

The BSA Medical Sociology Group

REGIONAL GROUPS AND SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP GUIDELINES

Context

The BSA Medical Sociology Group (MedSoc) is a Study Group of The British Sociological Association. As such it operates within the requirements that charity and company law impose on the Association as a whole. All Study Groups are ultimately answerable for their activities to the BSA Executive committee.

BSA Medical Sociology Study Group: Regional Groups and Special Interest Groups

The aim of the BSA Medical Sociology Study Group, and its Regional Groups (ReGs) and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) is to promote and develop the sociology of health and illness. ReGs are regionally based groups with a broad interest in the sociology of health and illness who meet in-between the annual MedSoc conference. They function as a local outreach of the medical sociology group and are therefore an important source of new members. SIGs are national groups with a specialist interest in a sub-field of the sociology of health and illness.

We currently have six ReGs and four SIGs (for a full list please see: www.britsoc.co.uk – ‘Specialism’ section – Medical Sociology Study Group).

As sub-groups of the MedSoc Study Group, ReGs and SIGs are obliged to report on their activities to the BSA MedSoc Committee.

Starting a new Regional or Special Interest Group

First check the website for details of established groups. Could your proposal be included under one of the established groups?

If you decide that a new group is the way forward you should write a proposal. It should include:

- an outline of the field to be covered, briefly explaining why a new group is needed
- the name of the convenor (who must be a paid-up member of the BSA)

Send your proposal to the MedSoc Convenor/s via the BSA office. It will then be considered by the next meeting of the BSA MedSoc Committee. (For the dates of these, please consult the website.)

Running the group

Membership: BSA membership includes free affiliation to any study group. It is important that this membership benefit is not extended to non-members on the same terms because study group involvement is an important source of new members for the Association. There needs to be an incentive for them to join. The BSA Medical Sociology Study Group deals with this by charging non-members higher rates than BSA members for attendance at major events, such as its annual conference and SIG workshops. If you are charging for any meeting you hold, preferential rates for BSA members should be clearly stated on information about events.

Officers: The group must have a convenor, who will be the main officer and named contact for the group. Other officers, for example secretary or treasurer, can be elected if the group wishes. All officers should be paid-up members of the BSA and their names should be notified to the BSA MedSoc Convenor/s.

The convenor should:

- ensure that the ReG or SIG operates within the overall policy and legal framework set by the EC. *This includes good financial management.* If in doubt, consult the Durham office.
- encourage and co-ordinate the group's programme of activities including, if possible, participation in the BSA MedSoc annual conference.
- provide a short (c. 500 words) annual report of the group's activities to be Published in Medical Sociology News. This should reach the BSA office by the end of the first week in July for inclusion in the *Annual Report* to the AGM.

Communicating your activities: Please send information about ReG and SIG activities to *Medical Sociology News* and the Jiscmail. If you decide to try and generate wider publicity for your activities or publications, please acknowledge your affiliation to the BSA MedSoc Group, but be careful not to appear to be speaking for either the entire MedSoc Group or the Association as a whole.

Because MedSoc is part of the BSA, which has charitable status, the group's name and the phrase 'The BSA is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 3890729. Registered Charity Number 1080235' should appear on all ReG's and SIG's correspondence and publicity material that is sent to or may be read by third party (for example on a letter to a venue regarding room hire), whether in hard copy or electronic form. If you omit this information, you are committing a criminal offence and may be liable for prosecution. A legal disclaimer needs to cover any web-based communications (for example if you have your own website). An example is given in Appendix 3.

Standard disclaimers for e-mail and web-based communications are currently under development.

ReGs and SIGs may be approached by the BSA office or to speak on behalf of the BSA in response to enquiries from the media or other organisations which relate to the specialist knowledge of group members. Convenors or other members are not required to do this if they do not wish to.

Finance and insurance

MedSoc makes available to each ReG and SIG a maximum annual allowance of £300. Where possible any activities you organise should endeavour to be at least self-financing, taking account of the £300 allowance. This means either incurring no costs (for example by making sure your room is free and that members pay for their own refreshments) or by charging those attending enough to cover costs. If the income generating ability of your group is limited, ensure that the group's activities are planned on an annual basis within budgetary constraints. When budgeting, try to think of all possible expenditures and be conservative in your estimate of attendance. Further suggestions on this can be found at Appendix 2. If the group is wound up, any accumulated funds revert to MedSoc's general revenue. If a ReG or SIGs exceeds its annual allowance, then this will be deducted from the subsequent year's allowance and ultimately threaten the group's existence. If a ReG or SIG generates any surplus income from its events, these will be added to your earmarked fund. The balance can be carried over from one year to the next and will not be used for other Medical Sociology Group purposes. Any unused annual allowance is *not* carried over from one year to the next.

You will be sent expenses claim forms which should be completed or counter-signed by the Medical Sociology Group Convenor and returned to the BSA office with relevant receipts. Each time a claim is reimbursed it is paid from the SIG or ReG's earmarked fund.

For VAT purposes, it is important that invoices - for example for room hire for a meeting - are made out to the BSA (XXX Group), and that you send the invoice to the BSA office for direct payment. If not, the office cannot reclaim any VAT due to you and the group may lose out financially. When sending in invoices for direct payment, please add a signed note (or send an email) confirming that you approve the payment. (For more details on VAT and the BSA see Appendix 1.)

Struggling ReGs or SIGs: Over time, the array of ReGs and SIGs is bound to alter, so if you feel that yours is no longer viable, please let the MedSoc Convenor/s know so that records can be properly amended. Inactive groups are a waste of resources and a poor reflection on the MedSoc Group and the BSA. Any ReG or SIG which does not submit an annual report for two successive years will be regarded as having ceased to exist, its earmarked 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 - ReGs or SIGs and VAT

Introduction

The BSA is registered for VAT and all of its activities, including those of the Medical Sociology Group and our ReGs and SIGS, are liable to HM Customs and Excise scrutiny. The notes below are designed to highlight the key things that you need to know about VAT when organising study group activities.

Income

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 17.5% as at 31st March 2005).

It is essential that all invoices issued by the BSA, including any pertaining to the Medical Sociology Group, include VAT when necessary. If VAT is not included in the invoice then the VAT element of the payment will be deducted from the money received and paid to HM Customs and Excise as required. This will result in reduced income to the Medical Sociology Group.

Expenses

As a general rule, the BSA cannot reclaim VAT on study group expenses. However, at the end of each tax year, a calculation is undertaken to determine if the BSA can reclaim in full all VAT on expenses for that given year. If the BSA fulfils all the criteria for that year then the VAT on expenses will be reclaimed and a refund given to study groups where appropriate.

It is vital that all invoices received by your group are addressed to the BSA, at the office in Durham, as only those made out to the BSA are eligible to be considered for a refund (please also request that invoices have a reference to your ReG or SIG and MedSoc so that invoices can be allocated correctly to your account). If groups do not receive invoices or if they are not addressed to the BSA (e.g. if they are addressed to your own department/institution) then VAT cannot be reclaimed at all.

As convenors will no doubt be aware, VAT is a very complex issue and these notes are by no means exhaustive. If you have any queries on VAT or finances in general, please contact the BSA office. If they can't answer them straight away, the BSA has a specialist VAT advisor who can help with more involved queries.

APPENDIX 2 – Advice on planning successful events that will support future events

- Use the BSA Medical Sociology Group mailing list which includes non-BSA group members as well as members (use email – it's free).
- Charge non-members to attend where appropriate.
- Use venues/catering facilities at minimal cost (some Universities may offer free space but discount rates can be negotiated at many venues for charities).
- 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).
- 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.
- Get a group of volunteers from within the study group to help divide the workload.
- 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.
- If your group organises an annual programme of seminars, take into consideration the likely costs of speaker travelling expenses and organise your programme to reflect a balance of outside and local speakers.

APPENDIX 3 - BSA website disclaimer

If your group communicates via the web, you should ensure that you include legal disclaimers where appropriate. The following legal disclaimer is that used by the BSA, and one that has been approved by the BSA's legal advisers. You can use this as a template.

The British Sociological Association (BSA) has taken all reasonable care to ensure that the information published on this website is accurate, complete and up to date, however, it is possible that the information may be out of date, incomplete or the opinion of external contributors. It is advisable to verify any of the information contained on this website with the BSA's office, before taking any action in reliance upon it.

The BSA accepts no responsibility/liability for the consequences of error or for any loss or damage suffered by users of any of the information and material contained on this website or any other site that you, or any other person, may access through this site.

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