

**Terms of Reference**

**ASE Health and Safety Specialist Group**

The ASE Health and Safety Specialist Group works both pro-actively and re-actively. ASE’s Education Group directs their activity but their set up and continuation is subject to the Trustee Body approval.

The ASE Health and Safety Specialist Group has a narrow and specialised remit which is highly technical. The Association carries a legal liability for the advice and guidance it offers and has a duty of care to ensure that such advice is appropriate and in accordance with best practice. In order to ensure this, the Group draws its members from a relatively small constituency. Some members may bring their expertise by virtue of their jobs; others may acquire it through long service in the Group. It can take inexperienced members several years to become fully familiar with the issues and it may be counter-productive to insist members step down due to time served.

It is important to have a sufficient number of experienced members in the Group to be able to review, quickly and prior to publication, all the ASE publications (journals, books, web publications) in which practical work arises, to ensure that what is written is in accordance with ASE policies and good health and safety practice.

The Group also produces several health and safety books which the ASE publishes, for which members of the Group contribute their time as a professional service, unpaid, unlike contributors to most of the Association’s books.

It is also important to have a single direct link with ASE HQ because there may be external projects, government initiatives or press reports which will require responses. Equally, members of the Group need to understand the direction in which ASE is going etc, for example, if there are proposals which do not fit within budget or if technically suitable advice does not meet the practical needs of ASE.

For all these reasons, the Operating Procedures of this specialist group are somewhat different to those of the other specialist groups.

**The work and accountability of the Group**

The work of the Group derives from the Strategic Plan of the Association and the Annual Business Plan.

The role of the Group is:

* to be concerned with all aspects of health and safety as it affects members of the Association;
* to offer advice to members on all matters relating to health and safety in science education;
* to define, subject to approval by the Education Group and the Trustee Body, ASE policy on matters relating to health and safety in science education, both internally and publicly;
* to maintain a watching brief in respect of developing health and safety issues and to offer advice to the Education Group, Trustee Body and staff team in order to safeguard the teaching of practical science;
* to help protect the role of practical work in science education by offering authoritative health and safety advice that broadens the scope for practical work and reinforces its place in the curriculum by identifying and disseminating exemplars of good practice, for example, by writing articles for Education in Science, School Science Review, Primary Science and other publications, contributing to the Annual Conference as well as to professional development activities and other events as appropriate;
* to disseminate information on issues pertaining to health and safety in practical science teaching, to publish, jointly with other organisations where appropriate, such health and safety information as seems necessary and to ensure that all such publications are kept up to date;
* to represent the Association in consultations with governmental bodies on health and safety legislation and regulation.
* To work with the staff team on issues that might arise for example in the press or social media that require a specialist health and safety input.

The Chair of the Group should provide an annual update on activities to the Education Group. This report contributes to the Annual Report of the Association, part of ASE’s statutory reporting responsibility.

**Membership of the Group**

This is a technical group, which relies on a suitable balance of experience and expertise.

It is essential that the Group includes:

* at least two members with substantial experience of teaching biology,
* at least two members with substantial experience of teaching physics, and
* at least three members with substantial experience of teaching chemistry (including an additional member because of the greater demands of work on chemistry).

The above seven people will comprise the elected members of the Group. They are elected for a six-year term. Normally one or two people will retire each year but membership is renewable as many times as members of the Group think desirable.

It is also essential that the Group includes:

* at least one representative of CLEAPSS,
* at least one representative of SSERC, and
* at least one technician.

Co-options will be for one year at a time but may be renewed as many times as members of the Group think desirable.

The net effect is that the Group will comprise seven elected members and, with co-options, may well comprise about 10 or 11.

The Chair of the ASE Health and Safety Specialist Group is elected from amongst the membership of the Group (elected or co-opted). The election is by the Trustee Body on the recommendation of the ASE Chair Trio, following consultation with the Group. Election is for a term of six years, renewable as many times as members of the Group think desirable. Although the intention is to have a review every six years, if necessary, the Chair can be removed by the Group passing a vote of no confidence which would trigger action by the Trustee Body.

The role of Vice-Chair will normally be taken by a Past Chair, if they are a member of the Group. Otherwise, the Group will elect a Vice-Chair from among its membership (elected or co-opted), for a six-year term, renewable as many times as members of the Group think desirable.

The Group will elect a Minuting Secretary from among its membership (elected or co- opted), for a six-year term, renewable as many times as the Group thinks desirable.

ASE members seeking election to the Group may be nominated by the Chair of the Group or as individuals or by a Region Committee through an online system following advertisements in EiS and on the web site. Nominations other than by the Chair of the Group must have the support of two ASE members. The ASE Chair Trio will consult with the Chair of the Group about the suitability of prospective members, particularly in relation to the balance of membership and skills required and recommend to the Trustee Body accordingly.

An alternative approach to encourage recruitment is to advertise vacancies for the Group and, invite those expressing interest to attend a meeting of the Group. With the agreement of the Chair Trio, as representatives of the Education Group, such potential new members of the Group may then be co-opted for an initial period of 1 year, after which membership will be subject to mutual review and may be renewed as many times as members of the Group think desirable.

Any member of the Group who fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings, including online meetings, (unless by prior arrangement with the Chair due to special circumstances) will cease to be a member of the Group irrespective of his/her remaining term of office.

Subject to budget constraints, additional members of the Group may be co-opted for particular projects and/or as members of a Working Party.

**Responsibilities of members of the Group**

In taking up a position on a Specialist Group for ASE, a member agrees to be an ambassador for the Association. This will be demonstrated by the member’s advocacy for the Association, coupled with his or her good and up-to-date knowledge of what ASE offers to members and the science education community at large in terms of tangible and intangible benefits. All Group members promote excellence in science education.

The following involvement is expected:

* to be an advocate for ASE membership;
* to prepare diligently for the meetings of the Group by reading the materials sent in advance and taking part in the discussion in their area of expertise; and
* to be pro-active in suggesting priorities for the Group to address.

In order to carry out these responsibilities, each member of the Group must have the following qualities and expertise.

* Excellent communication and listening skills.
* A commitment to the work of the Group and of the Association.
* Expertise and experience relevant to the work of the Group.

The Chair of the Group is responsible for ensuring that a balance of the views of Group is reflected in the advice given.

**Ways of working**

As described in the Rules of the Association, each Specialist Group has the power to regulate its own procedure and the responsibilities of individual members. However, when the Specialist Group has discussed and decided upon its procedure, this must be approved by the Trustee Body (which will consult with the Chair Trio as to the procedure’s suitability) and lodged with the Chief Executive Officer at ASE HQ

The ways of working adopted must be in line with the general values and ways of working as set out in ASE’s Strategic Plan.

This procedure must be reviewed every 3 years.

**Budget**

The Group has a fixed budget for meetings, set by the Trustee Body at the beginning of the year. The budget is managed by the Finance team.

**Resources for members of the Group**

Members of the Group will already have access to the health and safety resources on the ASE web site but, in addition, new members of the Group will be provided with copies of the latest editions of ASE health and safety publications in print.

If new members of the Group do not already have access, the Chair of the Group will request CLEAPSS and/or SSERC that they be given passwords to allow them to access the CLEAPSS and SSERC web sites.

**Last Reviewed by Trustees November 2023**

**Next due for Review by Trustees November 2025**