

Policies for Establishing and Maintaining Research Working Groups Within IAMCR

According to IAMCR Statutes, Working Groups pursue specialised research programs while pursuing emerging research topics. They are not expected to be permanent within the organisation. In contrast, IAMCR Sections are treated as major subdisciplines in the field of media and communication research and as permanent within the Association.

New Working Groups may be established as research and member interests evolve. The procedure for applying to establish a Working Group is documented below. It overlaps in certain respects with the process for Sections, but varies in some details, and is documented separately for the sake of clarity and convenience. (Section policies and procedures are available in “Policies for Establishing and Maintaining Research Sections Within IAMCR,” on the Scholarly Review Committee (SRC) page of the IAMCR website, <http://iamcr.org/SRC>).

1) Authority for Establishing Working Groups

IAMCR Statutes authorise the presentation of new Sections and Working Groups to the General Assembly for Association approval (Article 5.2). In practice, such presentations take place with the advice and support of the International Council (IC) assisted by the Scholarly Review Committee (SRC). The process begins with a written proposal providing information indicated in the requirements below.

2) Proposals to Establish Working Groups

Proposals to establish new Working Groups must include the following information:

- a. A proposed Head or co-Head(s), whose role shall be subject to confirmation through elections to be held by the prospective Working Group upon approval by the General Assembly (Article 9.4),
- b. Evidence that the proposed Head or co-Heads are paid-up members,
- c. A mission statement outlining planned work that is “consistent with the association’s aims and not dealt with by the existing Sections,” or existing Working Groups (Article S9.2),
- d. A 2-year plan of work including the activities specified in the list of required Working Group activities in 4) below,
- e. Signatures of minimally 20 IAMCR members located in at least 3 continents who support the proposed mission statement and plan of work,
- f. Support signatures of minimally 5 International Council members located in at least 2 continents.

3) Submission of Proposals

Complete proposals must be submitted to the SRC at least five months before the annual conference. The SRC then works with the applicants to evaluate and provide feedback on the proposal, possibly leading to a revised proposal, before submitting the final version and the SRC's recommendations to the EB for distribution to the IC at least two months before the annual conference. Following an online discussion, the IC may choose to vote online or to delay the vote until its face-to-face meeting at the annual conference. If a Working Group is approved in a General Assembly (GA) year, it will be ratified by the GA. In year without a GA the applicant will operate as an interim body pending ratification by the next GA.

4) Working Group Activity - Ongoing Requirements

Working Groups are expected to maintain the following requirements and levels of research activity:

- a. An elected Head, with all elected officers paying their IAMCR membership fees,
- b. A mission statement. This should not duplicate the work of other Sections or Working Groups but may note where productive overlap with the work of other Sections and Working Groups could be leveraged to advance mutual research agendas,
- c. Organise minimally one session with peer-reviewed papers at each IAMCR main conference,
- d. Deploy demonstrable activities to support the work of the members of the Working Group. For this, a variety of formats, including seminars, meetings, webinars, video conferences or other online activities such as courses, etc. can be used. (This does not include simple emails with members or newsletters).

5) Working Groups Becoming Sections and Other Changes

Working Groups wishing to become Sections should refer to the [Policy for a Working Group to become a Section](#), which outlines the criteria, requirements and application process.

For other scenarios involving changes to Working Groups, such as merging with existing Sections or Working Groups, or dividing an existing Working Group into two, members are invited to consult with the Scholarly Review Committee (SRC).

6) Annual Survey of Working Group Activity

Working Group activity is reviewed annually. Data are gathered via an annual online survey. Working Group compliance in completing the survey is required. These data are summarised and circulated within the Association to track research work and trends. It is also employed in examining applications for Working Group review and renewal every four years, explained in section 7) below.

7) Policy and Process for Four-Year Renewal of Working Groups

Pursuant to a passage in Article 9 of the Statutes, Working Groups are renewed every four years: “Every 4 years, Working Groups should report to the International Council which will then decide to renew them for a further 4 years or to close them.”

The protocol for renewal is described below in three parts: 1) Aims of the protocol, 2) Criteria for review and renewal, and 3) Procedure for review and renewal.

Aims of the Renewal Process

The aims of the renewal process include the following and suggest the nature of the information that is to be submitted and reviewed.

1) Support and promote Working Groups and their role within the Association. The work of the Association is driven, and sustained, by the interests of Section and Working Group members and their commitments. Supporting these interests and commitments should be a high priority in any review of Working Groups and renewal process. Emphasis is to be placed on protecting these while stimulating innovation. Working Group accomplishments and plans reported in renewal applications will be distributed to the IC and IAMCR Membership with each renewal cycle. This will include an annual story on newly renewed Working Groups to be placed in the IAMCR Newsletter, an account in an appendix of the Annual Report of Section and Working Group activity and distributed in other ways.

2) Promote thematic innovation in the Association’s training, research, and theoretical work. With the rapid pace of global change, it is increasingly important to develop novel methods for exploring innovative research themes as well as for new modalities of research collaboration and interaction among researchers. The efforts of individual researchers and research groups can be assisted by organisational mechanisms that facilitate such innovation. Critical reflection during the renewal process is intended to encourage and renew attention to innovations and new developments.

3) Further differentiate Sections and Working Groups. Differences between Sections and Working Groups have at times become obscured in the life of the Association, exemplified by the fact that some Working Groups are larger than some Sections. This is a cause of some confusion, especially among non-members about how to engage with IAMCR in advancing their research within the Association. The reviews are also to be treated as opportunities to develop organisational methods spearheading the Association’s work in important areas.

In practice, Sections may appear to be differentiated from Working Groups mainly by levels of required research activity, as reflected in the guidelines for establishing and renewing Sections and Working Groups. But there are other differences as well. In principle, Sections are to be treated as major subdisciplines in the field of media and communication research and be permanent within the Association. According to the Statutes, Working Groups

pursue more specialised research programs while pursuing emerging research topics. They are not expected to be permanent within the organisation, having a more limited duration, requiring review and renewal every four years.

Working Groups able to demonstrate that their research addresses emerging subdisciplines are encouraged to consider applying for Section status while, conversely, smaller Sections that might welcome less onerous productivity requirements and are tightly focused on the agendas of more transitory subject areas, might consider shifting to Working Group status or combining with other Sections or Working Groups. In general, the Association encourages Sections and Working Groups to think flexibly about collaborations as well as mergers with other Sections and Working Groups where this could facilitate innovative research agendas as well as administrative efficiencies.

Criteria for Review and Renewal

Criteria for Working Group renewal are of two kinds.

The first reflects requirements and levels of research activity that Working Groups are expected to maintain, as indicated above in 4) “Working Group Activity - Ongoing Requirements:” The activity levels indicated in 4) are minimal requirements in each of the 4 years preceding application for renewal. These data are provided by the SRC and do not require the attention of Working Group heads in the renewal application.

The second kind of criteria for renewal reflects the aim of stimulating thematic innovation and differentiating between Sections and Working Groups. They replicate, in part, the criteria used in proposals to establish Working Groups. In addition, they include new criteria encouraging additional forward-thinking and planning. These are:

- a. A vision statement describing the Working Group’s vision for the four years of work to follow.
- b. A three-paragraph statement on the most pressing or emerging intellectual or empirical challenges within the Working Group’s thematic research areas. This should include critical reflection on the Working Group’s performance in light of its mission and success in achieving its most recently stated plan of work. How well has it embodied the vision under which it was established (or renewed previously)? What has it done most effectively and least effectively? What were the reasons for successes and disappointments?
- c. A 4-year plan of future work. This plan will include the kinds of things specified in the list of required Working Group activities, expressed along a rough timeline for the future, e.g., year-one, year-two, year three...

Procedure for Review and Renewal

The four-year review and renewal of Working Groups is conducted jointly by the Executive Board (EB), Executive Secretariat, and the IC with support from the SRC, which then present the individual applications for renewal to the IC for a vote of approval.

The SRC review of Section and Working Group activity will be conducted, and a report prepared, annually as previously, with the exception of the former “rolling evaluation,” for Working Groups. This rolling evaluation will not be conducted given the establishment of a 4-year renewal process. Instead, the annual survey data gathered from Working Groups will be archived and used as input to each 4-year renewal application. The SRC will continue to review the Working Group data informally on an annual basis and will consult with Working Groups as needed.

The simultaneous renewal of 20 Working Groups every fourth year would place an undue burden on the EB, SRC, and IC during renewal years. To spread this burden across time 25% of the Working Groups will be evaluated in a given year proceeding alphabetically, excluding Working Groups 3 years old or less. The Executive Secretariat will circulate a call for renewal applications annually to Working Groups scheduled for review. The applications will be collected by the Executive Secretariat and checked for completeness with follow-up with Working Groups as needed. Complete applications will be circulated to the President and SRC. The SRC will add activity data information from the preceding 4 years to these applications and review them to assess whether Working Group Requirement guidelines have been met. The SRC will then return the applications with the additional data and its reviews to the Executive Secretariat for distribution to the President and EB who will conduct a review of their own. Once done, the President will schedule the renewal applications for discussion and a vote within the IC. The IC will vote to renew each Working Group or to place it on probation.

A Working Group placed on probation will have two years during which it may continue to operate while appealing for renewal and revising its application. (This two-years repeats the grace period previously employed in guidelines for the annual rolling review.) The SRC will be available for consultation upon request. A Working Group on probation may decide on its own to end its activities. A notification of this intent can be sent to the Executive Secretary. If deciding to continue, a revised application will be submitted to the Executive Secretariat by March 1 of the second following year (e.g. if reviewed in 2028, by March 1 on 2030). It will be reviewed by the SRC and forwarded to the EB with its advice. The EB will formulate a proposal for the International Council and schedule a final vote of the IC.

With a renewal application deadline of March 1, the IC can review applications and discuss them during its meeting at the next June/July conference. The purpose of face-to-face discussion is to promote within the Association its interest in innovative research and collaboration among Sections and Working Groups. The annual vote on renewal applications could be held either during the IC meeting at the conference or soon after, sometime in August through October.

Renewal Schedule

The IAMCR 4-year renewal timeline began at the 2024 conference in Christchurch following the IC's approval of the renewal process. The first scheduled group of Working Groups will apply for renewal in 2028. Working Group 4-year renewals will be conducted annually thereafter.

Anticipating approximately five reviews annually the provisional schedule is as follows, pending possible changes in the number of Working Groups:

2028

Comic Art - COA

Communication in Post- and Neo-Authoritarian Societies - CPN

Communication, Social Justice and Democracy - CSD

Crisis, Security and Conflict Communication - CRI

Diaspora and Media - DIM

2029

Digital Divide – DID

Ethics of Society & Ethics of Communication - ETH

Global Media Policy - GMP

Health Communication - HEC

Inclusive Communication and People with Disabilities - PWD

2030

Islam and Media - ISM

Media Production Analysis - MPA

Media Sector Development - MSD

Multimodal Communication Research - MCR

Music, Audio, Radio and Sound – MAR

2031

Organisational Communication - ORG

Public Service Media Policies - PSM

Religion and Communication - REC

Rural Communication - RUC

Visual Culture - VIC

8) Working Group Renewal Application Form

A Word file created by the applicant should be used as an application form, titled: "Working Group Renewal Application Form: Name of Working Group." Complete the application by addressing, in sequence, points raised in Part I below and entering them into the Word file.

Application Form Part I

Working Group Heads should provide information addressing each of the following. Please address these point by point, in each case providing open-ended answers for points a. through e. below. Use as much space as needed for each.

- a. Names of Heads/Vice Heads of the Working Group.
- b. The Working Group's existing mission statement. (Provide a revised mission statement if preferable, indicating that it is a revision and including a brief explanation of reasons for the change).
- c. Vision statement describing the Working Group's vision for the coming four years of work.
- d. A three-paragraph statement on the most pressing or emerging intellectual or empirical challenges within the Working Group's thematic research areas. This should include critical reflection on the Working Group's performance in light of its mission and success in achieving its most recently stated plan of work. How well has it embodied the vision under which it was established (or renewed previously). What has it done most effectively and least effectively? What were the reasons for successes and disappointments?
- e. A plan of work for the coming 4 years. This plan will consist of the kinds of events/activities specified in the list of required Working Group activities indicated above in 4) Working Group Activity - Ongoing Requirements, expressed along a rough timeline, e.g., year-one, year-two, year three...

This may include projecting forward the kinds of information gathered annually, such as: "events/activities during the past year (not including the IAMCR main conference). For this, a variety of formats, including seminars, meetings, webinars, video conferences or other online activities such as courses, etc. can be used." Regular conference activities can also be indicated. New activities and modalities of scholarly interaction are encouraged.

Application Form Part II

Part II of the renewal application comprises activity data gathered from Working Group Heads annually via survey over the preceding 4 years as discussed above. These data will be provided by the SRC.

Working Group Heads do not provide any information for Part II.

Renewal Application Form Submission

Submit the completed Word file to the Executive Director with a copy to the Deputy Director (sscifo@iamcr.org, vzamisich@iamcr.org) who will circulate applications to the EB,

SRC, and President who will schedule the applications for a vote in the IC. Working Groups may be contacted by the Secretariat and/or members of the Executive Board or the SRC if further information is required.