

Geotechnical Working Group

Terms of Reference and *modus operandi*



Background

The AGS Byelaws were totally rewritten and adopted by the Membership of the Association in late 2015. They bring many changes to the organisation and management of the AGS. The Byelaws define, in general terms, the identification, composition and membership, duties and line of responsibility of the Working Groups, and outline the broad nature of their activities. In accordance with good business practice, the AGS Chairman requires each Working Group to write its own Terms of Reference and *modus operandi* for approval by Senate.

The Byelaws further specify that the working groups will be given a brief by the AGS Chairman. In support of the AGS Chairman, the BPWG has been tasked to draft Terms of Reference and *modus operandi* for the proposed new **Geotechnical Working Group** and attempt to identify its proposed Activities for the current year, which are deemed to constitute the brief. The draft will be placed before the BPWG and agreed in principle by its members, before approval by the AGS Chairman, Executive Council and Senate.

In this document, all references to 'Chairman', etc, shall refer to the title of the post, irrespective of the gender of the post-holder.

The Aims of the Geotechnical Working Group

To promote technical excellence to the wider geotechnical engineering professional community and to raise general awareness of the need for geotechnical engineering input to all construction projects and land asset management to clients and asset owners. These aims are achieved through the Group's activities in respect of:

- a) promoting the activities of the GWG to the AGS Membership and to the wider industry;
- b) maintaining a watching brief on the geotechnical activities of the wider national and international engineering communities, and reporting these to the membership;
- c) organising and running GWG initiatives and events on behalf of AGS;
- d) being involved closely in the drafting and reviewing of national and international standards, codes of practice and other definitive guidance;
- e) striving to become a leading national authority on geotechnical engineering matters affecting the AGS Membership and the wider industry.

Terms of Reference

1 Identification

The Geotechnical Working Group (hereafter abbreviated to GWG), until such times as a re-arrangement of the Association takes place, will be one of the Standing Working Groups. These permanent Working Groups have a long-term brief.

The second type of Working Group (WG) is an *ad hoc* Working Group which, as its name infers, has a short-term brief to address a specific task or set of tasks over a limited time. It is likely that such temporary WGs will be attached to one or other of the Standing WGs, where its specific task comes within the purview of the latter. For example, the GWG may opt to set up one or more separate sub-groups, to deal separately with different areas relating to its agreed brief.

2 Composition and Membership

In common with all working groups, the GWG consists of the WG Leader, appointed to the Senate by the Members of the Association, and who is supported by an appropriate number of Members of the Association, supplemented as necessary, by individuals with recognised expertise from the wider industry and who may not be practitioners, such that the WG can function efficiently and effectively.

Members of the GWG are appointed directly by the GWG Leader from among the Practitioners within the Membership and their colleagues in Member and Affiliate Organisations, to serve for a year at a time. They may be appointed for further terms.

The WG Leader will review the membership of his or her WG directly after the AGM – usually in March or April each year. At this review, those who have not significantly contributed to the work of the WG over the past year will be retired and new members will be sought to replace them.

In addition to those members of the WG who are appointed by the WG Leader, employees of member Organisations of the Association who have particular skills in one or other aspect of communications and wish to serve on the GWG may inform the Administrator of their interest, which will, in turn, be conveyed to the WG Leader for his or her decision to accept or decline.

There is no fixed number of members of the GWG, but it would not normally exceed, say 20 members, unless the creation of a new *ad hoc* WG, for example, requires differing talents or areas of knowledge. Other WGs may have different optimum membership numbers.

3 Duties

The duties of the GWG (and all other WGs) are:

- i) to fulfil the brief given to it by the AGS Chairman, via its WG Leader, and
- ii) to communicate and engage with the Membership of the Association and the wider industry on matters relating to their Working Group.
- iii) the members of the GWG and their various sub-committees are expected to participate actively and contribute to the work of their WG. Thus, membership of a WG is not a virtual sinecure – it will not be sufficient merely to be present at meetings – everybody should expect to have tasks assigned to them, for completion outside the meetings.

4 Line of Responsibility

All Standing WGs report to the Senate and to the Executive Council via their WG Leader.

Modus operandi

- 1 The Byelaws require that each WG shall arrange to meet, in person, at least twice annually, and that the WG Leader shall choose the location, date and time, and ask the Administrator to communicate this with the members of the Working Group at least 30 days prior to the meeting.
- 2 In the interval between physical meetings, the GWG members will continue to communicate with each other by whatever means and at such frequency that will enable them to conduct their business efficiently. The WG Leader will co-ordinate such communication, with the assistance of the Administrator.
- 3 The Byelaws specify that the Leader of all WGs will make the decisions of their WG, having considered the arguments and advice given to them by the members of the Group.
- 4 Working with the Administrator, the GWG Leader will formulate and finalise the agenda for all of the GWG's meetings.
- 5 Each member of the GWG who has an action from the previous meeting against their name, or a member who wishes to raise a substantial issue, shall provide a brief paper on their subject to the Administrator. These papers must be submitted in accordance with the published timetable of actions referred to in item 8, such that they can be issued with the Agenda for the meeting. The former practice of providing *ad hoc* verbal reports at meetings is now actively discouraged.
- 6 In an effort to streamline the proceedings of meetings, all papers will be taken as read and, if for information only, will be annotated thus and will not be discussed further in the meeting. Self-evidently, this does not apply to papers for further discussion or matters for decision.
- 7 The WG Leader shall arrange with the Administrator to organise, distribute and make available the records of all activities of the Working Group, as appropriate.
- 8 When the finalised record of a meeting is distributed to the WG members, it will, as a matter of routine, be accompanied by a list of actions arising from the meeting for members to progress, together with a timetable for those actions leading up to the next meeting.

Activities for the Current Year

- 1 To alleviate the AGS Chairman's burden, the GWG Leader will draft an outline programme of work or list of activities for the current year. This draft will be discussed with the AGS Chairman and agreement reached on the final listing, after which the information will be conveyed to the GWG members. There will be an opportunity for the WG members to see and add other business to the programme before it is finalised.
- 2 The Byelaws state that 'The Working Groups shall undertake such activities as enable them to fulfil their duties' and that the WG Leader will co-ordinate these activities, with the assistance of the Administrator.
- 3 The activities of the GWG for 2019-20 will be developed by the Group once it is in place. It is anticipated that additional activities will be added through the year, as they arise.
- 4 Publish a best practice note on the value of quality design of ground investigation (draft currently under review) and the commercial and professional risks if advice from suitably qualified geotechnical professionals is not sought or followed during project inception and development
- 5 Promote a review of methods to assess in-situ infiltration rates in ground investigations
- 6 Develop a communication pack for AGS members to engage with clients and related professional/industrial bodies on the topic of ground engineering excellence and the value of using our members expertise during all key project phases
- 7 Promote best practice and opportunities for data sharing in pile testing
- 8 Ground Investigation – how do we apply the lessons from other countries? (AGS Survey link)
- 9 Carry out a survey of members training methods and priorities to help develop recommendations for baseline training needs for members
- 10 Maintain liaison with other WGs when appropriate

SLW ~ 2019 02 13
AGS GEWG Leader