

UKLA SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS GUIDANCE

What is a Special Interest Group (SIG)?

The UKLA Standing Orders state that a SIG will assist the Association in the development of understanding and policy about particular areas of literacy teaching and learning (see also UKLA Standing Orders 10 (b) 2019; UKLA Appendices to the Standing Orders Appendix 7).

The work of a SIG is therefore important to the overall work of UKLA. Executive Committee (EC) members are keen to support SIGs whose members will have the potential to develop/shape and/or respond to an area of need/common interest in literacy and contribute to the Association's mission. It is likely that SIGs will operate for one or two years only, or as long as the group thinks they need to fulfil their aims and commitment to the Association. If the work of the SIG is to continue after the end of two years, a revised proposal will be formally submitted to EC via the Hon. Secretary justifying the requested extension and seeking EC's approval.

Why set up a SIG?

Joining or starting up a SIG means access to the network of the UKLA, a significant number of professionals and researchers in all phases of education. It offers SIG members the chance to collaborate in self-defined ways to further the group's aims and interests and, if appropriate, to develop international links in relation to literacy education.

Once a SIG has been established, there are various opportunities to share its work-in-progress with the wider UKLA membership e.g. open meetings or a symposium at the International Conference; symposia at other conferences e.g. BERA; a presentation to National Council (NC).

There are also publishing opportunities within UKLA. The most familiar ones for the group to consider would be:

- an Occasional Paper, a UKLA Viewpoint, or a Minibook
- an article for *Literacy*
- an article for *English 4-11*
- UKLA blogs, podcasts or webinars
- updates and summaries of work in progress or in response to key issues and core concerns in *UKLANews* and on the UKLA website.

Whilst the work of a SIG would start with UKLA, it may have outcomes which are disseminated outside the Association, provided the end is not commercial gain. This would be a welcome way to extend ideas and networks, as long as, of course, UKLA is acknowledged and the logo is used e.g. jointly running and double-badging a conference or professional development event. Other opportunities also have potential for influencing literacy education e.g. attending or organising events for SIG members, other UKLA members or external audiences, setting up online networks, collaborating with local authorities and other associations, and seeking funding from external bodies to take the work further.

Matters to consider when setting up a SIG

The Association is not able to offer funding so the SIG's work will be carried out by email (or other forms of social media), unless funding outside the Association can be gained (provided the end is not commercial). The SIG may wish however to apply for a UKLA research grant or outside funding. (In all cases the UKLA logo needs to be used to reflect the SIG's affiliation). Any events held must be budgeted so that all costs, e.g. for venues and refreshments, are covered.

SIG membership

The proposers of a SIG will be expected to be UKLA members and all members of the SIG will need to be UKLA members in order to join the group. The convener may wish to invite specific UKLA members to join their activities and conversations, but SIG membership will be open to all UKLA members. During the life of the SIG, the SIG convener will be co-opted to the UKLA's National Council (NC) which meets twice annually. If there is more than one convener, attendance at NC can be alternated.

The SIG proposal form

A SIG may be proposed by any two members of the Association or set up by the EC. The SIG proposal form can be found on the SIGs page on the UKLA website and needs to outline:

- the name(s) and job title(s) of the proposed convener(s)
- the aim and focus of the SIG
 - In the 'Aims and focus' section of the proposal form, provide a brief rationale for the proposed area of interest, giving the proposal's reviewers a sense of why you think a SIG would be helpful.
 - **Example: Early Years SIG** *The way in which literacy is conceptualised in national policy can have a significant influence on how it is experienced by children. In the light of this, the Early Years SIG will aim to build a community of researchers, teachers, advisors and student teacher members who explore and give recognition to the complex relationships between literacies (including print literacies) and children's exploratory play within a supportive environment.*
- the likely duration of the group's work
- the proposed outcome(s):
 - e.g. conference symposium, publication, representation at other associations' conferences
- an assurance that there will no financial or commercial implications
- the name of an 'attached' EC member who will support the work of the SIG and act as a mentor.
- References to prior work in this area:
 - Please also provide a few references to indicate prior work you are likely to be drawing on.

- **Example:** *The key principles of the SIG will be guided by current research into early literacy and underpinned by the following understandings: Literacy pedagogy radically shapes children's understandings of what literacy is and who it is for (Levy, 2011). Literacy is a social and cultural practice, (Street, 1995, Gee, 2008) that varies significantly across time and place (Gutierrez, Bein, Seland and Pierce, 2011) etc.*

Authorisation of the SIG remit

Once EC have authorised the SIG, the Hon. Secretary will let the SIG convener know and discuss any practical matters that may arise. The General Manager in the UKLA Office will contact the SIG convener to collect details of the SIG's focus and aims for the website. Open membership of the SIG will be advertised through *UKLANews* and on the website.

The continuing work of the SIG

The SIG will report their activities through Research Sub Committee to EC and NC (once a year in Spring). An annual report of the work of the SIG must be submitted to the UKLA Hon. Secretary each May. Once the work of the SIG is under way, the convener may wish to contact the conveners of various UKLA sub-committees (e.g. Conferences, Publicity and Communications, Awards, Publications) to discuss future plans and opportunities for collaboration and dissemination of work.

Duties of SIG conveners

The SIG convener:

- works within the remit agreed by the EC
- liaise closely with Research Committee SIG coordinator and the EC link person/mentor
- co-ordinates email business and other meetings in line with UKLA's Data Protection Policy
- ensures that an annual summary of activity is circulated to EC and a reference set is lodged in the UKLA Office
- undertakes additional duties as from time to time may be agreed with EC, for example contributing to UKLA responses to policy documents; representing the Association in meetings of other organisations.