



ahep
Association of
Higher Education
Professionals

Special Interest Group (SIG) **Handbook**



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Purpose and Use

The handbook acts as a resource for assisting Special Interest Group Coordinators in establishing, structuring, and running their respective groups. This guidance outlines the essential expectations and tasks that coordinators might engage in and aims to provide coordinators with comprehensive support in navigating the various aspects involved in forming, organising, and managing their groups effectively.

Coordinators are welcome to present suggestions for adjustments to this guidance at any time throughout the year, utilising regular meetings as a platform to share these ideas.

What is the purpose of a SIG?

The purpose of AHEP's SIGs will be to **enable members to connect and develop** with professionals within and outside their areas of expertise and organisation, to develop and share best practice and provide CPD opportunities. The focus of SIGS may cover:

- Sharing good practice, resources, examples and success stories;
- Briefing each other on areas of new development and events;
- Discussing common issues and possible solutions;
- Identifying common areas of interest for collaboration and research;
- Raise awareness of special interest within the sector and help to inform the development of a strategic approaches;
- Collaborations with other stakeholder groups;
- Informal mentorship between members

SIGs can also inform wider AHEP professional development initiatives by providing their specialist knowledge and expertise. These contributions may take the form of providing specialist expertise to shape professional development projects and initiatives, organising and facilitating events in our wider professional development programme and developing resources for members.

AHEP Roles and Responsibilities



Who is the main AHEP contact for SIGs?

SIGs are supported by the AHEP Professional Development Team, specifically our Professional Development Coordinator. You can contact hello@ahep.ac.uk for direct queries.

What support will AHEP offer?

Whilst we provide autonomy within SIGs, we also strive to support our coordinators and their SIG members.

AHEP will provide administrative support across social media channels, the AHEP website as well as across any sessions organised by the SIG. This support includes:

- Updates to the general SIG webpages. AHEP is proud to showcase our SIGs and we have specific areas of the website dedicated to each individual SIG. With information provided by coordinators, AHEP will manage these webpages and update them accordingly.
- Managing membership data and providing this data to coordinators regularly to ensure that coordinators have an accurate membership list
- Promotion of specific SIGs across AHEP social media platforms and publications such as Development Monthly
- Whilst coordinators are expected to facilitate their own sessions, any online sessions that are suggested as part of the wider AHEP programme will be facilitated by a member of the AHEP team
- AHEP will host quarterly meetings with our community of SIG coordinators, gathering availability in advance to establish the most suitable date. AHEP will compile minutes reflective of each meeting to be shared with all coordinators following the meeting. In addition, SIG coordinators will have the opportunity to arrange 1-1 meetings with AHEP to discuss an individual SIG and can do so by contacting hello@ahep.ac.uk.
- As SIGs will primarily operate online, AHEP will encourage in-person participation and networking by providing designated areas for in-person collaboration at the AHEP Annual Conference and Exhibition.
- Whilst it is the responsibility of the SIG coordinating group to provide materials, AHEP will promote any SIG content on our social media platforms and mailing lists to both AHEP members and non-members.

AHEP Annual Conference Opportunities for Coordinators

We are delighted to offer exclusive opportunities for lead and deputy SIG coordinators to participate in the Annual Conference and Exhibition at a reduced rate. As part of this reduced rate, coordinators are expected to actively engage in the conference experience. Our team will reach out to coordinators before the conference to discuss the exciting opportunities available with examples of these opportunities listed below:

- Coordinators are invited to support the promotion of the conference before the event. This can involve activities such as sharing AHEP content on social media, spreading the word within their institution, and promoting it within their SIG community.
- Coordinators play a key role in enriching the networking experience that AHEP offers, and their contribution is particularly invaluable during the Annual Conference. Each SIG will have the opportunity to lead and deliver a networking session. We also encourage coordinators, whenever possible, to join in the various social events scheduled throughout the conference to further enrich the networking experience.
- As part of our commitment to nurturing SIG collaboration, there will be a dedicated Special Interest Group stand at the conference. Coordinators may be requested to manage this stand during the event, creating a hub for AHEP members to learn more and sign up.

Recognition

We very much value and appreciate the time taken by our coordinators and we understand how important it is to showcase that appreciation. Each year, nominations for AHEP Annual Awards for Network of the Year open, with the winner announced at the annual conference.

We also share our gratitude across our social media, communications, and publications. AHEP are also proud to celebrate our coordinators on [The National Day for Staff Networks](#), a nationwide day dedicated to recognising special interest groups and the incredible value they add.

As well as discounted conference attendance, SIG coordinators also receive a 20% off any membership level.

SIG Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities



SIG Coordinator Terms

Both Lead and Deputy Coordinator roles are usually held for a period of three years, with the opportunity to hold the position for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

Following the departure of a Lead Coordinator, Deputy Coordinators are welcome to stand for the role of Lead Coordinator. Where a position is not filled, outgoing coordinators would be expected to participate in the recruitment process for their successor.

It is advised that a SIG has a minimum of three coordinators: a lead, and two deputy coordinators acting as the coordinating group. In our commitment to ensuring the success of our special interest groups, we understand the significance of distributing responsibilities effectively. From experience, we believe that three coordinators will promote a collaborative environment where your ideas can flourish, and members can be better supported.

What are the benefits of being a SIG Coordinator?

SIG Coordinators play an important and fundamental part in maintaining and developing the Association and its activities. There are fantastic personal and professional development opportunities available to our coordinators.

As a coordinator, you will be able to:

- Gain experience and skills beyond your own role and institution
- Enhance your professional profile within and outside your institution
- Gain and facilitate substantial networking opportunities
- Pursue your own interests in specific areas of HE policy and practice and develop your knowledge of the sector
- Engage with and influence policy and practice in AHEP
- Utilise the leadership skills gained from this role to apply for enhanced status of AHEP

Responsibilities of Lead and Deputy SIG coordinators

The list below outlines the responsibilities of both the lead and deputy coordinator roles. These descriptions are not exhaustive, serving as the

minimum expectation. As a coordinator, you have the flexibility to build upon these descriptions as necessary to align with your group's identity and the preferences of its members.

- Remain a member of AHEP throughout your period of appointment as a coordinator
- Ensure that AHEP values are showcased throughout your term as a coordinator, which includes ensuring that the group remains a positive and inclusive space for all members
- Provide a description of your SIG outlining its aims and purpose, biographies and headshots of the coordinating team to be used on the website/promotion
- Arrange online meetings tailored exclusively for your SIG members. You can find further guidance on the expectation of these sessions here.
- Proactively recruit new members and take action to retain existing members

Specific responsibilities of Lead Coordinator

As a Lead Coordinator, you will be expected to:

- Organise meetings with deputy coordinators and follow up on any actions from those meetings
- Support the coordinating group in creating an effective form of communication
- To ensure that work is distributed fairly, and the group operates effectively, it is important that the Lead Coordinator consider the wellbeing and existing commitments of their deputies
- Whilst it should be a collaborative process, the Lead Coordinator is expected to take the lead on planning priorities for each year ahead
- Respond to communications from AHEP, other network leads or external figures who request involvement from the SIG
- Where commitments allow, there is the expectation that Lead Coordinators attend quarterly online SIG meetings organised by AHEP

We understand that your position as a coordinator is voluntary and commitments may not permit attendance at all meetings and events, though it would be preferred that Lead Coordinators attend quarterly SIG meetings. Where the Lead Coordinator is unable to attend, it is expected that at least one representative from your SIG will be in attendance.

Specific responsibilities of a Deputy Coordinator

As a Deputy Coordinator, you will be expected to:

- Attend and contribute to meetings with lead and fellow deputy coordinators
- Support the Lead Coordinator in creating an effective form of communication between the coordinating group
- Collaborate with the coordinating group to set goals and priorities for each year ahead
- If the Lead coordinator is unable to attend, Deputy Coordinators are expected to attend quarterly online SIG meetings organised by AHEP. These meetings are otherwise optional, though encouraged, for Deputy Coordinators.

What will the format of SIGs look like?

As a coordinator, you will be responsible for hosting regular online meetings tailored exclusively for your SIG members. With the assistance of existing coordinators, we have curated guidance on what is expected of these sessions in our **SIG Member Meet-Up Guidance** available on the [AHEP website](#).

SIG coordinators should prioritise activities that cater to their SIG audience. We also welcome proposals for activities aimed at the broader AHEP membership. Any sessions that are exclusive to your group will be organised and facilitated by the SIG coordinating team and required to take an online format. If you wish to deliver a session either online or in-person for the wider AHEP membership, please contact events@ahep.ac.uk where a member of the Professional Development Team will be in touch to discuss your proposal further.

Whilst SIG activities will take an online format, designated in-person collaborations will be facilitated at our Annual Conference.

Proposing a new SIG

How do we propose a new SIG?

AHEP enthusiastically invites proposals for the establishment of new Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that exhibit a well-defined purpose and align seamlessly with our overarching mission to foster connections, provide support, and facilitate the growth of higher education professionals within our vibrant and accomplished community. AHEP may identify instances where a SIG would be beneficial in addressing the specific requirements of higher education professionals, and in such cases, we will initiate a call for expressions of interest.

If you would like to propose a new SIG, please complete the [SIG Application form](#).

Inactive SIGs

If a SIG is inactive for 12 months, with no communication from the coordinating group, it will be disbanded.

Thank you

This document has been developed with input from AHEP's existing SIG Coordinators and we thank them for their ongoing support and contribution to the association.