

## Stream and Current Topic Convenorship in the SLSA

### Stream Convenor Policy and Accompanying Report

#### Summary:

The organisation of the SLSA conference has long relied on the use of parallel subject sections, run by volunteers in coordination with the conference organisers. In SLSA lingo, these are “streams” and “current topics”.

Although practices have developed over time, there is no SLSA policy on these subject sections. The Conference Organisers bear the responsibility for coordinating streams and current topics on a year-to-year basis. This has led to variation in practice between conferences, difficulties in managing churn among streams/current topics and their convenors, and generates additional work for the conference organisers.

With this in mind, this paper outlines:

- The approach the SLSA has taken in recent years to managing “streams” and “current topics” for the annual conference.
- Problems that conference organisers have experienced with the current approach.
- Recommendations for reform to the management of streams and “current topics”
- The policy approved by the SLSA Board on streams and “current topics”.

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## **Context: SLSA Lingo and the history of streams/themes/topics/panels**

This section provides some background on subject sections at the SLSA conferences and how “streams”, “themes”, “panels” and “current topics” have been managed.

### **i. A potted history: “Streams”, “themes”, “panels” and “current topics”...**

Subject sections at the SLSA conference have traditionally been divided into two categories: “streams” (a regular subject that runs in each conference) and “themes”, billed in later years as “hot topics” and now “current topics” (a subject section that does not run at each conference).

Historically, there has been drift between “streams” and “themes”. In particular, some “themes” began to evolve into more permanent fixtures, focusing on “cross-cutting” topics (examples from previous conferences include “Ethics” and “Multi-culturalism”) compared to the subject-focus of streams (such as “Labour Law” and “Administrative Law”).

This confusion led the SLSA Executive Committee (as it then was) to undertake a review of “streams and themes” in 2016, noting that:

*There is a feeling that the boundary between ‘streams’ and ‘themes’ has become blurred, that we have drifted away from the original concept of ‘themes’, and that there ought to be space for people to organise panels which don’t necessarily fit within a stream or theme.*

#### **SLSA Newsletter – No. 79 – Summer 2016**

This review led to a new threefold categorisation of subject sections at the annual conference:

- 1. Streams:** A stream is a grouping that is expected to continue from conference to conference (and may choose to have its own page on the SLSA website). They are intended to be “constant fixtures” at the conference (SLSA Executive Committee Minutes 13.05.10).
- 2. Current topics (previously called “themes” or “hot topics”):** A current topic is a one-off grouping for the purposes of a single conference which reflects a current hot topic of debate or an issue of emerging importance, and which would be expected to attract at least six papers. In their introduction, it was envisaged that there would be up to seven current topics per conference, but often more than this are included (e.g. York 2022 had ten).
- 3. Panels:** A panel is a single session made up of three to four papers that do not fit within any stream or current topic.

This is the three-fold approach currently adopted by the SLSA (albeit, as below, some problems in execution remain).

**ii. The number and focus of streams:**

The number and focus of the streams and current topics at the SLSA conferences has evolved over time. Four factors are worth noting about the churn in streams/current topics:

- **The number of streams/current topics has increased:** As we return to in the second section below, in 2010-2016, the total number of streams and current topics at any given conference were between 18-25. In 2022, this has increased to 41 streams/current topics (31 streams and 10 current topics, respectively).
- **The removal of a dedicated “postgraduate” stream:** Although postgraduate researchers have always been welcome to submit their papers to any stream or theme, the SLSA used to offer a parallel “postgraduate stream” each year at the conference, dedicated to PGR and early career researcher submissions. This was phased out – now all paper submissions are made to streams and themes, irrespective of the author status.
- **Historically, there has been significant churn in the “streams” on offer at the conference:** As an illustration, Figure One shows two adverts for the 2003 and 2005 conferences side-by-side, each listing the streams on offer. Some streams have always been on offer at the conference (such as “Family Law and Policy”) whereas others have come-and-gone, or been sub-subsumed into other streams (such as “Charity Law”).
- **Convenorship of streams has remained fairly static:** Although there is churn across the streams on offer, changes to stream convenorship do not happen regularly – stream convenors tend to occupy the role for a number of years (with some convening streams for over a decade, or in a minority of cases, two decades).

Figure One: Excerpts from SLSA Newsletters in 2003 and 2005, advertising the SLSA conference



# Annual Conference 2003

at Nottingham Law School, The Nottingham Trent University


Conference streams include: **14 - 16 April 2003**

Access to Justice  
Children and the Law  
Criminal Justice  
Civil Justice  
Environmental Law and Society  
Ethics  
European and International Issues  
Family Law and Policy  
Gender  
Housing  
Human Rights  
Information Law and Cyberspace  
Labour Law  
Law History  
Law and Social Theory  
Law and Literature  
Legal Education  
Medicine and Social Care  
Methodology  
Regulation  
Social Security Law and Policy


**PLUS** dedicated postgraduate stream, workshops, a full social programme. All accommodation is within easy walking distance of the conference site.

**For further information about student bursaries please e-mail: [mary.seneviratne@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:mary.seneviratne@ntu.ac.uk) before 1 February 2003**

**Deadline** for proposals for conference streams and conference papers: **31 January 2003**



For further information about the conference please visit our website: [www.nls.ntu.ac.uk/slsa2003/](http://www.nls.ntu.ac.uk/slsa2003/)



## SLSA liverpool 2005

### CONFERENCE STREAMS

The following streams are running at Liverpool 2005. For more details, log on to the conference website. The closing date for 300-word abstracts is 15 December 2004 and they should be submitted online.

www.liv.ac.uk/slsa2004.htm

**Access to justice** will feature papers on all aspects of the field, eg: international dimensions; salaried legal aid services; assessing legal need; lawyers and legal markets; the courts and litigation; tribunals, ombudsmen and dispute resolution. Richard Moorhead e [moorhead@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:moorhead@cardiff.ac.uk) t 029 2087 5098

**Administrative law** It is hoped that this stream will include speakers presenting empirical research or providing theoretical or comparative overviews. Papers providing new insights into established topics and papers covering non-UK jurisdictions will also feature. Robert Thomas e [robert.thomas@man.ac.uk](mailto:robert.thomas@man.ac.uk)

**Charity law** Papers will investigate all aspects of how the law affects charities, in particular: the role of regulation, the impact of the changes to the Charities Bill, the impact of policy and the impact of legislation and case law on policy and practice. Warren Barr e [wbarr@liv.ac.uk](mailto:wbarr@liv.ac.uk) t 0151 794 3094

**Children and the law** Themes will be as follows: excluded children; youth justice and the impact of recent legislation; children's services – the treatment of children; children's services, law and policy; the role of children in shaping law and policy. Clare Dickinson e [clared@liv.ac.uk](mailto:clared@liv.ac.uk) t 0151 794 3819

**Corporate governance – After the codes** The theme of the stream will be an assessment from a variety of perspectives of the extent to which codes of corporate governance have remedied the problems they were intended to resolve. Iain MacNeil e [i.macneil@law.gla.ac.uk](mailto:i.macneil@law.gla.ac.uk) f 0141 330 4900

**Criminal justice** Papers will cover any aspects of criminal justice, theoretical or empirical, UK-oriented or international. It is also hoped that there will be thematic panels on criminal justice topics. George Mair e [g.mair@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:g.mair@livjm.ac.uk) t 0151 231 3942

**Education law and policy** will provide an opportunity to: reflect on the rapid growth and categorisation of education law; highlight some of the common tensions and political and social pressures underlying its many different aspects; explore changing roles; and reveal the uses and limits of rights. Ann Blair e [e.a.blair@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:e.a.blair@leeds.ac.uk) Daniel Monk e [d.monk@bkk.ac.uk](mailto:d.monk@bkk.ac.uk)

**Equality law: Equality law and practice – delivering the goods** Papers in this stream will examine the evolution of equality law in the UK over the last decade addressing questions about the ability of legal reform to deliver social change. Fiona Beveridge e [f.c.beveridge@liv.ac.uk](mailto:f.c.beveridge@liv.ac.uk) t 0151 794 2809

**European law: European Union issues** The current dramatic chapter in the story of European integration presents fruitful opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and learning. General papers will be featured and also thematic sessions. Michael Dougan e [m.dougan@liv.ac.uk](mailto:m.dougan@liv.ac.uk) t 0151 794 2805.

**Family law and policy** Papers on all aspects of family law and policy will feature, in addition to papers that adopt a comparative, European or international perspective. Anne Barlow e [a.e.barlow@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:a.e.barlow@exeter.ac.uk) and Rebecca Probert e [Rebecca.Probert@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Rebecca.Probert@warwick.ac.uk)

**Gender, sexuality and the law** will feature law and law-related papers on all aspects of the relationships between gender, sexuality and the law eg: discussions of how gender and sexuality are constructed by the law and law's respect for and accommodation of difference in these areas. Helen Baker e [hebaker@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:hebaker@liverpool.ac.uk) t 0151 794 2825

**Health law** Due to the wide range of possible topics, the stream is not limited to a particular over-arching theme and papers dealing with any aspect of health law will be presented especially those dealing with topical areas. Sam Halliday e [halliday@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:halliday@liverpool.ac.uk) t 0151 7942882

**Housing law** Papers will investigate all aspects of housing law and its interaction with policy and practice. In particular, the role of regulation; the interaction of housing and crime; methods of dispute resolution; the impact of legislation and case law on policy and practice; the nature and content of housing rights. Sarah Blandy e [s.blandy@shu.ac.uk](mailto:s.blandy@shu.ac.uk) t 0114 225 4004 Caroline Hunter e [c.m.hunter@shu.ac.uk](mailto:c.m.hunter@shu.ac.uk) t 0114 225 3516

**Information law** Recent decades have seen a phenomenal expansion in the extent and nature of the use of information technology and its impact upon our lives, with a corresponding expansion of all facets of the law in this field. This stream will feature papers within this area as very broadly defined. Mark O'Brien e [m.r.obrien@shu.ac.uk](mailto:m.r.obrien@shu.ac.uk) t 0114 225 5749 Chris Ashford e [chris.ashford@sunderland.ac.uk](mailto:chris.ashford@sunderland.ac.uk) t 0191 515 2312

**Legal education** Papers on all aspects of legal education will be presented, both university legal education and professional training courses. Past speakers have addressed pedagogical developments and matters of theory and policy. The stream also hopes to cover legal education in non-UK jurisdictions and empirical investigations of aspects of legal education or law schools. Fiona Cownie e [f.cownie@hull.ac.uk](mailto:f.cownie@hull.ac.uk) t 0151 466 345

**Legal history** Legal history is a broad church. In the UK, it covers 2000 years, from the Roman Empire to last week, and every conceivable legal topic broadly defined. It also embraces the legal history of the rest of the world. It is hoped speakers will include those researching in the areas of gender, colonialism, identities and literature as well as other aspects of law in the past. Lorie Charlesworth e [l.r.charlesworth@livjm.ac.uk](mailto:l.r.charlesworth@livjm.ac.uk)

**Legal profession and ethics** The future of legal professionalism is in a state of considerable flux. This stream locates the changing fortunes of the legal profession in the organisation, regulation and operation of lawyers, in the UK and abroad, in theory and in practice. Andy Boon e [boon@wmin.ac.uk](mailto:boon@wmin.ac.uk) John Flood e [floodj@wmin.ac.uk](mailto:floodj@wmin.ac.uk) Julian Webb e [webbj@wmin.ac.uk](mailto:webbj@wmin.ac.uk) t 0207 911 5000

**Miscarriages of justice** will present work including theoretical attempts to explain error in the criminal process, cause(s) of miscarriages of justice; the role of the media; consequences for victims; compensation schemes; the Court of Appeal and CCRC; and the erosion of legal safeguards for suspects. Michael Naughton e [m.naughton@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:m.naughton@bristol.ac.uk) Carole McCartney e [ctmccartney@aol.com](mailto:ctmccartney@aol.com)

**Multiculturalism** Some of the most socially divisive contemporary debates are on cultural identity or diversity. To a greater or lesser degree, all states and communities face practical challenges that have to be resolved on a daily basis. This stream examines how multiculturalism has impacted on different legal jurisdictions and in different social and political spaces. Dominic McGoldrick e [dmcg@liv.ac.uk](mailto:dmcg@liv.ac.uk)

**Postgraduate stream** A postgraduate stream will be running. There is no set theme for this year. It is open to all postgraduate students conducting research into an area of relevance to the conference. Rob Stokes e [r.a.stokes@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.stokes@liverpool.ac.uk)

**Socio-legal methodology stream** covers the methodological issues arising out of attempts to study law, legal institutions and legal behaviour, eg: quantitative and qualitative methods; discourse analysis; fieldwork; feminist methods; comparative methods; and epistemological issues of socio-legal research. Reza Banakar e [r.banakar@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:r.banakar@westminster.ac.uk)



### iii. Governance of streams and current topics:

The SLSA does not have a formal policy or set of established procedures on streams and current topics – this is normally handled by the conference organising team on a year-to-year basis.

However, the review in 2016-17 (as outlined above) led to some procedures and basic principles. These were detailed in the SLSA newsletter in June of 2017 as follows – this is reproduced in Figure Two.

The current approach is therefore that:

1. Stream convenors are asked if they wish to “roll over” their stream each year by the conference organisers.
2. A stream must have at least two convenors.
3. Ahead of each conference there is a call for “current topics” – any current topic can apply for recognition as a stream (but it is unclear who they apply to do so).
4. Prospective conference delegates can propose panels that do not fall within streams or themes by contacting the conference organisers.
5. There is no cap on the number of streams, but overlaps should be avoided and there should be a mix of “subject area” and “cross-cutting”.

### iv. Life Beyond the Conference:

A key priority of the SLSA Executive Committee (and now the SLSA Board) has been encouraging streams to have a “life beyond” the annual conference. For instance, this ambition is set out in a 2015 newsletter when the SLSA launched the “stream” area of the website:

*The success of the streams and themes format means that some convenors are keen to give their streams and themes a life beyond the Annual Conference. The newsletter is delighted to give space for this to happen and now there is also a dedicated area of the website available for convenors' use.*

**Socio-legal Newsletter - No 76 • Summer - 2015**

Figure Two Excerpt from the SLSA Newsletter – June

1. Current stream and theme convenors will be invited to re-apply over the summer for recognition as a stream and members may also apply to establish new streams. If members would like to be involved in convening an existing stream, they are encouraged to approach the current convenor to discuss that possibility. A stream must have at least two custodians (two convenors or a convenor and deputy-convenor) and an articulated rationale as to why it is likely to be of ongoing interest to conference attendees. Streams may cover a single topic area (e.g. 'EU law') or may be cross-cutting (e.g. 'Exploring legal borderlands'); their subjects may be substantive, methodological (e.g. 'Research methodologies and methods') or theoretical (e.g. 'Systems theory thinking'). Decisions on the recognition of streams will take account of the need to avoid overlaps with other streams and to maintain a mix of subject area and cross-cutting streams.
2. There will be a call for themes ahead of each annual conference. Themes must conform to the definition above and will be specific to a single conference. Any theme wishing to continue beyond a single conference will need to apply for recognition as a stream and meet the criteria for a stream in point 1 above.
3. There will also be the possibility for people to propose panels that do not fit within either a stream or a theme. We hope members, conference attendees and convenors will find this revised arrangement clearer, more comprehensible and conducive to interesting and lively conference discussions.

More recently, the SLSA has launched an impact fund for which stream and current topic conveners are eligible.

### **Why do we need a new approach?**

Although the current, more informal approach to stream and current topic convenorship has served the SLSA well over time, there are a number of factors that have led to this review.

#### **i. Growth in the number of streams over time:**

The number of parallel subject sections at the SLSA conference has increased dramatically as the size of the conference (and the socio-legal studies research community) has grown. By way of illustration, when York hosted the conference in 2013, there were a total of 21 streams and 5 “themes” (as “current topics” were known then). At the 2022 conference there were a total of 31 streams and 10 “current topics”.

This expansion is to be expected as the SLSA grows. However, more streams to manage also means more administrative work associated with churn, liaising with convenors, and managing paper submissions/review.

#### **ii. No established mechanism for replacing stream convenorship:**

Where stream convenors step down or are not contactable by the conference organisers, there is no established mechanism for appointing new convenors. Generally, this is a process that has been managed informally either by the existing stream convenor(s), or by the conference organisers themselves.

#### **iii. No established mechanism for suggesting new “streams”, evolving “current topics” to a permanent “stream”, or retiring streams:**

For at least one previous conference (Lancaster 2016), “current topic” convenors have been invited to apply to “evolve” their “current topic” to a stream, but this has not been a widespread practice. For most SLSA conferences, there is no established mechanism for suggesting a new stream, asking to evolve a “current topic” into a stream, or retiring a stream (because, for instance, it is not attracting enough interest to fill sessions). Historically, this has been managed in an ad-hoc way by the conference organisers.

#### **iv. Burden on conference organisers:**

As the conference organising team changes each year, there is a substantial replication annually in identifying the stream convenors and keeping track of changes for future conference organisers. Problems emerge around the time of the call for papers and associated deadlines,

meaning that organisers often have to find replacement convenors/manage streams themselves. In addition to the considerable task of organising the conference (!), the current approach places a considerable burden and discretion on conference organisers on the management of streams and “current topics”.

**v. Mixed engagement from stream convenors:**

Some stream convenors are more communicative than others. It may be that different levels of engagement may reflect a lack of shared understanding over what the role entails.

**vi. Stream and current topic convenor status is now associated with access to SLSA funds:**

Now that the stream and “current topic” convenor impact funds have been launched, formalising the recruitment, churn and status of stream convenors is likely to become more important as it is a condition of eligibility to apply for these SLSA funds.

## What could a new approach look like?

In order to respond to some of the difficulties and changing context for stream and “current topics” outlined above, we make two recommendations.

### 1. To have an SLSA policy on streams and “current topics”:

In order to formalise the approach to streams and “current topics”, the SLSA should have a clear policy. This should cover:

- Processes for managing churn in stream convenors.
- How SLSA members can apply to establish new streams and “current topics”.
- Expectations of stream and “current topic” convenors.
- Triggers and processes for retiring a stream.
- EDI and widening participation issues across streams and “current topics”.

This policy should be published on the SLSA website and publicized through the Newsletter.

### 2. Creation of a new Stream Secretary role:

In order to help avoid duplication of work year-to-year, decrease the burden on conference organisers and help standardise approaches to streams and “current topics” over time, a new role for a “Stream Secretary” should be created on the SLSA Board of Trustees. This role should include:

- Maintaining a record of current SLSA streams and “current topics” and their convenors.
- Working with the Conference Organisers to liaise with the stream and current topic convenors.
- In co-ordination with the Conference Organisers, inviting applications for “current topics” ahead of the annual conference each year.
- Managing the process for replacement Stream Convenors and applications for new streams.
- Ensuring that the stream and stream convenor information on the SLSA website is up-to-date.
- Reviewing the operation of streams and “current topics”, in coordination with the organisers, as part of post-conference reporting to the SLSA Board.



## An SLSA Stream and Current Topic Convenor Policy

The policy below was approved by the SLSA Board on 24th February 2023. It is in seven sections:

1. **The role of the Stream Secretary:** An overview of the new proposed role on the SLSA Board.
2. **Appointment of Stream Convenors:** The triggers and process for appointing new convenors for streams.
3. **“Current topics” and the annual conference:** How current topics are advertised and chosen.
4. **Applications for new streams in:** How applications for new streams are sought and decided.
5. **Retiring streams:** The circumstances in which streams will be retired.
6. **The role of Stream Convenors:** Expectations of those running streams.
7. **The role of “Current Topic” Convenors:** Expectations of those running “current topics”

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### i. The role of the Stream Secretary

1. The SLSA Board is responsible for appointing a “stream secretary”.
2. A “stream secretary” will ordinarily serve for a term of three years – but this period can be extended at the discretion of the SLSA Board. The expectation is that stream convenors will serve a maximum of two, three year, terms.
3. The role of the SLSA stream convenor is to:
  - A. Maintain a record of current (and where possible, past) SLSA streams and current topics.
  - B. Maintain a record of current stream and “current topic” convenors, including their contact details and length of service.
  - C. Liaise with Stream Convenors ahead of the annual conference each year (as covered in (iii) below).
  - D. In co-ordination with the Conference Organisers, invite applications for “current topics” ahead of the annual conference each year (as covered in (iv) below).
  - E. In co-ordination with the Conference Organisers, manage the process for replacement Stream Convenors (covered at ii below) and applications for new streams (covered at vi below).
  - F. Ensure that the stream and stream convenor information on the SLSA website is up-to-date.

- G. To provide guidance to stream and “current topic” convenors on their role and to encourage best practice.
- H. To conduct an annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion review of the operation and convenorship of streams and “current topics”, with a view to advancing the SLSA’s EDI strategy, highlighting best practice, and identifying areas for improvement.

## **ii. Appointment of Stream Convenors**

1. The appointment of stream convenors is at the discretion of the SLSA Board.
2. Decisions to appoint convenors should be consistent with the SLSA’s EDI policies and values, and with a view to encouraging the participation of Early Career researchers in stream convenorship.
3. A standard term of a convenor of a stream is three years – this term can be extended at the discretion of the SLSA Board. The expectation is that stream convenors will serve a maximum of two, three year, terms.
4. In July of each year, the Stream Secretary will contact stream convenors who are approaching the end of their term to ask if they intend to continue as stream convenor for the conference of the following year. Convenors who are not nearing the end of their term, and who are unwilling or unable to continue, should make contact with the Stream Secretary.
4. In the following circumstances, a new stream convenor(s) should be appointed:
  - A. When Stream convenor(s) step down, either:
    - Leaving a stream with fewer than two convenors, or;
    - Where the current stream convenors wish to appoint a replacement stream convenor.
  - B. Where the Streams Secretary and/or the conference organisers do not receive any response from all convenors of a particular stream over a sustained period of time, despite their best efforts to make contact. Where this leads the Streams Secretary to conclude that the stream may not be able to run at the conference, the appointment process can be triggered.
5. The appointment process for new Stream Convenors is as follows:
  - A. Vacant Stream Convenor posts will be advertised via the SLSA e-bulletin.
  - B. Candidates apply via a cover letter and CV to the Stream Secretary.
  - C. Candidates must be members of the SLSA.
  - D. The decision on the appoint is taken by a sub-committee of:
    - The Stream Secretary.
    - The organisers of the preceding SLSA annual conference.
    - The outgoing SLSA convenor(s) of the stream and any current convenor(s) (where they exist).

## **iii. “Current topics” and the annual conference**

## Updated March 2023

1. In September each year, the Stream Secretary will issue a “call for current topic proposals” for the next Annual Conference.
2. “Current topics” should:
  - a. Reflects a current topic of debate or an issue of emerging importance in socio-legal studies.
  - b. Be expected to attract at least six papers.
3. Ordinarily, there would be up to seven “Current Topics” proposals accepted for a conference.
4. Decisions about the “Current Topics” proposals will be taken by:
  - a. The Streams Secretary.
  - b. The Conference Organisers.

### **iv. Applications for new streams**

1. SLSA members may propose the introduction of new streams at any time by contacting the Stream Secretary (i.e. there is no annual call for new streams and no timetable or application window).
2. New streams must only be introduced where:
  - a. There is an articulated rationale as to why it is likely to be of ongoing interest to conference attendees.
  - b. There is no clear overlap with another existing stream.
  - c. The stream proposal identifies at least two stream convenors for the new stream.
3. Applications for new streams will be considered by a sub-committee of:
  - a. The Stream Secretary.
  - b. The Chair of the SLSA.
  - c. The organisers of the next SLSA annual conference.

### **v. Retiring streams**

1. Streams may be “retired” (i.e. removed from the call for papers indefinitely) where:
  - a. All of the convenors step down (or are uncontactable) and the SLSA Board is unable to appoint any suitable replacement convenors.
  - b. Where a stream receives fewer than 3 submissions following the call for papers for two annual conferences in a row. In such circumstances, this should not lead to the automatic retiring of the stream, but instead a discussion between the Stream Secretary and the current stream convenors to allow review of the future viability and relevance of the stream.
  - c. Where a stream seeks to “merge” with another stream. Applications for this would be dealt with under the same process as applications for new streams under (iv) above.

## **vi. The Role of Stream Convenors**

1. The role of a stream convenor is to:
  - a. Advertise the call for papers for the annual conference to their networks.
  - b. Review, take decisions, and communicate with corresponding paper submitters to their stream for the annual conference within the timescale required by the Conference Organisers.
  - c. Organise papers for their stream into sessions/panels for the Annual Conference within the timescale required by the Conference Organisers.
  - d. Organise and facilitate chairing of sessions/panels in their stream for the annual conference.
  - e. Respond to queries from the Conference Organisers and the Subject Secretary in a reasonable period of time.
  - f. To be available for the three days of the annual conference, or – if they unable to attend – to facilitate the chairing and organisation of sessions in their absence so that streams can run across multiple days.
  - g. Advance the SLSA’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy.

## **vii. The Role of Current Topic Convenors**

1. The role of a “current topic” convenor is to:
  - a. Advertise the call for papers for the annual conference to their networks.
  - b. Review, take decisions, and communicate with corresponding paper submitters to their “current topic” for the annual conference within the timescale required by the Conference Organisers.
  - c. Organise papers for their “current topic” into sessions/panels for the Annual Conference within the timescale required by the Conference Organisers.
  - d. Organise and facilitate chairing of sessions/panels in their “current topic” for the annual conference.
  - e. Respond to queries from the Conference Organisers and the Subject Secretary in a reasonable period of time.
  - f. To be available for the three days of the annual conference and to facilitate the chairing and organisation of sessions in their absence so that “current topics” can run across multiple days.

## APPENDIX A

### Society of Legal Scholars Section Guidelines

#### Objects

The objects of sections are:

- to promote the development of the subject
- to stimulate discussion of reform proposals (in particular, those emanating from the Law Commissions) and to formulate responses on behalf of the Society
- to communicate with the Society's wider membership by centrally-maintained emailing lists
- to organise meetings of the section's wider membership at least once a year
- to encourage publication

Certain sections may be regarded as having more limited objects.

#### Membership

- Members of the Society may join the mailing list of a particular section by completing the online form found here – <https://sls.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/society-of-legal-scholars-subject-sections>. This form can also be used by members to update their subject section preferences.
- Non-members may request that they be added to the emailing list of a particular section; the decision whether this should be done is in the sole discretion of the person maintaining the list.

#### Convenors and deputies

##### 1. Appointment of convenors

- Convenors are appointed by the Executive. The standard term is three years, and can be extended or renewed. The term of office commences on 1 October.
- Each year in July, the Subject Sections Secretary will notify the membership of those convenors whose terms of office end in September and their Section. Any convenor who wishes to step down before the end of their term should notify the Subject Sections Secretary by the end of June so that their name can be included on this list. Copy of the call is here: <https://mailchi.mp/legalscholars/call-for-nominations-for-convenorships-of-sls-subject-sections>. The Subject Sections Secretary then

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sends individual calls to each of the Subject Sections needing to elect a new convenor. Copy of this call is here: <https://mailchi.mp/legalscholars/banking-finance-subject-section-convenor-call-for-nominations>. The outgoing convenor may invite someone to put their name forward for nomination. Nominations are asked to be submitted by the first Monday in August.

- During August, the Subject Sections Secretary will liaise with outgoing convenors about any necessary elections or, if there are no nominees, about continuing in the role or identifying a potential successor.
- At least two weeks before the start of the Annual Conference, the Subject Sections Secretary will e-mail members of the section to inform them of the names of the person or persons (if any) who have put themselves forward for nomination.
- Where it is established by the end of July that a number of persons wish to offer themselves for selection, an election to identify a nominee must be held by the section at the Conference.
- Where no person comes forward for nomination, the Subject Sections Secretary will be responsible for identifying a suitable person, after consulting the outgoing convenor and such other members of the Society as he or she thinks appropriate and forwarding that name to the Executive for approval. (It is not practicable to organize elections outside the Conference).
- Outgoing convenors may seek the advice of the Subject Sections Secretary as to the operation of this process, and the process can be varied to take account of exceptional circumstances with the prior agreement of the Subject Sections Secretary.

### 2. Criteria

Where the Subject Sections Secretary is required to propose to the Executive a suitable person as convenor, it is relevant to consider the record of contributions to the Section, for example by acting as Deputy Convenor, by chairing Conference sessions, by responding to Consultation Papers, by giving papers, and by attendance at Conference. The criteria for Executive Committee membership in the Directory might also be considered so far as they are relevant.

### 3. Elections

- Where Convenorships are contested, an election will be held during the subject section meeting at the conference. The current convenor should explain who has nominated the nominee(s) (though they may self-nominate) and should either read out the nominee's statement or ask the nominee to do so. The Convenor should ask the nominees to leave the room while the vote is taken. A majority in favour of the nominee means they become the new convenor.

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- Where a nominee is unopposed, the nomination must be put to the membership of the section at the conference for approval. The convenor need not ask the nominee to leave the meeting while a vote is taken. Vote by means of a show of hands by those there present must take place to approve the nomination. A majority in favour of the nominee means they become the new convenor. If a majority vote is not reached the outgoing convenor may seek the advice of the Subject Sections Secretary.
- If members of the Section are attending the conference both virtually and in-person and an election is required, the Subject Sections Secretary will arrange for an electronic vote to take place. The results of which will be reported to the Section members electronically by the close of the conference.
- Once nominations have been approved by the Section at the conference, they will be presented by the Subject Sections Secretary to the Executive Committee at the annual November Committee meeting for final approval.

4. Convenors and deputies must be fully-paid-up members of the Society at the time of their nomination and throughout their term of service.

5. Overseas members of the Society are eligible to stand as Convenors, but only as part of a team so that the Society has at least one team member at a UK or Irish Institution.

6. Convenors are expected to register for the Annual Conference and to pay the relevant registration fee. Save in exceptional circumstances (to be determined by the Treasurer, Honorary Secretary and Subject Section Secretary), the Society does not provide financial assistance to convenors for their attendance at the Annual Conference.

7. Convenors should normally attend the Annual Conference in person. If they are unable to do so, they must arrange for a subject section member to attend each subject section session on their behalf.

### **8. Open Section**

The Executive Committee will appoint the convenor of the Open section. The standard term is three years, and can be extended or renewed.

### **9. Co-convenors/deputies**

A section can appoint co-convenors/deputies, either generally or for specific functions. Where an elected Convenor requires support in the performance of their role, for example during periods of parental leave, illness, or compassionate leave, a section can request that the Executive appoint a co-convenor to act alongside them.

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Any such co-option would not last longer than the original convenor's term. The standard term is three years. In the first instance, a co-convenor/deputy should be appointed from those who were nominated or nominated themselves for the initial election. Where this is not possible, a co-convenor/deputy can be nominated to the Executive by the section convenor. What is said above about openness and criteria applies.

## **10. Qualification of convenors/deputies**

It is necessary to check that candidates are members, confirmed as such by the Treasurer.

In accepting a nomination, or nominating themselves, nominees are taken to have the necessary IT and administrative skills to respond promptly to emails and to use Mailchimp, Dropbox, Googledocs, or other IT tools as required.

## **11. Notifying Heads of School and/or appropriate financial lead**

Prior to being nominated or self-nominating, members should discuss the role and its implications with the relevant financial lead within their department. Convenors are expected to book and pay for the conference, and associated expenses.

*Revised Version 2021, approved by the SLS Executive January 2022*

## **Functions of convenors**

- The convenor should arrange for a meeting of the section at the Society's annual conference, and may arrange other meetings as appropriate. The SLS rules require each subject section to meet at the Annual Conference. This may be immediately after one of the subject sessions or at some other convenient time. The convenor should notify the membership of the section of the timing of the meeting via Mailchimp in advance. Where practicable, members who wish to attend by email should be permitted to do so. Where a conference has a virtual element, the subject section meeting should therefore be held at the end of a session to which virtual delegates have live access. Meetings should cover the following, as a minimum: Review of subject section activities over the past year (including the Annual Conference); Plans for the subject section for the coming year, including EDI Action Plan; and Approval of new convenor(s) (if applicable).
- Convenors should report annually to the Executive on the activities of their section.
- The membership of the Society should be kept informed of the work of the sections through the SLS Reporter, the website and centrally-maintained email distribution lists.

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- Convenors may arrange for the deputy convenors to undertake specific parts of the work of the section, for example as Conference Convenor or Treasurer or to co-ordinate responses to consultation papers.

### **Finance**

- Sections are primarily self-financing. The convenor is responsible for organising section finances in a manner directed by the Honorary Treasurer and for pursuing avenues of potential support outside the Society. Members attending meetings (including speakers) should seek financial support from their own institutions.
- The Society may annually make limited funds available for section activities, currently a total of £20,000. These funds may be utilised by convenors in accordance with rules agreed from time to time by the Executive and in accordance with the directions of the Honorary Treasurer.
- Organisers of some annual conferences may sometimes have special funds available to them for section purposes, in which case the conference organiser will circulate details to convenors.
- In exceptional circumstances, special applications for additional financial support may be made to the Subject Sections Secretary for submission to the Executive. The maximum amount that may normally be awarded in relation to a particular project, event or activity is £3000.

### **Rules for section funds**

Funds can be used to organise meetings or support activities of the subject sections, including: to promote the development of the subject and to stimulate discussion of reform proposals (in particular, those emanating from the Law Commissions) and to formulate responses on behalf of the Society.

Applications for an award from the fund may be made by subject convenors on a rolling basis. Please go to the Subject Sections Fund page on the website here <https://www.legalscholars.ac.uk/subject-sections-fund/> to find out how to apply to the fund.

### **Rules for the use of the SLS logo**

We ask convenors to request permission to use SLS logo for an event – permission to be sought by email to [sss@legalscholars.ac.uk](mailto:sss@legalscholars.ac.uk), with a brief explanation of how the event will benefit members of the section. Applications will be considered by the Subject Sections Secretary, Honorary Secretary and President.

### **Law reform**

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- The convenor of each section should ensure that the section considers and responds to matters referred to it by Council as well as Law Commission Consultation Papers and similar items.
- The Subject Sections Secretary will represent convenors and their sections at the annual meeting between the Society and the Law Commission.
- Where relevant, convenors are invited to maintain contact with individual Law Commissioners and their teams.

### Monitoring

- Council appoints (for renewable periods of three years) a Subject Sections Secretary.
- The Sections Secretary should report annually to Council on the activities of the sections.
- Council will annually review the existence, activities and membership of sections and will as part of that review consider whether the number of sections should be increased or decreased.
- Where a Section fails to fill its programme at the Conference for two years running, (or twice in a three year period), it should be considered for suspension or merger.
- Where a Section has attendance of below an average of ten people for its programme at the conference for two years running, (or twice in a three year period), it should be considered for suspension or merger.
- Merger could either be with another section, or by expanding the programme of the section to include other new fields.
- This procedure should be added to the Section Guidelines. The first set of data should be from the 2018 Conference.

### New sections

Proposals for new sections should be discussed with the Subject Sections Secretary: any proposed section would first have to organise a thematic session as part of the Open programme at the conference.

*These guidelines were revised by the Executive in November 2019 (with the endorsement of Council). Addendums to these guidelines were agreed by the Executive in November 2021 and updated in January 2022.*