Terms of Reference: Publications Committee

PURPOSE

Reporting to the Board of Trustees, the Publications Committee oversees the delivery of The Society’s publishing programme, ensuring that the publications advance physiology, enhance its relationship with other disciplines and promote the application of physiological discoveries to the improvement of human health. The Committee is responsible for ensuring that The Society’s publications distribute ethical, accurate, clear, reproducible, inclusive and unbiased research, while supporting transparency and data sharing. The Committee will ensure that the publications continue to provide an income stream that adequately supports the Society’s charitable activities and, in regard to this goal, make recommendations to the Trustees when appropriate about new publishing strategies and initiatives.

REMIT

The Publications Committee’s remit includes the following:

- overseeing the delivery of the publishing strategy of The Society and ensuring that The Society’s publications deliver a financial surplus sufficient to support The Society’s other charitable activities
- monitoring performance of The Society’s publications against the strategy and against financial targets
- assessing the changing publishing and scientific environment and responding to changes that could impact the strategy
- where appropriate recommending to the Board of Trustees investment in the publishing programme of The Society
- where appropriate proposing changes to the publishing strategy to the Board of Trustees
- balancing the commercial aspects of The Society’s publishing with fulfilment of its charitable mission
- acting on behalf of the Board of Trustees in business matters concerning the publications, in particular the contract and relationship with the publishing partner(s), with the priority of safeguarding the financial surplus returned to The Society
- enhancing and growing The Society’s publishing programme, through development of its existing journals, launching new journals and other publishing products, and introducing new business models and technologies as required, subject to the approval of the Board of Trustees if significant investment is involved, as required by the Delegated Authority Framework
- preparing a publishing budget annually and recommending the publishing budget to the Board of Trustees via the Finance Committee
• ensuring that the publication activities of The Society observe any budget set for them and follow the financial controls and accounting procedures and requirements set by the Board of Trustees for The Society in general — the presence of the Honorary Treasurer or other members of the Board of Trustees as members of the Publications Committee does not weaken this requirement
• reviewing budget updates regularly from the publishing partner(s) and the Head of Publishing and taking corrective action where necessary
• supervising the management of the journal brands (design, reputation, relationships, values)
• appointing the Editors-in-Chief of The Society’s journals and other publications, subject to the approval of the Committee’s recommendations by the Board of Trustees, and monitoring their performance regularly, including a formal annual review of the performance and strategy of each publication together with its Editor-in-Chief
• reviewing all proposals from the editorial boards of the journals for substantial changes to their practices or operations before these are considered by the Trustees, such as changes that might affect the reputation or finances of the Society, or have an impact on the effective operation of The Society’s portfolio of publications
• appointing The Society’s representatives on the Joint Management Board of Physiological Reports
• directing and coordinating the journals’ editorial scopes and their policies on transparency and openness, reproducibility and statistical rigour, and ethics in research and publishing
• ensuring that The Society’s publications provide an excellent service to authors and readers
• coordinating publication activities with other Society activities as appropriate
• convening Task-and-Finish Groups and other panels as required e.g. to advise the Committee on all science and quality aspects of our publications and on the scientific cases for new publications
• the Committee will in all its decision and actions maintain the good reputation of The Society

GOVERNANCE

Membership

The membership requires a balanced portfolio of skills, knowledge and experience to be able to fully support and engage with the remit of the Committee. The maximum size of the Committee shall be less than the maximum size of the Board of Trustees.

The Committee will comprise:

Members

- The Chair of the Committee, who will become a Trustee
- The Honorary Treasurer as an ex officio member
- The President Elect as an ex officio member
- Other members, who collectively provide the necessary publishing, commercial and scientific expertise, of whom up to three do not have to be members of The Society

The quorum necessary for the transaction of business shall be 50% of the membership of the Committee, plus one.

At the discretion of the Chair, the following may be in attendance only, with all but the Head of Publishing leaving the meeting for closed sessions

- The Editors-in-Chief of the journals wholly owned by The Society and the editors of other publications wholly owned by The Society
Terms of Reference

- A representative of the publishing partner(s)
- The Head of Publishing

In the absence of the Committee Chair, for example due to illness, the remaining members present can elect one member to chair that meeting. External members should be chosen to include an appropriate range of skills and expertise not found among the membership. The Chair of the Committee will serve for four years; further details are provided in the Regulations. Other members of the Committee will normally serve a term of three years.

The Committee may co-opt additional temporary members for particular tasks or projects.

Retiring Editors-in-Chief of The Society’s journals may not become members of the Publications Committee until a minimum of two years has elapsed since the date of completing their term as Editors-in-Chief.

Staff attendance

Other members of the Publications team may, by agreement of the Chair, attend meetings as required.

Recruitment of Members

Where the position is not ex officio, new members will be recruited through the following process:

- Identifying need for skills and experience
- Open call to the membership or targeted search and invitations to apply
- Invitation to potential externals to apply
- Potential new members provide CV and statement of interest and suitability
- Committee Chair, the Head of Publishing and one other member of the Committee discuss applications, assess and record demonstration of skills and experience against requirement, where required undertake interviews and appoint to positions

There is a minimum expectation of 33% female representation among the members of the Committee and ideally 50% across all Society activities. All Society meetings should be conducted in a manner that is supportive of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to ensure that the entire talent pool be considered in all discussions regarding Society activities.

Delegated authority

In carrying out its business, the Committee will refer to both its Terms of Reference and the Delegated Authority Framework.

Frequency and duration

The Committee will meet four times a year, with one meeting in person if the Chair so chooses and the other three online. In addition it may transact its business between meetings by email and other communications to ensure sufficient reporting to the Board of Trustees.

Members should not normally miss more than four meetings throughout their term of office. Where absence is unavoidable apologies should be sent to the Chair as soon as possible and comments on the agenda items and papers submitted before the meeting. Reasonable adjustments in the form of remote access to in-person meetings will be made when needed. Appointed members who miss more than two meetings without extenuating circumstances will be required to stand down.

Finance and legal

A Committee may not authorise expenditure and must observe any budget set for it and follow the financial controls and accounting procedures and requirements set by the Board of Trustees for The Society in general and
for committees specifically. A committee must not enter into any legal commitments or incur any financial or other liabilities on behalf of The Society.

Conflicts of interest and loyalty

A Committee member who has a clear and substantial interest in a matter described above should declare that interest before, or at the beginning, of any Committee meeting where the matter is to be discussed, whether or not that interest is already recorded in the Register of Interests. Ideally, a notice should be sent to the Chair before the meeting. The Chair of the meeting should ask, at the beginning of each meeting, whether anyone has or may have a conflict, where this might be relevant. As new conflicts are discovered they should be added to the Register of Interests. Further details are provided in The Society’s Conflict of Interests and Loyalty Policy.

Reporting procedure

Agendas and associated documentation will be distributed seven days before the meeting, via email.

All meetings of the Committee are carried out through reporting by exception where staff, with input from the Committee lead, provide the relevant information on areas of activity where input is required.

The Committee must have formal minutes of its meetings, recording all proceedings, decisions and recommendations. Minutes, approved by the Chair, should be written within two weeks of the meeting and circulated to Committee members. The “Chair’s minutes” will be submitted to the next Board of Trustees meeting.