



American MENSA®

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# SIG Handbook

Revised 2011



## Table of Contents

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What is a SIG? .....	4
Starting your SIG .....	5
Check for existing SIGs .....	5
Consider a “feeler” .....	5
Download a SIG application form .....	5
Review of application elements .....	5
Submitting the application.....	7
Adjustments .....	7
On approval .....	7
Running your SIG .....	8
Recruit SIG members .....	10
Respond to inquiries and membership requests.....	10
Exclusivity .....	10
Keep membership lists.....	9
Produce newsletters / moderate elists / create and maintain Web sites.....	10
Activity reporting .....	10
Maintain your own Mensa membership! .....	10
Utilize resources provided by American Mensa.....	11
Accounting .....	12
Dealing with problems.....	13
Ethical practices.....	14
Transferring control of your SIG .....	15
Discontinuing your SIG .....	16
International SIGs.....	17
Acknowledgements .....	17

## What is a SIG?

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### Definition

The abbreviation SIG stands for “Special Interest Group.”

SIGs may operate through paper newsletters, online discussion lists, Web sites, in-person activities, or other mechanisms.

### Description

A Special Interest Group is sort of a “mini-club” within an overall Mensa organization, put together by individual members of that organization on their own for the purpose of arranging discussions and/or other activities pertaining to a particular topic of common interest. The SIGs program allows members to find other members who share the same interests, and in this way helps Mensa members to customize their membership experience however they individually want it to be.

### Organization

SIGs can be organized within a local Mensa chapter or within a national Mensa such as American Mensa, Ltd., (hereinafter abbreviated as “AML”) or within the overall international Mensa organization. At some point, we may also start organizing SIGs at the regional level, to arrange for topic-specific activities involving members of multiple neighboring Mensa chapters. This handbook focuses principally on the SIGs program that operates within AML, which has approximately 150 currently operating SIGs as of this revision. AML has no jurisdiction over local SIGs, which instead must operate under the direct authority of their respective local Mensa chapters.

### Common types of SIGs

SIGs can be organized:

- around topics of intellectual stimulation (art, literature, mathematics, physics, etc.),
- around topics of current cultural interest (movies, TV shows, sports, politics, etc.),
- to discuss/play various games (chess, poker, role-playing, etc.),
- as support for members with shared challenges,
- to exchange tips and stories on particular hobbies (stamps, cars, cooking, travel, etc.),
- to undertake projects to help the world around us,
- or for any of several other purposes.

## Starting your SIG

### First, check for existing SIGs

AML policy provides that an application for a new SIG is not to be approved if there is another SIG already in place covering the exact same topic. Therefore, before considering whether to start a new SIG of your own, first check to see if there is already an existing SIG that you can join that deals with the same topic. The three primary methods for checking on existing SIGs are as follows, in order of preference:

- A. Look up the current directory online, at [www.us.mensa.org](http://www.us.mensa.org). This directory is maintained on an up-to-the-minute basis by the professional staff at AML's National Office, based on information received from the national SIGs Officer, who is a member volunteer appointed by the American Mensa Committee (AML's governing council, abbreviated as "AMC") to manage the SIGs program at the national level. The directory listing is divided into categories, to make your search easier; you probably will need a current Mensa membership and a log-on ID issued by the National Office in order to see the categorized listing.
- B. Consult the most recent printed directory. The directory of all current national SIGs used to be published each year in both the March and September issues of the *Mensa Bulletin*, which is mailed to all current AML members, but the current editorial policy as of this revision is to print the listing in only the March issue. The printed directory includes both a complete alphabetical listing (including brief descriptions and contact information) and a separate listing of SIG titles by category.
- C. Send an email to the SIGs Officer at [SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org](mailto:SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org), asking if there already is a SIG covering the particular topic that you are interested in and, if so, who the current coordinator of that SIG is, along with his/her contact information.

### Consider a "feeler"

If there currently is not a national SIG dealing with your pet topic, your next step is to consider whether or not you wish to start a SIG of your own. If you've already made the decision to go forward, proceed to "Download the SIG application form." If you're still not sure, then one of the key factors that you'll want to

consider is how popular (and therefore how active) your SIG is likely to be, for you'll probably not want to bother preparing an application, building a Web site and whatever else if you're going to end up being the only member of your SIG!

To get a better idea of the potential viability and popularity of your SIG, ask the SIGs Officer ([SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org](mailto:SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org)) to put a "feeler" in his/her next column for the *Mensa Bulletin*. A "feeler" is a paragraph that you draft (subject to possible editing by the SIGs Officer and/or the *Bulletin* Editor), announcing the type of SIG that you're interested in possibly putting together, presenting any preliminary ideas that you may have as to how the SIG would operate, and providing contact information to allow readers to let you know that they would be interested in joining such a SIG if it were formed.

### Download the SIG application form

Once you've determined that, yes, you definitely want to start a new SIG (or reactivate a previous one), your next step is to prepare an application form and submit it to the SIGs Officer for consideration. You can find the application form in PDF format on the AML Web site (look for the "Create a SIG" submenu option at [www.us.mensa.org/sigs](http://www.us.mensa.org/sigs)). When you download the form, save it onto your computer using your own unique filename, then fill it out electronically using Adobe Acrobat or other similar program. (If you experience any technical difficulty with the downloading process, contact the SIGs Officer for assistance, which may involve sending you a simple text file listing the fields to be filled in.) Some of the specific application elements are discussed directly hereunder.

### Review of application elements

There are several items that the SIGs Officer will be looking for as part of determining whether the application will be approved, so you'll want to make sure that they're all in good order before you submit the form. These items include – but may not be limited to – the following:

#### A. SIG title

AML policy provides that no SIG can use the name "Mensa" – or any inflection thereof – within its title without first receiving special permission from the AMC's Name & Logo Committee, which they almost

never extend to SIGs because the Committee seeks to continually maximize the integrity of the Mensa trademark. However, SIGs are allowed to use “M,” “Ms”/“M’s” or “M-” within their titles, which a lot of SIGs currently do. It’s often best to have a simple word or phrase that succinctly describes the subject matter of the SIG (“Chess,” “Psychology,” “Science Fiction,” etc.), within the title so that people looking for a SIG on that subject will have the easiest possible time finding your group.

### **B. Topic of interest**

Almost every conceivable topic is going to be acceptable for a Mensa SIG, but there are some exceptions. The SIGs Officer will be unlikely to approve any SIG that appears to promote any kind of hatred, violence, direct advertising or any activity that would in any way violate Mensa’s international Constitution or the Bylaws of AML.

### **C. Principal SIG Coordinator**

In most cases, the person who proposes the SIG will choose to serve as its Principal Coordinator, but you may wish to designate someone else to perform the actual management of the SIG, or you may wish to divide any duties among several people. The SIG Coordinator must be a current AML member who is willing to act as the principal contact and responsible party for the SIG.

### **D. Assistant SIG Coordinator**

Each SIG is required to appoint an Assistant Coordinator who can take over immediately when the Principal Coordinator quits the SIG, deceases or lapses his/her Mensa membership. The Assistant Coordinator must also be a dues-paid AML member.

### **E. Initial SIG Membership**

Only currently active SIGs are listed in the official directories, and non-operational SIGs are promptly removed so that other Mensa members can have the opportunity to create active SIGs based on those topics. Therefore, it must be clear in the original SIG application that the SIG will be “ready to go” immediately upon notification of approval. To further assure initial success of a SIG, an initial member count of at least ten members (in addition to the Principal and Assistant SIG Coordinators) is required. Indicate the number of current members in the “Member Count” on the SIG Recognition Form and be prepared to identify these initial members if the SIGs Officer requests. If you need suggestions on how to get these initial members, the SIGs Officer will be happy to assist you.

### **F. Method of Operation**

Please indicate on the SIG application whether the SIG members will be communicating by publishing a

paper newsletter, building a Web site, administering an online discussion list, or doing something else specific that will allow your members to participate in the SIG. Any online communications vehicle must be already established at the time that the SIG application is submitted, and any postal-mail vehicle must produce an issue within two months of SIG approval. Failing to provide a method by which your SIG members can communicate may result in rejection of your application or deactivation of your approved SIG. You may change your mind later as to how the SIG operates, but there must be some kind of initial operation method indicated in the application. As with the SIG title itself, the title of any newsletter, Web site, email group or other communication vehicle may not contain the name “Mensa” or any inflection thereof without express permission from the Name & Logo Committee, which they will grant only in very rare exceptions.

### **G. Description**

This is the paragraph that will appear both on the Web site and in the printed SIG directory. There is no set minimum or maximum length for the description paragraph, but the most effective descriptions tend to include approximately three to five sentences. Be descriptive but concise, enthusiastic but mature, unique but understandable, and be sure to include some kind of indication as to how interested Mensans may contact you (or your designee) to join the SIG.

### **I. Exclusivity**

Paragraph IX(3) of the AML Bylaws guarantees every AML member the right of full equal access to the SIGs program “without qualification or limitation,” including membership in any particular SIG. Thus, SIG Coordinators cannot exclude entire groups of Mensa members from SIG membership. Exceptions to this rule are as follows: 1) SIGs that were established prior to Nov. 15, 2011; and 2) SIGs categorized as “Adult,” which may exclude members under the age of maturity. SIG Coordinators may still deny SIG membership to individual members for any cause, including but not limited to disruption, inactivity, or lapse of Mensa membership.

### **Approval**

The SIGs Officer may approve your application in its original state, or may indicate that one or more adjustments need to be made to the application before it can be approved. The SIGs Officer acts in the best interests of AML and the SIGs program, and may approve or deny an application based on its overall effect on either. If you feel that an appeal is necessary, contact the National Ombudsman. Upon approval, the National SIGs Officer will select an appropriate general category under which members can find your new SIG

in the SIG directory. If you would like to suggest a new category, or have your SIG moved to a different category, contact the National SIGs Officer.

## Submitting the application

When it appears to your satisfaction that the application is complete, send it as an email attachment to the SIGs Officer (SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org) and stand by for his/her response. Response times will vary anywhere from a few minutes to several days or even weeks, depending both on the SIGs Officer's schedule at that time and on the number/degree of any irregularities that may exist in the application. Do feel free to send a follow-up email to the SIGs Officer when you think that enough time has passed without a response.

## Adjustments

In many cases, the SIGs Officer will approve the application in its original state. In some other cases, the application will be entirely rejected for some "fatal error" such as an apparent focus on either hatred/violence, commercial promotion or too great of a topic overlap with an existing SIG. (There is no appeal following a rejection by the SIGs Officer, except to try your luck with his/her successor.) In the remaining instances, the SIGs Officer will indicate that one or more adjustments need to be made to the application before it can be approved, such as filling in one or more key fields that had been left blank,

eliminating the appearance of the name "Mensa" (or an inflection) in the proposed title of the SIG or any of its communication organs, or something else. Modify your PDF file according to the SIGs Officer's suggestions, then send the file again in its revised entirety, and repeat the process as needed until final approval or rejection, or until you change your mind about the whole business.

## On approval

If/when the SIGs Officer determines that a given application submission is "good to go," he/she will then forward the file in its entirety to the National Office (typically with copy to you, or else you may expect a separate notification). The office staff will then arrange for the group to be included in the official SIG registers, usually within the same or the next business day if their schedule permits. The SIGs Officer will also typically make an announcement of your new SIG in his/her *Mensa Bulletin* column and may (depending on schedule, available column space, etc.) offer you the option to draft an announcement paragraph for that column, to include language beyond what you submitted in the Description field of your application. If so, you are not required to prepare such a separate announcement, but it's a rare opportunity to promote your group in front of the entire *Bulletin* readership, so it's best to take advantage of the opportunity if you get it.

## Running your SIG

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So, now your SIG application has finally been approved by the SIGs Officer, and the National Office has added it to the official SIG directories. Congratulations!! At this point, there are several duties that you'll need to undertake to get your SIG running and keep it running, or else you may at your pleasure delegate any or all of the duties to other SIG members. Following is a listing and discussion of all the things that somebody in your group has to make sure to get done and keep doing.

### Recruit SIG members

It's up to you to decide whether you want to recruit members actively, sit back and let them come to you, or some combination. As mentioned before, it is recommended following initial approval that you at least draft a special announcement paragraph for inclusion in the SIGs Officer's column in the *Mensa Bulletin* (even if the SIGs Officer doesn't directly ask for it), but it is not required. Beyond this, you may already know of certain online groups that accept this sort of announcement, and you might consider also asking the SIGs Officer for any additional outreach suggestions. Many SIGs do just fine without any special recruiting efforts, though, and prospective members often come to them simply by seeing them on the AML Web site and/or in the printed SIG directory, so it's finally your decision as SIG coordinator as to how hard (if at all) you wish to actively recruit people.

### Respond to inquiries and membership requests

Whoever is in charge of actively managing your SIG (whether yourself or a designee) should always be prompt in responding to any requests for information or actual SIG membership. If the National Office or the SIGs Officer receives complaints of delays in response (and these complaints definitely do happen), then the SIG will be subject to possible deactivation, although an effort will generally be made first to contact and counsel the current named coordinator of the SIG.

Consider the following points when determining whether to accept a particular applicant as an actual SIG member:

#### A. Mensa membership

You as SIG coordinator have the option to limit SIG membership to either current members of Mensa

generally or current members of AML specifically, or else you may open SIG membership to all interested persons. If you do wish to filter for Mensa membership, the National Office staff is available to perform these checks for you. Since the duties at the National Office shift around from time to time, check with them at [americanmensa@us.mensa.org](mailto:americanmensa@us.mensa.org) for the name and email address of the staffer currently assigned to that role, or else check with the SIGs Officer.

#### B. Disruptors

Even though the overall SIGs program has been officially defined by the AMC as a "membership benefit," the individual SIG is essentially your own private "mini-club," and you generally get to operate it how you will, as long as you continually abide by the rules and protocols designated by the AMC and the SIGs Officer. This includes the fact that you get to expel from your SIG at any time any member who causes an excessive level of disruption within your SIG, or otherwise violates any internal rules or protocols that you as SIG coordinator may have had occasion to designate within your SIG. Similarly, if you receive a SIG membership application from someone whom you know to have a history of excessive disruption, you are completely at liberty to reject the application, in the same way as your having the right to bar anyone from entering your physical home.

#### Exclusivity

This is an area that continues to be the focus of an ongoing debate within American Mensa. Some people feel that Paragraph IX(3) of the AML Bylaws guarantees every AML member the right of full equal access to the SIGs program "without qualification or limitation," including membership in any particular SIG, except where the individual has basically waived his/her individual rights as a result of a history of individual disruption (as discussed above). Others feel that the Bylaws provision of equal access applies to the SIGs program generally, but that individual SIG coordinators still get to deny SIG membership to anyone for any cause, including because the applicant belongs to a particular gender, race, nationality, chronological age group or some other such. Current AML policy as of this revision is to allow SIG coordinators to exclude entire groups of Mensa members from SIG membership, but the debate is continuing, and the policy may change at some point in the future.



## Keep membership lists

The SIGs Officer or some other official may ask you from time to time how many SIG members you currently have, or some prospective SIG members may for some reason wish to know the current count prior to their actually applying, and of course you may wish to keep this count monitored for your own internal management reasons. In addition, insofar as actual SIG members may enjoy certain privileges (such as voting for SIG officers or posting on SIG elists) that SIG non-members do not, you may wish to have a way of clearly distinguishing members of your SIG from non-members. For all these reasons, you should develop a methodology of maintaining a list of SIG members, adding new members to that list as they join and deleting discontinued members. Some tips to keep in mind as you administer this important function:

### A. Mensan-only SIGs

If you have set up your SIG to comprise only current dues-paid members of American Mensa, then you will probably want to perform annual scans of your membership list to make sure that everyone has renewed his/her Mensa membership by the universal expiration date of March 31. The best way to do this is simply to send an electronic copy of your current list to the National Office sometime after March 31 each year and ask them to advise you of any lapses. (Thus, if you do have such a rule within your SIG, then best to include your members' Mensa membership numbers on your listing to facilitate the efforts of the National Office staff.) It is up to you to decide whether to drop these lapsed members from your SIG membership list immediately or to grant them some amount of "grace period" to complete their renewals. If you're doing the latter, you may also wish to send them a "gentle reminder" or two that it's time to renew their Mensa memberships.

### B. Opting-in requirement

You don't get to say that your SIG automatically comprises all Mensa members (and/or other persons) who share a common attribute such as gender, nationality, chronological age range or anything else. Rather, you are entitled to count as SIG members only those persons who have affirmatively "opted in" to willingly become members of your SIG. To mitigate future misunderstanding or conflict on the point, you may want to keep copies of all membership requests in some kind of a file for future reference, but this is not a requirement.

## C. Deceased and/or resigned members

Even if you are not limiting SIG membership to current Mensa members, it would be misleading both to yourself and to any outside officials/entities if you were to include in your membership count any deceased persons or anyone else who has voluntarily withdrawn from all SIG participation. For this reason, you may want to send a "ping" message to anyone that you haven't heard from for a while, especially if you receive any returned postal mail or bounced emails sent to that individual, and then drop him/her from your list if you fail to get any further response within whatever you decide to be a reasonable period of time.

## D. Tracking methods

An Excel-type spreadsheet may prove to be the easiest way for you to maintain your membership list, but you may instead wish to utilize the resources provided by online communities such as Yahoo! Groups, which will allow you to add and delete members according to your own criteria, allow you to modify certain privileges of different members (such as posting to an elist directly, posting with moderation, or not being able to post at all), and provide you with an instant membership count that you can then communicate to any interested party immediately upon request. Also, as noted below, the National Office of American Mensa is now available to perform this function for you if you so desire.

## E. Avoid duplication

Whatever tracking methodology you decide to use, it's important to figure out some way of making sure that no SIG member gets listed twice. This is very prone to occur with email lists such as Yahoo! Groups that allow the same individual to create a second list membership with a separate email address. Thus, if you do maintain such an electronic list, and if you elect to allow members for convenience the option of creating multiple list profiles under different email addresses, then you will want to devise some mechanism of omitting the duplicate entries from your official membership count, possibly by resorting to an Excel-type spreadsheet.

## **Produce newsletters / moderate elists / create and maintain Web sites**

This is where you really get to express yourself creatively and add your personal vision and touch to how the SIG operates and “feels.” You generally have very broad latitude as to what you do with your various communication organs, but there are two important restrictions that you must keep in mind at all times:

### **A. Name & Logo**

As has been stated elsewhere in this Handbook, you may not use the Mensa name – or any inflection thereof – within the title of any of your communication organs, including within the URL for any Web site, unless you first obtain express permission from the AMC’s Name & Logo Committee, which permission they generally will not grant except under very rare and limited conditions. Similarly, you also may not display the Mensa logo in any paper publication or on any Web site without obtaining similar permission from the Name & Logo Committee, whose job it is to make sure that usage of the Mensa name and logo is strictly limited to specific authorized entities for specific authorized purposes. You generally may use the name “Mensa” within the text of any newsletters or Web sites, such as to identify that the publication in question comes from an official SIG of American Mensa, but it’s always good to be careful here. When in doubt, check with the Name & Logo Committee chair or with the SIGs Officer.

### **B. Opinions disclaimer**

It is an important constitutional provision of the Mensa organization at all levels that the Mensa organization holds no collective opinions on politics, economics, social subjects, religion, sports or anything else. It is therefore required that any Web sites or paper newsletters produced by a given SIG contain a prominent disclaimer to the effect that any opinions expressed within that publication are those of the individual authors only, or possibly of the SIG collectively, but that any such statements do not constitute opinions of the Mensa organization, which has no opinions.

Failure to abide at all times by both of these restrictions will subject your SIG to removal from the official directories and/or possible further remedial action.

## **Activity reporting**

If you are producing a paper newsletter, it’s highly helpful to include both the SIGs Officer and the

National Office in your distribution so that they can be kept aware that your SIG continues to be operational. If you do not produce a paper newsletter, then you should plan to prepare some other kind of activity report, probably every 1-3 months but certainly no less frequently than every six months. If more than six months go by without the SIGs Officer or the National Office receiving some kind of report from your SIG, then the SIG will be subject to removal from the official directories, although an attempt will generally be made first to “ping” you to make sure that you’re still around and still actively doing things for your SIG. In the course of your activity reporting, be sure to let the SIGs Officer know if you think that some particular news item (special event/activity, major anniversary, high membership count, etc.) may be of sufficiently general interest to merit inclusion in his/her column for the *Mensa Bulletin*.

## **Maintain your own Mensa membership!**

One of the most commonly occurring problems with SIGs is when the principal coordinator allows his/her own individual Mensa membership to lapse. Whenever that happens, the National Office and/or the SIGs Officer may or may not send you a separate reminder “ping” to renew, and in any case the SIG may be subject at any time to either complete discontinuation or transfer to the named assistant coordinator (if there is one, and if that individual’s AML membership is currently current). If either one of these things happens, then the approval of the SIGs Officer will be needed to reinstate you as principal SIG coordinator, even after you have completed your membership renewal. The SIGs Officer may or may not be willing to grant such permission, because changing coordinators requires work on the part of both the SIGs Officer and the National Office, and they may not want to keep changing a given SIG’s coordinatorship back and forth any more times than strictly necessary. Therefore, best way to maintain continued control of your SIG is to maintain your own individual Mensa membership without interruption, and don’t overlook the possibility of purchasing a life membership for yourself, to make this a non-issue permanently!

## Utilize resources provided by American Mensa

You don't have to run your SIG alone! American Mensa, Ltd., (AML) provides a variety of services and other resources to help you and help your SIG. Following is a partial listing of these. Get familiar with these different resources, and don't be afraid to speak up if/when you wish to utilize any of them:

### A. SIGs Officer

The SIGs Officer is a Mensa member appointed by the AMC who is available to help you in a number of different ways, including counseling you on your initial SIG application, offering suggestions for member recruitment, addressing technical questions such as how to navigate the AML Web site, advising you on dispute resolution, promoting your SIG within his/her column in the *Mensa Bulletin*, granting approvals as appropriate for any in-person SIG activities that you may wish to organize and publicize in the Calendar section of the *Mensa Bulletin*, pointing you to other National Officers or professional staffers for further help as may be needed, and others. The SIGs Officer is your primary contact and liaison if you require any kind of information or assistance regarding the management of your SIG.

### B. SIGs Advisory Committee

The SIGs Officer is ex-officio Chair of the SIGs Advisory Committee, which comprises certain SIG coordinators, certain past SIGs Officers, the Membership Officer and selected staffers from the National Office. If a policy question ever comes up that the SIGs Officer is not immediately able to answer, then he/she may elect to refer it to the SIGs Advisory Committee for consideration. SIGs Advisory is not an action committee, so its opinions are not binding, but the combined members of the committee collectively bring a lot of experience to the table, and the SIGs Officer will generally rely on their advice very heavily when it comes to any particularly complex or potentially controversial issues, as well as the content of this SIG Handbook.

### C. Membership verification

As previously mentioned, the staff members at American Mensa's national administrative office (currently located in Arlington, Texas) are available to check the membership status of anyone seeking to join or remain in your SIG. You may approach them directly on any such requests, without going through the SIGs Officer.

## D. SIG-Announce and SIG-Talk lists

These email lists have been set up at the National Office to facilitate communication among the entire community of SIG coordinators within American Mensa. The SIG-Announce list is for the SIGs Officer, the Membership Officer or the national administrative office to make any important "one-way" announcements to the community of SIG coordinators. The SIG-Talk list (sigcoord-talk@lists.us.mensa.org) is where you get to engage in open discussion with other SIG coordinators, ask questions, debate policies (politely, please), exchange tips, etc. Any new SIG coordinator is added to both these lists immediately upon approval of the SIG application.

### E. SIG elists

If you wish to enable electronic communication among the members of your SIG, but if for any reason you would rather not use Yahoo! Groups or a similar outside service, you may apply to the National Office to set up a separate list for you, maintained on their server. Destination email addresses would look like YourSIG@lists.us.mensa.org, and all messages sent to that address would be directed to all designated recipients automatically. Refer as applicable to ASIE 2005-080 ("Policy and Guidelines for Administrators of Internet Communication Services"), displayed in its entirety in the Appendix.

### F. Primary SIG Forum

[This service is still in development as of the present revision. Until further reference documentation is posted, contact the Operations Director at the National Office for information.]

### G. Individual SIG forums

[This service is still in development as of the present revision. Until further reference documentation is posted, contact the Operations Director at the National Office for information.]

### H. Email aliases

If you feel that it will help you to promote your SIG, or simply if you think that it will look spiffier in your various correspondence, you may apply to the National Office for an email address of the form Coordinator@YourSIG.us.mensa.org, which will then be directed to any non-alias email address that you designate. As indicated above, refer to ASIE 2005-080 (shown in the Appendix) as applicable.

## **I. Website hosting**

Don't want to undertake the trouble and expense of arranging a separate facility to carry your SIG's Web site? Apply instead to the National Office to load your SIG onto their server. There is no fee for this service, and their staff is available to help you with any technical questions that you may have.

## **J. SIG membership list management**

Finding the task of maintaining your own membership lists too difficult or onerous? The National Office now provides the service of maintaining your lists for you! All you would need to do is to let them know whenever you get a new member, and whenever you wish to make any adjustment to an existing member's profile, and they'll take care of it. They will also provide you with membership lists and counts upon demand.

## **K. Email blasts to SIG members**

While you will want to make sure not to abuse the privilege lest you inadvertently upset any of the members of your SIG, the National Office will provide you with the service of sending a promotional or informational email to all the members of your SIG who have agreed to receive such announcements. This is particularly useful for those SIGs that do not have ordinary Yahoo! Groups-type email lists in operation. The first 1,000 copies are free; you may be charged 1 cent for each additional copy.

## **L. Email blasts to non-members**

When people join and renew their memberships with American Mensa, they indicate areas of interest and select privacy levels. This member information is held in strict confidentiality, but it is yet available from any member who selects to release it via his/her Personal Data Questionnaire (or "PDQ"). You as a SIG coordinator may request the National Office to send out SIG membership invitations to those Mensa members who have indicated both a related interest and a willingness to receive such solicitations, or else you may request to be sent a listing of such Mensa members (either electronically or in the form of physical mailing labels) so that you can send out your own solicitation. As with the blasts to SIG members, the first 1,000 email notices are free, and there may be a 1-cent charge for each additional email. You would also be charged 1 cent for each physical mailing label. If you elect to use either of these services, then you have the option to designate whether any responses should be going to you directly or by way of the National Office.

## **Accounting**

As more and more SIGs elect to conduct their communications via free electronic methodologies such as Yahoo! Groups or any of the several fora discussed above, fewer and fewer SIGs are incurring any significant monetary expenses or requiring any sort of dues payment from their members. If yours is one of those SIGs that does not collect any sort of monies from your members, then this section does not apply to you. If you do collect any monies from your members, then there are a few guidelines that you should apply at all times. Some of those guidelines depend on the relative order of magnitude of the monies involved, viz.:

### **A. Large sums (travel, investments, etc.)**

If your average collection is in the hundreds or thousands of dollars, then you probably want to make sure that you keep all SIG funds in a separate bank account. In fact, by AMC resolution (see ASIE list in the Appendix below), AML requires it if SIG funds exceed \$1,000. Keep all bank statements, cancelled checks, receipts, tax statements, and all other accounting records on file for at least seven years, better yet indefinitely so that you can demonstrate to anyone at any time that you used SIG funds for only legitimate SIG purposes. For these types of SIGs, it is especially recommended that you have at least one deputy coordinator who has full access to your bank account(s) so that he/she can continue to operate the SIG if the primary coordinator suddenly deceases or otherwise becomes unreachable.

### **B. Small sums (newsletter subscriptions)**

If your average collection is more in the \$5-\$20 range, and if your overall cash balance is thus not going to be very large, then maintaining your SIG's funds in a separate bank account could involve bank service charges that would quickly eat up your limited funds. In this instance, it is considered acceptable to commingle your SIG's funds with a personal bank account, but still do please make sure to keep a very clear accounting of the SIG's transactions so that you can tell at any time what portion of your account balance actually belongs to the SIG.

### **C. All groups**

If your SIG takes in any amount of money from your members, at any time and for any reason, then you must maintain a record of all the SIG's receipts and expenditures, as well as a record of all the assets and liabilities (if any) belonging to the SIG. It is required (see the ASIE listing in the Appendix below) that you

provide these reports to your SIG's membership on at least a semi-annual basis (though quarterly is even better), and in any case you must provide your recent transactions and current balances to the SIGs Officer whenever he/she may happen to request it. Failure to provide these records upon demand, or failure to maintain your records according to generally accepted accounting practices, could result in official deactivation of your SIG and/or possible further remedial action. Check with the SIGs Officer if you have any questions about how best to maintain your accounting records, and he/she will point you to additional resources as may be needed.

## Dealing with problems

Running a SIG can be a very fun and rewarding experience but, as with any other activity, it certainly is possible for problems to arise, and you will need to deal with them as they happen if your SIG is to remain viable and vibrant. Following is a not-nearly-exhaustive listing of the types of situations that you may occasionally have to deal with, along with suggestions for how to do so:

### A. Overload

This may be the most common problem among SIG coordinators, as well as with anyone else taking charge of any activity involving groups of human beings. Don't ever sacrifice your own physical and mental well-being. Your SIG needs you! Here are a few things that you can consider if you're ever starting to feel over-burdened:

1. Delegate.  
If you don't already have an assistant coordinator for your SIG, appoint one. If you don't see any viable candidates among your current SIG membership, then consider going outside your SIG to bring in a "ringer." In any case, feel free to "outsource" various tasks to other SIG members, especially if any of them are experts in accounting, marketing, Web site administration, or other important areas.
2. Improve.  
Sometimes, as with any organization, there may be easier or faster or better ways of doing what you want/need to do, so sometimes it's good to perform an overall assessment of your SIG's operating structures and processes and to look for ways to do things smarter. For example: Preparing a paper newsletter getting to be too much headache? Consider going to electronic distribution instead. Spending too much time performing data entry on your new

members? Consider requiring lesser amounts of information, or better yet outsource the entire function to the National Office (see above). Paper accounting starting to become too hard to understand and follow? Consider switching to an accounting program such as Quicken that will enable you to keep your SIG's funds separate from your personal funds, even if they're in the same bank account.

3. Communicate.  
As noted above, the SIGs Officer may be able to provide you with some tips on how to manage your various tasks more easily or can simply provide a sympathetic ear if you feel like venting for a bit (but not too much, and not too loud, please). In any case, the SIG-Talk list (see above) allows you to post your questions and problems in a forum shared with other SIG coordinators, many of whom have faced the exact same challenges as you're facing, and you'll find that several of these fellow SIG leaders will be only too happy to offer you constructive tips and advice.
4. Rest.  
When all else fails, just take a break! Tell your SIG that you're taking a few days off, and just do something else for a while, or simply take a nice long nap. Don't become a slave to yourself, and do keep in mind always that your personal health is ultimately more important than that of your SIG.

### B. Complaints

The first thing to remember here is that there are two principal types of complaints, and that your response to them will generally need to be different. If you can't yet tell these two types of complaints apart when you get them, you soon will!

1. Constructive  
The first type is the actually constructive kind, where someone sees an area of SIG administration that genuinely could have been handled better, or that might benefit from some kind of systemic improvement. Genuinely listen to these constructive complaints when you get them, sincerely offer apologies if they're indicated, and expeditiously undertake whatever process improvements appear most likely to forestall such dissatisfactions in the future.
2. Destructive  
The second type of complaint comes from the

inevitable individuals among our Mensa community who like to complain simply because the sky is blue and cars have four wheels. These folks will never be satisfied, no matter what you do or say, so don't bother to sweat it. Do be polite, and do at least give the appearance (if not the reality) of being respectful, but do not feel that you need to give the matter any more attention than it actually deserves. It's sometimes better to lose a SIG member through chronic dissatisfaction than to retain that person and be constantly bombarded with silly complaints.

### **C. Disruptions**

This occurs most frequently with groups that use online communication lists, where participants with gripes about anything can post them instantly, freely, and without any limit on length. You as SIG coordinator may prefer to maintain an environment in which SIG members can say whatever they want whenever they want, and that's fine if you do, but a lot of SIG coordinators find themselves wanting to accept only so much internecine griping before they decide to take some action. If at any point (including as early as the very inception of your SIG) you decide that "enough is enough," you may wish to designate certain "ground rules" to govern the interaction of your members, and/or to temporarily or permanently restrict the privileges of particularly disruptive SIG members (such as by placing them on "moderated status" for some period of time or even giving them complete "timeouts"). If all else fails, you always have the absolute option to permanently expel a disruptive

individual from your group, and the SIGs Officer will be happy to back you up when that former member inevitably submits a formal complaint.

### **D. Illegal activities**

Problems that involve illegal activities are outside of Mensa's jurisdiction and should be turned over to the proper authorities. However, if you are made aware of such a situation, you should notify the SIGs Officer as soon as possible, both to insulate yourself from any associative culpability and also to allow the SIGs Officer the opportunity to provide you with any suggestions or specific external resources.

### **Ethical practices**

As a SIG coordinator, you are being entrusted by your members with their personal information and in some cases their personal funds. Your members are assuming that you are going to treat these resources responsibly, and so you have an ethical obligation to do so. This means that you must use SIG revenues only for legitimate SIG purposes, and that you must not disclose any of your members' private and personal information (including any statements that they may make in any communication forum) except as they specifically authorize. In addition, if you are assuming any kind of role as a moderator of any kind of communication forum, then you may be called upon to issue rulings or adjudicate disputes among your members, so you should take care on all occasions not to play favorites (or play "un-favorites"), but rather try to be fair and consistent in everything that you do.

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## Transferring control of your SIG

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At some point, even after having put all the above tips into practice, you may yet decide that you want to start devoting more of your personal time and energies to other SIGs and/or other non-SIG endeavors, or else maybe you just want to take a long or permanent break from anything that involves any amount of work, but you still want your SIG to remain active and viable. If/when this happens, the best approach is to find another AML member – either within the SIG or outside it – who appears to be both willing and able to take over the duties of running the SIG. It may be an assistant coordinator that you already have in place, or it may be someone else; it's your decision. Ideally, it should be somebody whom you know to be organized, dependable and ethical, and of course it must be someone whose Mensa dues are paid through the end of the current membership year. Once you have made your selection and obtained your successor's agreement, send an email to the SIGs Officer (SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org) with that individual's full actual name, email address and Mensa membership number. The SIGs Officer will pass that information on to the National Office staff, who will verify the nominee's Mensa membership and send out a confirmation to the appropriate parties, as well as engineer any applicable adjustments to the SIG's entry in the official directories.

## Discontinuing your SIG

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If for any reason you would like to permanently discontinue involvement with your SIG without naming a successor coordinator, or if your SIG is officially deactivated by the National Office for any of the reasons discussed above, then there are a few “cleanup”-type tasks that you may need to undertake.

### Notice to SIG membership

You probably will get away with fielding fewer questions if you make a prominent announcement of the closure to the members of your SIG, either within your normal communication avenues or by way of a special mailing/emailing, instead of just allowing them to wonder why they haven’t received a newsletter or group email for a while.

### Notice to SIGs Officer

If the decision to disband the SIG is your own and not that of the SIGs Officer and/or AML’s National Office, then you should notify the SIGs Officer of your decision as promptly as you can. The SIGs Officer will work with the National Office to remove the entry from the official SIG directories and very likely will include an announcement of the closure in his/her column for the *Mensa Bulletin* in order to let people know that the subject matter is again available for other Mensa members to create a new SIG.

### Distribution of SIG funds

If you have ever collected any monies from any members of your SIG (see the Accounting section above), and if your SIG therefore has been carrying any assets and/or liabilities, then those will need to be cleared out before the SIG can be considered fully closed. You do not get to keep any of the dues payments or other monies sent in by members of the SIG. If the members’ monetary submissions (dues, etc.) were made out of ordinary after-tax disposable income, then it would be most appropriate to refund any excess monies (following paying off any debts and/or final expenses) back to the SIG’s members, either in equal shares or in proportion according to how much each member contributed. Conversely, if the SIG’s revenues came in the form of pre-tax charitable contributions, then any excess funds must be turned over to another qualified charitable entity.

### Final accounting

Once any applicable monetary distributions have been completed pursuant to the paragraph directly above, you should prepare a final financial report that shows your profile of assets and liabilities as of the time that you made the decision to close the SIG, a listing of any final expenses and/or debt payments, and how any remaining excess funds were distributed. The report should be distributed to your SIG’s members, AML’s National Office and the SIGs Officer. If you never collected any monies from any of your SIG’s members, then you do not need to bother with this step.



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## International SIGs

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As noted above, SIGs are also organized at the Mensa International level, meaning that they are listed on Mensa International's separate Web site and are supervised by the International SIGs Officer (or "ISO") according to a different set of policies and procedures, including that an assistant coordinator is required and not just recommended. In this sense, international SIGs are distinctly different from national SIGs that elect to include members of other national Mensa organizations. Any member of American

Mensa may apply to have a new SIG formed at the international level, or to list an existing American SIG on the Web site of Mensa International, but the request must be sent through the national SIGs Officer (SIGsOfficer@us.mensa.org), who must add a statement indicating his/her approval of the application. Send an email to the ISO (sigs@mensa.org) to obtain a complete listing of the current rules and restrictions pertaining to international SIGs.

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## Acknowledgements

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This is the 6th edition of the SIG Handbook for American Mensa. The dates and principal authors of all editions to date are as follows:

1986: Charles Schilling  
1991: Vince Bonzagni  
1992: E. Bunny Warsh  
1995: W. Andrew York, Lisa Shea, Paula Trumble, Wanda Wolfe, Mary Prior  
2003: Marc Lamendola, Ray O'Connor  
2009: Jonathan Elliott

## Appendix

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### ASIEs

Here is a complete listing of all the specific resolutions (known as "Actions Still In Effect" or "ASIEs") adopted by the AMC which govern the conduct of SIGs organized within American Mensa. Some of these resolutions address topics not discussed in the above Handbook, so all SIG coordinators should make themselves familiar with the entire listing. We have worked to avoid any conflict between these provisions and the policies as outlined in the Handbook above, but in case of any conflict the ASIEs listed below shall have precedence:

**0000-032**

Interdicted the use of the name "Mensa" by any group other than AMC, MERF, and any officially recognized activity, including Local Groups of American Mensa Ltd. as determined by a resolution of the American Mensa committee as constituting an official act of American Mensa Ltd.; all other groups heretofore permitted or allowed, whether special interest groups or others permitted to use the name "Mensa", are notified to cease and desist.

**1978-086 (0000-145)** 04-Nov-1978

(Last amended 18-Sep-2004 by 2004-112)

Resolved that AMC recognize the concept of national vs. local SIGs in that national SIGs operate through correspondence and newsletters, both paper and electronic, their members being dispersed over all areas of American Mensa. Membership is limited to members of American Mensa. At the sole discretion of the SIG Coordinator, members of other national Mensas, Direct International Members, and non-Mensans may participate in the activities of the SIG as guests. SIGs of American Mensa are under the jurisdiction of the AMC, delegated to the SIGs Officer. Local SIGs operate under the jurisdiction of the Local Group where they operate.

**1985-030** 23-Jun-1985

That the AMC establish the position of SIGs Officer as a special appointee to serve as the AMC's representative in matters relating to Special Interest Groups and to act on AMC's behalf in extending and withdrawing American Mensa recognition of national Special Interest Groups.

**1987-013** 08-Mar-1987

(Last amended on 18-Sep-2004 by 2004-113)

That the SIG policy adopted by the AMC in August 1984 be clarified to note that a SIG newsletter is not prohibited from publishing opinions relating to Mensa politics provided that there is appropriate identification that the opinion is that of the author and the author alone, and not that of the SIG or American Mensa.

**1990-032** 25-Mar-1990

That the SIGS Officer has the authority to establish the specific, reasonable conditions under which a SIG or M-to-M service may be considered "inactive" for the purpose of retaining AMC recognition.

**1992-048** 12-Sep-1992

That proposers of new or existing SIGs shall be required to submit their newsletters or other materials to the SIGs Officer. If the SIGs Officer has questions about the legality of any SIG literature, those questions and the associated SIG literature will be reviewed by the legal counsel.

**2000-127** 02-Dec-2000

(Last amended 17-Sep-2005 by 2005-077)

SIGs are within the jurisdiction of the SIGs Officer, who is authorized to act on AML's behalf in recognizing, publicizing, and withdrawing recognition from SIGs, subject to appeal to the AMC. SIGs will be recognized provided that they conform to the applicable sections of the Actions Still in Effect of American Mensa that limit the recognition of Special Interest Groups.

**2004-022** 20-Mar-2004

That the AMC vote to accept the recommendation of the SIGs Committee to make the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) of American Mensa a membership benefit.

**2004-089** 03-Jul-2004

To reimburse each SIG for mailing one copy of each issue of its paper newsletter to the National Office. The rate per issue is the same as that of the corporate subscription program.

**2004-092** 03-Jul-2004

To be a member of an AML SIG requires current membership in Mensa. Guests sponsored by a SIG member are permitted at the discretion of the SIG Coordinator.

**2004-111** 18-Sep-2004

Effective July 1, 2005, at least one member of the hospitality committee for AGs, RGs, LDWs and Colloquiums must complete a food safety course prior to the gathering or workshop. Applications for these activities must include a copy of a certificate establishing that at least one member of the hospitality committee for that event has completed a federal, state, county or Mensa food safety course.

**2004-125** 04-Dec-2004

SIG funds shall not be co-mingled with the personal accounts of the SIG Coordinator. When the SIG funds exceed \$1,000, they are to be maintained in a separate bank account set up for the SIG, under American Mensa, Ltd.'s tax payer ID number.

SIG Gatherings that use the services of a travel agency must use bonded travel agencies. Travel deposits made to a trip coordinator other than a bonded travel agency must follow the same rules as apply to SIG funds. Travel funds greater than \$1,000 must be deposited in a SIG bank account.

A financial report is to be published not less than twice each year (at approximate six-month intervals), and the report shall contain schedules of income, expenses and balances for all funds and assets under the control of the SIG. The financial report may be published in the SIG newsletter or sent to the SIG members and the SIGs Officer as a separate document or email.

In the event SIG assets are invested in securities or real estate, the SIG Coordinator must provide evidence of possessing appropriate governmental registration/licenses for such investment activity.

**2004-126** 04-Dec-2004

Special Interest Groups are the result of the personal efforts on the part of volunteer SIG Coordinators and their designees. Participation in a SIG is at the discretion of the SIG Coordinator. Disputes over SIG membership may be taken to the SIGs Officer for mediation.

**2005-080** [Note: This policy may not still be in effect, as it does not appear in the official list of ASIEs on the AML website, so double-check as applicable.]

***Purposes of Internet Communication Services***

- To stimulate member, local group, and community related Mensa activities
- To provide a forum for the exchange of opinions and ideas among Mensa members
- To facilitate communications for groups, officers, and National Office staff
- To promote the overall health and growth of the American Mensa organization
- To aid Mensans in pursuing the ideals of Mensa as expressed in the MIL Constitution.

**Definition, Requisition, and Administration of Internet Communication Services**

Internet Communication Services include Web sites, e-lists, chat, threaded discussion groups, newsgroups, and electronic directories. Officially recognized group Web sites shall be considered to be electronic extensions of the newsletters, and as such, shall be subject to the same guidelines as the newsletters as applicable within the electronic medium. Three categories of services are defined.

- Services supporting official functions of the national organization – The administrator of such a service will be a member of AML, unless the service primarily supports the functions of one or more staff members. The Executive Director will designate a staff member for each service to support its operation.
- Services supporting official functions of regions, Local Groups, and Special Interest Groups – These will be established upon request, subject to available resources and approval of the RVC, Local Secretary, or national SIGs Officer. Regions and groups will be responsible for maintaining and governing these services once established, and for adherence to the Minimum Standards.
- Additional services based on member interests – These services may be created upon request of individual members, subject to approval by the Communications Officer (or designee) based on overall value to the membership and available resources.

All services are subject to the same Minimum Standards set forth below. Each Internet Communication Service has at least one administrator whose duties include facilitating and monitoring use of the Service and maintaining general compliance with the Service's guidelines. If a member-administrator's membership lapses, administrative duties will devolve back to any co-administrators or to the staff administrator until a new member-administrator is assigned.

AML reserves the right to revoke Internet Communication Services for violation of established Minimum Standards. It is expected that the administrators at the national, regional, Local Group, and SIG levels will notify [OnlineAbuse@americanmensa.org](mailto:OnlineAbuse@americanmensa.org) of any violations of the Minimum Standards so that steps can be taken to investigate the allegations and revoke the Internet Communication Service if appropriate.

**The Minimum Standards for AML Internet Communication Services**

- 1) Internet Communication Services must comply with all relevant federal laws, plus applicable local and state laws, including regulations regarding copyrights, obscenity, marketing scams, etc.
- 2) Users may not improperly post or distribute any confidential information or information that would infringe upon the proprietary, privacy, or personal rights of others.
- 3) Use of the Mensa name and logo must adhere to the current standards for Name and Logo Use.
- 4) The following disclaimer must be prominent for members agreeing to use these Internet Communication Services. In the case of e-lists or newsgroups, this disclaimer should be posted at least quarterly:

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*American Mensa, Ltd. accepts no responsibility for the opinions and information posted via its Internet Communications Services by its members or guests. Additionally, American Mensa is not liable for damages resulting from information transmitted via these Services or from any interruption or failure of these Services.*

- 5) Opinions and information posted via chat, discussion boards or elists remain the property of the poster. Content from national or regional Web sites remains the property of the national organization and content from group Web sites remains the property of the pertinent group, unless otherwise noted.

#### Online Membership Directories

Membership directories are defined as organized lists of members' names and contact information, possibly including Personal Data Questionnaire answers. Groups may make electronic versions of their directories available for download from secure areas of their Web sites and may email links to the secure download to local members to facilitate access and use.

Because members are able to change their information and release preferences daily via the AML Web site, but groups and RVCs only receive updated membership data once a month, maintenance of regional and group online directories is not allowed according to the terms of the Membership Data Agreement as referenced by ASIE 2005-078.

According to ASIE 1986-062 (Last amended by 1998-129), only the American Mensa Committee, or its designee, may authorize the commercial use of the American Mensa, Ltd. membership list or any portion thereof. Members may use membership directories to facilitate personal, non-commercial communication with other members and for the benefit of their local group, a respective regional Mensa group, or AML. Groups shall include a disclaimer to this effect when publishing rosters.

The Communications Officer, Committee, pertinent RVC, Local Secretary, SIG Coordinator or National Office Staff will investigate complaints about any misuse of members' information and may limit the offender's directory access if misuse is determined.

#### Minors

Internet Communication Services are well suited for supporting the interaction and participation of young Mensa members. To protect the privacy of children and the rights of parents, parental notification and consent is required before a minor may subscribe to a Service. This one-time parental consent is valid for any other AML-hosted Service unless the parent or administrator note otherwise.

As part of Minimum Standard #1, all Internet Communication Services hosted by AML must comply with The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), effective April 21, 2000, which applies to the online collection of personal information from children under 13. See [www.coppa.org](http://www.coppa.org) and [www.ftc.gov/privacy/coppafaqs.shtml](http://www.ftc.gov/privacy/coppafaqs.shtml) for more details.

#### CAN-SPAM Act

As part of Minimum Standard #1, all Internet Communication Services hosted by AML must comply with the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003 (Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography and Marketing Act) which establishes requirements for those who send commercial email and gives consumers the right to ask emailers to stop spamming them.

Currently, listservs, elists and national e-newsletters are not included because members can subscribe and unsubscribe at will. Administrators may choose to be courteous and note commercial postings as advertisements. It is recommended that "Mensa" be used in subject lines so subscribers will be better able to sort pertinent messages from spam.

For Internet Communication Services to which members are subscribed without their specific request, such as elists for office-holders, administrators must:

- include an opt-out in emails sent from a given service. The National Office includes [www.us.mensa.org/optout](http://www.us.mensa.org/optout) in official communications. Administrators are encouraged to use the same link so that there isn't confusion between opting out at the local level vs. nationally.
- include a postal address in the footer of the email. Administrators are welcome to use a local address or the National Office address for this.
- include a notice at the top of the email that it is an advertisement if the email is commercial in nature.
- comply within ten business days if the member requests that email not be sent again. When a member opts-out with the National Office, his/her Mensa notices release is changed from "yes" to "no" and the administrators are notified.

Guidelines for Administrators of Internet Communication Services Supporting Official Functions of the National Organization

### **Staff Support**

Internet Communication Services supporting official functions of the national organization will each have a National Office staff liaison responsible for subscribing/unsubscribing members and technical issues. Unless otherwise indicated, staff will not have independent administrative status.

### **Administration**

For all Internet Communication Services supporting official functions of the national organization, a member-administrator will be identified by office or function; staff liaisons will be assigned by the Executive Director. A list of administrators will be made available upon request to the National Office.

### **Responsibilities of Administrators**

- Develop the Internet Communication Service's guidelines regarding purpose, membership and posting limitations, parental consent requirements and procedures for minors, standards for appropriate and inappropriate content, disciplinary and appeal procedures, etc. and have it approved by the Communications Officer or designee.
- Apprise subscribers of the Internet Communication Service's guidelines. Ensure that the contents of the Internet Communication Service adhere to the guidelines for that particular Service.
- Implement reasonable and rational disciplinary action(s).

### **Rights of the Administrators**

- Change the Internet Communication Service's guidelines, provided subscribers are notified in advance.
- Declare off-topic discussion threads to be "closed," gently reprimand subscribers, suspend subscribers from posting, hold subscribers' posts for administrator review before posting, and unsubscribe members from the Service.

### **Removal of Administrators**

- Administrators can be replaced by the Communications Committee.
- The Communications Committee or National Office Staff will investigate complaints about administrator decisions as necessary, after which the Communications Committee may decide to remove the administrator or to terminate the Internet Communication Service.
- The Communications Committee may rescind an administrator's decision if it conflicts with the Minimum Standards, the guidelines established for that service, or the governing documents of AML.

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Guidelines for Administrators of Services Supporting Official Functions of Regions, Local Groups, and Special Interest Groups

### **Minimum Standards**

Regional, Local Group, and SIG Internet Communication Services must adhere to the Minimum Standards.

### **Ownership and Administration**

Regions, Local Groups, and SIGs retain ownership and administrative control of their Internet Communication Services. It is strongly recommended that Regions, Local Groups, and SIGs develop policies regarding responsibilities, rights, restrictions, and removal of administrators as well as guidelines regarding purpose, membership and posting limitations, parental consent requirements and procedures for minors, standards for appropriate and inappropriate content, disciplinary and appeal procedures, etc. for Services before requesting activation of those Services. When crafting their own policies, Regions, Local Groups, and SIGs are welcome to borrow freely from the Guidelines for Administrators of Internet Communication Services Supporting Official Functions of the National Organization.

### **Subscriber Complaints**

If subscribers to a Region, Local Group or SIG-sponsored Internet Communication Service contact the National Office or AMC with complaints about content and practices on that Service, the pertinent RVC, Local Secretary, or SIG Coordinator will be apprised of the situation and reminded of his/her authority to terminate the Internet Communication Service if he/she deems it to be in the best interest of the Local Group or SIG members.

### **Administrative Intervention**

In instances where a Region, Local Group or SIG's Internet Communication Service's content or administrator's guidance violates the Minimum Standards or has the potential to cause harm to AML's Web presence or visitors to these services, as in the case of viruses, the National Office staff will, with the Communications Officer and the pertinent RVC, Local Secretary or National SIGs Officer, investigate and may act to terminate the Service.

**2005-081**      17-Sep-2005

American Mensa Committee (AMC), wishing to support members' cost-and energy-saving efforts, strongly recommends that Web sites of local groups and Web sites of local/regional/national gatherings direct members to the site's "bulletin board" or "forum" area where members may make their event-specific ride-sharing or room-sharing needs known and thereby work out a mutually-agreeable arrangement, preferably "off line."

AMC takes this action in recognition of a number of factors: a) sophistication of members in utilizing technology makes AMC involvement in the process redundant; b) initiative at increasing membership numbers will, at some point, result in the process being too unwieldy for AMC to manage; c) liability risks that attend AMC's management of process, while insurable, can have undesirable effects that are not insurable (damage to reputation, image of Mensa, etc.)