

Guidelines on the Institutionalization and Governance of Special Interest Groups

INTRODUCTION

The Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. (PAOT, Inc.) aims to encourage its members to participate in advanced study and research in occupational therapy, to keep abreast of new developments in the profession, and to facilitate the exchange and dissemination of knowledge among occupational therapy professionals¹. In accordance with one of its core mission statements, fostering strong professional fellowship among its members² facilitated through training and research activities, PAOT, Inc. recognizes and values the formation of special interest groups (SIGs) as indispensable in improving established and emerging areas of interest.

Through the mobilization of the SIGs, it is envisaged that the implementation of specific training and research activities will capacitate and benefit the members and other stakeholders of the profession in a more contextualized and timely manner. Information exchange and collaboration within the SIGs, among the SIGs, and with the PAOT, Inc., ensures a strengthened, more responsive, and more efficient mechanism to prioritize areas for relevant programs to thrive. At the same time, such linkage reinforces a sense of communal commitment and professional dialogue, to further advance the members, the profession, and the nation.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE PAOT, Inc. hereby adopts and promulgates the following:

Sec. I. Objectives. This document shall provide guidance and structure to the members and other stakeholders of the PAOT, Inc. on the institutionalization of SIGs. This is to ensure a harmonious alignment of goals and processes between the PAOT, Inc. and the SIGs.

Sec. II. Scope. The guidelines cover the processes from formation to program/research monitoring. It contains expectations from the SIGs related to planning, implementing, and monitoring activities that are attuned to the needs of the stakeholders while at the same time contributing to the attainment of goals of the PAOT, Inc. Support, linkage, and feedback mechanisms extended from the PAOT, Inc. to the SIGs, are also included.

Sec. III. Definition of Terms.

1. **Core Leader** – a professional member tasked to coordinate with the Board from the formation of the SIG to the implementation of its activities. S/he may be asked to represent the SIG and the PAOT, Inc. in engagements with other organizations relating to the area of interest.
2. **Emerging Area of Interest** – recent specializations and contexts where an occupational therapist is discharging various functions as needed by clients (i.e. person, group, or population).
3. **Established Area of Interest** – conventional specializations and contexts, backed up by literature and widely known practice trends, where an occupational therapist is discharging various functions as needed by clients (i.e. person, group, or population).

¹ Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. (PAOT, Inc.). (2017). Position Statement on Special Interest Groups.

² Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. (PAOT, Inc.) (2017). Bylaws of the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc.

4. **Practice Guidelines** – systematically developed statements and evidence-based recommendations aimed to assist the occupational therapist in various encounters with a client in the identified area of interest.
5. **Professional Member** – a regular, affiliate, or lifetime member of the PAOT, Inc.
6. **Research Activity** – may be in the form of scoping review, data gathering and analysis, and dissemination of information and results for the purpose of informing practice, strengthening interventions, and ensuring generalizability to the clients in the identified area of interest.
7. **Stakeholders** – include occupational therapists, who may be PAOT or non-PAOT members, clients, who may be a person, group, or population receiving occupational therapy services, or other professionals inextricably linked with the profession's service delivery.
8. **Training Activity** – may be in the form of seminar, conference, or forum aimed to increase or retool the occupational therapist's knowledge, skills, and attitude to better serve clients in the identified area of interest.

Sec IV. Formation and Proposal for Official Recognition.

1. A group of at least five professional members may collaborate to form an SIG for an established or emerging area of interest. A group composed of a lower number of initial members may be allowed to proceed with the formation subject to the approval of the Board.
2. PAOT, Inc. may identify a list of priority areas of interest and encourage its members to organize and volunteer to form the SIG.
3. In the event that different groups of professional members have submitted a proposal for the official recognition of an SIG with the same area of interest, PAOT, Inc. may ask the different groups to coordinate with one another to come up with one proposal. Alternatively, a first to submit, first to be reviewed policy shall be adopted by the Board.
4. During the formation stage, the group shall conduct needs analysis of the stakeholders of the identified area of interest to further determine and strengthen its niche in advancing the profession. Environmental scanning, through a SWOT analysis, shall also be performed to identify crucial factors when it comes to planning, implementing, and monitoring eventual activities of the SIG, along with its overall sustainability. The results of these analyses shall be documented by the group.
5. The group shall be represented by a Core Leader/s who will be coordinating with the Board from formation to the official recognition of the SIG. The Core Leader/s shall retain such designation and title after official recognition unless changes will be made depending on the bylaws set by the SIG.
6. The Core Leader/s shall submit the **Letter of Intention (Annex A)**, **Special Interest Group Proposal Form (Annex B)**, and **Initial/Official List of Members (Annex C)** addressed to the President thru the Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics. The proposed list of activities contained in Annex B shall cover a period of two years.
7. The Chair of the Committee on Programs, the Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, and the Chair of the Committee on Finance shall be given copies of the **Special Interest Group Proposal Form (Annex B)** to look into the proposed list of activities and check for alignment with the program and research agenda of the PAOT, Inc. Budget allocation shall also be considered.

8. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall relay the initial list of members of the SIG to the Chair of the Committee on Membership and Nominations to verify if they are members of the professional organization. The Board Secretary shall also be informed to include the deliberation for the SIG's official recognition during the monthly Board Meeting.

Sec. V. Conditional Approval, Disapproval, and Official Recognition of the Special Interest Group.

1. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall present to the Board the proposal for the official recognition of the SIG. The Core Leader/s shall be invited to the Board Meeting to answer possible queries on the goals and proposed list of activities of the SIG.
2. The Chair of the Committee on Programs, the Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, and the Chair of the Committee on Finance shall give suggestions for program improvement and budget allocation and identify support and monitoring mechanisms from the Board to concretize the proposed activities.
3. The Board shall deliberate and decide whether the proposal of the group is conditionally approved or disapproved.
4. Grounds for **conditional approval** include the following but not limited to:
 - a. Proof of need to form an SIG based on the group's submitted analysis,
 - b. Proof of clear identification of factors that will affect the SIG's overall sustainability based on the group's submitted analysis,
 - c. Presence of clear threading of the group's goals and proposed activities with those of the PAOT, Inc., and
 - d. Presence of feasible budget allocation and additional measures for funding for the group's proposed activities.
5. Grounds for **disapproval** at the proposal stage include the following but not limited to:
 - a. Marked deviation of the group's goals and proposed activities with those of the PAOT, Inc.
 - b. Implementation of the proposed activities without at least receiving conditional approval from the PAOT, Inc.
6. Grounds for **disapproval** after receiving conditional approval include the following but not limited to:
 - a. Non-submission of the modified **Special Interest Group Proposal Form (Annex B)** within 30 days, if applicable
 - b. Marked deviation from the approved proposed activities
 - c. Non-coordination and non-compliance with the suggestions and identified support and monitoring mechanisms from the Board
7. **Official recognition** shall be given after a period of one year of conditional approval upon fulfilling both procedural and substantive requirements. Specifically, the following shall be met:
 - a. Implementation of three activities or 50% (whichever is higher) of the approved proposed activities during the group's first year,
 - b. Continuous presence of coordination and compliance with the suggestions and identified support and monitoring from the Board, and
 - c. Evidence of information dissemination through the following means but not limited to: social media postings in the PAOT, Inc. official pages AND publication of an article in the PAOT newsletter or PJOT or other journals / e-journals, or reputable newsletters.

8. In the giving of conditional approval, disapproval, or official recognition status, a unanimous vote from the Board of Directors is needed to determine the status of the SIG.
9. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall relay the decision of the Board to the group.
10. Upon the recommendation of the PAOT, Inc., an officially recognized SIG may have the potential to be recognized as a specialty society by the Professional Regulation Commission.
11. In such cases when the SIG proposal is **disapproved**, the group may opt to apply again for conditional approval at least 30 days after disapproval.
12. Once conditional approval from the Board is received, the Core Leader/s shall be asked to facilitate the first official meeting of the SIG to reiterate to the initial members the goals and proposed activities for the first two years.
13. The Chair of the Committee on Public Relations shall disseminate to the public the conditional approval and official recognition of the SIG.
14. Officially recognized SIGs shall be jointly and directly monitored and assisted by the Chair of the Committee on Programs, the Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, the Chair of the Committee on Finance, and the Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics unless a new structure is enacted by the Board.

Sec VI. Functions of the Special Interest Group.

Upon receiving conditional approval, the SIG shall perform the following:

1. Formulate training and research activities beneficial to the stakeholders of the identified area of interest and the profession at large subject to the approval of the Board;
2. Implement training and research activities beneficial to the stakeholders of the identified area of interest and profession at large subject to monitoring of the Board;
3. Disseminate to the stakeholders of the profession the activities and training / research outputs of the SIG;
4. Provide avenues for collaboration and sharing of practices within the members of the SIG and with the stakeholders of the profession;
5. Liaise with the Board on the needs and concerns of the stakeholders of the identified area of interest;
6. Advocate for the inclusion of programs related to the identified area of interest at both national and chapter levels of the professional organization; and
7. Represent the PAOT, Inc., through the Core Leader/s, in engagements with other organizations related to the area of interest.

Sec VII. Creation of Bylaws.

1. The Core Leader/s shall facilitate the creation of bylaws, adopted from the existing PAOT bylaws, to provide a context-specific structure to various processes and activities of the SIG.

2. The bylaws shall cover provisions on the following but not limited to: mission and vision statements and goals, membership, elections/special appointments, roles and responsibilities of the officers/appointees and members, meetings, committees/sub-committees, program/research implementation, and reiteration of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.
3. The Core Leader/s shall continuously coordinate with the Chair of the Committee on Legislation to ensure consistency of the SIG's bylaws with the PAOT's bylaws.
4. Upon the finalization of the bylaws, the Chair of the Committee on Legislation shall present the document to the Board. A unanimous vote from the Board of Directors is needed for its official approval.
5. The Chair of the Committee on Public Relations shall disseminate to the public the official bylaws of the special interest group.

Sec. VIII. Membership.

1. Any PAOT member may join one or more SIGs provided that s/he will actively participate and contribute to its undertakings, along with adhering to member roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the bylaws of the SIG.
2. For a non-PAOT member who signifies an intention to join, the SIG is to facilitate his/her application for membership to the professional organization.
3. At the end of each year, each SIG shall submit an official list of members (**Appendix C**) to the Chair of the Committee on Membership and Nomination for documentation and verification purposes.

Sec. IX. Financial Allocations.

1. PAOT, Inc., through the Chair of the Committee on Finance, shall determine a fixed amount to shoulder per approved activity of the SIG. This shall be relayed to each SIG upon receiving conditional approval.
2. In the event that the agreed-upon allocation from PAOT, Inc. for activity implementation and other income-generating measures of the SIG would not suffice to implement certain activities, the Chair of the Committee on Finance may recommend the provision of extra funds upon the unanimous approval of the Board of Directors.

Sec. X. Training / Research Planning, Implementation, and Monitoring and Formulation of Practice Guidelines.

1. Upon receiving conditional approval, the SIG shall:
 - a. Ensure that the approved list of activities will be implemented;
 - b. Continuously coordinate and tap the identified support and monitoring mechanisms with the Chair of the Committee on Programs, Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, and Chair of the Committee on Finance in the implementation of the activities;
 - c. Provide feedback from the stakeholders to the Board on important phases of implementation and upon completion of activities;

- d. Coordinate with the Chair of the Committee on Public Relations to promote the goals and activities of the special interest group and to ensure dissemination of the activities to the public;
 - e. Monitor the attainment of the goals of the SIG; and
 - f. Prepare a term report after every two years.
2. On a recurring basis, after its second year, the SIG shall present a proposed list of activities, encompassing training and research, covering a period of two years, to the Board for approval. Items 1a – 1f of this section are then expected to be performed.
3. During strategic planning sessions of PAOT, Inc., the Core Leader/s of the SIG shall participate in defining the road map that the professional organization has to take, along with emphasizing programs that need to be prioritized based on the stakeholder needs of the area of interest.
4. The Core Leader/s shall actively participate and coordinate with the activities of the chapters especially during their strategic planning sessions.
5. During midyear and annual assemblies, SIGs shall be given a blocked time to provide training activities and disseminate their research outputs to the attendees.
6. The Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, with its core members, shall facilitate the dissemination of the SIG's research outputs to journals, conferences, and other possible platforms.
7. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics, with its core members, shall facilitate the ethical approval process for these research outputs to recognized institutional review boards, if needed.
8. Within the first year of official recognition, SIGs covering areas of interest with direct implications to client care shall start formulating their practice guidelines. Specifically, the following tasks shall be performed:
 - a. The SIG shall devise a mechanism to review literature, audit practice patterns and trends of its members, and identify gaps in practice to provide the necessary inputs for the formulation of practice guidelines;
 - b. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall sit as an ex officio member to the committee/team formed by the SIG in the formulation of the practice guidelines;
 - c. Upon the finalization of the practice guidelines, the Chair of the Committee of Standards and Ethics shall present the document to the Board to decide whether the practice guidelines are conditionally approved or approved. A unanimous vote from the Board of Directors is needed for either decision;
 - d. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall relay the decision of the Board to the group;
 - e. For conditional approval, the special interest group shall submit the revised practice guidelines based on the suggestions of the Board within 60 days; and
 - f. The Chair of the Committee on Public Relations shall disseminate to the public the approved practice guidelines of the SIG.

Sec. XI. Inactivity, Probation, and Dissolution of Special Interest Groups.

1. The following are grounds for an officially recognized SIG to receive an **inactive status**:
 - a. No training or research activity for a year

- b. Non-attendance to any PAOT, Inc. event or meeting for a year wherein the SIG, through the Core Leader/s, is required to participate
 - c. Non-submission of the proposed set of activities for the next two years
2. The following are grounds for an officially recognized SIG to receive a **probationary status**:
 - a. Implementation of non-approved activity that is deviant from the vision and mission of the SIG
 - b. Non-submission of required documents to respective committees of the PAOT, Inc.
 - c. Non-coordination with PAOT, Inc. in training and research activities of the SIG
3. The following are grounds for **dissolution** of an officially recognized SIG:
 - a. Inactive status for two years
 - b. Continuous non-adherence to the recommendations of PAOT, Inc., despite assistance and warnings, while in probationary status
 - c. Continuous non-coordination with PAOT, Inc., specifically with the Chair of the Committee on Programs, Chair of the Committee on Education and Research, Chair of the Committee on Finance, and the Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics on the implementation of activities, despite assistance and warnings, while in probationary status
 - d. No active members for two years
4. A unanimous vote from the Board of Directors is needed in giving an inactive status, probationary status, or official dissolution.
5. The Chair of the Committee on Standards and Ethics shall relay the decision of the Board to the group.

Sec. XII. Other Provisions.

1. PAOT, Inc. shall only recognize one SIG for each identified area of interest. The formation of similar SIGs due to geographical boundaries will not be allowed.
2. Inclusion of members to the SIG from other professions is subject to the stipulations in the SIG's bylaws and approval of the Board.

Sec. XIII. Effectivity. The guidelines set forth herein shall be effective upon the release to the public.

Prepared by:

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Promulgated by the Board of Directors of the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc. on the 27th day of October, 2020 in the City of Makati, Philippines.

ANNEX A Letter of Intention

<Date>

<Name of President>

President

Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc.

Thru: <Name of Committee Chair>

Chair, Committee on Standards and Ethics

Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc.

Dear <Name of President>:

We would like to signify our intention to form a special interest group, named <Proposed Name> and seek official recognition from the Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc.

Attached are the following documents for your perusal:

- Special Interest Group Proposal Form
- Initial List of Members of the Special Interest Group
- Other Documents

Sincerely,

<Name and Signature of Core Leader>

ANNEX B
Special Interest Group Proposal Form

Name of the Special Interest Group (SIG)				
Background	<i>(brief narrative of the formation of the SIG, including the involved individuals)</i>			
Description of the SIG	<i>(a single sentence to describe the SIG and will serve as the official description on all documents released by the PAOT)</i>			
Vision of the SIG				
Mission of the SIG				
Goals of the SIG				
Needs Analysis and Threading of Goals <i>(highlight the needs of the stakeholders in your area of practice)</i> <i>(identify the gaps in practice that will be addressed by the SIG)</i> <i>(emphasize the threading of the SIG goals with that of the identified needs of the stakeholders and the goals of the PAOT)</i>				
SWOT Analysis <i>(identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats applicable to the planning, implementing, and monitoring of the SIG's activities)</i> <i>(comment on the factors that will influence the overall sustainability of the SIG)</i>				
Proposed List of Activities <i>(covers the proposed list of activities of the SIG for the first two years)</i> <i>(should include training activities/seminars/fora, research activities, plans for public dissemination of activities through various platforms)</i>				
Goals	Activities	Point Person/s	Timeline	Budget
Proposed Measures for Funding <i>(possible income generating activities/measures of the SIG to supplement the allocation from the PAOT)</i>				

ANNEX C
Initial / Official List of Members

Name of member	License number	PAOT Membership number	PAOT Membership type	Email address	Affiliation

