

GUIDELINES FOR GAELIC FOCUS GROUPS

1. RATIONALE:

Within GAELIC, three types of structures were identified for the organization design:

- Permanent structures for services (processes)
- Governance structure
- Non-permanent structures eg Focus Groups

GAELIC wants to move its activities away from committee-based and agenda-driven type structures to ones that stimulate and encourage specific areas of focus and interest among its members in relation to their work-related needs, namely Communities of Practice. The former role of the teams and workgroups will be enhanced with a strong emphasis on building and sharing knowledge. A Focus Group should stay in place as long as the interest remains after which it should be disbanded ie they are discretionary or non-permanent structures.

Focus Groups should be distinguished by clear boundaries and a sharp focus otherwise there will be overlap and duplication. The Focus Groups should be aware of the other groups and interests so that they work together on issues of common concern that might have an impact.

2. PURPOSE

The Focus Group should strive to promote widespread sharing, producing knowledge and building skills among the staff working in higher education libraries. The focus should be in a specific and well-defined area of work area in order to address:

- The library work needs of staff as identified and supported by the libraries
- New directions, themes and technologies in libraries and industry-related contexts
- Common interests/focus eg heads of libraries
- Standards including best practice

3. EXPECTED OUTPUTS OF THE FOCUS GROUP

The GAELIC Focus Group strives to achieve the following outputs:

- Performance improvement in academic libraries (through library-related training)
- Standards for academic libraries
- Unlocking potential/capacity building (infrastructure and staff)
- Knowledge sharing
- Collegiality
- Broader leadership base
- Increased participation of member libraries and staff
- Needs surfacing

4. FOCUS GROUP – STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

Each Focus Group should strive to integrate three levels of performance output:

- A formal and structured level – this is the more formal coordinating role taken on by 3-4 members, including an elected leader (leadership defined in each Focus group charter). Their role is to identify, address or refer issues that come to their attention (permanent, regular and on-going matters in key areas) and that might impact or have implications for work functions and operations in GAELIC libraries eg input on proposals, standards, policies, advocacy and lobbying, representing GAELIC on national bodies.
- A less formal level but which also requires skilled coordination. Activities at this level should be as practical as possible. Activities should stimulate the production and sharing of knowledge among members ie to expose members to new developments, debates and sources. The activities should attract the “younger colleagues” in the libraries to get them excited about developments It will also look at training needs within the scope of the Focus Group. It will also be a forum for members to share experiences eg

conference attendance and to debate matters of key importance in this area. Where a Focus Group decides to present a formal workshop to which participants outside the consortium will be invited – the FOTIM Events Programme Manager and the Communications & Marketing Programme Manager are required to assist with the arrangements to ensure that the event is widely promoted and that the FOTIM branding is maintained. Formal workshops should be included as part of the annual FOTIM budgeting process and registration fees are determined annually by FOTIM.

- An innovation level, where appropriate, that identifies issues with the potential to become a funded project (addresses research/problem identified within the scope of the Focus group) which would be managed by the FOTIM/GAELIC office. The project would be accountable to the GAELIC – members from the Focus Group would be included on the team as specialists.
- The modus operandi of the Focus Group would be determined, to a large extent, by the number of members participating and purpose of the meeting. For small specialist discussions, Focus Groups should consider making use of video- and teleconferencing facilities to promote inclusion and limit travel and time costs of GAELIC staff. Initially, the office can assist with advice and guidance on availability and use of these facilities.

5. GOVERNANCE

Focus Groups will be shaped by a charter that defines:

- Governance & structure
- Leadership (including term of duty)
 - Roles, duties & responsibilities
- Modus operandi
- Terms of reference
- Membership
- Meeting & reporting
- Expected outputs

Focus groups are self-run ie they are not organized by the FOTIM/GAELIC office.

The Programme Manager role in the FOTIM/GAELIC Office would shape and guide the content of the GAELIC Focus Groups.

The Communications & Marketing Programme Manager role (based in the FOTIM/GAELIC office) would shape relations and communication around the Focus Groups. Assistance with events and logistics would be part of this role. Reports of workshops, and to a lesser extent meetings, would be shared with the Programme Manager who reports to the FOTIM General Manager.

Workshops that advertise the event and charge a registration fee would receive assistance with the logistics and organisation from the FOTIM/GAELIC office (both Events & Communications & Marketing).

6. ESTABLISHING A FOCUS GROUP

- Find a sponsor (champion) to set it up ie GAELIC will not manage it
- Drivers (keen staff) identify an area of common interest that could fulfill criteria set out in section 3.
- Make use of listservs to call for interested members to respond
- Meet as a group to define focus, parameters and draw up a charter
- Application to GAELIC to exist – charter to be approved by GGB via Office
- Once the charter is approved, elect a leader plus 3 members to co-ordinate and manage the Focus Group activities
- Membership is for staff members from GAELIC Libraries.

- Participation in forum discussions and workshops will be for any interested persons from the LIS sector – this will be by invitation (listserv and web site announcements)
- Create a web page for the Focus Group on the GAELIC website so that members can follow activities. The Focus Group would supply content to the GAELIC Office which would maintain the pages.

7. FUNDING

As far as possible, the Focus groups should be self-funding through workshop fees – there will be differentiated price structures for consortium and external participants determined annually by FOTIM..

There should be no cost to GAELIC with regard to the running and management of Focus groups. The hosting library is requested to cover the costs of the venue, catering and other relevant costs for the discussion or workshop.

GAELIC does not contribute towards the travel costs of members attending the workshops or meetings.

8. PROPOSED FOCUS GROUP AREAS

Focus Group 1:	Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Information services (contact and virtual) User education (policy, standards, trainer skills and competences) e-resource (database training)
Focus Group 2:	Collection development & management e-resource evaluation and selection including application of service level agreements Risk management, stock taking & inventory control Assessment & evaluation of collections Shared site storage policy Shared journal collection development
Focus Group 3:	Quality Assurance
Focus Group 4:*	Cataloguing and metadata Cataloguing standards Union database Authority control
Focus Group 5:	eResearch management Open access & scholarly communication Institutional / digital repositories (including e-theses & dissertations) Metadata Digitisation Portal technology & applications User authentication
Focus Group 6:*	Serials & acquisitions
Focus group 7:*	Shelving & circulation
Focus group 8:	INNOPAC Millennium & networked related issues
Focus group:9*	Interlending and document supply
Focus Group 10:	Mentorship

*One of GAELIC's strategies is to form partnerships and strategic alliances where areas of common interest and benefit coincide. Focus Groups are encouraged to be aware of and promote shared programmes/activities with organisations working in similar areas of speciality eg LIASA Interest Groups.

9. MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH GGB & REST OF GAELIC

How to ensure that members participating in Focus Group give feedback to staff and colleagues in library after the event. Possible formats include:

- Regular progress reports are channelled through the GAELIC Director to the GGB meetings
- The AGM is a Showcase/Achievements Day which includes the main meeting with library exhibitions, workshops and feedback on achievements.

How to keep GGB informed of what is happening in Focus Groups because more staff should now be participating in the Focus groups.

It is important that the GGB endorses the Focus group programmes and activities – that they support investigations, findings, research and monitor progress.

10. NEXT STEPS

Table the draft proposals for approval at the GAELIC Governing Board Meeting on 9 March 2005. Approval for Focus Groups identified for implementation.

Announce the formation of the Focus Groups on the listservs and web site. Request for members to indicate interest and to make themselves available to get the Focus Group Charter drafted and initiate first activities.

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