

DMSS Terms of Reference: Interest Groups

Revised May 8, 2023

SECTION 1: PURPOSE

- a. To define a set of parameters by which the Dalhousie Medical Students' Society (DMSS) Interest Groups, at DMNS and DMNB, may be established, renewed and funded.

SECTION 2: INTERPRETATION

For the purposes of this Terms of Reference:

- a. "Student Interest Group Committee" (SIGC) refers to a committee of the DMSS that exists to review Interest Groups and Student Initiatives applications, and funding requests
 - i. There are two SIGCs: one at DMNB and one at DMNS
 - ii. Wherever possible, the two SIGCs will make efforts to share processes and criteria.
 - iii. For SIGC membership, see DMSS Terms of Reference: Standing Committees
- b. "Interest Group" (IG) refers to an association of members of Dalhousie Medical School, primarily DMSS members, given official status through formal DMSS approval.
- c. A "New IG" refers to any IG applying for official IG status that does not meet all of the requirements for a Returning IG.
- d. A "Returning IG" refers to any IG that is applying for official IG status that has been an official IG during at least the fall or winter funding cycle in the previous year.
 - i. Returning IG applications are only accepted in the fall funding cycle.
- e. "IG Executive" refers to IG leaders – be they referred to as President, Chair, Coordinator, or any other leadership title.
 - i. IGs must have two Executives responsible to the DMSS. Other roles may be created within an IG structure as needed, but would not be Executives from the viewpoint of DMSS.
- f. "IG Night" (both NB and NS) refers to an event which showcases all potential IGs to the DMSS student body.
- g. "IG Executives' Roundtable" (both NB and NS) refers to a meeting held in both the fall and winter semesters where IG Executives will review the application process for IG funding with the treasurer from each campus, and will discuss their activities with the aim of fostering further inter-IG collaboration.
- h. "Lifestyle Nights" refer to events that invite staff and/or resident physicians to provide perspectives on residency programs, work/life balance, CaRMS applications, clinical pearls, and any other information with regards to the paths that they followed in establishing their careers.

SECTION 3: GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- a. All DMSS members have the right to participate in, apply to lead, or apply to create an IG.
- b. IGs must be accessible to the entire DMSS Student Body regardless of an individual's gender, race, or religion.
- c. IGs must seek to provide programming that complements rather than reproduces medical curricula.
- d. IGs fall into one of three categories
 - i. "Medical Interest Group"
 1. Refers to an IG that organizes events for the purpose of providing information, knowledge and skills relevant to the practice of medicine, including the various medical specialties.
 2. These groups are inward-facing and are primarily directed at the personal and professional development of members of the DMSS.
 3. Medical IGs must strive to maintain an average attendance of at least 10% of the pre-clerkship class size at their respective campus over all sessions.
 - ii. "Community Interest Group"
 1. Refers to an IG that organizes events for the purpose of outreach to, or the bettering of, the wider community.
 - i. This includes historically marginalized groups, whereby Section 3, clause a and b do not apply to support the creation of safe spaces for those students who identify with their mandate.
 2. These groups are outward facing, interacting with individuals outside of the DMSS and Faculty of Medicine.
 - iii. "Social Interest Group"
 1. Refers to an IG that organizes events for the enjoyment of the DMSS community, largely unrelated to the professional practice of medicine.
 2. These groups are inward-facing and are primarily directed at the personal and professional development of members of the DMSS.
- e. The same funding criteria will be applied to all interest groups deemed to fall into the same category.
- f. The categorization of IGs is approved at the discretion of the SIGC and may not be the same distinction made by UGME with regards to the Medical Student Performance Evaluation Record (MSPR).
- g. IGs must maintain an up-to-date attendance list for each event to track number of attendees. This list must be included in the end of year report.
- h. IGs must attend the IG Night, held every fall and organized by the VP NB (DMNB) and VP Internal (DMNS).
- i. IGs must hold a minimum of:

- i. NB: one (1) event per funding year.
 - ii. NS: three (3) events per funding year.
- j. IGs will not be permitted to hold events during Wellness Week. Exceptions can be made with approval from the Wellness Week Committee.
- k. IGs will not be permitted to hold events during Green Week. Exceptions can be made with approval from the Dal Med Green Team.
- l. IGs must submit requests to the DMSS DMNB Technology and Communications Rep (DMNB) and DMSS VP Communications (DMNS) to have their event included in the DMSS calendar. Requests must be made at least one week before the event.

SECTION 4: APPLICATION FOR NEW AND RETURNING IGs

4.1 General Procedure

- a. A call for applications will be disseminated via the DMSS e-mail account by the DMNB Technology and Communications Rep (DMNB) and the VP Communications (DMNS)
 - i. No later than October 1st for the fall funding cycle, AND
 - ii. In January for the winter funding cycle
 - iii. The application periods may differ between DMNB and DMNS, however, they should follow the same general principles.
- b. Before the closing date of the fall IG application, an “Interest Group Roundtable Meeting” led by the SIGC will be held at each campus, with mandatory attendance by IG Executives, to discuss IG funding sources and allocation, the funding application process, and budgeting for Interest Groups.
- c. Returning non-medical IGs must submit confirmation including new IG Executive membership before August 1st annually to the VP NB (DMNB), VP Internal (DMNS) and VP Communications (copied via email). Current IGs with a newly selected executive in the spring will automatically carry forward as an approved IG, once confirmations are submitted by the new executive. Late submissions will require the IG to submit a new application in the Fall cycle.
- d. Applications for Returning IGs must be received within one (1) week of the application opening, no later than October 8th for fall applications.
- e. Applications for New IGs must be received within one (1) week of the application opening, no later than October 8th for fall applications.
 - i. Applications for New IGs can be run independently from applications for Returning IGs at the discretion of the SIGC.
- f. In order to receive official DMSS recognition, IGs must be approved by the SIGC. Final decisions will be made within two (2) weeks of the application opening, no later than October 15th for fall applications.
 - i. Approved Returning IGs will be considered an ‘official’ DMSS IG for one fall and one winter funding cycle and require another submission the following academic year.
- g. A campus-specific IG application will be used for DMNB and DMNS. After the closure of the application period, submitted applications will be organized for evaluation by the DMNB Technology and Communications Rep (DMNB) and the VP Communications (DMNS) .

- h. The IG application (see 4.2 for New IGs and 4.3 for Returning IGs) will be evaluated by each member of the SIGC on the respective campus. The SIGC will then come to a consensus whether an IG will be created or renewed.
 - i. Should a member of the SIGC sit on an IG Executive, they will abstain from both discussions and decisions regarding their group's IG formation, renewal or funding during SIGC meetings. This member of the SIGC will be asked to leave the room when said group is being discussed. All discussions that occur when this SIGC member leaves the room will be *in camera*.
- i. If the application is approved, the amount of funding available to the IG will be determined by the SIGC, see SECTION 5.
 - i. *Note:* IGs do not need to receive funding to be an official IG. These IGs will be permitted to advertise their official status and participate in IG Night.
- j. If an IG is refused official IG status, a written explanation prepared by the SIGC will be provided to the IG Executives.
- k. The SIGC reserves that right to disallow the formation or renewal of an IG based on:
 - i. Overlap with another IG in terms of mandate, medical specialty and/or programming;
 - ii. Not providing sufficient value-added educational, career, extracurricular or life-experience component to members of the IG or the student body as a whole;
 - iii. SIGC discretion
- l. IGs whose formation or renewal was disallowed may submit a written appeal to the DMSS President within one (1) week of learning of the decision. The DMSS President will review the appeal and must bring it to DMSS Council to be discussed and voted upon at the next DMSS Council meeting.
- m. Voting members of DMSS Council, who are also members of the SIGC may engage in this discussion, but shall abstain from the final vote.

4.2 Applying for New IG status

- a. In order to apply for official New IG status, the Executives must submit a completed IG Application Form to the SIGC by the advertised deadline, as per 4.1. The application form shall include:
 - i. The IG category into which the IG falls, as outlined in SECTION 3 above.
 - ii. A formal mandate consisting of the purpose and detailed objectives of the IG;
 - iii. The names and e-mail addresses of the Executives
 - iv. For Community and Social IGs, a signature of support of 10% of pre-clerkship students who are not the Executives of the proposed;
 - 1. An IG may present a written explanation for circumstances that preclude them from the minimum number of signatures. The

- explanation should include justification of how their IG would provide benefit for the student body at Dal Med.
2. Medical IGs are exempt from collecting signatures of support.
- v. A proposed budget for the year, including:
 1. List of proposed activities, with dates
 2. Any projected costs and revenues
 - vi. New Medical IGs are asked to indicate their desire for a Lifestyles in Medicine Night, see SECTION 5.5.
 - vii. Whether efforts to secure funding for the IG outside the DMSS have been made, and how much additional funding was secured.
 1. Such funding includes, but is not limited to: departmental support, affiliate organization support, community or government grants.

4.3 Applying for Returning IG status

- a. In order to renew IG status as a Returning IG, the Executives must submit a completed DMSS IG Confirmation Form to the VP Internal, VP Finance, and VP Communications by the advertised deadline, as per 4.1. The confirmation form will include:
 - i. The IG category into which the IG falls, as outlined in SECTION 3 above.
 - ii. A formal mandate consisting of the purpose and detailed objectives of the IG;
 - iii. The names and e-mail addresses of the Executives
 - iv. Medical Specialty IGs are asked to indicate their desire for a Lifestyles in Medicine Night, see SECTION 5.
 - v. A report on activities undertaken during the year including:
 1. List of activities, including dates
 2. Attendance numbers for each event, and which faculty or residents were in attendance, if applicable;
 3. *Note for DMNS IGs:* Failure to hold three (3) events will be taken under heavy consideration.
 - vi. A proposed, detailed budget for the upcoming year including:
 1. List of proposed activities, with dates
 2. Any projected costs and revenues;
 - vii. Medical Specialty IGs are asked to indicate their desire for a Lifestyles in Medicine Night, see SECTION 5.5.
 - viii. Whether efforts to secure funding for the IG outside the DMSS have been made, and how much additional funding was secured.
 1. Such funding includes, but is not limited to: departmental support, affiliate organization support, community or government grants.

SECTION 5: FUNDING

5.1 Funding Eligibility

- a. For IGs, to be eligible for DMSS Council funding, an itemized budget must be provided during the application period:
 - i. IG budgets must include assessments of known or projected costs for all planned events, as well as any known or projected revenues and donations to be collected during the year.
 1. For returning IGs, an itemized budget of the previous year is required
 - ii. Funding will not be given to IGs or IG events where there is not a value-added educational, career, extracurricular or life-experience component to members of the IG or the student body as a whole (i.e., Executive of IGs may not use funds to purchase food for the Executive or IG meetings).
 - iii. If an IG is denied funding, a written explanation, prepared by SIGC, will be provided to the Executives.
 - iv. IGs who did not receive funding or less funding than they had asked may submit a written appeal to the DMSS President within one (1) week of learning of the decision. The DMSS President will review the appeal and must bring it to DMSS Council to be discussed and voted upon at the next DMSS Council meeting. Voting members of DMSS Council, who are also members of the SIGC may engage in this discussion, but shall abstain from the final vote.

5.2 Funding Application

- a. Calls for funding will be included in the IG application, and follow the same timelines outlined in 4.1

5.3 Funding Allocation

- a. Funding will be allocated by the SIGC using the principles for review of budget requests, including:
 - i. Extent of external funding received from existing funds (i.e., existing bank accounts) and/or third-party funding;
 - ii. Evaluation of the degree of medical student attendance;
 - iii. Demonstrated successful use of previous IG funding;
 - iv. Number of planned events;
 - v. Funds estimated to be necessary for planned events (based on size of planned events, as well as expected attendance);
 - vi. Practicality of budget request;
 - vii. Total available funds for that period.
- b. Funding will be allocated based on IG categories:
 - i. The same funding criteria will be applied to all IGs that fall within the same category, as defined in SECTION 3.

- ii. Funding for Medical Interest Groups is prioritized. All approved Medical Interest Groups deemed by the SIGC to require funding will be funded before Community and Social Interest Groups.
 - iii. Following the allocation of funding to Medical Interest Groups, allocation to Community and Social Interest Groups can be made at the discretion of the SIGC.
 - iv. As funds vary from year to year, approval of official IG status by Community and Social Interest groups does not guarantee funding from the DMSS.
- c. Following funding allocation, the SIGC will make the full list of IGs that were funded and the amount they received available to the DMSS Executives.

5.4 General Principles

- a. Outside of Lifestyles Nights, DMSS funding for food for IG events will not be allocated in lieu of opportunities to fund practical learning experiences.
- b. Generally, gifts for speakers are not approved.
- c. Funds approved, in principle, for a student group, but not utilized by that group will NOT be carried over multiple years for that group.

5.5 Lifestyles in Medicine Nights

- a. Funding for Lifestyles in Medicine Nights will be distributed by the Dalhousie Medicine Office of Student Affairs through the DMSS. Allocation towards Lifestyles in Medicine Nights is governed independently at DMNB and DMNS.
- b. Funds will only be available to official Medical IGs that represent a medical specialty or medical specialties.
- c. Interest to obtain funding for a Lifestyles in Medicine Night must be indicated in the IG application (whether the IG be New or Returning).
- d. Only one Lifestyles in Medicine Night will be granted to each relevant IG per funding year.
- e. Money available from the Dalhousie Medicine Office of Student Affairs will then be split evenly among each Medical IG that indicates their intent to obtain Lifestyles in Medicine Night funding.
- f. *Note:* for Lifestyles in Medicine Nights at DMNB, IGs are required to complete the “DMSS-NB Project Reimbursement Form” and to email Pam Murphy,

outlining the number of participants that attended, a quick description of the event, and the receipts for their purchases.

5.6 Reimbursement

- a. Receipts must be submitted to either the DMNB Treasurer (DMNB) or the VP Finance (DMNS) at the earliest convenience.
- b. Requirements for reimbursement:
 - i. Original, itemized receipt
 - ii. Completed DMSS Request for Reimbursement Form for their respective campus.
- c. Money will NOT be transferred in advance of any proposed event.

SECTION 6: INTEREST GROUP EXECUTIVES

6.1 IG Executive Responsibilities

- a. In addition to duties outlined above including, but not limited to, forming or renewing IGs and reporting relevant to both, Executives have the following responsibilities:
 - i. Attend (or delegate another student to attend) the IG Night in early September (to occur by September 15th annually);
 - ii. Attend (or delegate another student to attend) the IG Executives' Roundtable.
 1. The meeting will discuss IG funding sources, funding allocation, the funding application process, budgeting and scheduling for Interest Group events.
 - iii. At DMNS only: Attend (or delegate another student to attend) the Dalhousie Medical Alumni Gala Dinner (held in the Fall of each year)
 - iv. Outgoing Executives must prepare an end-of-year handover report to the Incoming Executives and DMSS VP Communications including:
 1. Final budget for previous year
 2. Summary of events
 3. Contacts of key stakeholders for the IG

6.2 IG Executive Appointment

- a. For Medical Interest Groups (see SECTION 3 for description)
 - i. All Executive positions are considered vacant after Executives serve a 1-year term
 - ii. Application:
 1. Following the conclusion of the Spring DMSS elections, IG applications will be made available to eligible students by the VP Internal or VP DMNB to apply for all vacant IG Executive positions.

2. Interest groups applications must provide co-executive applicants with an option to self-disclose affiliation with traditionally under-represented groups in medical leadership.
 3. The application period will remain open for five (5) days.
 4. The applications will be anonymized and distributed to the outgoing Executives by the VP Internal or VP DMNB for selection of new Executives.
 5. The outgoing Executives will have 72 hours to inform the VP DMNB or the VP Internal of their selected replacements.
 6. VP DMNB or the VP Internal will communicate results to successful applicants.
- iii. No student will be permitted to serve as Executive for more than three (3) Medical Interest Groups.
1. If a student is selected to lead more than three Medical Interest Groups, the VP Internal or VP DMNB will inform the relevant student and seek their preference. They will then ask the outgoing Executives for the other IGs to select a new replacement.
- iv. Interest Group Candidates who were unsuccessful in their application may submit a written appeal to the VP of Internal Affairs within one (1) week of learning of the decision. The VPI will review the appeal and must bring it to the President, VPI, VP EDI, and one of the current 2SLGBTQIA+ and Allies in Medicine Interest Group lead. In New Brunswick, the VPI position will be replaced by the VP NB.
- b. For Community and Social Interest Groups (see SECTION 3 for description)
- i. Outgoing Executives must advertise their leadership positions for at least two (2) weeks prior to selecting the incoming Executive. This must be reported to the VP Internal.
 - ii. Outgoing Executives must choose the Incoming Executives in the most democratic way possible:
 1. Complaints arising from these procedures may be addressed to the SIGC;
 2. If the complaint is found to have merit, the SIGC will then choose who the Incoming Executives for the IG in question will be.