

Terms of Reference – Geoscience-RSE Special Interest Group

Last updated: December 2024

Introduction

This document details the terms of reference for the organisation and delivery of the Geoscience Research Software Engineering (RSE) Special Interest Group (SIG). The group aims to provide a space for RSEs working in geoscience (e.g. climate, meteorology, oceanography, earth sciences, geomagnetism) to come together.

As a charity, the Society (of Research Software Engineering) must fulfill its legal obligations in many areas including but not limited to: equality, diversity and inclusivity, financial regulation, working with volunteers, protecting reputation, liability insurance, cancellation insurance, GDPR.

Many of these legal obligations feature in the organisation of this working group and the Society Trustees must take responsibility for certain decisions and actions while at the same time formally delegating the organisation and delivery to the SIG committee. Final responsibility in all matters lies with the Society.

Where the term “the Society” is used, this refers to the Board of Trustees (as the elected representatives of the Society of Research Software Engineering) unless specified otherwise.

Term

This Terms of Reference is effective from *(insert date trustees voted to hand delegated responsibility to SIG chair)* and continues until the SIG should be disbanded.

Committee Aim

The aim of the Geoscience RSE SIG committee is to provide opportunities for bringing together RSEs working in various fields of geoscience, for example, weather, climate, or space weather research, and to facilitate knowledge exchange and networking. The committee will do this by organising events, signposting resources, providing platforms for asynchronous exchange, such as Slack workspaces and mailing lists, reaching out to RSEs in the field who might not be part of or aware of the Geoscience RSE community yet, and advocating for RSEs within the Geosciences community.

Purpose and Aim of the SIG's outputs

The purpose and aim of this SIG is to create a community and knowledge exchange hub for Geoscience RSEs. There are RSEs at various institutions and in various research groups working on Geoscience-related research software. By bringing them together the

Geoscience RSE SIG wants to further the research field by enabling better RSE knowledge exchange, but also improve career opportunities and a sense of belonging in the field of Geoscience Research Software Engineering.

This purpose has been decided in collaboration between the SIG steering group and Society and under careful consideration of the RSE community and the external environment at this time. This purpose is not expected to change, and if significant changes are required they should be proposed to a Society trustee meeting for consideration and approval.

Budget

The approximate annual budget for the SIG at outset is £200 per year to cover basic outreach materials.

The estimated proportion of this that will be requested through the Society's Events and Initiatives Policy is 100%. This will be requested in a timely manner, at least 1 month before it is required so that it can be approved at the monthly trustee meeting. If funding is required quicker than anticipated, the Society will make this available as part of their support for the SIG.

We currently plan to run annual events at RSECon, which will be where a lot of the community comes together and avoid additional costs. If we decide to run a separate event, for example, if our event is not accepted at RSECon, we will make an application to the Society's Events and Initiatives Policy. We expect this to be in the range of £1000-£2000.

Insurance Policies

At this point, we do not foresee any insurance needs apart from those associated with running an event in conjunction with RSECon.

The Society Treasurer will ensure that any events are covered with appropriate insurance policies like but not limited to: Public Liability insurance, Events cancellation insurance. This should be organised in conjunction with the SIG committee so that all involved have full knowledge of what is both required and purchased.

Reporting

The Geoscience RSE SIG committee is happy to send a member to the SocRSE trustee meetings for reporting purposes whenever invited, and/or issue a standing invitation to the SocRSE trustees to attend our planning meetings. We will also provide a written report when requested. We commit to providing progress reports at Society trustee meetings at least once every three months, if requested.

Committee Roles

The broader SIG committee will consist of volunteers without any requirement that they are members of the Society. The committee will be led by a SIG steering group that will comprise a smaller section of the committee most of whom will be Society members. The Steering Group should ensure that working as a committee member is a fun and learning experience.

To that end, we look for a proactive attitude from the Steering Group to ensure that tasks are evenly spread, giving opportunities to all volunteers to learn new skills and gain confidence.

Four volunteers will form the **Steering Group**: Chair, Deputy, Communications, and Events manager. This steering group takes responsibility collectively for all decisions and can vote when unable to agree unanimously. If this vote doesn't lead to agreement, the Chair has the casting vote.

A brief description of the roles is as follows:

- Chair: leading meetings and steering the group/SIG.
- Deputy: taking minutes of meetings, preparing reports, and administering the mailing list and slack spaces.
- Communications: preparing communication to SIG members, advertising activities, and leading outreach.
- Events manager: overseeing the organisation of events organised under the SIG. This is not an expectation to lead organisation of all events, but to act as a liaison between the steering group and a wider organising group from the general members.

As the SIG grows the demand for roles may change. The steering group has the right to add/remove roles from the steering group by vote as these needs become apparent, updating this ToR with the Society when this occurs.

For induction, the Steering Group is asked to:

- Read this document, carefully discussing it with the Trustees for clarification if necessary
- Complete the free training videos 1-4 on '[Good Practice in Volunteer Management](#)' from the NCVO
- Read '[How to Reduce Risk while Volunteering](#)'
- Read "[10 Simple Rules for Leadership without Formal Authority](#)"

The process for appointing the SIG committee is as follows:

1. The Society will launch an open call for a minimum of three weeks to the RSE Community to fill the initial open SIG roles.
2. Once established the SIG will manage its own appointments, launching a call for volunteers when required.
 - a. Appointments will occur on an annual basis, roughly coincident with RSECon.
 - b. A call for volunteers will be made followed by election by single transferable vote
 - c. It is expected that there will be a period of overlap between roles, with outgoing members assisting with the onboarding of their successors.

The open call is looking to fill all steering group roles, with Chair and Deputy being the most important.

Onboarding of Committee members

The Society asks that the Steering Group ensure that an initial onboarding meeting takes place to cover the following (but not limited to) activities:

- Introductions and icebreaker
- Circulate this document and ask all to read it carefully
- Ask each member to take the free (mandatory) online EDI training on <https://elearning.acas.org.uk/>
 - Bullying & Harassment
 - Discipline & Grievance
 - Equality & Diversity
 - Disability Discrimination and Reasonable Adjustments
- Read the Organisation Code of Conduct
- Read the [Complaints and Grievances policy](#)
- Volunteer policy – see charity governance
 - Complete the free 'Good Practice in Volunteer Management

Removal of unproductive committee members

In the unlikely event of an important committee role not being fulfilled with the possibility of that inaction jeopardising the SIG, the Steering group reserves the right to ask that volunteer to step down and will appoint a new person in that role. The new person will be appointed by the Steering Group. If any committee member is concerned about the behaviour or inaction of a fellow committee member, they can raise a grievance through our [Complaints and Grievances Policy](#).

The Society reserves the right to remove any member of the Steering group if sufficient progress is not being made and this inaction is thought to lead to a failure to deliver the SIGs goals.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

The SIG committee will read and follow the [Society's EDI policy](#), and ensure that there are goals in regards to equality, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility. These statements will be agreed on by the Society and the Steering Group as a reflection of the Society's aspirations and goals for each of these areas for the RSE community.

The Society has an EDI team that are able to liaise and advise the SIG committee as needed, they can be contacted at edia@society-rse.org.

When organising events, we will aim to select one person from the Steering Group to be responsible for ensuring EDI considerations feed into the full planning process and will be considered throughout the event as well as in the retrospective evaluation.

The Environment and Sustainability

The Geoscience RSE SIG aims to have concern for the environment and sustainability at the forefront of all of its activities.

Where sensible we will plan for colocation of meetups with other events so as to minimise travel and resource use.

When organising events, we will aim to select one person from the organising committee to be responsible for ensuring environmental and sustainability considerations feed into the full planning process. This would include, but is not limited to, travel and transportation, environmental-friendly catering, and policies for re-use and minimisation of resources.

Geoscience RSE SIG is only planning to create very minimal giveaways, such as stickers, to support outreach, with careful consideration applied to the value.

Feedback

The committee will use various modes of collecting feedback. We are encouraging community members to reach out to us with their feedback and suggestions, we will collect feedback via forms, documents or sticky notes, and we will keep in close touch with the community and receive feedback directly and indirectly in conversations. After larger events, we will create a blog post and publicise it on a website (e.g. the SocRSE News website) and advertise it on social media and Slack, to increase visibility of the Geoscience RSE community.

Publicity and online presence

The Geoscience SIG will create a webpage which will collect blog posts from its events and signpost to other relevant groups, communities and resources. We have a [#geoscience](#) Slack channel on the UK RSE Slack workspace for communication between community members as well as for communication from the SIG committee. We also have a JISC mailing list (GEOSCIENCE-RSE).

Codes of Conduct (CoC)

The Society has two Codes of Conduct currently in place: an [event CoC](#) and an *organisation* CoC (also known as the [Trustee Code of Conduct](#)). The event CoC covers the expected conduct at events and on any online forums and apps. The organisation CoC covers the expected conduct for the committees and subgroups. The Society expects both of these CoCs to be adopted by the Steering Group. Any changes to either document would need to be requested to the Society and approved by trustee vote.

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