



Interest Group Policy

Section 1 - Objective

1.1 - The Manitoba Medical Students Association (MMSA) recognizes the vital role that interest groups play in enhancing the medical student experience. With this policy, the MMSA aims to improve interest group sustainability and accountability while increasing transparency regarding funding allocation and group formation/turnover.

Section 2 - Interpretation

2.1 - For the purposes of this policy:

(a) An “interest group” or simply a “group” refers to any MMSA Executive-certified (i.e. “official”) association of MMSA members. Only these certified groups shall enjoy the rights and responsibilities outlined herein.

(b) A “returning interest group” refers to any interest group that is applying for official interest group status and was recognized as an official interest group during the previous academic year.

(c) A “new interest group” refers to any interest group that is applying for official interest group status and was not recognized as an official group during the previous academic year.

(d) An “academic interest group” refers to an interest group that organizes events for the purpose of providing information, knowledge, and skills relevant to a specific medical field.

(e) A “community interest group” refers to an interest group that does not meet the above requirements for an academic group. These groups typically organize events that represent specific populations of patients or allow medical students to express their interests outside of the medical field with like-minded peers.

(f) “Executive” refers to interest group leaders, whether they are referred to as President, Chair, Coordinator, or any other leadership title as designated by their respective group.

(g) “MMSA Executive” refers to the MMSA Executive Council, as organized in Article III, Section 1 of the MMSA Constitution. The Vice Stick Internal is primarily responsible for the management of interest groups.

Section 3 - Rights and Responsibilities

3.1 - Interest Group Rights

(a) All MMSA members have the right to participate in, apply to lead, or apply to create an interest group, as well as attend events put on by groups.

i. An MMSA member may be part of the executive council of a maximum of 2 interest groups.

(b) Interest groups are eligible to apply for funding from the MMSA.

(c) Interest groups have the right to hold events sanctioned by the MMSA.

(d) Interest groups may advertise their events to MMSA members on social media, keeping in mind that the aim is not to overwhelm dedicated college or class groups.

i. Groups may not send mass emails to the MMSA membership via the class listservs or otherwise. Email advertisement of events shall be limited to those students who have consented to email correspondence by subscribing to an interest group's mailing list.

ii. Groups may advertise their events on the shared MMSA Facebook page, as well as their class Facebook pages.

iii. Groups should post their events on the MMSA website calendar. Sign-up for group events should go through the MMSA website event sign-up, and not through Google Sheets or other platforms unless a valid reason is offered and approved.

3.2 - Interest Group Responsibilities

(a) Groups must abide by municipal, provincial, and federal law.

(b) Groups must be free from intention of personal or corporate financial gain.

(c) New and returning groups are required to complete the relevant annual Application Form and submit it to the Vice-Stick Internal as outlined herein.

i. Group conduct must be in agreement with the information put forth in their Application Form for the duration of the academic year.

(d) Groups may have either one or two Executives.

i. Executives must ensure that their current contact information is up-to-date on the MMSA website, either by updating their contact information in their group application, or by notifying the Vice-Stick Internal.

- (e) It is the duty of each group to maintain financial responsibility by:
- i. Making judicious use of its financial resources for the benefit of all MMSA members;
 - ii. Keeping accurate records of financial assets and expenses;
 - iii. Utilizing all funding granted by the MMSA, or notifying the Vice-Stick Internal or MMSA treasurers if funding cannot be appropriately used, such that these funds can be reallocated to other groups.
- (f) Groups are required to hold a minimum of 2 programs per year.
- i. Groups should seek to provide programming that complements rather than reproduces medical curricula.
 - ii. Groups must maintain an up-to-date attendance list and budget for each event. These items must be included in their annual application.
- (g) Groups booking spaces on campus must adhere to the Seminar Room Policy outlined by the Rady Faculty of Health Sciences
- i. Groups may be held financially liable for events that require excessive cleaning on the part of the University of Manitoba's Physical Plant Services.
- (h) Executives must submit program information to the MMSA website calendar as soon as it is available, and at minimum one week before the event is scheduled to occur.
- i. Interest groups will not be allowed to book an event at the same time as another interest group event or MMSA event. Priority of booking event for an allotted time spot will be executed on a first-come, first-serve basis. The Communications Representative will notify groups in a timely manner if their event conflicts with another previously scheduled or submitted event.
 - ii. Any conflicting event that is organized to be held during an event scheduled through the MMSA website calendar cannot be advertised on the Med 1 – 4 Facebook page and will not be posted on the MMSA website.
 - iii. Exceptions to this rule will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Vice-Stick Internal (eg. for groups with regularly scheduled events)
- (i) Interest Groups may take attendance at events. If MMSA members who have signed up for the event do not attend the events, Interest Group Executive are encouraged to share this information with the Vice-Stick Internal so the matter can be followed up appropriately.
- (j) Interest Groups should aim to submit a profile on one event per year to be featured

on the MMSA website

(k) At least one Executive from each group must be present at the annual Interest Group Information Night in September, or similar event as planned jointly with the Department of Student Affairs.

i. If no Executive is able to attend, another student may be chosen to attend as a replacement, at the discretion of the Vice-Stick Internal and/or Associate Dean, Student Affairs.

(l) Outgoing Executives must supply incoming Executives with all group information and documents necessary to the successful running of the group in a transition report. The contents and format of said report shall be at the discretion of the outgoing Executives.

3.3 - MMSA Executive Responsibilities (pertaining to interest groups)

(a) A complete list of interest groups and their Executives will be made widely available for reference on the MMSA website. As per Section 3.2.d, Interest Group Executives are responsible for ensuring contact information is up-to-date.

(b) The MMSA Executive (namely the Communications Representative, Vice-Stick Internal, and Senior Stick) will help to maintain an up to date MMSA Events Calendar, in an effort to aid interest groups in advertising their events and prevent scheduling conflicts.

(c) The MMSA Executive (namely Senior and Junior Treasurers and the Vice-Stick Internal) will make all group registration/funding decisions in a fair and timely fashion, as outlined herein.

Section 4 - Interest Group Organization

4.1 - Each interest group shall be managed by a council, consisting primarily of one or two Executives plus one or two Medicine I Representatives.

(a) Executives shall serve a term of one academic year, typically during Medicine II.

(b) As their title suggests, Medicine I Representatives shall serve a term of one academic year, during Medicine I.

4.2 - Upon the conclusion of the academic year, Medicine I Representatives shall transition to become the incoming Executives for the next academic year. Such transition should be accomplished using a transition report, as outlined in Section 3.2.l.

(a) Outgoing Executives may remain a part of their interest group's council in an advisory role, at the discretion of the new Executives.

4.3 - Executives may choose to advertise and appoint additional council members as deemed

necessary.

(a) Potential positions may include subspecialty representatives, secretaries, treasurers, etc.

(b) A given interest group council shall not exceed six additional members without the consent of the MMSA Executive.

Section 5 - Interest Group Executive Appointments

5.1 - As outlined in Section 4.2, Executives are not appointed from the general MMSA membership; instead, the Med 1 Representative(s) is/are promoted from within a given interest group at the conclusion of each academic year.

5.2 - Selection of Med 1 Representatives shall occur in September on an annual basis:

(a) Executives must inform the Vice-Stick Internal of the titles and numbers of positions they would like to fill with Med 1 Representatives at least one week before applications are distributed.

(b) Two weeks prior to application due date, the Vice-Stick Internal shall notify the first year medical students of the impending selection process, indicating:

- i. Which interest groups have been approved by the MMSA Executive for the current academic year, and are thus eligible to appoint Med 1 Representatives;
- ii. Descriptions of said groups;
- iii. Roles and responsibilities of the positions available ;
- iv. Application forms and information relevant to the application process;
- v. Application deadline.

(c) Applications shall be returned to the Vice-Stick Internal, who will then distribute them to the relevant interest groups.

(d) Executives may then select which applicants they would like to join their council. The Vice-Stick Internal should be informed of selections within the following week such that announcement of the appointments can be made to the MMSA membership.

5.3 Selection of additional interest group council members shall occur concurrently with the process outlined in 5.2.

(a) Executives must inform the Vice-Stick Internal of which additional positions they would like to appoint at the same time as their request for Med 1 representatives, such that these positions can be included in the call for applications.

5.4 Students may not serve on the executive of more than two interest groups in one academic year.

Section 6 - Annual Application Procedures (New Interest Groups)

6.1 - In order to apply for official new interest group status, the proposed Executives must submit a completed New Interest Group Application Form to the current Vice-Stick Internal. The application form can be found on the MMSA website and shall include:

- (a) A stated purpose of the group;
- (b) A description of the group, which will be displayed on the MMSA website;
- (c) One or two proposed Executives and their contact information;
- (d) A minimum of one faculty advisor for academic interest groups (this does not apply for community groups).
- (e) A minimum of twenty MMSA members, who are not the Group's Executives, who have endorsed the Group via signature;
- (f) A proposed budget and schedule of events for the year (i.e. a list of activities and when they will be held, and any projected costs and revenues)
 - i. This aspect of the application may be filled out on the Interest Group Budget Proposal Form.

6.2 - In order to receive official MMSA recognition for the current academic year, groups must be approved by the MMSA Executive.

- (a) Final decisions will be made 1-2 weeks following submission of the application.
 - i. The MMSA Executive reserves the right to disallow the formation of a new interest group on the basis of overlap with pre-existing interest group (in terms of mandate, medical specialty, or programming) or at their discretion upon review of the application outlined in Section 6.1 and the criteria outlined in Section 9.1.
 - I. If a Group is refused official Group status, a written explanation will be provided to the proposed Executives.
 - II. Groups whose formation was disallowed may submit a written appeal to the MMSA Senior Stick within 1 week of learning of the decision. The Senior Stick will review the appeal, and must bring it to MMSA Executive to be discussed and voted upon at the next council meeting.
 - iv. The timeline for decisions regarding new interest group applications may be

extended to coincide with returning interest group applications, as outlined in section 6.3.

(b) Following approval, the application will be reviewed for funding by the MMSA Executive. For details on funding allotment, see Section 9.

6.3 - New interest groups are encouraged to apply in the spring or early summer, such that they align with standard interest group council appointments and MMSA funding allocation procedures, as outlined in Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 9.

(a) In order to align with the annual council appointment procedure, new groups must submit their application by June 30th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal) of the preceding academic year.

i. Groups that do not meet this cut-off date will still be able to appoint members in conjunction with the Vice-Stick Internal using a similar procedure to that outlined in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

(b) In order to align with MMSA funding allocation procedures, new groups must submit their funding application by September 30th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal) of the academic year in which they wish to receive funding.

i. Groups that do not meet this cut-off date must present a plan to operate the remainder of the year without MMSA funding. (See Section 9 for more detail.)

Section 7 - Annual Application Procedures (Returning Interest Groups)

7.1 - In order to renew group status as a returning interest group, the incoming and outgoing Executives must submit a completed Returning Interest Group Application Form to the Vice-Stick Internal by June 30th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal). The renewal form will include:

(a) A turnover report containing the names and signatures of both incoming and outgoing Executives and their contact information;

(b) A minimum of one faculty advisor for academic interest groups (this does not apply to community groups);

i. The faculty advisors may differ from year-to-year, but groups must confirm an annual commitment from at least one faculty advisor.

(c) A report on programming undertaken during the year and their budget;

i. Executives may at this time choose to also submit a budget and programming proposal for the upcoming year, or they may defer doing so until September 30th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal) of the upcoming academic year, as this is the deadline imposed upon new interest groups in order to be

considered for funding, and groups will have appointed their Med 1 Representatives at this time.

(d) Revisions to any previously submitted group information, as warranted (e.g. group name or description)

i. These revisions must be deemed by the Vice-Stick Internal to be in line with the objective of previous iterations of said group. If changes are not deemed to be in agreement with previous group mandates, the Executives must submit an Application to form a new interest group.

7.2 - In order to receive official MMSA recognition for the following academic year, groups must be approved by the MMSA Executive.

(a) Final decisions for returning groups will be made by July 15th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal).

i. The MMSA Executive reserves the right to disallow the renewal of a returning group on the basis of overlap with another group (in terms of mandate, medical specialty, programming), or at their discretion upon review of the application outlined in Section 7.1 and the criteria outlined in Section 8.1 and 8.2.

I. If a group is refused official status, a written explanation will be provided to the Executives.

II. Groups whose renewal was disallowed may submit a written appeal to MMSA Senior Stick within 1 week of learning of the decision. The Senior Stick will review the appeal, and must bring it to MMSA Executive to be discussed and voted upon at the next council meeting.

(b) Following submission of a budget and program plan, the MMSA Executive will review these documents for funding.

Section 8 – Evaluation and Assessment

8.1 - The applications for group status as outlined in Sections 6 and 7 shall be evaluated using the following criteria:

(a) Pertinence of the group for MMSA members;

(b) Sustainability (i.e. possibility for group continuation);

(c) Proposed event plan and budget;

i. Academic groups should aim to conduct several types of sessions, including but not limited to:

(A) A workshop relevant to the Group's mandate. This may include technical skills, clinical skills, or other hands-on or direct interpersonal sessions.

(B) An event featuring clerkship students or residents. Having a clerkship student or resident in a supervisory role for a clinical skills workshop is not sufficient for this category.

(C) A "Why this specialty?" session.

(d) Number of events held in an academic term;

i. All groups must hold a minimum of two events per year to maintain returning group status.

ii. If a group fails to hold a minimum of two events per year, a written explanation must be provided to the Vice-Stick Internal along with the Returning Interest Group application

iii. Groups who fail to hold a minimum of two events per year will be placed on Probation for the following year, should their returning group application be successful. Failure to overcome probationary status in this subsequent year will be grounds for dismissal for the group in question, as per the discretion of the Vice-Stick Internal.

(e) Uniqueness of group and avoidance of overlap with the programming and mandate of an existing Interest Group

8.2 - The application for returning group status as outlined in Section 7 shall also be evaluated using the following additional criteria:

(a) Average attendance at prior events;

(b) Diversity and originality of prior events;

(c) Student satisfaction with prior events;

(d) Overall history of group professionalism.

8.3 - Success or failure of one criterion is not sufficient for the approval or denial of group status. A global review of how each group satisfies all of the criteria will be made in order to approve groups in a holistic manner.

Section 9 - Funding Allocation Procedure

9.1 - To be eligible for Doctors Manitoba Funding from the MMSA Exec funding, a completed Interest Group Budget and Programming Proposal Form must be provided prior to September

30th (or the date set by the Vice-Stick Internal).

(a) Budgets should include assessments of known or projected costs for all planned events, as well as any known or projected revenues to be collected during the year.

9.2 – Doctors Manitoba Funding will be allocated on an annual basis, at the October MMSA Executive council meeting.

(a) The MMSA Exec will make every effort to accommodate groups applying for approval following the cut-off date; however, those who miss the deadline must present a plan to operate the remainder of the year without MMSA funding, as this is the likely scenario.

9.3 - Funding will be allocated using the following principles, listed by relative weight of importance:

- (a) Practicality of the budget request;
- (b) Number and size of planned events;
- (c) Assessment of event quality, originality, and planning;
- (d) Demonstrated successful use of previous group funding;
- (e) Extent and availability of external funding for the group in question;
- (f) Total available MMSA funds for that period;
- (g) Degree of medical student attendance

9.4 - In addition to the aforementioned principles:

(a) Practical or creative learning experiences will be valued more highly than food.

9.5 Executives must retain receipts for all programming expenses in order to be reimbursed by the MMSA Treasurers through the Doctors Manitoba Fund, as per the Treasurer's instructions.

Part 10 – Accountability

10.1 - Grounds for interest group disbandment include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Breach of any of the responsibilities outlined in this policy;
- (b) Committing an offence that breaks any federal, provincial or municipal laws or otherwise damages the reputation of the MMSA and/or University of Manitoba;
- (c) Failure to take adequate precautions to limit liability while hosting or participating in high-risk events or activities.

10.2 - If an interest group is believed to have contravened one or more of the grounds for disbandment, the Executives will be notified of such complaint in writing by the Vice-Stick Internal.

(a) This complaint may take the form of a warning or a direct motion to disband said group, depending on the nature of the policy breach.

i. If a warning has been issued, said interest group will be considered to be on probation for the remainder of the academic year.

ii. Groups who accrue multiple warnings in a single academic year may be subject to a motion for disbandment, regardless of the severity of the individual breaches in policy.

10.3 If a group believes that they have not met the grounds for a warning or a motion to disband, the Executives may submit a written response to the Senior Stick.

(a) The Senior Stick, Vice-Stick Internal, and Vice-Stick External will then convene to review both the complaint and the group's response. If sufficient grounds for probation or disbandment are deemed to exist, the group will be notified in writing by the Vice-Stick Internal.

(b) If the group wishes to dispute the decision of this committee, they may submit a new appeal to the Senior Stick.

i. If this should occur, the Senior Stick will present the case to the MMSA Executive at the next convened council meeting. Following a discussion, a final decision regarding probation or disbandment will be made.

10.4 - Consequences of disbandment:

(a) Loss of interest group status and all privileges thereby conferred for the interim, including rights to hold and lead MMSA-sanctioned events;

(b) Repayment to the MMSA Executive of any monies provided to the group that have not yet been spent at time of disbandment.

(c) Disbanded interest groups may apply for approval in the following academic year using the process outline in Section 7, with the addition of a report detailing the previous incident and what can be done in the upcoming year to avoid similar incidents.

Developed July 2015 by the MMSA in collaboration with Queens University's Aesculapian Society and the Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan.

Revised October 2017 with support from 2017-2018 Interest Group Executive and with

feedback from the 2017 – 2018 MMSA Executive Council.