12th November 2026

TERMS OF REFERENCE: SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP WORKING SUB-COMMITTEE (CSA 2027-28)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) is the single, official representative body for all student organisations across the Commonwealth's 56 nations. Established in 2012 at the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) in Mauritius, it unifies and represents the needs and aspirations of national student councils and other student organisations, bringing their concerns to the forefront of educational and global development. It is supported by the Commonwealth Youth Programme and headquartered at the Commonwealth Secretariat at Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London. The Commonwealth Students' Association represents students from across Commonwealth member countries and works to advance student interests through advocacy, partnerships, and programmes.

2. PURPOSE AND STATUS

2.1. The SIG Working Sub-Committee delivers the manifesto of the Elected Special Interest Group (SIG) Representative of the Commonwealth Students Association (CSA) for the 2027–28 term.

2.2 The Sub-Committee works under the CSA constitution and the decisions of the CSA Executive Committee. Where these Terms conflict with the CSA constitution, the constitution prevails.

2.3 Membership is voluntary and unpaid.

2.4 No member may speak, sign or spend on behalf of CSA or the SIG except as these Terms permit.

3. COMPOSITION, APPOINTMENT AND TERM

3.1 The Sub-Committee comprises the Chair (the Elected SIG Representative) and five Leads: The Policy & Research Lead, the Programmes & Events Lead, the Communications & Accessibility Lead, the Partnerships & Resources Lead and the Diversity and Inclusion officer.

3.2. The Chair appoints Leads through an open call for applications and an interview. Selection weighs commitment, relevant experience, and representation across the five Commonwealth regions and the SIG communities.

3.3 An appointment runs until the end of the term. The Chair reviews each Lead's work every six months.

3.4 The Chair may appoint volunteers to support a Lead. Volunteers follow these Terms.

3.5 A Lead who also serves as an RSIG member, country representative or thematic officer keeps that post. The Sub-Committee role adds to it and does not replace it.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Each member owns the responsibilities below and answers to the Chair for them.

Chair (Elected SIG Representative)

Sets priorities; approves outputs, statements, partnerships and spending; chairs meetings; reports to the CSA Executive Committee

Policy & Research Lead

Runs the policy pipeline: Listening Circles, Student Diversity Councils, the Annual Commonwealth Student Policy Forum and policy recommendations to ministries; owns the advocacy agendas, the flagship campaign and the Commonwealth Student Diversity Report 2026; sets data-handling rules

Programmes & Events Lead

Delivers the Disability Film Festival, the thematic observance days and the logistics of the Policy Forum; attaches a follow-up action to every event

Communications & Accessibility Lead

Runs SIG social media, the Voices Unheard Project and the Sign Language Ambassador programme; makes all SIG content accessible; obtains consent for every published testimony

Partnerships & Resources Lead

Manages relations with ministries, foundations and global organisations; secures sponsorship; supports the strengthening and establishment of NSOs

Diversity and Inclusion officer

Links the Sub-Committee to the five Regional SIGs, the country representatives and the four thematic officers; collects monthly Listening Circle outputs; tracks DEI mainstreaming inside and outside the CSA

5. WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

5.1 Meetings. The Sub-Committee meets online once a month, after the monthly Listening Circles. The Chair may call an extra meeting with 72 hours' notice.

5.2 Quorum. The Chair and three Leads form a quorum.

5.3 Decisions. The Sub-Committee decides by consensus. Where consensus fails, the Chair decides.

5.4 Reporting. Each Lead sends the Chair a written update before each monthly meeting, covering progress, next steps and risks.

5.5 Minutes. Leads take minutes in rotation. Minutes record each decision, its owner and its deadline. The Chair circulates them within seven days.

5.6 Follow-through. Every event, campaign and policy output carries a named owner, a deadline and a follow-up action.

5.7 Accessibility. Meetings run with captions. Materials circulate in accessible formats: screen-reader-compatible documents, alt text on images and plain language. Any member may ask the Chair for a reasonable adjustment, and the Chair arranges it.

5.8 Attendance. A Lead who misses two consecutive meetings without notice comes under review under clause 8.2.

6. CODE OF CONDUCT: DO'S

6.1 Every member shall:

1. Act in the interest of SIG communities and CSA, not in personal interest.
2. Treat every member, student and partner with respect, whatever their disability, gender, sexual orientation, region, religion or background.
3. Use the names and terms that communities use for themselves.
4. Attend meetings and meet agreed deadlines, and tell the Chair early when either is at risk.
5. Reply to Sub-Committee messages within three working days.
6. Obtain the Chair's written approval before any public statement, social media post, partnership approach, sponsorship request or expenditure in the SIG's name.
7. Make all SIG content accessible.
8. Credit contributors, storytellers and partners in every output.
9. Keep working files in the Sub-Committee's shared drive, not on personal accounts.
10. Follow the CSA constitution, policies and code of conduct.

7. CODE OF CONDUCT: DON'TS

7.1 No member shall:

1. Speak, post or sign on behalf of CSA or the SIG without the Chair's approval.
2. Commit CSA to any agreement, partnership, funding or expenditure without the Chair's written approval and, where CSA rules require it, the CSA Executive Committee's.
3. Share any student's personal data, contact details, disability or health status, gender identity or sexual orientation without that student's consent.
4. Record, publish or share any student's story, image or testimony without written informed consent.

5. Use any student's identity or story for publicity without involving that student in how it is used.
6. Use the position for personal, commercial or party-political gain.
7. Accept gifts, payments or sponsorship personally in connection with the role.
8. Harass, bully, discriminate against or demean any person, online or offline.
9. Use SIG accounts, logos or letterheads for any purpose the Chair has not approved.
10. Disclose confidential Sub-Committee discussions before the Chair releases them.

8. DATA, CONSENT AND SAFEGUARDING

8.1 Members collect only the personal data a task needs and store it in the Sub-Committee's shared drive. Only members who need the data for that task may access it. Members delete it when the task ends, and no later than the end of the term.

8.2 Before recording or publishing any testimony, including under the Voices Unheard Project, the Communications & Accessibility Lead obtains written consent. The consent states where and how the story will appear, and offers anonymity. A storyteller may withdraw consent at any time before publication.

8.3 Outputs from Listening Circles and Student Diversity Councils enter policy work in anonymised form.

8.4 A member who learns of a risk of harm to a student reports it to the Chair within 24 hours. The Chair escalates it to the CSA Executive Committee.

8.5 These obligations continue after a member leaves the Sub-Committee.

9. CONFLICT OF INTEREST, BREACH AND EXIT

9.1 Conflict of interest. A member declares to the Chair any personal, financial, organisational or political interest connected to a decision, partner or sponsor, and takes no part in that decision.

9.2 Breach. The Chair addresses a breach of these Terms in three stages: a conversation, a written warning, then removal.

9.3 Serious breach. For harassment, discrimination, misuse of data or funds, or an unauthorised commitment of CSA, the Chair may suspend the member at once, pending review.

9.4 Fair process. Before removing a member, the Chair puts the allegation in writing and gives the member seven days to respond. The member may appeal to the CSA Executive Committee within 14 days of the decision.

9.5 Resignation. A member gives the Chair 30 days' written notice and hands over all files, contacts and account access before leaving.

9.6 On leaving. A former member returns all access to SIG accounts and data and stops presenting themselves as a member of the Sub-Committee.

9.7 Amendment. The Chair may amend these Terms after consulting the Leads. Amendments take effect seven days after the Chair circulates them in writing.

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10. ACCEPTANCE

I have read these Terms of Reference and agree to follow them for the duration of my appointment.

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First and Last Name Signature and Date

ENDS.