



BSA Study Groups

Terms of Reference

Version 7

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1. Introduction

BSA Study Groups play a vital role within the Association, offering meaningful opportunities to engage with others in a specific area of interest. The strength of these groups relies on the enthusiasm, leadership and collaborative spirit of their Convenors. Convenors are instrumental in creating inclusive, supportive spaces that foster intellectual exchange and community.

This document outlines the responsibilities and expectations of Study Group Convenors, as well as the support provided by the BSA. It also outlines the legal and practical requirements for running a Study Group in line with the BSA's charitable purpose.

Study Group Convenors are expected to uphold the values of the BSA by working collegially and respectfully with each other and with the wider membership.



2. Policy, Legal and Financial Obligations

2.1 The Role of the BSA

The Association, working through the Board of Trustees, commits itself to:

- 2.1.1 Providing a legal framework for the operation and activities of the Study Groups;
- 2.1.2 Overseeing Study Group activities;
- 2.1.3 Supplying administrative assistance through the BSA office;
- 2.1.4 Providing expert event management advice, budgetary guidance, and support;
- 2.1.5 Organising, maintaining, auditing and reporting on Study Group designated accounts;
- 2.1.6 Approving the formation of new Study Groups;
- 2.1.7 Closing non-viable Study Groups;
- 2.1.8 Assisting in the recruitment of Study Group Convenors and members by promotion through all communication channels;
- 2.1.9 Assisting in the promotion of Study Group events and activities by providing publicity through all communication channels;
- 2.1.10 Providing advice and support in dealing with media enquiries;
- 2.1.11 Appointing a representative for the Study Groups who speaks on their behalf at BSA Advisory Forum meetings;
- 2.1.12 Facilitating policy discussion and the sharing of knowledge and experience between Study Groups by organising a bi-annual meeting for Convenors;
- 2.1.13 Approving, if any, the constitutions of Study Groups, including practice and rules of those groups;
- 2.1.14 Setting general policies in terms of codes of conduct for anyone involved in Study Group activities;
- 2.1.15 Providing a web presence via the BSA website;
- 2.1.16 Covering Study Group activities via the BSA's Public Liability insurance policy.

2.2 The Role of the Convenor

- 2.2.1 The role of the Convenor(s) is to foster the study of sociology in the particular areas of the Study Group and to create opportunities for connection amongst those interested in the area of study.
- 2.2.2 BSA Convenors and other officers* of the Study Groups must be members of the BSA;
*Officer relates to anyone holding a role of responsibility within the group e.g. treasurer or conference organiser.
- 2.2.3 The Convenor(s) will have authority on decisions about the academic activity of the Study Groups; it is good practice for Convenors to consult their Study Group members;
- 2.2.4 The Convenor(s) will ensure that the Study Group complies with BSA Study Group Terms of Reference and other applicable BSA policies – including the [Expenses Policy](#), [Code of Conduct for BSA Events and Meetings](#) and [Privacy Policy](#) – and will ensure that Study Group members do likewise;



- 2.2.5 The term of office of the Convenor(s) and other Study Group officers can be terminated by the BSA Board of Trustees on grounds of non-compliance with the Study Group Terms of Reference;
- 2.2.6 The Convenor(s) will ensure that an accurate record of the membership of the group is maintained on Jiscmail or another suitable platform. The BSA office must also have access to this platform and its records to support ongoing communication, ensure continuity and assist with any necessary handover when the Convenor(s) step down.
- 2.2.7 The Convenor(s) are expected to handle personal data (such as mailing lists, event attendee details or speaker information) in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the BSA's [Privacy Policy](#). The Convenor(s) must take appropriate steps to protect this data, ensure it is only used for Study Group-related purposes and delete it when no longer required. If in doubt about how to store or share personal data, please contact the BSA office for guidance.
- 2.2.8 The Convenor(s) will be responsible for co-ordinating the group's programme of activities, including participation in the BSA Annual Conference in liaison with the relevant stream coordinator(s);
- 2.2.9 The Convenor(s) will actively participate in the biannual Study Group Convenors' meeting called by the BSA Board of Trustees to ensure that the Association continues to meet the needs of its Study Groups and vice versa;
- 2.2.10 The Convenor(s) will ensure that information about the Study Group and its activities is communicated regularly to the BSA office so that it can be posted on the website and included in BSA members' communications, as appropriate;
- 2.2.11 The Convenor(s) will act as the named contact for media enquiries relating to the Study Group subject area;
- 2.2.12 The Convenor(s) will not commit to any financial liability without prior authorisation from the BSA office. The BSA will not underwrite losses resulting from unauthorised expenditure and the Convenor(s) may be held personally liable for such costs;
- 2.2.13 The search for and nomination of new Study Group officers, including Convenors, is primarily the responsibility of the Study Group Convenor(s). Once a new Convenor is appointed, the new and former Convenors will inform the BSA office of the change. Where a Study Group is experiencing low activity or limited volunteer engagement, the BSA office can assist in raising the group's profile and, where necessary, support the process of identifying a new Convenor;
- 2.2.14 The Convenor(s) will be responsible for ensuring that the entry for the group on the BSA website is accurate and up to date;
- 2.2.15 If the Study Group wishes to establish an external website or social media presence, please refer to section 5.2 for requirements;
- 2.2.16 The BSA encourages all Convenors to consider continuity and succession planning as part of their role. Where a Convenor intends to step down, they should make every effort to identify a suitable successor and coordinate a smooth handover, with support from the BSA office where needed. This ensures the ongoing success of the Study Group and helps maintain an active and sustainable network across the Association.

2.3 Reporting Engagement



Each year, Convenors will be invited to submit a short annual report (maximum 500 words) to the BSA. This report serves as a valuable record of the group's activities and achievements, offering convenors an opportunity to reflect on their work, celebrate progress and help build a legacy for future members. Reports are also shared on the BSA website to showcase the vibrant work of our Study Groups to a wider audience.

The report should include:

- a) A record of the number of members in the group, including how many are BSA members;
- b) Income, expenditure and balance (the BSA Office can supply these details);
- c) The aims of the group;
- d) A summary of activities undertaken in the past calendar year (January to December);
- e) A summary of planned activities for the coming calendar year;
- f) The names and contact emails of the Convenor(s) and any other group officers.

This simple reporting process helps the BSA support and promote its Study Groups and provides a lasting record of their contributions to the sociological community.

3. Membership

- 3.1 Membership of the BSA includes free or reduced rate membership to any Study Group;
- 3.2 Study Group membership is not restricted to BSA members, in the interests of research networking and the promotion of sociology;
- 3.3 Study Group Convenor(s) may charge a fee for membership of their Study Group if they wish to do so. However, BSA members must be offered a preferential rate. This preferential rate must be clearly stated in any promotional or membership materials to reflect the benefits of BSA membership.

4. Finance and Event Planning

4.1 Start-up Funding and Designated Funds

- 4.1.1 The BSA will make the sum of £200 available in a designated fund for each newly established Study Group to help kick-start the group's programme of activities;
- 4.1.2 All expenditure and income relating to a Study Group must be managed through that group's designated fund;
- 4.1.3 In the event of the closure of a Study Group, any accumulated funds will revert to the BSA's general unrestricted fund.



4.2 Financial Management and Authorisation

- 4.2.1 The BSA trustees are legally responsible for all financial transactions relating to the BSA, including all Study Group transactions;
- 4.2.2 To comply with audit regulations, all Study Group financial activity will be administered and managed by the BSA office;
- 4.2.3 All expense claims must be authorised by a BSA Study Group Convenor;
- 4.2.4 All expense claims must be received by the BSA office within three months of the event for payment. Late claims may not be paid;
- 4.2.5 All expenditure made by the Study Group, except individual travel claims, must be authorised in advance by obtaining a purchase order (PO) number from the BSA office. The PO number serves as formal approval for the expenditure and must be quoted on the supplier invoice; Failure to obtain and use a PO number may result in the Convenor(s) being held personally liable as outlined in section 2.2.12.

4.3 Event Funding and Budgeting

- 4.3.1 All Study Group event costs (e.g. venue hire, catering costs, speaker expenses) must be covered by the Study Group.
- 4.3.2 Costs are normally covered by money held in the Study Group designated fund and/or by sponsorship or advertising income and/or by charging event fees.
- 4.3.3 Before promoting an event, the Convenor(s) must check their designated fund balance and discuss an event budget with the BSA office to ensure all costs will be covered. The Convenor(s) should provide estimated costs when proposing the event, and the BSA office can assist with preparing a budget, if needed.
- 4.3.4 Any events which do not incur costs may offer attendance free to all i.e. BSA members and non-members alike.
- 4.3.5 Any events incurring costs (e.g. venue hire, catering) must recoup the costs from the Study Group designated fund *or* charge for attendance; where a Study Group is charging for attendance, preferential rates must be offered for BSA members to encourage BSA membership and in recognition of existing BSA membership.
- 4.3.6 For the avoidance of doubt, typical Study Group events will not incur charges for BSA staff time or use of the BSA online meeting software/licences. However, where an event constitutes a larger-scale or flagship conference – particularly those requiring significant staff involvement (e.g. abstract management, programme development, delegate communications) – the BSA reserves the right to recover reasonable costs associated with staff time.
- 4.3.7 Study Group events should operate on a break-even or surplus-generating financial basis to support the future activities of the group; surplus income generated by Study Groups will be added to the designated funds of the relevant groups.

4.4 Financial Responsibility by Event Type



Financial responsibility for events varies according to the type of event and the source of funding, as set out below:

- 4.4.1 Where an event is wholly funded by the BSA (e.g. the BSA Annual Conference or Study Group event), financial responsibility lies with the BSA;
- 4.4.2 Where an event is partially supported by money provided by the BSA (e.g. the BSA Regional Postgraduate and Early Career Days, or an event organised by another academic unit/university with support from Study Group funds), overall financial responsibility lies with the event organisers and/or host institution. Events of this type must carry the following acknowledgment on all promotional materials:
“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. The BSA exists to promote Sociology.”
- 4.4.3 For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions in section 2.2.12 apply to all events: Convenors must not commit to any expenditure without prior authorisation from the BSA office. The BSA will not underwrite losses resulting from unauthorised expenditure.

5. Communication and Publicity

5.1 Branding and Legal Information

- 5.1.1 Where appropriate, Study Group publicity materials (e.g. posters, calls for papers, event signage) should include the BSA’s charity and company registration details as set out below. This is particularly important for externally distributed materials that function as formal communications or include requests for payment or sponsorship:

“The BSA is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 3890729. Registered Charity Number: 1080235.”

- 5.1.2 All publicity material (whether in hard copy or electronic form) must display the BSA’s official logo symbol (as shown in the top left-hand corner of this document). This is the essential visual identifier of the Association and must be included on all materials. The BSA’s logotype (i.e. the three-word text "British Sociological Association", often shown in the bottom right-hand corner) may also be included if desired. The BSA office can provide high-quality versions of both the logo symbol and logotype upon request.

5.2 External Websites and Social Media

- 5.2.1 Study Groups wishing to have a website and/or social media presence other than through the BSA channels must first seek approval from the BSA office. Please submit a proposal detailing where the site will be hosted, how much it will cost



- (including any monthly/annual charges), what it will include, and how it will be maintained;
- 5.2.2 Approved external platforms must clearly display the BSA logo symbol, a link to the main BSA website, the name of the Study Group in the format “**BSA [XXX] Study Group**” and the Association’s registered charity and company information detailed in section 5.1.1. This ensures consistency with BSA branding, legal obligations and public recognition;
 - 5.2.3 For any approved external website or social media account, the Convenor(s) must provide the BSA Office with administrator or login access details. To ensure continuity and oversight, accounts must not be created using personal email addresses. Instead, use a generic or role-based email (e.g. bsa.[studygroup]@gmail.com) that can be easily transferred during handovers. Convenors are responsible for keeping login details secure, up to date and for ensuring they are passed on during any handover process. This allows the BSA to support oversight, troubleshooting and transitions, as needed.

6. Closure or Inactivity

- 6.1 When it is clear that a group is no longer viable and active, the Convenor(s) should notify the BSA office so that BSA publicity and records can be properly amended;
- 6.2 The BSA also keeps track of group activity through the submission of Annual Reports (see section 2.3) and through the financial and event information available to the BSA office. Where this suggests a group may be inactive, the BSA will contact the Convenor(s) and make every effort to offer support and guidance.
- 6.3 If/when a Study Group is considered non-viable, its designated account will be closed and references to it on the website and elsewhere will be removed;
- 6.4 If a Convenor steps down and no replacement can be identified despite reasonable efforts by the outgoing Convenor(s) and the BSA office, the Study Group will be deemed non-viable and closed in accordance with the above.

7. Acceptance of Terms

- 7.1 All Convenors are required to sign and return a Declaration confirming their acceptance of these Terms of Reference upon first appointment, and again whenever a revised version of the Terms is issued.
- 7.2 If a Convenor continues to act in that role after receiving the Terms of Reference (or any updated version) without returning a signed Declaration, they will nevertheless be deemed to have accepted the Terms and to be bound by them.



8. Declaration

I fully understand, accept and agree to the terms of reference set by the British Sociological Association and confirm, to the best of my knowledge, that the group is operating in compliance with the requirements outlined above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Study Group: _____

Date: _____



APPENDIX

Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
1	Sept 2014	Initial Approval
2	Sept 2026	Terminology update
3	Nov 2019	Terminology update
4	Feb 2022	General update and formatting changes
5	May 2023	Clarified Convenor duties, speaker fees and Zoom use
6	May 2024	Addition of clause 4.5 – New guidance on event cost recovery and clarification that only events incurring costs must charge differential fees for members and non-members.
7	Sept 2025	Formatting and structural improvements for clarity and consistency, including some further edits to terminology.