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WIHEA LEARNING CIRCLE STURCTURES & LEADS RESPONSIBILITIES

WIHEA Learning Circles

The intention of Learning Circles is to help WIHEA Fellows, and wider community develop expertise in an area that either explores new opportunities or tackles current challenges faced by Warwick and/or other higher education institutions across the world. Learning Circles are expected to support one or more areas of the Education and Student Experience Strategy. Through discussion within these circles and sharing this with the WIHEA community, we can then disseminate examples and methods for best practice with the wider international network of academics.

Proposing a New Learning Circle

Any current WIHEA Fellow (staff or student) can propose a new Learning Circle. Before proposing, please check the Learning Circle web pages to see whether an existing Circle already covers your area. If it does, joining or collaborating with that Circle may be a better route. The WIHEA team is happy to talk through ideas informally at WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk.

Submitting a proposal

Proposals are made by completing the Learning Circle Proposal Form [link]. The form asks you to describe the challenge, opportunity or question the Circle will address, its links to the Education and Student Experience Strategy, its intended impact, the proposed duration and membership structure, and any relevant existing work. You can also name any Fellows interested in co-leading.

How proposals are considered

Proposals are reviewed by Director of WIHEA but will also involve relevant senior leadership where/if appropriate. A proposal may be approved, approved subject to changes, or not approved at this time, in which case feedback will be given. Occasionally you may be encouraged to work with an existing Learning Circle instead.

After approval

Once a proposal is approved, the Lead(s) must:

- secure a senior sponsor (see below)
- recruit initial members in line with the approved membership structure (see Learning Circle Structures)
- develop the Terms of Reference with members and submit it to WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk for approval

The WIHEA team will then help you set up your Learning Circle. Please see the Guidance & Tips for WIHEA Learning Circle & Network Leads for details on web pages, communicating with members, recruiting and arranging meetings.

Senior Sponsorship

Every Learning Circle must have a senior sponsor, named in its Terms of Reference. A sponsor should

be a senior member of staff, for example a Head of Department, Director of Education, Pro-Vice-Chancellor or the chair of a relevant committee with responsibility for, or influence over, the Circle's area of work.

The sponsor's role is to:

- champion the Circle's work and help it gain visibility
- advise on the institutional context and relevant links
- help direct the Circle's recommendations and outputs to the right committees and decision-makers
- receive updates on progress [at least once a year]

Sponsors are not expected to attend Circle meetings. Lead(s) are responsible for approaching a sponsor, and the WIHEA team can advise who might be suitable.

Learning Circle Structures

Ideally, Learning Circles should always be led by Fellows or with approval from the WIHEA Director may for short periods especially during handover of leadership, be co-led by Fellow(s) and Alumni. Where a Lead is nearing the end of their Fellowship, they should identify a current Fellow(s) to take over leadership. On becoming an Alumni, any request to co-lead alongside the new current Fellow for a fixed period of time to hand over, should be submitted to WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk .
There are two main types of Learning Circle, '**Standard**' or '**Open**'.

- The membership of a **standard** Learning Circle is Staff and Student Fellows and Alumni only. However, there are two enhancement options for standard Learning Circles that give flexibility to bring in specific expertise or opinions from the wider community at various points. These are described in the table below.

- An **open** Learning Circle is where in addition to Staff and Student Fellows and Alumni, members can include staff and students from the wider Warwick community. An open membership is usually only applied when a wider collective input from across the University is to be sought to ensure the focus is University-wide and/or to ensure a strong student voice. Therefore, the membership enhancement options are not relevant for open Learning Circles. All Learning Circle members that are not a WIHEA Fellow, Alumni or current WIHEA Member, will be required to become a WIHEA Member. This will enable them to be kept informed of WIHEA activities and progress on a range of Learning Circles and Projects, so that understanding of WIHEA's strategic aims and links to other similar work in that area can be made more easily.

The two types of Membership enhancement options available for standard Learning Circles are described below. Only one option can be requested. Learning Circles will not be able to request both enhancement options. To change the membership structure of a Learning Circle, approval by the WIHEA Director will be required. Please submit any such request for consideration if there is a case to do so to **WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk**. No changes should be made to the Learning Circle until they have been approved.

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Enhancement Type	Critical Friends Group Membership	Short-term Membership
Description	Critical Friends Group members are separated to the main Learning Circle members. The group would mainly meet outside of the main Learning Circle meetings.	Short-term members attend and contribute to all Learning Circle meetings alongside its full members for a specific period.
Benefits	The Critical Friends Group should be invited to join the main Learning Circle members at various points in the year to contribute, provide feedback and/or expert advice/share lived experience, insights etc. on key topics. The main Learning Circle members (Fellows/Alumni) would continue to also meet separately alongside this. This model may particularly support Student engagement by increasing the Student Voice.	Where there may be a specific gap of knowledge/experience in the WIHEA community, a short-term member provides much needed expertise or contribution to help the Learning Circle achieve specific aims within a set timeframe.
Membership Duration	Membership can remain for the duration of the Learning Circle being active.	Membership should be for a realistic, fixed period to achieve a set task or set of specific tasks.
Restriction on number of members	No restriction on the number of members in this group. Decision made by lead(s).	Learning Circles can have up to a max of 4 Short-term Members at any one time.
Can Staff & Students of Warwick be members?	Yes	Upon approval by the WIHEA Director
Can Staff & Students of other HEI's be members?	Approval by the WIHEA Director required.	Approval by the WIHEA Director required.
Can other/External Experts be members?	Approval by the WIHEA Director required.	Approval by the WIHEA Director required.
Membership Recruitment Process	Lead(s) can directly recruit internal members but those that are not WIHEA Fellows or Alumni must become a WIHEA Member before joining the Learning Circle. Leads must keep WIHEA informed of the names of all members recruited to the CFG and the main Learning Circle.	The details of the individual, including specific contribution, tasks and expertise should be outlined in a request to the WIHEA Director. They will also be required to become a WIHEA Member before joining the Learning Circle.
Important Note:	All Learning Circle members that are not a WIHEA Fellow, Alumni or current WIHEA Member, will be required to become a WIHEA Member. This will enable them to be kept informed of WIHEA activities and progress on a range of Learning Circles and Projects, so that understanding of WIHEA's strategic aims and links to other similar work in that area can be made more easily. Leads are to provide the link to the **Membership Request Form** and inform WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk	

Learning Circle Membership
As the challenges and topics that Learning Circles focus on are diverse, the structure and size of each Learning Circle will vary, as will attendance and engagement levels of its members. Once the structure has been agreed with the WIHEA Director, it is the leads responsibility to decide the manageable number of members and review/decide whether to approve any membership request. Therefore, all requests to join/become a member of a Learning Circle will be directed to the lead(s).

Learning Circle Duration
Learning Circles are set up for a defined period, agreed at the start, so that their work stays focused and their outcomes are achievable. There are three durations:

- **Task & Finish (up to 1 academic year):** for a clearly defined, specific piece of work, such as producing guidance or a set of recommendations.
- **Standard (1–2 academic years):** suitable for most Learning Circles.
- **Extended (2+ academic years):** for more complex areas or those aiming at longer-term institutional change. A clear rationale for the longer duration should be given in the proposal.

The duration is proposed on the Proposal Form, confirmed in the Terms of Reference and approved by the WIHEA Director. Whatever the duration, the Terms of Reference must still be reviewed and approved each academic year.

If a Learning Circle needs more time, or is ready to finish early, Lead(s) should email WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk with a summary of progress and the reasons for the change. Any change in duration must be approved by the WIHEA Director.

For what happens at the end of a Learning Circle, please see “Concluding a Learning Circle” in the Guidance & Tips for WIHEA Learning Circle & Network Leads.

Leads Responsibilities:

All Leads are responsible for ensuring:

1. The membership and agreed structure of the Learning Circle is maintained and that any new membership is manageable and fits within the requirements for the structure.
2. All Learning Circles should have Student representation, which must be in line with the membership requirements for its structure.
3. Any member requests from staff or students that are not a WIHEA Fellow, Alumni or current WIHEA Member, will be required to become a WIHEA Member before they join the Learning Circle. Leads are to provide them with the link to the Membership Request Form
4. Leads are required to always keep the WIHEA team updated on all new or leaving members, so that they have an accurate record of all membership.

5. Both standard and open Learning Circles may request to have external members if there is a case for doing so. Requests will be considered on an individual basis by the WIHEA Director, and they should not be recruited until the request has been approved.

6. All Learning Circles must have an approved Terms of Reference, reviewed and resubmitted each academic year, setting out the challenge or opportunity being addressed, the main aim, the agreed goals, the intended outcomes and the agreed duration. Any Learning Circle without an approved, up-to-date Terms of Reference, or which has been inactive (not meeting or making progress), will be temporarily closed until the WIHEA Director has given approval and it is ready to proceed.

7. As well as planning and organising meetings, all communication with the Learning Circle members about dates/times of each meeting is the responsibility of the Learning Circle lead(s). When finding suitable dates, leads are to check the WIHEA Events calendar to avoid clashes with other Learning Circles/WIHEA events. Once the time and date of meetings have been confirmed, the lead(s) should share this swiftly with the WIHEA Team by emailing WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk .

8. Staff and student members must be clear what their engagement should look like, and Leads should ensure any contributions and/or specific tasks required of them is communicated clearly. Where required, Leads should ensure students are supported to enable them to contribute fully, assigning a student with a staff buddy can sometimes be helpful.

9. All members should be kept informed of progress and current activities after each meeting and enable any members that were not able to attend a meeting to still contribute to ongoing work/activities between meetings. This can be done in a number of ways: via MS Teams; email; creating a padlet; or via the Learning Circles web page (member access only pages can be created for this purpose – please email WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk for more information).

10. A minimum of one Lead from each Learning Circle is expected to attend the termly Learning Circle Leads meetings (it is ideal if all Leads can attend this). This meeting provides an opportunity to share leadership practice, soundboard, receive and give support to each other to address shared challenges. A termly report on the Learning Circles progress should be submitted in writing to the WIHEA Director ideally prior to or during the meeting.

11. Leads are also responsible for regularly keeping the wider WIHEA community informed of progress and current activities. A minimum of one Lead (or nominated representative) is expected to attend all Networking Lunches to share progress and be kept up to date with the progress of other Learning Circles, so that any potential links can be fed back/explored.

12. Additionally, information can be shared via WIHEA's monthly updates. There will also be opportunities to share information/involve staff and students from across the institution and beyond through articles in the Education Bulletin or Insite and/or delivering a

Masterclass or workshop, which as well as being space to share progress can also be an opportunity for two-way communication by inviting conversation and contributions from the community.

13. It is an annual requirement that at least one Learning Circle Lead from each Learning Circle attends the WIHEA Learning Circle Fair.

14. On achievement of intended outcomes or attainment of set goals it is expected that Leads will deliver or contribute to at least one Masterclass or Workshop each year. Please email WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk when it is felt that the Learning Circle is ready to deliver either a Masterclass or Workshop, so that a meeting to discuss this further with the WIHEA Director can be arranged.

15. In recognition of your leadership achievements, we encourage Learning Circle Leads to include reference to your Fellowship and your role in leading a Learning Circle in your email signatory and please help us to keep your WIHEA Fellow Profile up to date – by providing us with bullet points of specific achievements that you have led, so that we can update your Profile. You can then also link to your Fellow Profile and/or the Learning Circle web page from your email signatory.

We hope this information helps you to understand what the responsibilities of leading a Learning Circle are and provides a reminder to refer to during your time as lead/co-lead.

If you have any questions at all on the above or anything we have not thought to include, including other ways we could support Learning Circles, please do email us at WIHEA@warwick.ac.uk.