch Chair handbook
- Coordinating roadshows by academic fellows and scholars
- Providing a session at the annual conference for Branch Chairs to meet with the HERDSA executive, particularly the Executive members responsible for the Network Portfolio
- Providing a session at the annual conference for Branch Chairs to meet with their branch members (if requested)
- Liaising with Branch Chairs to:
  - Identify areas of support and presenting these to the National Executive
  - Encourage communication between branches and sharing of ideas/practice
- Compiling a written Branch Report (as part of the Networks Report) for the 3 Executive meetings
- Providing relevant feedback from National Executive meetings

HERDSA SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGs)

HERDSA encourages the development of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) by facilitating opportunities to meet like-minded colleagues at each HERDSA conference. Members of the Networks portfolio who oversee this activity ensure that HERDSA heightens the potential for collaborative research activities.
Members of the Networks portfolio identify potential groups and leaders, support the initiation and development of a SIG and actively monitor their progress and research activities. This role comprises the following responsibilities:

- Running a session at the annual conference on SIGs in which new members are encouraged and new leaders are supported.
- Put out a call for Expressions of Interest prior to the conference to identify potential new SIGs and members.
- Supporting SIG promotion through:
  - HERDSA Notices and HERDSA Connect
  - HERDSA website
  - Facebook page
  - Flyers at the conference (at the HERDSA stand)
  - Conference website
  - Conference Guidebook
  - Registration form for interested delegates (to be held at HERDSA stand)
  - Emails/information sheet to conference presenters who wish to lead a SIG for use at conference to invite members
  - Liaising with conference organisers to include a few sentences and a link to a survey in regard to expressing an interest in leading/participating in a HERDSA SIG in with their notification of acceptance to present a paper, showcase, poster or any other relevant format at the annual HERDSA Conference.
- Liaising with SIG leaders to:
  - Advise on methods of developing a SIG
  - Provide guidance on the Terms of Reference and the criteria for membership
  - Assist with advertising and promotion
  - Inform on conference SIG meeting date and venue
- Submitting and presenting a SIG proposal to the Executive for ratification of the proposed SIG
- Compiling a written SIGs Report (as part of the Networks Report) for the 3 Executive meetings
- Developing a HERDSA Special Interest Groups Handbook and provide online to guide practices.