

BSA STUDY GROUP: TERMS OF REFERENCE

Version approved by Council: 12th Feb 2010

(Amendments November 2011 in red)

1. Association support for study groups

The Association, working through the Council, commits itself to:

- i) Supplying appropriate administrative assistance through the BSA general office in Durham;
- ii) Providing a legal framework for the operation and activities of the study groups;
- iii) Providing expert event management advice and support;
- iv) Providing appropriate insurance for study group events;
- v) Providing free access to the BSA London Meeting Rooms;
- vi) Organising, maintaining, auditing and reporting on study group designated accounts;
- vii) Annually applying a pro rata share of any surpluses generated via the investment of funds to the designated funds of the study groups;
- viii) Allocating annual operating budgets for study groups;
- ix) Assisting in the recruitment of study group convenors and members by providing free access to BSA members;
- x) Assisting in the promotion of study group events and activities by providing free publicity to BSA members and on the BSA website;
- xi) Providing advice and support in dealing with media enquiries;
- xii) Appointing a liaison person from the BSA Council to facilitate communication;
- xiii) Facilitating policy discussion and the sharing of knowledge and experience between study groups by organising an annual meeting for convenors;
- xiv) Maintaining appropriate lines of responsibility as determined in the other guidelines for good practice.

2. Association responsibilities towards study groups

The Association, working through the Council and the Executive Management Team [EMT], will be responsible for:

- i) Confirmation of the establishment of new study groups to be operated in the name of the Association and ultimately the right of veto or closure;
- ii) Monitoring study group activities and expenditure;
- iii) Approval of the constitution of study groups, including practice and rules of membership;
- iv) Setting general policies in terms of language and ethics for members involved in study group activities;

3. Study Group officers: requirements and conduct

- i) Convenors and other officers of the study groups will be members of the Association;
- ii) Convenors will be expected to consult their study group members on all relevant matters;
- iii) Convenors will have final authority on decisions about the academic activity of the study groups not other officers or members of the study groups;
- iv) The term of office of study group officers is not limited but the convenor will seek the approval of the members of the study group for officers to continue in role at least once every three years;
- v) The term of office of the convenor and other officers can be terminated by the BSA Council on grounds of non-adherence to the BSA Study Groups Terms of Reference;
- vi) The convenor will ensure that the study group adheres to BSA Study Group Terms of Reference and other policies and will ensure that study group members do likewise;
- vii) The convenor will ensure that an accurate record of the membership of the group is maintained;
- viii) The convenor will submit a short (max. 500 words) annual report to the BSA Council by the end of March each year which includes:
 - A summary of activities undertaken in the past year
 - A record of the number of members in the group giving the number that are BSA members

- The names and contact emails of the convenor and other officers
 - A summary of activities planned for the coming year
- ix) The convenor will ensure that at least one meeting of the group is held each year to deal with elections, finances, and to plan activities;
 - x) The convenor will ensure wherever possible that meetings of the study group do not clash with the BSA's key events, for example the BSA Annual Conference;
 - xi) The convenor will be responsible for co-ordinating the group's programme of activities including participation in the BSA annual conference;
 - xii) The convenor will be responsible for ensuring that the entry for the group on the BSA website is accurate and up to date;
 - xiii) The convenor will actively participate in the annual Study Group Convenors' meetings called by the BSA Council to ensure that the Association continues to meet the needs of its study groups and vice versa;
 - xiv) The convenor will ensure that relevant information about the study group and its activities is communicated regularly to the general office in Durham so that it can be posted on the website, emailed to BSA members, and included in the BSA members' newsletter, as appropriate;
 - xv) The convenor will act as the named contact for media enquiries relating to the study group subject area.

4. Establishment of a new study group

- i) Proposals for new study groups should be submitted to the BSA Council;
- ii) Proposals for new study groups should include:
 - an outline of the field to be covered, briefly explaining why a new group is needed
 - a statement of the proposed aims of the group
 - the support of at least fifteen current members of the Association (either hard copy signatures or e-mails from them), the names of the convenor (who must be a paid up member of the BSA) and any other officers and committee members who have volunteered

- iii) Proposers of new study groups should ensure that the proposed field of study is not likely to be deemed by the BSA Council to be already covered by an existing study group.

5. Appointment of Study Group officers

- i) The search for and nomination of new study group officers is the responsibility of the study group convenor;
- ii) The BSA will assist in the recruitment of a new convenor via its membership networks, as requested.

6. Study groups: membership

- i) BSA membership includes affiliation to any study group;
- ii) In the interests of research networking and the promotion of sociology, study group membership is not restricted to BSA members however at least 50 percent of the membership of a study group should be BSA members;
- iii) BSA members must be offered preferential rates for any study group activity for which there is a charge;
- iv) Preferential rates for BSA members will be clearly stated on information about activities.

7. Study groups correspondence: legal requirement

- i) BSA study groups are part of the BSA's overall charitable activity and status and are subject to certain legal requirements;
- ii) All correspondence and publicity material relating to BSA activities, including study group activities, that is to be sent to or may be read by a third party, whether in hard copy or email form, must carry the legal registration information of the charity in the format set out below;
- iii) " The BSA is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 3890729. Registered Charity Number 1080235."

8. Study groups: website presence

- i) Each study group will have a presence on the BSA website;
- ii) Study groups wishing to have a website presence other than on the BSA website will submit a proposal to the BSA EMT which details where it will be hosted, how much it will cost (including any

monthly/annual charges), what it will include, how it will be maintained and what measures are in place to ensure continuity in the event of the person responsible for updating the website stepping down from the role;

- iii) All external study group websites will carry the BSA logo, a link to the main BSA website, the name of the study group [BSA XXX study group] and the charitable information detailed in point 7. above.
- iv) The design of external study group websites must be in keeping with the BSA website.
- v) If a study group requires a social networking presence on Facebook, this must be requested via the BSA office.

9. Study groups: Public Liability Insurance

- i) The BSA's Public Liability insurance policy covers 'normal' study group activities.
- ii) The insurer requires notification of any events outside the 'normal' calendar of activities.
- iii) Study group convenors should ensure that their programme of activities and ad hoc activities added during the year are communicated in advance to the BSA general office in Durham so that cover can be confirmed for the groups' activities.

10. Study groups: finances

- i) The BSA Council is legally responsible for all financial transactions relating to the BSA, including those relating to the study groups;
- ii) All study group accounts will be held and managed by the BSA general office;
- iii) **All expense claim forms must be authorized by a BSA study group convenor;**
- iv) **All events must charge a differential between members and non members which demonstrates there is a benefit to BSA membership;**
- v) **All expenditure made by the study group, except individual travel claims, requires a purchase order number obtained from Gillian Mason (Gillian.mason@britsoc.org.uk) at the office. This number needs to be quoted on the invoice as it assists with BSA cash-flow management and accruals for accounting purposes.**
- vi) Each study group will have a designated (earmarked) fund from which expenditure and income relating to that study group will be drawn and applied;

- vii) Each year the BSA will apply a pro rata share of any surpluses generated via the investment of funds to the designated funds of the study groups;
- viii) The BSA will transfer the sum of £200 into a designated fund of each new study group that is established to help kick-start that group's programme of activities;
- ix) The BSA will provide an allowance in the charity's overall annual budget of £200 per study group to act as a 'buffer' for expenditure and to enable groups to meet the requirement to meet at least once a year;
- x) The BSA will not provide subsidies for study group events;
- xi) Study group events and activities should operate on a break-even or surplus generating financial basis to support the future activities of the those groups;
- xii) Surplus income generated by study groups will be added to the designated funds for the relevant groups;
- xiii) Study groups are encouraged to collaborate with other groups that have similar or related interests to host joint events but must seek prior authorisation from the BSA Council through the BSA EMT to ensure that the BSA would not be breaking the Association Ethical Policy or any charity regulations limiting links between charities and any particular commercial entities;
- xiv) Study group funds may be used to support collaborative ventures but only where written agreement has been obtained from the other party that they will provide matched funding and that the BSA will have its support acknowledged on all promotional materials as follows: "This event has been made possible with the financial support of the British Sociological Association XXX Study Group and the voluntary assistance of its members."
- xv) The BSA will not pay bills that exceed the balance in a group's designated fund;
- xvi) The BSA will reimburse the travel expenses of one officer from each study group to attend study group convenor meetings called by the BSA Council, subject to the current rules of the BSA Expenses Policy;
- xvii) The BSA will ensure that the current rules of the BSA Expense Policy and electronic copies of BSA Expense Claim Forms are available to download on the BSA website;
- xviii) In the event of a study group being wound up, any accumulated funds will revert to the BSA's general unrestricted fund.

11. Study groups: VAT

- i) The BSA is registered for VAT and all of its activities, including those of the study groups, are liable to HM Customs and Excise scrutiny.

- ii) Study group income for membership, conference fees, workshop/event fees and sales of publications does not incur VAT. However any income relating to the sale of mailing labels, adverts in a publication or provision of a service is liable to VAT. VAT must be included on invoices for these services (current rate 20% as at 4th January 2011).
- iii) To comply with Inland Revenue regulations, it is essential that all invoices issued by the BSA, including study groups, include VAT when necessary.
- iv) The BSA can reclaim VAT on certain study group expenses, for example catering/refreshment bills, provided that a VAT receipt is provided.
- v) To comply with Inland Revenue regulations, it is vital that all invoices received by study groups are billed to the BSA. For example, when ordering catering for a study group workshop, the convenor will need to get a purchase order number from the Finance Officer (Gillian Mason) or Company Secretary (Kerry Collins) at the BSA office. Any invoices that are not billed to the BSA will be returned with a request for a new invoice to be obtained as the BSA can only pay invoices that are billed to the Association.

12. Study groups: closure

- i) Where a study group seems to be running out of energy and volunteers, the BSA office will assist with trying to raise its profile and attract new members.
- ii) Over time, though, the array of study groups is bound to alter, so where it is clear that a group is no longer viable, the convenor should notify the general office in Durham so that BSA publicity and records can be properly amended.
- iii) Inactive study groups are a waste of BSA resources and a poor reflection on the Association. It is therefore current BSA policy that any study group which does not submit an annual report for two successive years will be regarded as having ceased to exist, its designated account closed and references to it on the website and elsewhere removed. Of course, this would not be done without making enquiries and issuing a warning first.

APPENDIX 1

Planning successful events that will support future events

- a) Have a good extensive mailing list which includes non-BSA group members as well as members (use email – it's free – and make the most of jiscmail lists – see Appendix 2 for more info).
- b) Charge non-members to attend to ensure you cover your costs and make a small surplus to put in your kitty (a reasonable rate would be about £50 for a half-day event).
- c) Use venues/catering facilities at minimal cost (the BSA's London Meeting Rooms are free for study group events, some Universities may offer free space, and discount rates can be negotiated at many venues for charities).
- d) Treat your speakers like VIPs but don't pay them a fee (it's flattering to be acknowledged as a revered authority on a subject and speakers should welcome the opportunity to promote their work and engage with a specialist audience).
- e) Think carefully about the focus of the events and make them of interest/accessible to a wide audience of academics and practitioners as this will help to ensure a bigger audience.
- f) Get a group of volunteers from within the study group to help divide the workload.
- g) Watch out for hidden costs – make sure you are clear about rates to be charged (including VAT!) at the outset and plan to cover these accordingly.

(This page based on suggestions kindly supplied by Anne Eyre, 2003)

APPENDIX 2

Setting up and using a JISCMail email list: information for BSA study groups

Edited information from WWW.JISCMail.AC.UK (with comments added)

What is a list?

At its most basic level, a mailing list (or electronic discussion list) is a list of study group member's names and email addresses. A list can serve a variety of purposes. It may be used to discuss work with others, share news, collaborate on projects and publications, announce conferences, arrange meetings or just to keep in touch with members of your study group.

Who's in charge?

Each list is managed by one or more list owners, who are responsible for running the list. A list owner looks after the configuration of the list, its members and generally steers the direction and usage of the list. If members have problems joining, leaving or using the list, they contact the list owner

What skills do list owners need?

As a list owner you do not need to be a computing expert. A certain familiarity with email and the World Wide Web is all the technical experience that is required. The JISCMail website (www.jiscmail.ac.uk) provides all the information you are likely to need to create/ run a list and the site is very 'user friendly'.

Is it time consuming?

The amount of time needed to run a list depends on the type of list, how many members there are, the amounts of support they need, and how active the list is. Since setting up the FOOD-STUDY-GROUP list, I have only spent a few minutes each week on list maintenance – adding/deleting/amending email addresses; responding to requests to join the list; dealing with erroneous messages etc.

List moderation

Moderation means that all messages must be approved, by a human, before they are posted to a list. List moderation is optional and can be specified when the list is set up or subsequently via the website. When a message is posted to a moderated list, it is forwarded to the moderator for approval. The moderator can either authorise or reject it. *Advantages:* Junk mail, spam and irrelevant or offensive postings can be intercepted. *Disadvantages:* Messages will take longer to reach the list and free-flowing discussion may be constrained.

Advantages of contacting study group members via a JISCMail list

- Several new members have found out about the food study group via the JISCMail website (you could choose to let non-study group members join your list; I ask that people join the group first as I see the list as a benefit of belonging to the study group).
- Ease of maintaining an email database of members

- Protects the personal details of members; the list is sent to 'FOOD-STUDY-GROUP@JISCMail.AC.UK' and therefore individual email addresses are hidden
- Potential for email-based discussion with the whole study group about the sociology of food – this has not happened since setting up the FOOD-STUDY-GROUP list, but at least we have the option!

(This page kindly supplied by Wendy Wills, 2004)