Scientific Review and Advisory Committee

Terms of Reference

1. Responsibilities of the Committee

Purpose

There are ongoing challenges to midwifery practice in Australia requiring the active involvement of the Australian College of Midwives (the College). The Scientific Review and Advisory Committee (SRAC) will provide advice and make recommendations to the College on scientific matters that impact on midwifery practice, and guide the scientific programs of ACM national conferences.

Role

The role of the Committee is to:

- Provide expert advice to the College (including the Board) via the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Australian College of Midwives (College) on scientific matters related to practice and the midwifery profession.
- Provide expert advice and support to the CEO on ways in which to utilise national/international policies and scientific developments to assist with the ongoing development of research-based midwifery practice in Australia.
- Make recommendations about ways in which the College can effectively contribute to the ongoing development of research-based midwifery practice in Australia.
- Undertake specified tasks or projects as requested by the CEO from time to time, such as drafting College policies on scientific matters and research-based practice.
- Represent the College as either individuals or as a group when requested to do so by the CEO in scientific matters and as resources permit.
- Provide advice on the instructions and call for submission of abstracts and the scoring system developed to assess submitted abstracts for national conferences.
- Participate in peer review of abstracts for national conferences.
- Provide advice on the program planning for national conferences.
- Provide input to the CEO on the selection of experts to represent the College on national/international committees relating to scientific matters as necessary.
- Liaise with any other College Committee through the Chair as matters arise.
- Carry out the responsibilities/role in a culturally-safe manner, demonstrating respect and understanding of the wide variety of cultural beliefs and practices members may come across during their time on this committee.
Members should be prepared to attend all scheduled teleconferences or web conferences for the Committee, with a minimum of 50% attendance per year to maintain Committee membership. Further, members are expected to actively participate in all dialogue that occurs “out of session” pertaining to Committee business, which may on occasion require a quick response. This information will inform decisions related to continued membership of the committee.

2 Structure of the Committee

Membership

The Committee members shall be appointed by the CEO of the College. The CEO may determine the size of the Committee and may vary the number of appointees from time to time as the need arises. The ideal size of the committee is 11 members, including the Midwifery Advisor Policy Unit. This will allow for diversity as well as ensuring an odd number of members to enable a consensus to be reached when voting occurs. A sense of geography will be considered upon making appointments to the committee.

Members of the Committee shall be selected on merit following an Expression of Interest (EOI) process. All members shall meet the following requirements:

- Current financial member of the ACM.
- Have registration as a midwife with the NMBA and be able to meet recency of practice requirements.
- Possess higher research degree qualifications (research masters or doctorate)
- Have experience in, or a capacity to, represent midwives with regards to evidence-based midwifery practice and research.
- Have a well-developed capacity to analyse research evidence and other sources of information relating to evidence-based midwifery.
- Be able to access conference abstracts and review through an online process.
- Experience with the process of ‘reviewing’ would be desirable but not essential
- Have email access.
- Have a willingness to donate time and expertise to the scheduled meetings and activities undertaken by the committee on behalf of the College as outlined in the Committee’s TOR.

Organisational representatives

The CEO may also on occasion invite representatives from relevant organisations to join the committee outside of the EOI process.

Chair

The Committee shall be chaired by a member of the Committee as approved by the CEO.

When the position of Chair is to be filled, members of the Committee can nominate for the position by submitting an application to the CEO. The CEO will appoint the Chair. The minimum requirements for application to position of Chair include:

- The Committee Chair Nomination form
To be supported by at least two members of the relevant Committee

- EOI outlining ability to meet the criteria and responsibilities of Chair
  - To show evidence of skills such as managing meetings, time keeping, delegating tasks

Tips on roles and responsibilities of an effective Chair can be accessed here:

- [http://www.wikihow.com/Chair-a-Conference-Call](http://www.wikihow.com/Chair-a-Conference-Call)
- [http://www.ehow.com/how_2077063_be-committee-chairman.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_2077063_be-committee-chairman.html)

The length of appointment for the Chair will be the same as for all members and will expire when the member’s appointment to the Committee expires.

The Chair shall be responsible for:

- Determining the agenda for meetings. This will require the Chair to be current with issues pertaining to scientific matters and may require working with the College Midwifery Advisor, Policy Unit to identify matters that need to be addressed by the Committee.
- Chairing meetings.
- Leading discussion and ensuring all Committee members have the opportunity to contribute their expertise and views.
- Ensuring that the Committee’s work is completed on specific tasks or projects in a timely manner.
- Co-ordinating the preparation of the Committee’s quarterly reports to the CEO.
- Shall have casting vote in a tied decision of the Committee.

**Length of Appointment**

Each member of the Committee shall be appointed by the CEO for a term of 3 years and is eligible to apply for one further 3 year term up to a maximum of six consecutive years on the Committee unless they are specifically invited by the CEO to re-apply for the role on the Committee at the end of this period.

**Reappointment**

Members are expected to respond to an EOI process at the end of their first term such that they reconfirm their commitment to the Committee and the Committee obligations. Reappointment to the Committee will be dependent on a successful EOI being completed as well as evidence being noted of active participation in Committee meetings and project work over the period of the previous appointment. Ideally members should not all be appointed to commence at the same time to ensure the committee retains continuity and consistency in its functioning. This may mean on occasion that a member’s appointment is soft-rolled into a further period of time before the EOI process for re-appointment commences.
At the end of the maximum term of appointment (2 terms of 3 years each), individuals shall be required to undertake a period of ‘downtime’ for a minimum of 2 years before applying for a position on the Committee again unless they are specifically invited by the CEO to re-apply for the role on the Committee at the end of this period.

Filling a vacancy

Members of the Committee may resign their position with 4 weeks’ notice in writing of their intention to do so. The CEO may appoint a replacement member in consultation with the Chair of the Committee following an EOI process.

Temporary/ad hoc members may be invited by the ACM CEO to join the Committee for specific tasks and matters. The length of term for this member will be defined in the EOI process and reappointment will be dependent on need and determined by the CEO.

Conflict of interest

In order to prevent the potential risk of conflict of interest no more than one Director or senior manager from another organisation or business with similar objects to the ACM may be a member of the advisory committee.

3. Workings of the Committee

Communication within the committee

The Committee will communicate predominantly by email and telephone. All committee communication must be kept within the committee unless advised differently by the Chair or the CEO. Any changes of e-mail address for individual Committee members should be communicated with both the Committee and the Head Office of the College.

- Teleconference or web conference by arrangement with the Head Office.
- Meeting schedule as arranged by the Committee.
- Face-to-face meetings of the Committee will be opportunistic – e.g. at national midwifery conferences.

Frequency of Meetings

The schedule for meetings will be the responsibility of the Chair, in consultation with the Committee members. The Committee should meet formally at least four times per year in addition to addressing matters arising at any time. Ideally meetings will be held within business hours, any changes to this will need to be agreed with the Chair and the Midwifery Advisor Policy Unit.

Quorum

50% plus 1

Decision Making

Decisions are reached by consensus. In the event of a tied Committee the Chair will have the deciding vote.
Secretariat Support

The Head Office will provide secretariat support to the Committee where possible including:

- Providing means of communication via email, teleconference and web conference links.
- Recording draft minutes of meetings.
- Copying and distribution of information as directed by the Chair.

Funding/ Resources

Membership of the Committee is honorary and attracts no remuneration or fee for services provided.

There is no specifically allocated budget for the work of the Committee. The Committee’s work shall be resourced using the office services allocations in the budget provided by the College for teleconferencing and IT services.

The CEO may determine to make resources available for a specific project or activity undertaken by one or more members of the Committee from time to time.

Stakeholders

The key stakeholders in this Committee are:

- Members of the College.
- Midwives and others with an interest in and knowledge of national/international midwifery education and related issues.

Indemnity

The activities of the Committee in providing advice on national/international midwifery education matters to the College are covered by the College’s professional indemnity insurance policy, in accordance with the terms of that policy.

Dispute Resolution

The Committee will be expected to foster professional dialogue among its members and to support and even encourage differences of view based on fact or substance. Professional differences of view can provide a robust basis for effective and informed decision making on an issue, by providing the opportunity for reflection on alternative viewpoints or perspectives.

Where the Committee is unable to reach agreement on a particular matter, alternative views will be outlined in a report to the CEO with sufficient information to support informed decision-making by the CEO on substantive issues over which the disagreement arose.
4. Accountability of the Committee

Reporting

The Committee is responsible to the CEO of the College. The Committee is required to provide a brief summary report of its activities (half to 1 page), quarterly. The dates are to be agreed with the CEO.

The Committee is also required to keep minutes of any teleconference, web conference or face to face meetings it holds. The minutes shall be a brief summary of any decisions made or recommendations agreed to by the Committee relevant to its role and responsibilities as outlined in Part 1.

Deed Poll

Members are required to sign the ‘Deed Poll by Committee Members about confidentiality, conflict of interest and Intellectual property’, within one month of their appointment as required by the ACM Governance Policy.

Dissolution of the Committee

The CEO reserves the right to disband this Committee if in the judgement of the CEO of the day, the Committee is no longer needed to support the work of the College or no longer able to fulfil its responsibilities.