

# Research Group Handbook

This Handbook brings together the various policies, procedures, and documents of the Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers) ('RGS-IBG', or 'the Society') that relate to Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups ('Research Groups'). It is intended to assist the officers and committee members of RGS-IBG Research Groups in their work. It is reviewed annually, usually in the autumn. Last updated 27 March 2025 by the Research and Higher Education Division (RHED) of the RGS-IBG. Please send any questions, comments or suggestions to: [E rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

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# 1 Formation and dissolution of Research Groups

## 1.1 Formation, operation and dissolution of Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups

*Created by RHED 14 November 1999 and last amended 16 December 2021, approved by the Research and Higher Education Committee*

### 1.1.1 Research Groups

1. Research Groups are collective bodies of researchers within the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). They undertake some or all of the following activities:
  - Collaborative research
  - Foster networks of researchers with common interests
  - Host and co-host activities within the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference
  - Convene workshops, seminars, conferences
  - Encourage postgraduate participation in their particular sub-discipline
  - Publish books, journals, and other publications including digital resources
  - Maintain and update websites
  - Distribute newsletters and/ or bulletins
  - Promote undergraduate and postgraduate activity through dissertation prizes and grants for early career researchers and postgraduates to attend relevant meetings
  - Nominate colleagues for awards

Research Groups are normally formed by a body of researchers working in a particular sub-discipline/area within Geography. The Society seeks to encourage diversity in the nature of geographical research being conducted within and across Research Groups, and also wishes to positively embrace new developments and initiatives in the discipline. As sub-disciplines change through time, Research Groups are expected to change. New Research Groups may form, and others may be dissolved.

2. Limited Life Working Groups with a more temporally restricted scope of activity may also be formed. (See 1.1.2 below.)
3. All Research Groups receive an annual subvention from the Society based on the number of Fellows of the Society within them. This is normally paid in December. All Fellows can join Research Groups free of charge. Fellows can belong to more than one Research Group and there is no upper limit on the number of groups Fellows can join.
4. Associate Fellows (postgraduates) automatically belong to the Postgraduate Forum (PGF).
5. Some Research Groups make additional charges for specific services, such as distribution of newsletters.
6. Non-members can also join Research Groups, at the discretion of the Research Group. Information on these members is not held by the Society.
7. All Research Groups should have written constitutions, should hold an Annual General Meeting (normally at or around the Society's Annual International Conference), and must also
8. present an annual report and statement of accounts to the Society (separate guidelines exist for financial reporting and the annual report). Research Groups are expected to use their funds appropriately, and to specify in their annual report the purpose for which they are holding any funds above £1500 that remain in their bank account at the year end.

9. Research Groups are directly represented on the Research Groups Sub-Committee by the Chair, the Honorary Secretary or Treasurer (or another nominated committee member who is a Fellow or member of the RGS-IBG), and on the Research and Higher Education Committee by three members elected from the Research Groups' Chairs, Honorary Secretaries and Treasurers. These elected representatives on the Research and Higher Education Committee must be Fellows of the RGS-IBG. Elections are normally held each February, with Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers of each Research Group entitled to one vote each. [For more information about the Committees of the Society, refer to Section 6 of this Handbook.]
10. New Research Groups may be established through the submission of the following to the Research and Higher Education Committee:
- Name of proposed new Research Group
  - Statement of purpose of the Research Group and reasoning for any overlap with existing Research Groups where this might exist. This should demonstrate clearly the distinctiveness of the new Research Group, in particular why the proposed activities cannot be undertaken within the infrastructure of an existing Research Group, and provide evidence of the distinctive contribution the new group will make to geographical research.
  - Two-year plan of proposed activities and their anticipated outcomes
  - Names and RGS-IBG membership number of 40 members indicating their agreement to belong to the Research Group
  - Nomination of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Research Group
  - Draft Constitution of Research Group (model provided, see 1.2 below)

The Research and Higher Education Committee will consider any proposal at its next meeting, providing that such a proposal is received no less than four weeks prior to that meeting, so that papers can be circulated. If the proposal is agreed, the Committee will approve the creation of the new Research Group

11. Following approval from the Research and Higher Education Committee for a new Research Group, a meeting will take place with the Director of Research, Education, Professional (or their designate). The Research Group will be asked to report on their planned activities at six-monthly intervals to the Research and Higher Education Committee for the first two years from their formation. Annually, one of these will be the annual report.

If the Committee consider it appropriate, Research Groups may be asked to form as a Limited Life Working Group for two years in the first instance. During that two-year period, the Working Group will be asked to report on their activities at six-monthly intervals.

12. Research Groups may be dissolved by the Research and Higher Education Committee following discussion with the Chair and Secretary of the Research Group for the following reasons:
- Decision at the AGM of the Research Group to cease its activities
  - Research Group membership of fewer than 40 members of the RGS-IBG
  - Failure of the Research Group to present its annual report and statement of accounts after at least three reminders have been sent to the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer at monthly intervals
  - A Research Group not having held an AGM for two years
  - Limited activities demonstrated at the five-year review or equivalent (see 3.4)
  - Activities by the Research Group which contravene policies of the RGS-IBG, including inappropriate use of Research Group funds.

### **1.1.2 Limited Life Working Groups**

1. Limited Life Working Groups exist to undertake specific research activities on themes of contemporary interest. They are created for an initial period of two years, but this may be extended by agreement of the Research and Higher Education Committee for two further years. Once established, the Limited Life Working Group may submit a proposal to become a Research Group providing they satisfy the above procedures. While some working groups may develop into a Research Group, subject to the approval by the Research and Higher Education Committee, this is not always considered appropriate and is in no way guaranteed. The Research

and Higher Education Committee may recommend that the proposed activities of the Limited Life Working Group are conducted within the scope of an existing Research Group rather than forming a new group.

Limited Life Working Groups undertake some, or all, of the following:

- Collaborative research
- Foster networks of researchers with common interests
- Host and co-host activities within the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference
- Convene workshops, seminars, conferences
- Encourage postgraduate participation in their particular sub-discipline
- Publish books, journals, and other publications including digital resources
- Maintain and update websites
- Distribute newsletters and/ or bulletins
- Promote undergraduate and postgraduate activity through dissertation prizes and grants for young researchers and postgraduates to attend relevant meetings
- Nominate colleagues for awards

They are normally formed by a body of researchers working in a particular sub-discipline/area within geography. Limited Life Working Groups may also form for a two-year period to establish if there is a need and enthusiasm from the community to form a Research Group with similar interests. This might be especially relevant to Working Groups that cross traditional sub-discipline boundaries or have yet to become an established sub discipline.

2. All Limited Life Working Groups should have written constitutions, and should present an annual report and statement of accounts to the RGS-IBG as specified above for Research Groups. Limited Life Working Groups are expected to use their funds appropriately, and to specify the purpose for which they are holding any funds above £500 that remain in their bank account at the year end.
3. Proposals for Limited Life Working Groups will be considered through the submission of the following to the Research and Higher Education Committee;
  - Name of proposed Limited Life Working Group
  - Statement of purpose of the Limited Life Working Group and reasoning for any overlap with existing Research Groups or Limited Life Working Groups where this might exist. This should demonstrate clearly the distinctiveness of the new Limited Life Working Group, in particular why the proposed activities cannot be undertaken within the infrastructure of an existing group, and provide evidence of the distinctive contribution the new group will make to geographical research.
  - Two-year plan of proposed activities and their anticipated outcome
  - Names and RGS-IBG membership number of 20 members indicating their agreement to belong to the Limited Life Working Group
  - Nomination of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer of the Limited Life Working Group
  - draft Constitution of Limited Life Working Group (model provided, see 1.2 below)

The Research and Higher Education Committee will consider any proposal at its next meeting, providing that such a proposal is received no less than two weeks prior to that meeting, so that papers can be circulated. If the proposal is agreed, the Committee will recommend the creation of the new Limited Life Working Group.

4. A Limited Life Working Group may apply to become a Research Group of the RGS-IBG after two calendar years of formation. Any such application must satisfy the conditions for Research Groups above, irrespective of whether the Group has existed as a Limited Life Working Group or not. The application must explain why continued Group activities cannot take place within the infrastructure of an existing research group. As noted above, development into a Research Group is not always considered appropriate and is not guaranteed. More commonly it is expected that a Limited Life Working Group would be subsumed within the most appropriate and closely related Research Group once its term has come to a close. The activities of the Limited Life Working Group will be taken into account during such applications.

5. Following approval from the Research and Higher Education Committee for a new Limited Life Working Group, a meeting will take place with the Director of Research, Education, Professional (or their designate). The Limited Life Working Group will be asked to report on their planned activities at six-monthly intervals to the Research and Higher Education Committee for the first two years from their formation. Annually, one of these will be the annual report.
6. Limited Life Working Groups may be dissolved prematurely by the Research and Higher Education Committee following discussion with the Chair and Secretary of the Limited Life Working Group or for the following reasons:
  - Decision by the members of the Limited Life Working Group to cease its activities
  - Limited Life Working Group membership of fewer than 20 members of the RGS-IBG
  - Failure of the Limited Life Working Group to present its annual report and statement of accounts after at least three reminders have been sent to the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer at monthly intervals
  - A Limited Life Working Group not having held an AGM
  - Activities by the Limited Life Working Group which contravene policies of the RGS-IBG, including inappropriate use of Limited Life Working Group funds.

## 1.2 Template for Research Group and Limited Life Working Group Constitutions

*RHED, Created 1st May 2000, last amended December 2021*

The constitution of the Research Groups should take the following format. The standard text may not be amended without consultation with RHED. For all reasonable purposes, the Limited Life Working Group constitutions should follow a similar format. Constitutions must clearly state whether it pertains to a Research Group or a Limited Life Working Group. Please note:

- Text in [ ] should be replaced with information specific to the Group
- Text in *italics* is for guidance and should be deleted from the final version of the constitution.

### Constitution of the [Title of Research Group]

1. The name of this Research Group is: [Title of the Research Group, with a reasonable abbreviation to be agreed with the Director of Research, Education, Professional.]
2. [Brief outline of the aims of the Research Group and how it is intended they will be achieved, including expected outcomes (maximum 150 words).]
3. Organisational status - The [XXRG] is a 'branch' of the Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) and must satisfy the aims and policies of the Society, including Equal Opportunity policy, and the legal and Charity Commissioner requirements including the guidance issued by the Charities' Commission on campaigning and political activity by charities. The [XXRG] must deliver an Annual Report and statement of accounts to the Society demonstrating that these aims and policies are being adhered to.

*Guidance is provided on suggested content of the Annual Report and statement of accounts. All Research Groups will be subject to a five-yearly review (or equivalent) of activities, membership and expenditure, while Limited Life Working Groups will be subject to a two-yearly review (or equivalent). See Section 2.4.*

4. Statement of membership - Membership of the [XXRG] shall be open to all members (including Associate Fellow (Postgraduate) members) of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) who request to join the Research Group, but shall never be less than 40. Limited Life Working Groups membership shall never be less than 20. Membership of the [XXRG] will be [free of charge].
5. Other interested persons who are not members of the RGS-IBG may join the [XXRG], subject to approval of the Research Group, [for an additional fee collected separately by the [XXRG]]. The [XXRG] will maintain their own

records of these members (adhering to all GDPR guidance), but must also use the RGS-IBG membership lists when undertaking a mailing to members.

6. The business of the [XXRG] shall be conducted by a Committee of no fewer than three members. Specified roles within the Committee include the following: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer. Each of these roles shall be undertaken by members of the RGS-IBG elected by the Group. The Committee will have the power to co-opt additional members as 'Ordinary members' or in named roles (e.g. 'Events Officer'). Overall, the majority of the Committee must be members of the RGS-IBG.

*Often Research Groups have additional elected members on their committees such as newsletter/website editor, membership secretary for a group of over 200 members, meetings and events co-ordinator, postgraduate co-ordinator, and publications co-ordinator.*

7. Terms of office - The offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and other committee members shall be for a period of three years. These officers may stand for a second term of three years, but must relinquish their post after the sixth year of office. Retiring officers shall not be eligible for re-election as an Ordinary Member of the Committee if they have served for 6 years, without first having a one-year break from the Committee.

Ordinary Committee members shall be elected for a period of not more than three years. Ordinary Committee members may stand for a second term of three years (either continuing in their current role, or taking on a different role including one of the honorary officer roles), but they must relinquish their post after the sixth year of office.

Postgraduate members shall be elected for a period of one year and shall not normally be eligible for re-election to the Committee for more than three terms of office.

*The Research Group should give consideration to a staggered succession timetable of officers serving on their committees in order that there is an appropriate level of continuity.*

8. Elections to the Committee will be held at the Annual General Meeting. Members will be informed in writing<sup>1</sup> (email) 30 days prior to the AGM of all vacancies to be filled. Nominations for Committee membership will be accepted up to the beginning of the AGM. Nominations must be in writing and include the names of the proposer and seconder.
9. The [XXRG] must present an Annual Report and Statement of Accounts to the RGS-IBG as requested. This is to comply with Charity Commissioners guidelines. The Research Group is expected to manage its funds with due care and for the benefit of the membership of the Research Group.
10. The Annual General Meeting shall normally be held at or around the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference in late August/September.

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) may be called by either the Chair and four members (or all other members if fewer than four in total) of the Committee or by any 20 ordinary members of the [XXRG]. The Secretary must give notice of at least 30 days of an EGM by email to all members of the [XXRG].

11. Changes to the Constitution - The constitution can be changed only by two-thirds majority vote of those present at an Annual General Meeting, provided that the membership has been individually notified of the proposed changes in email at least 30 days in advance. Research Group constitutions that have been altered by the AGM of the Research Group should then be submitted for approval by the Research and Higher Education Committee of the RGS-IBG at their next meeting. If the Research Group alters its constitution without informing the Research and Higher Education Committee by the time of its next meeting, the Research and Higher Education Committee will view this matter seriously and consider whether the group is contravening the aims of the RGS-IBG.

12. The activities of the Research Groups should not contravene the aims of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). Current policies may be viewed at <https://www.rgs.org/about-us/governance/society-policies-and-statements>
13. The [XXRG] may be dissolved only in accordance with the rules of the RGS-IBG.<sup>2</sup>
14. Current members of the Research Group Committee should familiarise themselves with the latest versions of the Society's Code of Conduct and the 'GDPR: Guidance for Research Groups' document, and act according to the principles outlined therein.

*Other activities of the group may be specified in an Appendix e.g. the organisation of x meetings or workshops over a 12-month period, the issuing of a newsletter, the creation and maintenance of a website, the creation and maintenance of an email distribution list of non-members of the RGS-IBG, and the organising of joint activities with other research groups and networks.*

### 1.3 Suggested Research Group Committee structure and roles

The template Constitution of the Research Group in Section 1.2 above defines the minimum Committee size and necessity for the roles of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer to be fulfilled. Research Groups may then recruit additional Ordinary Members for their Committee as appropriate to enable the Research Group's activities (examples are provided below). Ordinary Members support the work of the Research Group and provide feedback and input on the Research Group's activities at Committee meetings.

Specific responsibilities are likely to be as directed by the Chair. Based on best practice and the Committee structures of existing Research Groups, the table below suggests responsibilities that Ordinary Members of Research Group Committees may wish to adopt. Not every Committee will need all of these roles, and some Groups may need other roles.

The only role where we recommend that the person filling it needs to be UK-based is that of Treasurer. This is so they can be added as signatory on the group's bank account(s), as some banks will not allow international signatories on accounts. This requirement does not exist if the Research Group's funds are held at the Society.

Upon election as a formal Research Group committee member, each officer will be required to complete a short form of appointment (see 1.3.1 below) and available from: **W** [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups). Newly elected committee members are encouraged to attend induction sessions in early autumn each year. These may include externally facilitated training to support your Research Group role, for example in terms of EDI.

Occasionally an elected Committee member may need to temporarily step aside from their duties for a period of time (parental leave, medical leave, career break and so on). Should this occur, and if this is expected to be one year or less, we recommend that the Committee put in place temporary but formal arrangements to cover that person's duties during this period, and let RHED know what these are. This can include co-opting a named existing committee to the temporarily vacant role. Groups are not normally expected to hold elections for such temporary vacancies. If a committee member takes a period of leave, this 'pauses' their time on Committee, so that they may extend their role beyond the end date of their original 3 year or 6 year term (i.e. for an additional year) if they would like to do so.

Individual Research Groups may mandate Committee make-up or elections in their Constitutions. Research Groups are advised to check carefully before proposing significant changes in case of any constitutional limitations.

Each Research Group is also required to appoint a Data Controller. By default, we will assume this is the Chair of the Research Group, but you may nominate another committee member to take this role. The Data Controller must read the privacy notices of all third-party platforms being used by the Research Group (e.g. Eventbrite, Dropbox, Google Docs etc.), and return a signed copy of the Research Group data management agreement. More

<sup>2</sup> Please see 1.1.1.11 of the Research Groups Handbook



information is available in our guidance for Research Groups on compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), available from: [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

Committee role descriptions	Role and responsibilities
<b>Chair</b>	Leads the Research Group, helping to set its agenda and supporting other committee members in their roles. They may also be asked to respond to consultations by the Society on behalf of the group. The Chair should be a more senior scholar, and must be a current RGS-IBG Fellow.
<b>Secretary</b>	Supports the Chair, with particular responsibility for organising and minuting the group's AGM and other meetings. Must be a current RGS-IBG Fellow.
<b>Treasurer</b>	Keeps the accounts for the group, ensures payments are made on behalf of the group, and compiles and submits the group's annual financial reporting. Must be a current RGS-IBG Fellow.
<b>Membership coordinator</b>	Maintains the group's membership records, in consultation with the Research and Higher Education team at the Society. This role may be combined with that of <i>Website/Newsletter/Mailing List Coordinator</i> if that person manages the mailing list. This position is only recommended for groups where membership is greater than 200 and/or there is a high turnover rate, where the Secretary cannot manage the changes.
<b>Postgraduate representative</b>	Promotes postgraduate interests and needs to the wider Research Group and maintains connection with wider postgraduate community through the Postgraduate Forum and with Postgraduate representatives on other Research Groups.
<b>Early career representative</b>	Promotes interests and needs of early career researchers to the wider Research Group
<b>Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) coordinator</b>	Responsible for managing and supporting the work done by the Research Group on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.
<b>Communications coordinator (may include Website/Newsletter/Mailing List/Social Media)</b>	Manages communications on behalf of the Research Group, across a variety of media (including, but not limited to, the group's website, any manual mailing lists or automated list-servers, social media, and newsletters). This task may be undertaken by the Secretary.
<b>Awards and prizes coordinator</b>	Coordinates the judging and awarding of prizes for essays and dissertations in line with the Research Group's policy. Depending on the number of prizes and or submissions that the Committee proposes for a given year, these responsibilities might be shared by two or more people.
<b>Conference/event coordinator</b>	Coordinates the group's activities at annual conference, including sponsorship of sessions and Research Group Guest registration applications. May also organise other events for the group. Depending on the calendar of events that the Committee proposes for a given year, these responsibilities might be shared by two or more people.
<b>Publications coordinator/editor</b>	Coordinates and/or edits any publications the Research Group makes (e.g. working papers, journals, monographs, books), and liaising with publishers about the publication of any scholarly journals or books related to the Research Group's activities.
<b>Ordinary member</b>	Supports the work of the Research Group and provides feedback and input on the Research Group's activities at Committee meetings. We recommend that committees have no more than 3 ordinary members without a specific role.

### 1.3.1 Research Group committee appointment form

New members joining Research Group committee members for the first time are required to complete the below form as part of the processes of appointment. Please return your completed form to [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org). This form is available from [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

<b>Name</b>	
<b>RGS-IBG membership number</b>	
<b>Contact email</b>	
<b>Research Group name</b>	
<b>Committee position to which you have been elected</b>	
<b>Start date of committee role (usually the AGM at which you were elected)</b>	
<b>I have read and agree to abide by the Society's Code of Conduct, available at</b> <a href="https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/code-of-conduct/">https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/code-of-conduct/</a>	(please sign and date):
<b>I have read and agree to abide by the Research Groups Handbook, including the Society's policies on GDPR, available at</b> <a href="https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/resources-for-research-group-committees/">https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/resources-for-research-group-committees/</a>	(please sign and date):

## 1.4 Dissolution of Research Groups

If the decision is taken by either a Group Committee or the Research and Higher Education Committee to dissolve a Research Group, the following activities should be undertaken by the officers of the Group at the time of closure:

- Formally notify the Research and Higher Education Committee (through RHED) of the intention to close the Group. This action can then be formally recorded in the minutes of the Committee.
- Close any remaining Research Group communications and website.
- Close the Research Group bank account and return any remaining funds to the Society.
- Return a closing-balance financial report and annual report documenting any activities of the Research Group since the date of the last report delivered to the Society.
- Arrange for any Research Group archives held by Committee members or others to be transferred to the Society for long-term retention.

In addition, RHED will:

- Communicate the closure of the Research Group to members and update membership records; and
- Update its website and other records to show the dissolved Group as a "former" Research Group.

## 2 Requirements of a Research Group

In addition to being active (as evidenced by activities and a minimum threshold of 40 Fellows/members belonging to the Group), essentially there are four requirements of Research Groups: to (1) hold an AGM; (2) submit an annual report (by 31 October); (3) submit an annual financial report (by 31 October) (4) abide by the Society's policies, including upholding the Code of Conduct. In addition, all Research Groups (but not Limited Life Working Groups) are subject to a five year review (or equivalent) (see 3.4).

### 2.1 Hold an AGM

Each Research Group must hold an AGM each year. Important business conducted at an AGM includes (but is not limited to):

- Elect new committee members
- Report to members on the work and activities of the group this year
  - This forms the basis of that year's annual reporting provided to the Society
- Plan ahead for the coming year
- Engage members, hearing their thoughts and ideas to inform the Group's work

It is important to enable as many members of the group as possible to take part. It must not just be the current committee that attend and participate.

#### 2.1.1 Scheduling your AGM

AGMs may be held in person or online. Online AGMs often provide the opportunity for more members to attend. The Society must be informed when these are scheduled.

Each Research Group should notify its members at least 30 days prior to the AGM of the location, date, and time of the AGM, along with details of any committee vacancies (see the constitution of the particular Research Group and/or the example constitution given in Section 1.2).

Although a Research Group should normally hold its AGM just before, during, or just after the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference, from time to time they can choose to hold the AGM at another event where a greater number of Research Group members are expected to be in attendance. Research Groups should notify RHED of their intention to do this, E [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org), and communicate the changed location, date, and time to their members well in advance.

We encourage Groups to choose a time that will work for the majority of their members and respect caring and other commitments. Groups should also think about other ways to participate for those who can't attend (in person or online), as well as ways to make information available before and after the meeting.

Enabling other ways to participate

- Producing an annual report, including draft financial reporting, and publishing these on the Research Group website (or equivalent) ahead of the planned AGM
- Publishing a draft agenda ahead of time, including items for discussion
- Collating questions and points for discussion beforehand – using social media, the Group's mailing list and other channels to ask for contributions
- If elections are taking place, Groups should set the deadline for nominations a few days ahead of the AGM, and ask candidates to supply short statements which can be posted online ahead of the AGM

If the AGM is taking place online, Groups should make sure to use all appropriate security measures on their chosen online platform. The Society has a number of paid Zoom accounts which can be made available for hosting an AGM. If Groups would like to request use of one of these, please get in touch at [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) so we can make the arrangements.

### 2.1.2 Managing committee elections

Should elections to the committee be needed, Groups should think carefully about how they will manage votes for any contested roles. It is good practice for votes to be private but not necessarily secret (that is, the Research Group committee member coordinating the vote may be able to see how an individual has voted, but this information should not be shared publicly). It will usually be the Chair or Secretary coordinating any votes, or their chosen designate.

Groups may wish to restrict voting to those present during the AGM and for that vote to take place during the AGM itself. Alternatively, they can choose to open voting at or just prior to/after the AGM, and use a system such as an online voting form).

Options include:

- Setting up an online form which collects votes and where appropriate basic voter information (to confirm their membership of the group and that individuals are only voting once).
- In an online AGM, using a platform's built-in polling feature.
- In an online AGM, asking voters to private message the committee member running the election with their vote.
- In an in-person AGM, completing a paper ballot and handing it to the committee member running the election.
- Show of hands in the room (not private).

## 2.2 Annual report on activities

Each Research Group must submit an Annual report to RHED by 31 October each year, [E rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org). The report should include details of committee members, activities during the year and their outcomes, and future plans. Reports are usually short; of the order of one or two pages. RHED will not make any payments to Research Groups, of subventions, Research Group grants, or any other funds, until annual reporting has been received for that calendar year.

Research Groups with external bank accounts will also be asked to provide a supplementary bank statement in January each year, showing the account balance on 31 December immediately preceding.

## 2.3 Annual financial report

1. It is a statutory regulation that all Research Groups submit their Annual Accounts to the Society no later than 31 October of any calendar year. This allows the Society to fulfil its financial reporting requirements.
2. The format shown in Section 2.3.1 is recommended for reporting Annual Accounts (also available as an Excel spreadsheet for download from: [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups)). This information is the minimum that is required. The opening and closing balances at Bank/Building Society must be shown clearly. Please contact RHED if you require any help or have any questions on annual reporting.
3. Research Group must provide the RGS-IBG with account details, including the sort-code.
4. All Groups must use a reporting period of to 1 September to 31 August annually. This has the following advantages: Reports can be given at the AGM in early September. To have accounts that close on 31 August enables the Treasurer to prepare up-to-date files for their successor, and then begin the process of transferring control of the account.
5. In the financial report it is important to explain why funds are being held in the account (if appropriate); for example, to be used for a forthcoming meeting or conference. If significant funds have been spent from the account in a year, an explanation should be provided. The charity commissioners, or auditors, may well ask us to explain why money is being held in accounts and the clearer the information that you can give to the RGS-IBG, the easier this is.
6. Research Groups must also supply a list of current signatories and an up-to-date bank mandate for their account, as part of their annual financial report. Where these have not changed from last year's annual

reporting (i.e., no signatory committee members have left the committee, and no new committee members have been added as signatories), then Groups should resubmit their previous year's mandate with a covering note to this effect.

7. Additional guidance for Research Group Treasurers is available from RHED upon request, E [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)

### 2.3.1 Research Group Financial Reporting Form

#### Research Group financial reporting form

##### Research Group Name

Period

Receipt and payments account

#### INCOME

RGS-IBG subvention

RGS-IBG grant(s)

Other grants

Subscriptions

Conference income

Meetings income

Royalties

Interest

Other income (please give details)

#### Total income

0

#### EXPENDITURE

Committee expenses

Conference costs

Meetings costs

Newsletter costs

Grants and awards

Other costs (please give details)

#### Total expenditure

0

Net surplus/deficit

Opening balance(s) - 1 September  
(or alternative date)

Closing balances - 31 August  
(or alternative date)

0

Closing balances comprised of:

treasurer account

deposit account

It would help if you gave the additional information for BACS payments (duplicate as needed)

Name of bank

Address of branch where accounts are held

Name of account

Account number(s)

Sort code

Name of treasurer

Email address of Treasurer

Phone number of Treasurer

Name of additional signatories (duplicate as needed)

Email address of additional signatories (duplicate as needed)

## 2.4 Code of conduct

All activities of the Research Groups must be conducted in accordance with the Society's code of conduct.

This is available at: <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/code-of-conduct/>.

Upon election as a formal Research Group committee member, each officer will be required to complete a short form of appointment (see 1.3.1 above) in which they agree to abide by the code of conduct.

## 2.5 Review of Research Groups by the Society

The membership, activities and expenditure of all Research Groups will be reviewed once in every five years as needed by RHED and an elected member of the Research Committee, on behalf of the Research Groups Sub-Committee and the Research and Higher Education Committee.

These reviews are undertaken in a fair and transparent manner, and are conducted in dialogue with the Research Groups, allowing Research Groups the opportunity to provide input to the final report.

If there is evidence for inactivity, dwindling membership, or if any of the Society's conditions and policies have been contravened by the Research Group, following consultation with the Chair of the Research Group, RHED may make a recommendation to the Research and Higher Education Committee that the Research Group is dissolved (see Section 1.4)

Limited Life Working Groups will be reviewed at the completion of their initial two-year term.

## 3 Membership of Research Groups

### 3.1 Joining an RGS-IBG Research Group

There are two ways for members to join an RGS-IBG Research Group:

1. RGS-IBG members should inform the Society of the Research Group(s) that they wish to join. There is no limit on the number of Research Groups they may belong to, and no additional charge is levied through the Fellowship/Membership annual subscription. Some Research Groups may make additional charges for specific services, such as distribution of newsletters/publications. Associate Fellows (postgraduates) are automatically added to the Postgraduate Forum when they join the Society.
2. Non-RGS-IBG members should contact the Chair or Membership Officer of the Group that they wish to join and request to become a member and/or be added to the mailing list. Research Groups may choose to make an additional charge to non-members for any services provided.

Contacts for all Research Groups can be found on the RGS-IBG website

W [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

### 3.2 Research Group membership lists

Research Groups are provided access to confidential personal records of any Society Fellows and members who have requested to join their group. These records are strictly for the purpose of the Research Group communicating with its membership and should not be shared outside of a few designated Committee members. Membership lists should be kept securely. For more information, and for ensuring that the Research Group is compliant with GDPR, please see the guidance on Research Groups and GDPR, available from

W [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

Each Research Group has a Sharepoint folder which is controlled by RHED and shared with the current Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary for that group. On a monthly basis, and usually shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month, RHED will upload the most recent membership list(s) for each Research Group to its shared membership list Sharepoint folder, deleting the oldest month's list(s) at the same time. This will include up to 3 files: a full list of current members, a list of any new joiners since the last update (if any), and a list of any leavers since the last update (if any, and including any Fellows or members whose membership has lapsed or otherwise ended). Up to 3 months' worth of lists will be available in the folder at any one time.

To access this, you will now need to use 2 factor authentication. This can be done via an authenticator app, or via text message. If you need any assistance with setting this up, please contact us at [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

Research Groups are encouraged to maintain their own membership lists and to keep these regularly updated. These should include both the current RGS-IBG members, and any other members of the Research Group, and should be maintained in accordance with our guidance on GDPR (see above).

W [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

### 3.3 RGS-IBG Membership & becoming a Fellow

Fellowship offers the opportunity to network and to support the spread of geographical knowledge. To find out more about becoming a Fellow see the guidelines found with the application form:

W <https://www.rgs.org/join-us>

Fellows enjoy the following benefits:

- Participation in Society governance and vote in elections for representatives to Council
- Attendance at a wide range of conferences, seminars and events at reduced cost
- Participation in Research Groups; Fellows can be members of more than one group
- Opting to receive the RGS-IBG's journals – *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, *Area* and *The Geographical Journal*
- Applying for RGS-IBG research grants





- Using the title FRGS
- Nominating colleagues for Society medals and awards
- Access to the Foyle Reading Room and Collections

## 4 Activities of Research Groups and RGS-IBG support

### 4.1 Activities of Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups

The Society's Research and Limited Life Working Groups bring together active researchers at all career stages with a professional interest in a particular aspect of geography and related disciplines. Research Groups meet at the Annual International Conference when they also hold their AGMs. Throughout the year there is a varying level of activity for each Research Group. They undertake a combination of the following:

- Collaborative research
- Foster networks of researchers with common interests
- Host and co-host activities within the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference
- Convene workshops, seminars, conferences
- Encourage postgraduate participation in their particular sub-discipline
- Publish books, journals, and other publications including digital resources
- Maintain and update websites
- Distribute newsletters and/ or bulletins
- Promote undergraduate and postgraduate activity through dissertation prizes and grants for young researchers and postgraduates to attend relevant meetings
- Nominate colleagues for awards

This section of the Handbook provides guidance and principles to support Groups in delivering these activities, as well as signposting additional support from RHED and elsewhere.

### 4.2 Research Group Events

Research Groups hold a number of events each year, both in person and online.

When planning events, Research Groups should be attentive to the following:

- Why you are holding the event and what you want to achieve
- The Society's code of conduct. This is used to frame the event and expectations of professional conduct. As part of the registration process all participants in any Research Group event (in-person or online) must formally indicate (mandatory question) that they will abide by the code of conduct (see 2.4 above).<sup>3</sup> Failure to do so will mean they cannot attend the event. The Society has the right to refuse entry to any registered delegate. Society, and Research Group events, are by invitation only. This should be clearly indicated in the registration process. You should also designate a point of contact for anyone wishing to report any issues, based on the Society's reporting processes. This can be the Director of Research, Education, Professional at the Society.
- How you can make your event as inclusive and accessible as possible, being attentive to
  - Event timings and duration, respecting attendees' potential caring and other commitments
  - Baseline accessibility accommodations that will improve the event for everyone (e.g. a physical space that is wheelchair accessible, enabling closed captions within your online event)
  - Encouraging attendees to let you know about other accommodations that they may require
  - Being attentive to how you can make your programme diverse and inclusive
- If recording all or part of any event, to have opt-in consent from speakers and participants

Guidance and advice

- You can use the Society's guidance on accessibility for the annual conference as a starting point: **W:** <https://www.rgs.org/research/annual-international-conference/planning-your-attendance/accessibility-at-the-conference> and how to make your presentation accessible: **W** <https://www.rgs.org/research/annual-international-conference/planning-your-attendance/accessibility-at-the-conference/making-your-presentation-more-accessible>

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the Society's main code of conduct at <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/code-of-conduct/>, you may also wish to refer to the annual conference code of conduct, which gives a fuller elaboration for events: <https://www.rgs.org/research/annual-international-conference/code-of-conduct/>

- See also our guidance on organising an inclusive conference: **W** <https://www.rgs.org/research/higher-education-resources/organising-an-inclusive-conference>

### 4.2.1 Event registration

To reduce the burden of organising events, the Society can help you setup and run registration for in-person, online, and hybrid Research Group events through the RGS-IBG website. To request this please complete the form here: <https://forms.gle/RQDWSJNzGvDaW2Eq6>.

### 4.2.2 Rooms at the RGS-IBG

Research Groups are entitled to book the Sunley Room, Drayson Room or Lowther Room free of charge for daytime bookings at the RGS-IBG, twice each year (subject to availability) for Research Group related activities.

Catering costs are the responsibility of the Research Group. Catering must be booked via the Society's caterers, Lodge Catering, **E:** [jana@lodge-catering.co.uk](mailto:jana@lodge-catering.co.uk). When submitting your request, please include that you are affiliated with an RGS-IBG Research Group.

Larger rooms may be booked for special events but hire rates (discounted for Research Groups) will normally apply. Rooms at the RGS-IBG are in high demand and it is strongly advised that bookings are made well in advance.

If registration is not done by the Society, the list of attendees at an event at the Society be shared with the Society 24 hours in advance of the event (to enable access for delegates and in case of any health and safety issues).

All rooms available to book at the Society have hybrid capacity.

To arrange a room booking and/or to discuss discounted room access, please contact RHED, **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

### 4.2.3 Holding Research Group events online

Increasingly, Research Groups are looking to hold their events online. The Society has a number of paid Zoom accounts which can be made available for hosting these events. If you would like to request use of one of these, please get in touch at **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) so we can make the arrangements.

In addition to the points above under 4.2, things to consider when scheduling an online event include:

- The pros and cons of both synchronous (everyone present/participating at once) and asynchronous (spread over a wider time period, with not everyone 'present' at once) approaches. Synchronous live exchange is important for building community and networks, but asynchronous options can offer greater potential for overcoming some accessibility issues, particularly digital inequalities and some social inequalities, and may be more inclusive of international delegates (and time differences).
- The importance of ensuring a safe space. This is particularly acute for certain topics and speakers, especially any that touch on issues of marginalisation in various forms. It is important not to shy away from still holding these events and inviting provocative speakers, but Groups should put appropriate safeguards in place where possible. This includes:
  - Make use of security measures allowed by the platforms used
  - Dedicate resources to having moderators/facilitators/tech hosts
  - Pre-registration and care with sharing logins/access
  - Clear planning for what to do if something happens.
    - [A Guide to Hosting Virtual Events on Zoom](#) (google doc)
    - [How to Prevent 'Zoombombing'](#)
- Allocating sufficient resource to the event, particularly having clearly defined roles, including a Chair but also moderators, facilitators and tech hosts.
- Breaks are particularly important for online events and should be included in programming.

#### 4.2.4 Events and activities involving participants under 18

Sometimes Research Group events will include speakers or attendees who are under 18, when the following additional guidance should be noted. Please contact RHED if such an event is happening so we can ensure the Society's safeguarding policy is being followed **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)

In-person events:

Where a young person is a contributor or participant, event organisers need to be extra vigilant and ensure that they are not on their own with just one other person at any point. By always having at least two people in a room with them, we avoid putting adults at risk of misunderstanding/false allegations and the young person avoids the actual risk of abuse/harm.

Remote events:

If these are in broadcast mode, with under-18s viewing the broadcast stream, no additional issues arise. If these are in meeting mode (where everyone can see everyone else), make sure that the host knows there are under-18s present so that they can act on any inappropriate behaviour by attendees immediately (as they should be doing anyway). Be attentive so that any recording wouldn't include/show the face of an under 18 year old. Attendees should not share contact details or have individual chats (so networking in separate rooms without a host should not take place).

### 4.3 Research Group Communications

Communications from Research Groups should support the work of the Research Group through dissemination and discussion, build networks between interested individuals and groups, and represent a sub-disciplinary presence within wider geographical debates.

Communications on behalf of or about the Research Group should be managed by elected Committee members with discretion and integrity, with appropriate security applied to electronic accounts. Data protection/data confidentiality principles (with respect to members' information) and 'netiquette' should be used.

Although Research Groups are a 'branch' of the Society, communications should not purport to represent the views of the Society. While Research Groups are encouraged to contribute to debates in an engaged manner, communications should not: cause offence; be provocative; or undertake advocacy, lobbying, campaigning or activism activity in the name of the Society (see Section 9).

Communications should adhere to current best practice on accessibility (such as captioning videos).

#### 4.3.1 Mailing lists

Each Research Group is strongly advised to set up a JISCmail account (or similar mailing list function) to communicate with their members, as this is compliant with GDPR. We advise against using the bcc function in email to send a mass mailing to Research Group members.

More information about how to set up and manage a JISCmail account is available here:

**W** [www.jiscmail.ac.uk](http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk). A useful manual is provided at: **W** <http://www.lsoft.com/manuals/1.8e/owner/owner.pdf>

More information about GDPR and compliance is available from: **W** [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

We have been advised by JISCmail that lists should have at least one permanent owner, in addition to co-owners who may come and go more frequently. Given committee turnover, RHED is able to serve as that 'quiet' permanent co-owner. Research Group committee member co-owners would run the day to day management of the lists, with RHED responsible in name only, ensuring the list isn't taken over by JISCmail. For more information if you are setting up a list, please contact RHED directly, **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

One of the real challenges for Research Groups and the RGS-IBG is keeping email and postal distribution lists current. We strongly recommend that Research Group membership officers use the monthly membership updates detailed in Section 3.2 (integrating lists of members who may join independently), and maintain close contact with the Research and Higher Education Division at the RGS-IBG, **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

### 4.3.3 Websites

Research Groups may choose to have a website or equivalent where materials can be posted. The Society will set up and host WordPress sites for Research Groups

These websites must acknowledge the support of the RGS-IBG on their site, use the appropriate logos and descriptions of the Society, and link to the Society's privacy notice for Research Group members, here: [W www.rgs.org/Research/Research-groups/Research-Groups-Privacy-Notice](http://www.rgs.org/Research/Research-groups/Research-Groups-Privacy-Notice). For more information, please see the guidance on Research Groups and GDPR, available from [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

Contact RHED for advice and a set of web-ready logos in a variety of formats, [E rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

### 4.3.4 Social media

If Research Groups choose to use social media, e.g. X, LinkedIn, Facebook ...., etc., to communicate with their members, they are asked to advise RHED when they establish a social media channel and ensure that the support of the RGS-IBG is appropriately acknowledged, including the use of the RGS-IBG logo if appropriate. Admins of Research Group accounts must be a current member of the committee, and logins must be handed on to a new committee member when people rotate off the committee.

### 4.3.3 Hosting videos on Society accounts

The Society has accounts on video hosting platforms (YouTube, Vimeo), which can be used to host videos produced by Research Groups, so that these can be embedded on other websites or circulated online. Requests should be made as far in advance as possible of when the video is intended to be published/go live.

We reserve the right to edit content as needed and as we see fit. For the most part these will be light touch edits (e.g. adding the Society's logo to the beginning and end). We will go back to the group if larger edits are needed or if the content provided isn't up to a suitable standard.

Here are some top tips from one of our past Communications Officer, Amy Williams, for recording video yourself at home on your laptop, mobile phone or camera. To see these tips in practice, watch [Amy's YouTube video](#).

#### Top tips:

#### Do:

- Shoot in a **quiet location**: you are relying on the microphone in your phone/laptop/camera, and you don't want to have lots of background noise to compete with. Do a quick test and listen back to it to check you're not picking up any unwanted background noise. If you have an external microphone that you can plug into your device, use it! In built microphones on various devices, especially cameras and laptops, have a reputation for being notoriously poor quality.
- Shoot **landscape**: your video is likely to end up on a horizontal video player (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo), and you want to fill as much of the screen as possible.
- Keep your recording device **steady** – if you're using a camera and have no-one to help you, a tripod really is a must. Alternatively, if you don't have a tripod and you can enlist someone to be your camera operator, ask them to film you, but it is essential they keep the camera as steady as possible. See specific tips for phone and laptop recording below.
- Light - indoor filming: Try and film during the day in **natural light** (e.g. by a window), ensuring that the whole of **your face is evenly and well lit**. If you are unable to film facing a window, and have a window to one side of you, on your opposite side try and switch a lamp on to balance out the shadows caused by the window light.
- Light - outdoor filming: If you decide to shoot outdoors, an **overcast day** is best for an even light. When shooting on a bright sunny day, opt to film in a shadier spot to avoid squinting against the sun – not an attractive look! NOTE: Be aware that you are more likely to encounter more unpredictable noise when shooting

outside, so finding the right spot which balances quiet with appropriate light may be trickier and filming may take longer (you've been warned!).

- Film with a **neutral background** – this doesn't have to be a blank wall, but we don't want a busy background that distracts from you (no piles of laundry in shot!). Also wear neutral clothes, that are preferably one colour and a different shade from the primary colour of your backdrop e.g. if you're shooting against a white wall, don't wear a white shirt or blouse - you'll blend right in and could end up looking like a floating head!
- Position yourself in the **middle of the screen** with your head and shoulders visible, and your head at least two thirds of the way up the screen. A good rule of thumb is to have the camera a minimum of an arm's length away from you.
- The **camera should be at eye level** to prevent strange angles with you looking down or up.
- **Look into the camera** when recording (and try to avoid the temptation to look at yourself on the screen when using your laptop or if you're using the phone's front camera). You want the audience watching your video to feel as though you're talking directly to them, which is more likely to keep them engaged with what you're saying.
- Try to **incorporate the question into your answer** e.g. "I chose geography because..." Make sure you give context to what it is you're saying so that the audience can follow your train of thought.
- Think about what you want to say before you hit the record button. **Make some notes** on your key points prior to filming to help cement them and keep you on track. Avoid writing a script, you want to come across naturally and trying to remember a script can make you wooden, more likely to make mistakes and become frustrated. If you have to take a glance at your notes, pause to look at your bullet points and then look back at the camera before you start speaking again. This helps for a smoother editing process and continues to make you look natural and like a pro!
- **Talk slowly and loudly.** It can be nerve wracking filming yourself and everyone needs some practice, but remember you can reshoot as many times as you like until you're happy. The more you do it the more confident you'll become and before you know it, you'll be a pro!

#### Don't:

- Film in a noisy location
- Shoot portrait
- Shoot with your back to a window/into the main source of light, your face will be in darkness, and we won't be able to tell who you are!
- Wear heavily patterned clothing
- Look anywhere but the camera, you want to connect with your audience – and they're not out your window!
- Have the camera too close to your face – it will be far from flattering!
- Avoid writing a script
- Rush through your words or mumble, speak clearly and concisely.

#### Consider these when recording video on a mobile phone

#### Do:

- Try and keep your phone as steady as possible during filming; either ask someone else to film you, use a selfie stick, use a small phone tripod if you have one (or have a go at [a DIY project](#) – we can't vouch for this one but there are plenty of tutorials out there!) or, if you have to, hold your phone as steadily as possible whilst filming yourself.

#### Don't:

- Move around when recording (i.e. don't walk through the kitchen and into the hallway or similar whilst recording). This won't be good for keeping a steady shot and will distract viewers from what you're



- saying.

**Consider these when recording video on a laptop using a programme like Zoom**

**Do:**

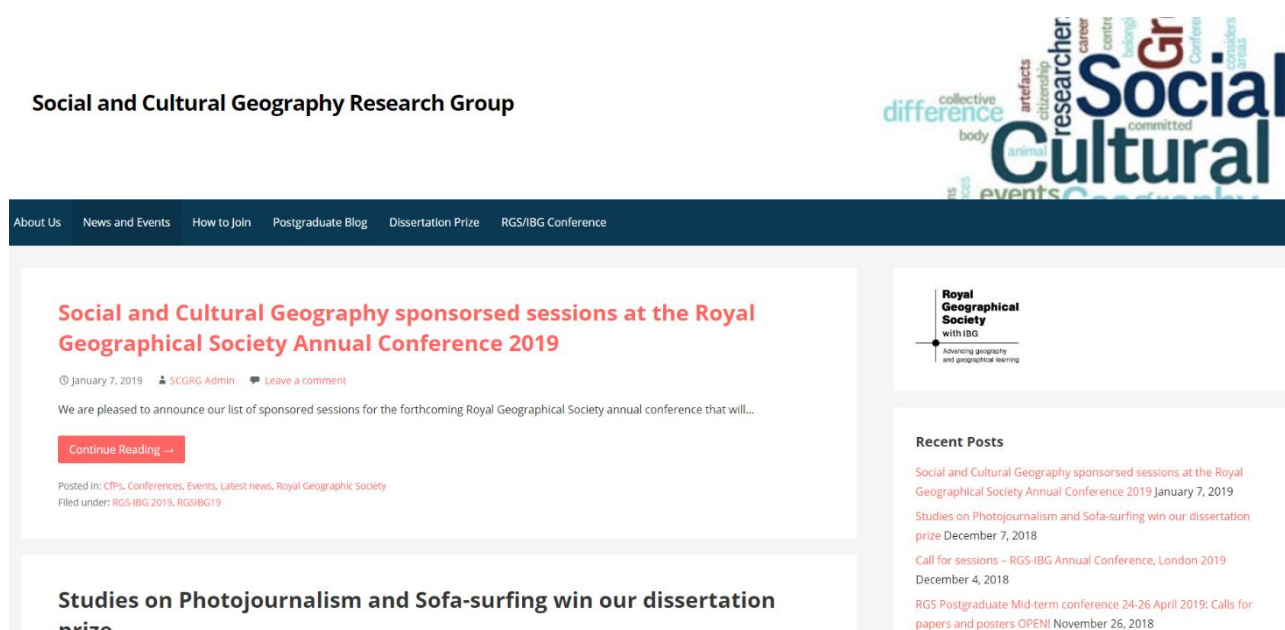
- Have your laptop on a stable surface such as a desk or dining table.

**Don't:**

- Have the laptop on your lap (can lead to an unsteady shot) or positioned on a low table e.g. a coffee table when you're sat on the sofa (strange angle).

#### 4.3.5 Use of Society logo on Research Group websites

As mentioned in 4.3.3, Research Groups are encouraged to place the Society logo prominently on their website and make reference to their status as a Research Group of the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG). For example:



#### 4.3.6 Use of the Society logo for other purposes

If Research Groups are planning publications or other (commercial) activities that will bear the name of the Society above and beyond the name of the Research Group itself, they must contact RHED ([rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)) early in planning stages for advice and guidance about the Society's policy on such publications or activities and the ways in which the Society might support them, including the use of the Society name or logo.

Use of the Society's logo is restricted to projects which have the official approval or endorsement of the Society. The process for obtaining such approval may take some time and Research Groups are encouraged to get in touch with RHED as soon as a project is being considered.

### 4.4 How RHED shares and promotes Research Group activities

RHED has a number of channels for sharing and promoting Research Group activities. We collate information about Research Group activity from: the updates Groups provide through annual reporting and ahead of Research Group Sub-Committee

meetings; and from Research Group mailing lists, websites and social media. Research Groups should add [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) to their mailing lists so that RHED is kept up to date with events, plans, information and discussions.

Research Groups are also warmly encouraged to send news and announcements directly to [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) for sharing. We will also contact you about taking part in specific initiatives such as Research Group of the Month

#### 4.4.1 List of Research Groups on RGS-IBG Website

There is a full list of all Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups on the RGS-IBG website:

W [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups)

This page links directly out to the Research Group's own website where possible. For groups without an active web presence, a brief overview of the Group's aim and activities is provided. Research Groups are encouraged to regularly check their page and inform RHED, [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org), if the information is not accurate.

#### 4.4.2 RGS-IBG channels for sharing Research Group activities

- Our Research Groups Wakelet channel, which can be accessed here: <https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/research-groups-roundup>
- The [@RGS-IBGhe](https://twitter.com/RGS_IBGhe) X feed. In particular, we regularly feature a 'Research Group of the Month' on this Twitter feed, which highlights recent activity by specific Groups.
- Our monthly Academic News and Updates newsletter, which includes a Research Groups round-up section. You can sign up by contacting RHED, E [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)
- These round-ups also appear in our Latest news channels as quarterly updates, which you can see here: <https://www.rgs.org/research/academic-news-and-updates/>
- Research Group events can be included in our Events section here: <https://www.rgs.org/events/upcoming-events> (filter on 'Research interest'). From here, they can be included in the members' printed Bulletin and members' e-update.

#### 4.4.3 Ways RHED shares information with Research Groups for circulation

- General RHED and Society news will be sent via our monthly Academic News and Updates communication, and the [@RGS\\_IBGhe](https://twitter.com/RGS_IBGhe) X feed, unless time-critical (see below).
- Research Group Committee Members are asked to subscribe to Academic News and Updates (published monthly by RHED), and to forward individual news items to their own mailing lists as appropriate (each Committee should nominate someone to do this). To sign up, contact RHED, E [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).
- Research Groups are also encouraged to follow [@RGS\\_IBGhe](https://twitter.com/RGS_IBGhe) and to retweet content as appropriate.
- Research Groups Sub-Committee meetings will usually be followed by a digest of news, updates and information for Research Groups. Some of this information will only be relevant to Committees, but information suitable for the wider community will be marked in a section "Please forward".
- Time-critical postings for the community will go straight to relevant Committee members (Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers only), clearly marked "Please forward".
- RHED will not post to a Research Group mailing list directly.

### 4.5 Nominations for Medals and Awards

Many Research Groups actively nominate members and colleagues for RGS-IBG Medals and Awards. This is strongly encouraged. Details of all the Medals and Awards and examples of recent recipients can be found at:

W <https://www.rgs.org/about-us/our-work/medals-awards-and-prizes>.

Any Fellow or member of the Society may make a nomination by filling in the Medals and Awards nomination form available from: W <https://www.rgs.org/about-us/our-work/medals-awards-and-prizes>

The form should be signed and returned to the Director's Office together with a copy of the candidate's CV and an outline detailing why the candidate should receive an award. Nominations must be supported by two other Fellows.

The deadline for all nominations is on or shortly before 28 February every year.

All activities undertaken by a Research Group should be managed by elected Committee members with discretion and integrity, including nominations for Medals and Awards. The Charity Commission guidance is clear that in the course of committee members carrying out their duties, it is crucial not only to avoid conflicts of interest and/or unfair advantage being given to committee members, but also to avoid any appearance of such. Research Groups looking to nominate any colleagues for Medals and Awards should put in place a clear process for managing any



potential or perceived conflicts of interest, including at minimum any affected committee members recusing themselves from discussion of any nominations. It may be appropriate to also consider whether it is appropriate to postpone any plans for nominating a serving committee member until they have completed their term on the committee. We recognise though that this may be challenging in the case of early career researchers (where there are timelines on nominations).

For further advice and guidance on this please contact RHED E [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

## 4.6 Research Group Dissertation prizes

Many of the Research Groups offer dissertation prizes each year. These recognise outstanding work from undergraduate and postgraduate students at higher education institutions both in the UK and overseas.

A list of current prizes, along with details of how departments can submit prizes for consideration, is maintained at **W** <https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/research-group-dissertation-prizes>. We will contact Groups once a year to ask them for any updates to their prizes, and Groups can also proactively send these to us at **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org). A list of past recipients can also be found here: <https://osf.io/m48js/>

Reviewing submissions to the prizes can be a substantial task, and Groups are encouraged to consider how to share this work among members of their committee. The Society is willing to take on the role of setting up a form for university departments to submit their entries. Once the deadline has passed, we will collate the submissions and provide access to the reviewing committee. In this instance, we will provide administrative support only, with all decisions remaining with the committee.

Questions of eligibility for the prizes sometimes arise, especially for prizes recognising dissertations submitted for undergraduate degree programmes. Here, the key consideration should be the level of the course, and not its duration. Groups may want to consider using the FHEQ level (or SCQF equivalent in Scotland) of the final award of the programme as a criteria for eligibility. For undergraduate programmes, this is currently FHEQ Level 6 or SCQF Level 9 or 10. There is more information in the Society's resources on its programme accreditation scheme, which Groups may want to look at: **W** [www.rgs.org/research/Programme-accreditation](http://www.rgs.org/research/Programme-accreditation).

## 4.7 Research Group grants to researchers

A number of Research Groups offer grants to support researchers with travel for fieldwork or conference attendance, as well as prizes to recognise achievement by researchers including postgraduate researchers.

A list of current grants, awards and prizes, is maintained at <https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/research-group-awards-and-prizes>. Please contact RHED with any updates or changes.

## 4.8 Research Group archives

Research Group archives form an important part of the institutional memory of the Society. Research Groups already provide the bulk of essential records by submitting their constitution (and any subsequent changes to it), and AGM minutes, annual activity reports and financial reports in October each year.

Individual Research Groups may also choose to maintain their own archives of records, extending to publications, websites, newsletters, conference reports, correspondence, committee lists, and other files. The Society should be considered the central archive for Research Group records, regardless of whether Research Groups also have their own archives. RHED encourages Research Groups to help us fill out their archives by providing us with copies of reports, minutes, constitutional changes, or other essential records germane to the formation and operation of the group.

## 5 Research Group Finances

The funds of the Research Group should be managed by elected Committee members with discretion and integrity. The Charity Commission guidance is clear that in the course of committee members carrying out their duties, it is crucial not only to avoid conflicts of interest and/or unfair advantage being given to committee members, but also to avoid any appearance of such. For example, current and recent committee members should not participate in any competitions or prizes being run by the group. If you are in any doubt, please contact [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) for advice.

Research Group funds should not ordinarily be used to support attendance by committee members at conferences, meetings and other events, including the Annual Conference. However, Research Group committee members organizing a core Research Group activity, in which they are playing an essential role, are eligible to have their direct expenses covered by the Research Group. This does not include remuneration for time, and is not applicable to the Annual International Conference. When Research Group AGMs take place at the Annual International Conference, Research Group committee members should not use Research Group funds to cover their travel expenses for attending their AGM. As per Section 2.1, Research Groups can consider holding their AGM at events other than the Annual Conference if it is expected that insufficient committee members will be in attendance, and should contact RHED to discuss this in advance.

If your Research Group is intending to spend more than £500 on a single transaction, please check in with us at [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) before proceeding, for advice and guidance.

Please also see the guidance on Research Groups and GDPR with regard to processing of any financial information, available from: **W** [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups). In particular, groups should never collect credit and debit card, or bank details from members.

### 5.1 Start-up funds

Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups are entitled to a start-up payment of approximately £200 to cover their first year of operations. This payment will be made once a bank account has been opened by the Group (independent of or at the Society).

These funds must be accounted for in the same way as grants, subvention payments and any other income for the Research Group, in the annual accounts submitted to RHED by 31 October each year.

### 5.2 Subventions

In November each year RHED calculates subvention payments to Research Groups, based on the numbers of RGS-IBG Fellows/members who are also a member of the Research Group; these are paid in December. These are grouped into three bands, as follows:

Band A: 1-150 members  
Band B: 151-300 members  
Band C: 300+

### 5.3 Sponsorship of Research Groups by other parties

[This form is available from W [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups)]

From time to time, opportunities may arise for the activities of a Research Group to be sponsored by an external body (i.e. not the Society). In most circumstances, sponsorship, either financially or in-kind (from a university, a publisher etc.), is unproblematic. However, in certain cases the potential may exist for there to be, or perceived to be, a conflict of interest with the Society, or implications for the independence of the Research Group.<sup>4</sup>

As ever, all activities undertaken by a Research Group should be managed by elected Committee members with discretion and integrity. In the case of sponsorship, it must be clear that any sponsorship does not affect in any way

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to Charity Commission guidance for more information.

the independence of the Research Group or constrain their activities beyond the guidance outlined in this Handbook.

Before accepting any external sponsorship not listed in the exemptions below, Research Groups must contact RHED to discuss the proposal. Initially this is best done through a phone call and followed up with the completion of the form below (to be submitted to [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)).

The request will then be reviewed by elected members of the Research and Higher Education, consulting with other members of the Committee as appropriate. RHED will then notify the Research Group of their decision and/or seek additional information or assurances.

Research Groups are reminded that Research Group membership data should only be accessed by the group's current Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and/or Membership Secretary. Under no circumstances should Research Group membership data ever be shared with external sponsors or any other parties. For more information please see our guidance on Research Groups and GDPR, available at **W:** [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/resources-for-research-group-committees/](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/resources-for-research-group-committees/)

Exemptions where this form is *not* required:

- Partners or sponsors for an activity for which a Research Group grant is being applied for, where these are listed in full in the Research Group grant application.
- Waived room hire or other in-kind support for an event from a hosting university

**Please refer to Section 5 of the Research Groups Handbook for additional guidance notes**

Please include the following in your completed application:

<b>Name of Research Group</b>	
<b>Name, institution, email address and telephone number of the Committee Member making this application</b>	Name: Institution: Email: Phone:
<b>Total amount of sponsorship being proposed</b>	£
<b>Name and contact details for proposed sponsor</b>	
<b>Details of the proposed sponsorship – amount, duration, conditions</b>	
<b>Proposed use of the funds/in-kind support</b>	



<b>Details of potential risks or ethical consequences, and how these have been addressed.</b>	
<b>Details of agreement/contract to be signed</b>	

## 5.3 Research Group bank accounts

### 5.3.1 Holding your Research Group bank account at the Society

We encourage Research Groups to arrange for funds to be held at the Society on behalf of the group in a ring-fenced account. Under this arrangement, RHED can manage all payments on behalf of the Research Group and reduce significant burden from the Group.

Holding the bank account at the Society also allows us to complete the first draft of annual financial reporting for you to then check and confirm. This also means that when Research Group committee members change you do have to spend time with banks updating signatories.

We encourage Research Groups to still to have a Treasurer who can maintain independent oversight of the Group's accounts, and report the Group's annual financial report at the AGM. Contact **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) for more information.

### 5.3.2 Opening a Research Group bank account

The officers of the Research Group (usually Treasurer and Chair/Secretary) may choose to open a group bank account independent of the Society. Please inform RHED of the bank address, sort code, account number, account name and signatories as soon as the bank account has been opened so that the Society can update its records. We need to have on file a document from the bank with information on all account signatories and the current address on file for correspondence.

Groups should discuss the requirements for opening and managing a bank account with their selected provider in detail to ensure suitability. You should use online banking where possible. Where forms need to be signed in person at a branch, it is worth considering selecting a provider that has branches across the country for future officers of the Group. If payments can only be made via cheque and your bank account demands co-signatories, consider instituting a process for multiple signatories within the Research Group and for changing these promptly as/when committee members change.

When a signatory ends their term of service on the committee, their successor should be added to the account in their place and then they must be removed from the account. This should be treated as the highest priority for the Research Group immediately following the election of new committee members. It is not appropriate to hand over log in details for online banking without updating signatories.

As part of annual reporting Research Groups are required to submit a current copy of their bank mandate and/or letter from their bank confirming current signatories on the account. Only current members of the committee should be signatories. For more information, please see Section 2.3. above.

RHED have produced additional guidance for Research Group Treasurers, which is available from **E** [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) and at **W** [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

## 5.4 Research Group Grants

The submission deadline for grant applications is 31 October each year. Please note the updated guidance in Section 5.4.1.

1. Grants can be made for conferences, seminars and symposia, travel to international meetings, preparation of publications or similar academic activities. Pump-priming support which stimulates or co-ordinates existing research activities (e.g. assistance with the costs of materials, research assistance, travel costs) is encouraged. Given the limited funds available, normally it will only be possible to fund part of the proposed activity. Research Groups should attempt to secure financial and other forms of support from other sources.
2. For an event where Research Groups are inviting guests from outside the UK, they should state in their application the name of the intended speaker, otherwise the application will be returned for further details, and this may delay the award. Joint applications from Research Groups are encouraged, but normally one group will take the lead and agree to be the point of contact.
3. Grants are not awarded for attendance at the RGS-IBG Annual International Conference, or for any other activity normally associated with the Annual Conference or at the AAG annual meeting. Grants may be awarded for events that are held immediately before or after the Annual Conference.
4. If a Research Group applies for funding for support of members' attendance at other conferences/meetings/seminars etc., they are encouraged to use as open and fair a method as possible for competitive onward distribution of funds. The method that the Group intends to apply should be specified with the application. Some suggested models are outlined in Section 5.5 below.
5. All things being equal, priority will be given to activities likely to benefit a large proportion of the membership of the Research Group. Priority will also be given to travel and registration costs that benefit those early in their career and the unwaged, who normally have much greater difficulties in obtaining funds for seminars, travel, etc.
6. Some Research Groups include payment of honoraria to speakers and facilitators in their grant applications. Please note that these should usually only be paid to unsalaried contributors, in line with practice elsewhere and with Research Council Terms and Conditions. Recipients are responsible for any income tax implications, and Research Groups should notify them of this. Research Groups should also keep records (e.g. an email trail) of what the payment is for and exchange of the recipients' bank details in case we (RGS-IBG) are ever asked to produce these for an audit.
7. Groups may not apply retrospectively for funding for activities that have already taken place.
8. Groups may apply for more than one grant or loan, but should indicate their priority.
9. Please note that it is very unlikely that large sums will be allocated to the same Group in successive years.
10. Before making their application, Research Groups are encouraged to look at the balance of funding in their Research Group account. These funds should be used to support the activity where possible and at the very least match the funding being sought from the Society.
11. The amount of funding in the research group account on 31 August each year will be taken into account by the assessors when making the award. If Research Groups are unable to provide the balance of the account on 31 December, this will be estimated from the Research Group annual reports and accounts. If substantial funds have been taken from the research group account since August, it should be stated on the form.
12. Research Groups are encouraged to publish the results of the funded activity in one of the Society's publications. If the resulting publication is a book, the RGS-IBG Book Series should be offered the work first, subject to any existing contractual agreements the Group may have with other publishers.



13. RHED supports the Postgraduate Forum Annual Mid-Term Conference each year, and a grant application is not required for this activity.
14. A report on the use of the grant must be submitted to RHED by 31 July of the year following the award. No additional awards will be made to that Research Group until the report is received.
15. The application form may be found on the Research Groups website, [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups) and is normally updated in August each year in advance of the 31 October deadline for applications.
16. The deadline for submission of applications for grants or loans is 31 October each year, and they should be made to: RHED, Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) 1 Kensington Gore, London. Tel: 020 7591 3027; [E rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org)
17. Late applications for grants will not normally be considered.
18. A sub-group of Research and Higher Education Committee members will assess the awards (normally at least 4 members) and results will be known approximately 2-3 weeks after the closing date, subject to the volume of applications received.

#### **5.4.1 Additional information for Groups making applications**

Research Group committees may find the following additional information helpful in writing their grant application:

- Grants tend to be awarded for sums in the region of £500 each year. Very occasionally, higher amounts are awarded for significant projects of demonstrable benefit to the Research Group and members. Research Groups should consider carefully the scale of planned events in balance with available resources and plan accordingly.
- Applications should include a full budget for the project/event, not just a budget for the portion to which grant funds will be applied if successful.
- If events are to be held at the Society, catering costs must always be covered. Research Groups must include the (discounted) price for these in their event budget. Please contact [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) for more information. See Section 4.2.1 On the availability and process for booking rooms.
- It is expected that a per capita charge will be made for most events, covering at least the direct catering costs, unless free access can be fully justified (e.g. an event specifically for postgraduates/early-career or low-income communities). In addition to helping cover event costs, a per capita registration fee can help to build commitment to attend the event.
- Research Group grants should not be used directly to fund: committee expenses or travel associated with the event; drinks receptions. Where these costs are included in the event budget, the Research Group should indicate how the grant money will be ring-fenced to be applied to other costs.
- Research Group grants should not normally be used to fund the attendance of more than one key-note speaker per event, though the Research Group can choose to invite more and cover their costs in other ways.
- RHED would be very pleased to write letters of support for matching funds applications to other organisations throughout the year, and encourages Research Groups to consider this method of funding well ahead of the annual deadline for Research Group grants.
- RHED welcomes opportunities to discuss partnership opportunities for dissemination activities and any other follow-on activities relating to Research Group events.

#### **Examples of past successful applications**

The following table summarises some of the recent applications made by Research Groups that were very highly rated by reviewers, in terms of value for money and breadth of reach to the Research Group membership and wider research community.

Application	Award made, and application of funds	What was especially successful about the application (strong reviewer feedback)
Practising historical geography conference for undergraduates and postgraduates (awarded multiple years – annual event has been running for 15+ years)  Historical Geography Research Group	Funds applied to: Invited speaker travel costs; catering. Delegates pay a small fee to attend, and HGRG contributes some of own funds.	Long-running successful event with proven model and format. Strong support from HGRG community, including offers of in-kind assistance (e.g. free rooms) from departments hosting the workshop. Relationship of event to other HGRG activities, e.g. undergraduate dissertation award prize winners speak at the event.
Annual away weekend  Participatory Geographies Research Group	Funds applied to: bursaries for attendance by low-income participants, awarded on a competitive basis.	Encouragement of low income and non-academic participants in RG activities. Innovative format for combining academic work with other participatory methods and theories.
One-day symposium  Space, Sexualities and Queer Research Group	Funds applied to: Bursaries for attendance by postgraduates; SSQRG also provided own funds; in-kind support from hosting institution (room hire, admin support). Delegates pay a fee to cover catering and remaining costs.	Clear focus as an impact event (links with practitioner networks beyond academia; geographers/academics beyond the UK. Good early career focus and support.
Podcast series project  Digital Geographies Research Group	Funds applied to: paying an unsalaried researcher to produce 12 podcasts, one per month (match-funded by Research Group) and to establish processes for podcast production for future use	Innovative activity with strong opportunity for learning which could be shared across Research Groups
Archives project  Population Geography Research Group	Funds applied to: transcription of oral history interviews with eminent population geographers; extension funding to ensure diversity of those represented.	Innovative activity with strong opportunity for learning which could be shared across Research Groups Capturing/documenting important recent history of their sub-discipline

## 5.5 Responsive Interventions Fund

We recognise there are events and issues both nationally and globally on which Research Groups are well placed to share their expertise and insights. Groups may wish to call for action on a particular subject or event; to draw attention to a situation; or to express solidarity with and support for affected communities - both within and beyond their own group membership. To support Research Groups in responding to such events/issue, we have introduced a new ring-fenced fund to which they may apply.

Applications can be made at any point during the year, in response to the event. Applications will be reviewed by representatives of the Research and Higher Education committee. We expect to be able to return a decision within two weeks except during holiday periods.

Grants from the Responsive Interventions Fund will not normally exceed £1,000, although exceptions can be made. Items funded can include paying people for their time/work, with priority for those not in salaried roles. Please also refer to Section 9.6 for further guidance. An application form is available from

<https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups/resources-for-research-group-committees>



## 6 Committees of the RGS-IBG

### 6.1 Research and Higher Education Committee

The Research and Higher Education Committee is a standing committee of the Society's Council and is responsible for the Society's research and higher education relationships and activities. The Committee is chaired by the Vice President for Research & Higher Education, assisted by the second elected member. You can view the committee's Terms of Reference here: <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/council/committees-of-council/research-and-higher-education-committee/>

### 6.2 Research Groups Sub-Committee

The Research Groups sub-committee (a sub-committee of the RGS-IBG Research and Higher Education Committee) meets twice a year in the autumn and spring (see the latest Research Groups timeline at [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](https://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups)). The Chair of the Research Groups Sub-Committee is an elected member of the Council and the Research & Higher Education Committee. The Secretary of the Research Groups Sub-Committee is the RHED Professional Officer. Additional members include the Director of Research, Education, Professional and the Chairs, Secretaries or Treasurers of each of the Research Groups or their nominee. Ex officio members are: the Vice President for Research & Higher Education; and the Chair of the Annual Conference. You can view the committee's Terms of Reference here: <https://www.rgs.org/about/the-society/governance/council/committees-of-council/research-and-higher-education-committee/research-groups-sub-committee/>

#### 6.2.1 Role of the Research Groups Sub-Committee

The Research Groups Sub-Committee reports to the Research and Higher Education Committee. It is responsible for: liaison with Research Groups and, when appropriate, providing recommendations for the approval of Limited Life Working Groups and new Research Groups. It serves to encourage and support Research Groups in their activities and is therefore also responsible for liaison with Research Groups with respect to the planning of the Annual Conference and the development of research seminars, conferences and meetings. The Research Groups Sub-Committee is intended to be both reactive and proactive with Research Groups and Limited Life Working Groups in order to enhance the role of both groups in the Society.

The RGS-IBG will allow claims for travel expenses from one representative of each Research Group to attend the meetings of the Research Groups Sub-Committee, when this meeting is held in person. Forms for reimbursement are distributed at the meeting. Only advance-booked economy fares (or their cost equivalent) will be reimbursed (please investigate two single fares as they may be cheaper). **Day travel fares on the tube will not be reimbursed – rather single tube fares.** Taxi fares are admissible only in specific circumstances with prior approval. All costs must be documented with receipts. If you are unsure, contact RHED for advice, [E rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

Travel costs are significant. All Committee representatives attending meetings are strongly encouraged to find the cheapest options for travel to the extent possible.

#### 6.2.2 Research Group Representation on the Research and Higher Education Committee

The Research Group committee members of the Research Groups Sub-Committee elect from among themselves three representatives to become members of the Research and Higher Education Committee. These individuals must be members or Fellows of the RGS-IBG. Each representative serves for three years with appointments offset so that one new representative is elected each year.

The representatives must attend all the meetings of the Research and Higher Education Committee of which there are two per year (usually October and March).

Any individual who is at the time of the election a Treasurer, Secretary or Chair of a Research Group can be nominated for election. Each nomination must be accompanied by a statement from the person being nominated of no more than 75 words stating why the candidate is interested in being nominated.



The representatives are expected to engage fully with all issues considered by the Research and Higher Education Committee, and will be particularly called upon for input on issues relating to Research Groups. Representatives are also called upon by RHED to assist with Group related activities throughout the year, including reviewing Research Group grant applications.

The deadline for nominations is 28 February each year. Elections are held if there is more than one candidate. Currently serving Chairs, Secretaries and Treasurers of Research Groups have one vote each in the election; nominees may vote for themselves. The election is organised by the Chair and Secretary of the Research Groups Sub-Committee, and votes are received in confidence.

### **6.2.3 Research Groups' Forum**

The purpose of the forum is to share best practice, gather Research Group input to Society initiatives, and to encourage greater networking and cross-working opportunities between the Groups. At present, this is held as a distributed series of online meetings over the course of the academic year. Please see the latest Research Groups timeline at [W www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups)

## **6.3 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Sustainability Review Group (EDISRG)**

The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Sustainability Review Group (EDISRG) is a standing Committee of the RGS-IBG Council. You can see the Terms of Reference here: <https://www.rgs.org/about-us/governance/council/committees-of-council/edi-and-sustainability-review-group>

## 7 The RGS-IBG Annual International Conference

### 7.1 Proposing sessions for the Annual Conference

Research Groups are encouraged to think about how they want to organise sessions and papers at the conference, focusing particularly on the kinds of spaces and conversations they want to curate, and who and how they want to engage attendees in person and online. This includes networking sessions and events outside the main conference programme. The conference is a great opportunity for community building and networking. Research Groups play a vital role in this and in the construction of the conference programme.

Research Groups are asked to take responsibility for encouraging session organisers to advertise their Calls for Proposals (CfP) widely, to continue encouraging participation from early-career researchers and international delegates, and to consider alternative formats for sessions and presentations to enable an environment in which greater interaction and discussion is possible (this remains a key piece of feedback from delegates). In particular Research Groups are encouraged to make the process for requesting sponsorship of sessions open – advertise it clearly on your website and via your mailing lists at the earliest opportunity to give session organisers enough time to announce their CfPs.

#### 7.1.1 Annual conference timeline

Procedures and deadlines for submission of sessions and abstracts for the Annual International Conference are announced on the conference web site: [www.rgs.org/ac20\\*\\*](http://www.rgs.org/ac20**) (corresponding year). Research Groups are usually advised of the process in the Committee meeting held in October each year.

The timeline of activities for Research Groups to propose sessions for conference is ordinarily as follows:

- *16 months before the conference:* the Conference Chair is elected by the Fellowship at the Society's AGM (first Monday in June)
- *11 months before the conference:* the Conference Chair outlines their ideas about the conference theme for input and discussion by Research Groups
- *9-10 months before the conference:* RHED issues a Call for Sessions and Papers to the wider geographical and related communities. All Research Groups are included in this call. Research Groups announce a call for sponsored sessions. Session convenors apply to relevant Research Groups for sole or joint sponsorship of their session at the next conference, or choose to propose a session independently. Research Groups liaise among themselves to agree sole and joint sponsorship. Once sponsorship is agreed, Research Groups are asked to submit a copy of the Call for Papers (CfP) for the sessions to RHED, to allow advertising of the CfP on the conference website, and to provide an early view of sessions for planning purposes.
- *7-8 months before the conference:* A listing of known Calls for Papers is advertised for prospective delegates. Session convenors receive proposals for papers directly from prospective delegates.
- *5 months before the conference:* The deadline for session proposals to be submitted to the conference organisers by session convenors, following the process announced on the conference website. The Call for Papers remains open for contributions to open sessions (convened by the conference organisers). The Call for Papers closes, and 'open' papers sessions convened on a range of themes are added to the conference timetable.
- *4 months before the conference:* The conference organisers confirm acceptance of sessions and papers and commence the conference timetabling process.
- *3 months before the conference:* A provisional programme is made available to Research Group Chairs/Secretaries, inviting feedback about potential clashes or other timetabling issues. Wherever possible, the conference organisers will accommodate these requests. The updated provisional programme is then published to the conference website ahead of the 'early-bird' registration deadline for participants to view.

#### 7.1.2 Guidelines for participation at the Annual Conference

Research Groups are encouraged to take note of the following guidelines for participation at the Annual Conference, which are designed to encourage wide participation and reduce programme clashes for delegates with multiple commitments.

### Individual contributions

- Delegates are limited to ONE paper presentation and ONE panel/workshop contribution, OR, TWO panel/workshop contributions.
- A single paper may only be presented once at the conference.
- We cannot guarantee to resolve all timetable clashes for non-presenting co-authors where they are involved in multiple sessions.
- There is no formal limit on the number of sessions an individual can chair, but we encourage delegates to be realistic about what they can take on.
- There is no formal limit on the number of sessions that one can (co)convene. However, we do not undertake to resolve timetable clashes for convenors where they are involved in multiple sessions, where they are not presenting or chairing.

### Organising a session

- Sessions are limited to TWO timeslots in the programme. A timeslot is 1 hour 40 minutes.
- Sessions may take the form of presented papers, panels, practitioner forums, discussions, workshops, or something else. [Innovative formats](#) are encouraged, particularly for online sessions which make use of uploading 'on-demand' content in advance of sessions to be viewed ahead of time.
- Please remind contributors of the limits on individual contributions when accepting paper proposals for a session.
- Session organisers should ensure that they have sufficient confirmed contributors to allow the session to go ahead if one or two withdraw.
- Sessions do not need to be sponsored by a Society Research Group in order to appear in the programme, but session organisers may wish to seek the sponsorship of one of the Society's Research Groups for their session.

### Programme structure

Assuming a three -day conference, there are twelve unique timetable slots across conference, with four lunchtime/evening plenary timeslots in addition:

<b>Session one</b>	9am to 10:40am
<b>Session two</b>	11:10am to 12:50pm
<b>Lunch/plenary</b>	1:10pm to 2:25pm
<b>Session three</b>	2:40 to 4:20pm
<b>Session four</b>	4.50pm to 6:30pm
<b>Evening</b>	Usually 6:45 to 8.00pm

## 7.2 Research Group session quota

The creation of the annual conference programme requires conference organisers to schedule plenary lectures and sessions, Research Group sponsored sessions, independently proposed sessions, and open sessions of papers that are convened by conference organisers, alongside Research Group AGMs, Journal-sponsored lectures, receptions and other activities.

Research Groups are limited to a quota of timeslots in the programme. In doing so, the conference organisers are attempting to:

- Create a balanced programme representing the breadth of Research Group interests and the conference theme for that year
- Reduce the likelihood of timetable clashes and difficulties created by multiple Research Group commitments in simultaneous timeslots
- Maintain, within reason, a practical limit to the number of concurrent sessions scheduled, in order to keep costs (room & AV hire, online technical hosts, etc.) within budget for the conference.

Each Research Group is allocated a quota of timeslots within the conference programme. Research Groups may sponsor sessions solely or jointly with other Research Groups, but in either case sponsorship of a session timeslot counts towards their total quota as one session timeslot (i.e., there are no 'half' session timeslots). The number of timeslots allocated to each Research Group is announced at the October committee meeting each year, before the conference's Call for Sessions is announced. The allocation of timeslots is currently 12 per Research Group, assuming a three-day conference.

If Research Groups exceed their quota of sponsored timeslots, for example because the sessions proposed elicit more paper submissions than can be fitted into one or two timetable slots, they are asked to contact the conference organisers to request additional space in the programme. Where additional sessions can be allowed in the conference programme, the conference organisers cannot always guarantee that the timetabling process will be able to prevent clashes between Research Group sponsored sessions. In a limited number of cases, there may also be timetable clashes for individual people if they are involved in more than one session. However, every effort will be made to reduce the likelihood of significant clashes (e.g. where people might appear in two places at once, or a clash of sessions on similar topics).

Research Groups normally hold their AGMs just before, during, or just after the annual conference. These can be held in-person or online (see 2.1.1 above)

### **7.2.1 Announcement of Calls for Papers for Research Group sponsored sessions**

Session organisers are encouraged to send their Calls for Papers to the conference organisers to be added to the conference website.

RHED also tries to monitor relevant mailing lists and gather Calls for Papers that have not been sent directly, to add them to the conference website on behalf of the session organisers. Information about session sponsorship by Research Groups is generally not added unless that information has been verified by a member of the Research Group Committee – Research Groups are encouraged to let the conference organisers know their list of supported sessions as soon as possible.

Research Group Committees are encouraged to monitor the conference website closely to see what other sessions may be proposed for the conference in similar themes.

## **7.3 Research Group Guests**

### **7.3.1 Rationale**

The Research Group Guest Registration scheme is intended to encourage and support participation in the annual conference, beyond UK geography. This includes:

- Colleagues from overseas, whether in geography or other disciplines, and particularly from the Global South and/or economically less-developed countries.
- Colleagues working outside academia in the UK and overseas, including policy, the third sector, arts, and more.
- Colleagues working in other disciplines in the UK (this is not for those actively involved in research groups/geography communities or who have attended the conference in the past).

The intent is to enrich the programme and engage new people.

### **7.3.2 Allocation**

Each Research Group is entitled to request complimentary guest registration totalling six days. These can cover both in-person and online-only registration. Each online-only registration is equivalent to one day in-person registration but will cover the whole conference. No part days are allowed. Guests who are nominated for 1 day in-person registrations have the option of upgrading their registration at a concessionary rate to the full conference.

The six days may be applied as the Research Group sees fit.

*Additional information*

The Guest status applies to registration fees only. Guest(s), or their sponsoring Research Group, should pay for their own travel, accommodation and other costs of attending the conference in-person. If the nominated guest has already paid for their own registration at the time of being awarded a guest pass, RGS-IBG will refund the fee paid in full.

Names of the guests will be listed on the conference website. If circumstances for a guest change after the application is submitted and approved, Research Groups must inform the RGS-IBG promptly.

### 7.3.3 *Criteria for applications*

- 1) Nominated guests must be making a substantive contribution to the conference programme, e.g. presenting a conference paper, acting as session panellist or discussant, or convening a conference session.
- 2) Nominated guests are also expected to also be active participants in the conference, attending sessions beyond the one in which they are directly involved.
- 3) If the nominated guest is from the UK, they must not be a geographer or a member of a university geography department, nor involved in the Research Group (currently or in the past).
- 4) If the nominated guest is based overseas:
  - a) For EU transition states, the Global South and developing countries, nominations may be made for either geographers or non-geographers
  - b) For developed countries (including but not limited to, North America, Canada, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and members of the EU etc.) nominations may only be made for those who are not geographers, members of university geography departments or who have participated in the conference in the past.
- 5) Research Groups must inform the nominated guest of the arrangements and scope of the guest pass prior to submitting their application to avoid any misunderstandings.
- 6) Current or past Research Group committee members are not eligible for Research Group guest passes.
- 7) Applications cannot be accepted for those who do not fulfil all the above criteria.

**Applications should refer directly to the above criteria, outlining which criteria are being met.**

The deadline for applications each year will be confirmed at the autumn Research Groups Sub-Committee meeting.

### 7.3.4 *Consideration process*

- The Chair or another Committee Representative should submit applications to [ac20XX@rgs.org](mailto:ac20XX@rgs.org) by the **advertised deadline**. We welcome submissions earlier and will make decisions ahead of the deadline.
- If your Research Group is oversubscribed, please indicate which applications are a priority for your group when you submit these. We may be able to approach other undersubscribed groups to see if they can support these additional guests.
- **Applications submitted directly by conference session organisers or delegates will not be considered.**
- We will review all applications as quickly as we can and come back to you with a decision. If we have any concerns or queries, we will come to you to discuss further.
- Where an application for guest passes is successful, the conference organisers will notify the Research Group representative who made the application, and then contact the guest directly to arrange for the registration paperwork to be completed. If the Research Group does not want the conference organisers to contact the guest directly, please make this clear in the application form.
- Where an application for a guest pass is unsuccessful, the conference organisers will advise the Research Group representative who submitted the form, and the Research Group will be responsible for communicating this to the prospective guest.

## 8 Useful information for Committees

### 8.1 Annual timeline of deadlines and events

RHED provides Research Groups with an annual timeline of key deadlines and events, which is updated regularly. For the latest version, please visit [www.rgs.org/research/research-groups](http://www.rgs.org/research/research-groups).

### 8.2 Contact information for Research Groups

The full list of Research Groups with contact information is available here: W: [Current Research Groups - RGS](#)

### 8.3 JISCMail for Research Group committees

There is a JISCMail list available for use by Research Group committees. This list allows committee members to connect with those from other groups. Members are encouraged to use the list for any purpose they find helpful. Some suggested uses include:

- For committee members, especially Officers (such as Chair, Secretary, or Treasurer), to communicate with their counterparts in other groups.
- To ask for advice and share information on Research Group management with a network of helpful contacts.
- To promote collaboration and build strong relationships between different groups.

Committee members can subscribe [here](#). The list does not replace the periodic requests and information updates sent from [RHED@rgs.org](mailto:RHED@rgs.org).

### 8.4 Research Group executive role bursaries

One of the requirements to hold the role of Chair, Treasurer or Secretary of a Research Group is Fellowship (including Associate Fellowship) of the Society. There is also a requirement that the majority of a given Research Group committee will be Fellows of the Society. The latter is important in terms of representation and governance in the Society.

#### 8.4.1 The scheme

As part of the Society's support for Research Groups, each year funds will be available for up to five bursaries (each for one year) to cover the costs of Society Fellowship for unsalaried individuals if elected to executive roles on Research Group committees.

#### 8.4.2 The process

Those who are interested in taking on a Research Group executive committee role (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer), but whose circumstances prevent them from taking up Society Fellowship, are invited to submit an expression of interest for this support, using the form below.

The annual deadline for applications is 1 August. Applications will also be considered out of cycle after the Research Groups have held their AGMs.

Applications will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Those applying will be expected to have considered taking up Associate Fellowship first if they are eligible to do so (within five years of the completion of their first degree) and if their circumstances permit. The deadline for applications is expected to be in early August each year.

Expressions of interest will be reviewed by a sub-committee of the Research and Higher Education committee, comprising the Honorary Secretary for Research and Higher Education and the Research Group Representatives. The sub-committee will review and establish the eligibility of applications. If the number of eligible applications exceeds five, we will then operate a lottery to select those to receive the five bursaries. We will operate a reserve list should successful recipients not be elected or take up the role.

Successful applicants will be notified by mid-August each year. If they are subsequently elected to their chosen committee role, they will be able to draw on the bursary to submit their Fellowship application for the upcoming year.

Bursary holders will have the option in subsequent years, should it be relevant, to request additional years of support in order to complete three-year terms, by submitting a new form. However, such support cannot be guaranteed. Such applications will be included in the limit of five bursaries per year.

Where Research Groups have financial resource available, there is the option for the Research Group to fund the additional years of support to committee members who had previously received a bursary if their circumstances are appropriate. This is an exception to the general principle that committee members should not financially benefit from Research Group funds (so as to avoid any perceived or actual conflict of interest). There is no expectation from the Society that groups will choose to use their funds in this way.

To apply, please complete the form [here](#) and return to [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org).

## 8.5 Summary of support offered by the Society

<b>Bank accounts</b>	Research Groups can arrange for funds to be held at the Society on behalf of the Research Group. We can manage all payments on behalf of the group. We can complete the first draft of annual financial reporting for you to then check and confirm. You will not be required to update signatories.
<b>Dissertation prize submissions</b>	The Society can set of a submission portal for university departments to submit their entries. Once the deadline has passed, we will collate the submissions by Group and provide access to the respective Groups' review committee. All decisions will remain with the committee.
<b>Events</b>	The Society can host registration for in-person, online, and hybrid Research Group events through the RGS-IBG website. Research Groups are entitled to book the Sunley Room, Drayson Room or Lowther Room free of charge for half-day bookings at the RGS-IBG, three times each year for Research Group related activities. All rooms available to book at the Society have hybrid capacity. The Society has a number of paid Zoom accounts which can be made available for hosting online events.
<b>Mailing lists</b>	The Society can serve as a 'silent' permanent co-owner of lists, with responsibility in name only, ensuring the list isn't taken over by JISCMAIL.
<b>Websites</b>	The Society can pay for an IONOS-hosted WordPress site for Research Groups to host their website. This is ad-free and includes daily backups. The Society can also provide support with building the site or migrating an existing one. Under this arrangement, the Society will remain a 'silent owner' of the site to ensure continuity between committees.

## 9 The Society's Policy on advocacy, lobbying, campaigning and activism

### 9.1 Background

Under Charity Commission guidelines the Society cannot exist for a political purpose, the Society cannot give support or funding to a political party, and the Society must remain independent and ensure that any involvement it has with political parties is balanced and non-partisan. Trustees must not allow the charity to be used as a vehicle for the expression of the political (personal or party political) views of any individual trustee or staff member or, by extension, any individual member or groups of members. The Charity Commission does allow political campaigning or political activity by charities but only in the context of such activity supporting the delivery of the charitable purposes of the organisation. It is a matter for Trustees of the charity to decide whether and how to engage in such activities and the processes by which to manage that engagement.

The Society's current guidelines can be found here: W: [Advocacy - RGS](#)

The guidelines **do not** apply to individuals who have an association with the Society when they are acting in a personal and individual capacity when, for example, undertaking research, publishing, or presenting at conferences or giving a lecture.

We know requests are made of Research Groups to make statements on current issues and this has the potential to be a challenging issue for Research Groups Committees. Please do contact RHED at the earliest possible opportunity for advice should such a discussion/requests develop in your Research Group.

#### Guidelines

1. The Society's purpose is to advance geography. It achieves this through supporting research, education and outdoor learning, public engagement and in highlighting evidence for policy. It is on this basis that the Society has charitable status.
2. The Society in its name, and through delegated responsibility to its staff and Trustees, may act as advocate for the position and status of geography in school education and in higher education, including the funding of geography teaching, fieldwork and geographical research, and geography in the curriculum. The Trustees maintain an overview of such activities within the annual operating plan of the Society and as reported at Council meetings. Delegated responsibility is devolved to the Director in managing such activities.
3. In acting as advocates for the above activities, the Society's delegated responsible staff and Trustees may choose to respond to consultations; lobby ministers, MPs and others responsible for formulating policy; commission and disseminate targeted research (resources permitting); and hold conferences, seminars and other meetings to raise awareness of the issue(s).
4. For issues of deep concern in terms of the position and status of geography this may amount to a 'political campaign' that is planned in advance, fully approved by the Society's Trustees, and monitored in its execution. The Trustees limit such campaigning to support the status, position and funding of geographical education, fieldwork and research. The Trustees do not allow the Society's work, or that of its associated subgroups, to extend to either campaigning or activism on geographical and other issues or in relation to third parties.
5. The Society's Trustees may, from time to time, consider whether the Society wishes to lend its name and weight to the promotion of particular, substantive geographical research findings that are viewed as being of wide public benefit, such as for example, research on climate change. In these instances, the Society may publish a position statement that has been approved by the Society's Trustees. The purpose of such a position statement is solely to inform, making use of the Society's authority and independence. Such statements are not to be used in campaigning or activist activities.



6. The Society does not empower any branch, committee, network, research group, or other group within the Society, or any individual Fellow or member or staff member, to speak in the name of the Society or on behalf of the Society, or to represent the Society's position (or that of any Society sub-group), unless agreed in advance or requested to do so on an agreed topic by the Trustees, the Director, or any person delegated to do so by the Director. This includes speaking to the media on behalf of/in the name of the Society.

## 9.2 Guidance for Research Groups on responding to events

We recognise there are events and issues both nationally and globally on which Research Groups are well placed to share their expertise and insights. Groups may wish to call for action on a particular subject or event; to draw attention to a situation; or to express solidarity with and support for affected communities - both within and beyond their own group membership. The Society's policy on statements is outlined above (section 9.1).

This resource is to support Research Groups who are considering making an intervention in response to events in the world. We want to stress this guidance is only for interventions in the name of a Research Group(s) and is provided because Research Groups are part of the RGS-IBG. As individuals expressing your own personal views, you may include your Research Group role or affiliation if you wish (e.g. after your name on a petition), without having to refer back to these guidelines or to the RGS-IBG.

### 9.2.1 *The process*

1. What is the issue you are responding to?
2. How does it relate to the scope of your Research Group/to the specific expertise within your Research Group?
3. What do you hope to achieve?
4. What support might you need?

### 9.2.2 *Consulting with Research Groups*

When deciding on making an intervention as a group, we would expect Research Group committees to consult with their membership through the group's main communication channels (for example, through an email list).

Depending on the subject being discussed, there may be a diversity of views held by members of a Research Group. As a learned society, we respect the academic freedom of individuals to express and share their opinions. We would therefore expect Research Groups to respect and make space for a divergence of views within their group and to represent the diversity of opinion in any subsequent output from their discussions.

1. How do you intend to consult with your members on this subject?
2. How will you ensure that your members' voices are being heard and represented?
3. Is there expertise outside of your Research Group that you wish to draw on? E.g. another Research Group, non-members, external subject experts, affected communities.
4. Is there sufficient time, resource and support available for those taking forward this work?

### 9.2.3 *Different types of intervention*

There are many ways Research Groups may wish to respond. Here are some examples to consider (this is not an exhaustive list).

1. A resource: for teaching and learning; for students; for fellow researchers; for the broader public. See for example these [anti-racist resources](#) developed by the RACE Working Group.

2. An event or series of events: open forums; conversations; seminars; panels; workshops; film screenings; letter writing events. [See for example.](#)
3. An opinion piece: blog post (e.g. on [Geography Directions](#) - the Society's blog); commentary in an academic geography journal.
4. RGS-IBG Annual Conference: sessions; workshops; meet-ups. [See for example.](#)
5. Written collection: Special Section to an academic journal. [See for example.](#)
6. A statement of support written on behalf of the Research Group's members; a joint statement with another Research Group.

#### **9.2.4 Considerations for risk mitigation**

We recognise that certain topics might carry more risks than others. We encourage Research Group committee members to think through the following considerations when beginning discussions.

1. Does the subject being discussed have the potential to cause harm (emotional, institutional, reputational etc.) to you or your members?
  - a. If yes, how do you plan to mitigate this risk in your discussions?
  - b. What support do you require from the Society?"
2. Do the interventions being planned have the potential to cause unintended consequences for yourselves or your members? E.g. threats, online abuse, creating difference or divisions within the group?.
  - a. If yes, how do you plan to mitigate these risks, and what support do you require from the Society?
3. Are there any conflicts of interest within your group that should be declared?
4. Is your intervention on a subject that is likely to be deemed 'political' by the Charity Commission?
  - a. If yes, we encourage you to contact the RHED in the first instance for advice.

#### **9.2.5 The Society's consultation process**

We hope Research Groups will make the Society aware of any interventions they are planning so that we can ensure the required support is in place (e.g. with communications; convening meetings; providing networks and contacts etc.). Please just email [rhed@rgs.org](mailto:rhed@rgs.org) in the first instance to set up a Teams call (you can also contact [Comms@rgs.org](mailto:Comms@rgs.org)).

In the event that an intervention requires additional consultation e.g. if the subject could be deemed to be 'political' according to the Charity Commission's guidance\*, the proposed activities will be considered by a subcommittee of the RHED Committee to ensure that all necessary steps to avoid potential risks have been taken. This will involve discussion with representatives of the Research Group(s).

In the exceptional circumstance that an activity is considered to contravene the rules of the Charity Commission, we would support your Research Group to find alternative ways of making your intervention.

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\*The Charity Commission Guidance on this topic can be found [here](#). This should be read in the context of the Society's objective to 'advance geographical science'.