



INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF  
RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

# **IARU Groups and Initiatives Handbook**

April 2023

## IARU Groups and Initiatives Handbook

### Introduction

IARU promotes institutional joint working in various ways among member universities, such as inter-university networking, institutional learning and staff development. The groups and initiatives are a prime example of the ongoing collaborative work of IARU.

This Handbook is designed to distil the knowledge, experience and best practice of our groups and initiatives. We hope it will offer helpful tips on how to set up and run a group or initiative, provide information about how the group interacts with the Secretariat and the rest of IARU, and how to make the group's activities productive and valuable for its members.

For the sake of brevity, references to 'groups' also include 'initiatives', as the practicalities of groups and initiatives are similar.

We would like to keep the Handbook updated in response to any questions that might arise, so please do get in touch with any suggestions and queries.

Cambridge Secretariat  
[iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk)

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## 1. What is IARU and what does it do?

The International Alliance of Research Universities (IARU), established in 2006, is a network of eleven international research-intensive universities from nine countries across the globe. IARU member universities work together to address the major challenges of our time, to add value by providing opportunities to students and staff that would not arise otherwise, and to promote institutional joint working. The groups and initiatives are key elements of IARU's collaborative ethos.

### Where groups and initiatives sit within the structure of IARU

Within IARU, each university has a:

- President – the head of their institution. The Presidents meet annually for top-level, strategic discussions on issues relating to IARU and its members.
- Senior Officer – these are the operational decision makers of IARU who meet once a year to discuss IARU business matters.
- Key Contact – someone who acts as a point of contact for the Secretariat and can circulate IARU information within their own institution.

The Secretariat, based at the IARU Chair's university, is the administrative function of IARU.

The IARU groups and initiatives can involve individuals from IARU's eleven universities and facilitate cooperation on areas of joint institutional working. IARU currently has groups for subjects such as campus sustainability, alumni relations and HR. The initiative for Ageing, Longevity and Health is the sole research-focused initiative at the moment. Each university may have one or more representatives taking part in a group, and universities may choose to participate in all or some of the groups.

### The different types of groups and initiatives

Some groups are focused on joint working (producing reports, arranging conferences and working on projects etc.), while others concentrate on networking and sharing good practice. Groups are free to set their own work programme. They have to report their activities to the Senior Officers each year and they can request funding at these meetings, if their activities require it.

The groups allow members to exchange ideas on areas of common interest and obtain a global perspective on shared challenges, while the small membership of IARU means that it is easier to establish valuable and productive working relationships between like-minded institutions.

The current IARU groups and initiatives are:

Ageing, Longevity and Health Initiative  
Alumni Associations Network  
Cybersecurity Forum  
Gender Group  
Global Transformations Group

HR Consultation Group  
Librarians' Contact Group  
Lifelong Learning Working Group  
Real Estate Working Group  
Sustainable Campus Initiative  
Virtual Museum Tours Initiative

## 2. How to set up a new group or initiative

### Making a proposal

Initially, an area of interest would be identified by individuals at a member university (or universities). This could come about through discussion at the Presidents' or Senior Officers' Meetings, or through ongoing networking between IARU members in particular areas; there is no single fixed route for developing a proposal for a new group or initiative.

IARU members interested in setting up a new group are welcome to contact the Secretariat, as it can help identify others that may be interested by circulating information to the IARU Key Contacts.

If there is sufficient interest amongst members, a proposal can be submitted to the Senior Officers' Meeting via the Secretariat. The Senior Officers generally meet annually in the autumn, reviewing the activities of groups and deciding on funding requests.

The proposal should explain how the group would benefit IARU members and the value it would bring to the Alliance.

The proposal should include:

- An outline of the group's topics and aims, establishing whether the emphasis of the group would be on joint working, networking or sharing best practice.
- A brief workplan of the projects or discussion areas that it hopes to concentrate on in its first year.
- The types of meetings or events it might arrange, e.g. whether it would hold regular online meetings, in-person events, workshops etc. Some new groups have started with an initial workshop to gauge interest or to establish the direction of the group.
- Any funding requests. If planning is at an early stage, it may be that no funding request is made until the plans have progressed. A funding request would then be made to the Senior Officers, either at one of their future meetings or by circulation. Such requests should be made in good time so that they can be discussed in the context of the IARU budget.

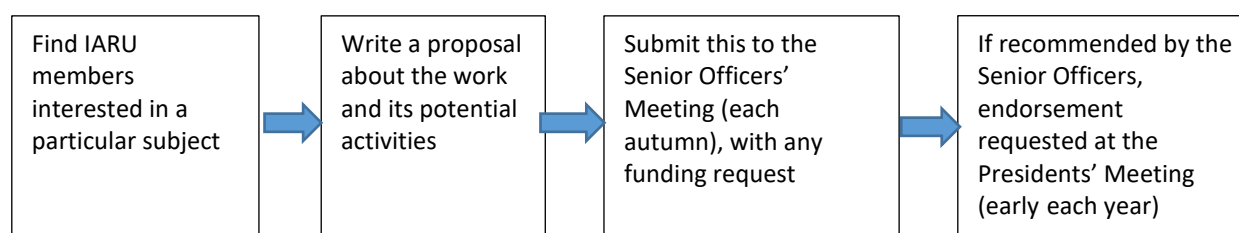
The Senior Officers would discuss the proposal (and make a decision on any funding request) and if they felt that it had merit, would recommend it for endorsement at the Presidents' Meeting (held annually in the few first months of the year).

Once the proposal had been accepted by the Presidents and the Senior Officers, the group would be established for an initial period of 3 years. During that period, the group would report annually to the Senior Officers' Meeting. These reports would also be presented at the Presidents' Meeting. At the end of the three year period, the Senior Officers would consider whether the group had achieved its aims and could therefore be wound up, or if it should continue for a further defined period.

IARU recognises that there will be differences in the productivity and outputs of groups due to their varying purposes and functions. If group members feel that the group's activities are beneficial, then there is no reason why a group cannot operate with just a few institutions as members. As with other groups, the funding approved by Senior Officers is likely to be proportionate to the type of activities being undertaken.

Occasionally, a new group or initiative could be proposed at the Presidents' Meeting first. When this has happened in the past, it is usually because the area has been discussed previously at a Presidents' Meeting, or because no funding request is being made, or plans are at an early stage of development. The expectation would be that a complete proposal would then go to the Senior Officers' Meeting for further discussion.

### Process summary



### What does a new group need to do first?

A newly established group should ensure that it covers the following points:

- Agree on a group lead or leads to coordinate the activities and decide if and when the positions should rotate around the membership of the group.
- Decide on the focus of the group, i.e. whether it plans to work on projects or concentrate on networking and sharing best practice.
- Agree specific goals and a workplan for the group's initial three year period; this should include proposals for their first year of activity, which will then be reported on at the next Senior Officers' Meeting.
- Decide on the frequency of meetings.
- Plan how to evaluate the progress and success of the group (the markers of success will vary from group to group, depending on its focus).
- Agree a process on how the group accepts new members or replaces departing members. Please note that universities may request to join groups after they are founded. The Secretariat can assist with contacting member institutions about group representatives.

### 3. Group activities over the year

#### Meetings

How often a group meets, and in what format, is a decision for the group itself. The group lead(s) will make the arrangements for meeting with the members directly, usually by email circulation. Many groups are now meeting a few times a year online but are also aiming for at least one face-to-face meeting per year. This may depend on the nature of the group, as those focused on networking and sharing best practice may not require as many meetings (especially face-to-face meetings).

#### Finances

Groups can submit budget requests for the coming year to the annual Senior Officers' Meeting. These funds are used to cover the costs of in-person meetings and hosting events (e.g. the ALH initiative conference), but may also be requested for wider group activities such as staff exchange, outreach work and cooperative education. Travel costs for individuals attending IARU meetings are to be met by individual institutions, rather than IARU.

The Secretariat provides budget request forms ahead of the meeting and the group lead(s) can set out the expected costs and the reasons for the request. Typically, groups request in the region of USD 10 – 15,000, depending on the nature of their work. The Senior Officers will then approve or reject the request, sometimes asking for amendments or further information if needed.

When making a funding request, the following information will be needed:

- Project name and year
- Total costs (including a breakdown of costs)
- Other financial resources (if applicable)
- List of participants
- Details of the project (background, purpose, expected outcomes, schedule, project's continuity etc.)

Funding should be spent on the activities the approval was given for. If a group wishes to change what it spends its funding on, then the request should be made to the Senior Officers (via the Secretariat) for approval by email circulation.

If the funding request is approved, the group will then report back at the next Senior Officers' Meeting on how the funds were used and the outcomes.

The approved funding is not transferred directly to the group. Groups should submit invoices to the Secretariat for expenses related to the budget request made to the Senior Officers. The Secretariat will then arrange reimbursement of group expenditure, up to the total amount approved by Senior Officers for that year. Please see 'Appendix 3: Reimbursement Guidance' for the information that the invoices should include.

#### Administration

In addition to the core work of the group, arranging meetings and overseeing financial matters, there will be a few administrative matters that the group lead(s) will need to manage. Most communication will be with the Secretariat, and the Secretariat will periodically request the following:



- A report in advance of the Senior Officers' Meeting (held annually around September/October). This report will cover the group's activities over the past year in terms of the agreed goals and workplan, highlight any decisions to be made and, where appropriate, set out the funding request for the year ahead. Groups can also add any additional papers (reports, publications etc.) if they think that this material would be helpful for the Senior Officers. These updates are also a good way to demonstrate the group's work to a wider audience, as their content will be adapted for inclusion in the twice-yearly IARU newsletter which is sent to all IARU members.
- Any requests for expense reimbursements. This must be received by the Secretariat by the end of the calendar year.
- An updated report in advance of the Presidents' Meeting (held annually in the first months of the year). This is very similar to the report for the Senior Officers' Meeting and will share (any) developments from the intervening months.
- Some groups may be offered the opportunity to deliver a presentation about their work to the Presidents' or Senior Officers' Meetings. The Secretariat also welcomes requests from individual groups to provide extended in-person updates to these meetings, if they think it would be beneficial. This is a great opportunity to engage with IARU's decision makers about aspects of the group's work which may benefit from high-level, cross-IARU discussion or would be of high-level interest to all IARU members.

### Working with the Secretariat

Throughout the year, the Secretariat may be in touch for updates about a group's contact information and information about the group for the IARU website etc. It can also provide help with promoting events and news on the website and social media channels. Groups may like to contribute to the IARU newsletter, as a way of showcasing their work to the IARU community or generate interest among potential new members.

If a group has any questions about how IARU works, the governance of a group or any other administrative matter, the Secretariat would be the first point of contact ([iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk)).

### Working with the Senior Officers

The annual Senior Officers' Meeting is a good opportunity to take stock of how a group is operating, what its future aspirations might be and whether the funding is adequate and being used efficiently. The Senior Officers may pose questions for the group or ask for additional information, especially in terms of how funding is spent, if it is not made clear in the report. If a group is struggling to recruit members, then bringing it to the attention of the Senior Officers is a good way to try to develop interest from other institutions. The Senior Officers may also provide additional feedback and advice on how the group operates, if they felt that it would be helpful.

### Leading a group

The leadership of a group is a decision for the group members, with some groups choosing co-chairs rather than just one leader. How often the leadership of a group changes is also down to the group members, although the model of leadership rotating between IARU institutions is encouraged (as with the IARU Chair).



Some thought should be given to how information is retained and passed on when the membership of a group changes. Minutes or brief notes of meetings are useful to record the discussions and to provide a basis for the reports to Senior Officers and Presidents. This information is also a useful resource for future group leads and members. The Secretariat can also assist with historical records and information from past group activities and membership.

## 4. What makes a group or initiative successful?

In May 2021, the Secretariat launched a survey of IARU members and this was one of the key questions. The groups all have different ways of working and their individual aims, however there are some common themes when it comes to the question of what makes a group run successfully.

The survey feedback highlighted the following as contributing to a productive and valuable group:

- **Clear planning** about the work programme and goals.
- **Committed leadership** in the group/initiative – if groups leads are active in setting up meetings, identifying areas for joint working and facilitating communication between the group members, this makes the group dynamic and effective.
- **Engaged members** – encouraging participating members to attend meetings regularly and make contributions towards the agreed goals and workplans. New groups should also be mindful that the time commitment of members is balanced with the value they derive from participating in the group. Group members typically do not receive additional remuneration for the time they spend working on IARU business and must fund their own travel expenses for IARU meetings.
- **Achieving a balance between virtual and face-to-face meetings** – survey feedback noted the value of meeting in person, although the ease of having more frequent virtual meetings is also an important consideration. We would also encourage groups to think about sustainability when planning the frequency of their in-person meetings.
- **Clear communication** with the Senior Officers.

## 5. Closing a group

From September 2022, it is proposed that new groups be established for an initial period of three years, after which the Senior Officers, in conjunction with the group leads, may decide that the group has achieved its original objectives and the group can close. If it is felt that there is additional work for the group to do, or that there is a value in the networking it provides, then the Senior Officers can approve its continuation for a further fixed period.

For existing groups, it is hoped that the new report form will be helpful for Senior Officers and group leads in discussing a group's objectives and purpose, and to understand when a group may have achieved its specific aims and can therefore be wound up. If approved, this would be the format of the reporting form for the annual Senior Officers' Meeting.

Alternatively, it may be that an existing group has changed its needs or has simply become unviable, for example if it is struggling to recruit enough members to make it worthwhile for others to continue to contribute their time to the group.



If a group falls into one of these categories, group members are encouraged to discuss the continuation of the group at one of their meetings as a first step. If the consensus is that the group should disband, this should be communicated to the Secretariat. The Secretariat will report this to the next Senior Officers' Meeting, along with a proposal of how any unspent funds should be dealt with (in consultation with the group leads).

In all cases, it is hoped that engagement and discussion will allow for a productive relationship between Senior Officers and the groups. If Senior Officers have concerns about the level of engagement of a group or the way in which it is operating, it would be expected that they could ask questions of the group and make suggestions for a way forward. Persistent concerns about the value being provided by a group may affect the willingness of Senior Officers to approve its funding requests. The decision about whether a group should continue, however, would ultimately rest with the group itself. IARU members are free to maintain informal, unfunded groups or networks if they wish.

## 6. FAQs

- **What does the Secretariat do?**

The Secretariat is the administration centre of IARU, organising the Presidents' and Senior Officer's meetings, handling IARU's financial matters, managing communication on decisions, news and requests across IARU. There may be additional project work taken on by the Secretariat to improve IARU's processes or establish new practices (e.g. launching the IARU newsletter). The institution of the President currently chairing IARU runs the Secretariat. Upon the election of a new IARU Chair (every 2 years), the role of the Secretariat also passes to the new Chair's institution.

- **How do I find new group members?**

Some groups will have representatives from all IARU institutions, whilst others have involvement only from some of the member universities. If you would like to find new members from across IARU for your group, please contact the Secretariat in the first instance. They will be able to put you in touch with the Key Contacts who can then circulate information about how colleagues at their institutions could become involved with the group.

- **When do I need to submit reports or funding requests?**

The Secretariat will contact you two to three months before the Senior Officers' Meeting (which is usually held in September/October) and send you a report template and a budget request form. It will also contact you one to two months before the Presidents' Meeting (usually held in the first few months of the year) for any updates to the previously submitted report for the Senior Officers' Meeting. To assist with planning, it should be noted that every second year, the Presidents' Meeting will be held directly before the World Economic Forum at Davos (usually scheduled in mid-January).

- **Can a group lead or group member also be a Senior Office of IARU?**

Yes, a group lead or member can also hold the role of Senior Officer. However, as the Senior Officers decide on the budget requests from groups, the member in question would be required to declare their interest at the beginning of the Senior Officers' meeting and recuse themselves from the discussion of that group's budget.

- **Can a group change what it spends its IARU funding on?**

Any changes to what a group spends its approved funding on should be communicated to the Senior Officers via the Secretariat. Approval will then be sought from the Senior Officers by email circulation.

- **Our group hasn't spent all its allocated funding for the year – what do I do?**

Unspent funds may be carried over to the next year, with agreement from the Senior Officers. The request to carry over funds would be made to the Senior Officers Meeting, in the same way that the usual budget requests are made.

- **Where can I find more information about how IARU works?**

More information on the Presidents, Senior Officers, Key Contacts and other parts of IARU can be found [on the website](#).

- **How can I find out what other IARU groups there are?**

The IARU website has [a section on each of the groups and initiatives](#). The [newsletter](#) also contains updates from each group about their work over the last year.

## Appendix 1. Blank Status Report Form

### Name of Group or Initiative

<b>Lead</b>	<i>Name of group lead(s)</i>
<b>Reporting</b>	<i>Name of group lead or member reporting to the meeting</i>
<b>Items for decision</b>	<i>Please fill in if applicable</i>
<p><b>To assist the Senior Officers in understanding your group's work patterns and the goals you are hoping to achieve this year, we would be grateful if you could answer the following questions:</b></p>	
Summary of previous year's activities	<p><i>Please describe and assess the topics that your group has considered over the last year and/or projects that were worked on or completed.</i></p> <p><i>This summary should refer to the planned work outlined in your previous report to the Senior Officers' Meeting.</i></p>
What specific topics does your group hope to address in the coming year?	
Do you have projects that you hope to begin or continue? <i>(Please give details – the financial details of any planned projects can be set out separately in the budget request form)</i>	
How often do you plan to meet (approximately)?	
Funding to date	<p><i>Summary of previous funding allocations – this content can be provided by the Secretariat</i></p> <p><i>E.g.</i></p>



	<i>USD 13,500 (2020)</i> <i>USD 10,000 (2018)</i> <i>USD 10,000 (2017)</i> <i>USD 5,000 (2016)</i> <i>USD 3,300 (2015)</i>
Participants List	<i>So that the Secretariat can keep its records updated, please list the group members, their institution and their email address.</i>

## Appendix 2: Blank Funding Request Form

*Please fill in the following form to make a funding request.*

**Project Name/Year:**

**Total Requested Amount & Breakdowns:**

Item	Amount
Item 1	USD
Item 2	USD
Item 3	USD
<b>Total Requested Amount</b>	USD

\*Groups will be asked to report on how funds were used in next year's report for the Senior Officers' Meeting.

**Other Financial Resources (if applicable):**

**Project Participants List (Please specify the lead by adding "Lead" next to the name):**

University	Title/Position	Name
ANU		
ETH Zürich		
NUS		
PKU		
Berkeley		
Cambridge		
UCT		
Copenhagen		
Oxford		
UTokyo		
Yale		

\*The list does not need to be complete in case not all participants are confirmed yet.

**Details of the Project (background, purpose, expected outcomes, schedule, project's continuity, etc.):**

## Appendix 3: Reimbursement Guidance

### Guidance on Submitting Invoices to the Secretariat (2023)

We hope that this guidance will be helpful when it comes time to submit invoices for reimbursement. Funds will be paid in US dollars and the Secretariat will cover the transfer fee. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us at [iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk)

#### When to Submit Your Invoice

- Please remember that it is only possible for us to provide reimbursements against approved expenditure for 2023 (i.e. unused funds cannot be rolled over to 2024 unless approval is received from the Senior Officers).
- **All invoices must be submitted before 31 December 2023.** Invoices will take at least 2 weeks to process. Invoices received in December 2023 may not be paid until late January 2024, due to Cambridge's Christmas-New Year closure. Therefore, if payment is required before the end of the calendar year, please let us know and submit the invoice by **13 November 2023**.
- Invoices should be emailed to the Secretariat: [iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:iaru@admin.cam.ac.uk). Please do not post invoices.

#### Preparing Your Invoice

- If staff at your university have undertaken expenditures for more than one IARU group/initiative, you can submit either a single itemised invoice for all IARU-related expenditures or separate invoices.
- Please ensure that your invoice is addressed to the University of Cambridge (i.e. *not* the IARU Secretariat), using the following details:

Dr Karen Kennedy  
Strategic Partnerships Office  
The Old Schools  
University of Cambridge  
Trinity Lane  
Cambridge, United Kingdom CB2 1TN

- Please ensure that your invoice contains the following information:
  - ✓ An itemised list of expenditures, where applicable. The list can be submitted as a separate document if that is easier.
  - ✓ The amount in both your local currency and in US dollars
  - ✓ Beneficiary account name, account number, address and country
  - ✓ Bank name, bank branch, address and country
  - ✓ ABA Routing Number (US only), Sort Code (UK only), BSB (Australia only)



- Finally, please note that the account needs to be held in the name of your university. Reimbursements to non-university accounts will need the owner of the account to be set up as an approved supplier in Cambridge's financial system, and that will take additional time.