

# CFMS POLICY COMMITTEE – TERMS OF REFERENCE

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## *Background*

It is a central mandate of The Canadian Federation of Medical Students to represent medical students at national and international organizations, as well as to the federal government; in fact, “Representation” is encapsulated as one of the CFMS’s three pillars. The CFMS generally remains neutral on issues in medical education or health policy until the general membership has approved a position statement on a given topic at an Annual General Meeting or Spring General Meeting. CFMS executives, other representatives, and indeed any member medical student can submit a position statement for approval, which if passed becomes the official position of the organization. This system ensures a robust deliberation has occurred every time the CFMS commits itself to a particular stance, and it also provides an opportunity for grassroots engagement for member medical students.

However, the current system does not have a mechanism to follow-up on position statements after they are approved. A close reading of the CFMS By-Laws seems to indicate that a position paper exists into perpetuity, unless a separate motion at an AGM or SGM is made to rescind or amend it. The result of this is that the current library of CFMS position statements dates back over a decade. Several position statements are factually incorrect or out of date, and others touch on issues that are no longer currently relevant. A visitor to the “Position Statements” section of the CFMS website would have difficulty discerning exactly what issues are important to the organization.

## *Need for policy direction and review*

An effective mechanism to set overarching policy goals, and to review current policy, is lacking in the By-Laws of the CFMS. Currently, this need is met on an ad hoc basis by the VP Government Affairs and the PAC. However, there is no direction on what amount of review is necessary. Many national organizations comparable to the CFMS have a mandated process whereby position statements are regularly reviewed and/or sunsetted (ie: rescinded) if not renewed. For example, the Canadian Paediatrics Society must review or sunset a given position statement within 3 years of approval.

The extra amount of work necessary to regularly review all position papers is likely a worthwhile investment for the CFMS; however, it is beyond the time constraints of the VP Government Affairs to take on this role. Also, given that many position papers touch on areas of global health or medical education, it is also beyond the role of the PAC to take on this task. A new committee is needed with an individual dedicated to leading it, and with membership drawn from all of the areas touched upon in CFMS position papers.

A “Policy Committee” would also be ideally placed to help set the overarching policy goals of the CFMS. Members would become familiar with CFMS policies through reviewing existing ones, and would then be able to identify gaps and areas to focus on. Moreover, the Policy Committee would be a regular venue whereby CFMS representatives from different constituencies (e.g. global health, education, PAC) could regularly liaise between General Meetings.

*Proposal*

1. Effective September 2013, it is proposed that there be the creation of a CFMS Policy Committee that is responsible for setting policy priorities and regularly reviewing CFMS position statements.
  - 1.1. The Policy Committee would meet at least bi-monthly (every two months) via teleconference, with funding coming out of the VP Government Affairs budget line-item.
  - 1.2. The Policy Committee would be tasked to complete by Spring General Meeting 2014 a set of recommendations as to the optimal frequency of review and sunseting of CFMS position statements.
  - 1.3. The Policy Committee would not have the ability to unilaterally change or sunset a position statement, but would need to have such changes approved by the general membership at a Spring or Annual General Meeting.

\*Addendum: the creation of this committee and national officer would in no way affect individual members’ ability to propose, amend, or rescind current position papers through delegate motions at an AGM or SGM. Direct grassroots member engagement is a crucially important component of setting policy, and CFMS executives and committees must always remain responsible to their membership.\*

2. Effective September 2013, it is proposed that there be the creation of a National Officer of Policy, with the responsibility of overseeing the Policy Committee.
  - 2.1. This individual will be responsible for setting teleconference meeting agendas and running the general organization and functioning of the Policy Committee.
  - 2.2. The National Officer of Policy will be fully funded to attend the CFMS Annual General Meeting and Spring General Meeting, with funding coming out of the VP Government Affairs budget line-item
  - 2.3. The National Officer of Policy will be tasked with chairing the Motions Committee at AGM and SGM

### *Composition*

3. The CFMS Policy Committee will be headed by the new CFMS National Officer of Policy.
  - 3.1. This individual will be determined following the election of the new Executive at the Annual General Meeting.
  - 3.2. This individual will be responsible for overseeing the selection/election of new appointees (in coordination with the VP Government Affairs), and reporting back to the Executive on any news related to this committee.
4. Further, the composition of the Policy Committee will be such that there is at least one PAC chair, and at least one Global Health Advocate (GHA). The remaining membership will be drawn from the general membership through an open call for nominations. Additionally, the VP Government Affairs, National Officer of Human Rights and Peace, and VP Education will sit on this committee in advisory roles.

### *Responsibilities*

5. The responsibilities of this committee will be to set policy direction for the CFMS, and to regularly review existing position statements at a frequency to be determined by the committee by Spring General Meeting 2014.

### *Oversight*

9. The Policy Committee will be led by the National Officer of Policy, who will be directly responsible to the VP Government Affairs. The VP Government Affairs will regularly report on the activities of the Policy Committee at regularly-schedule CFMS executive meetings.

Overall, this proposed Policy Committee will allow for coherent CFMS policy goals to be articulated, while keeping position statements current and relevant. It will aim to provide a fair and rigorous mechanism to review existing positions and to propose future directions for new ones.

For further information, contact VP Government Affairs Sarah Silverberg ([vpgovtaffairs@cfms.org](mailto:vpgovtaffairs@cfms.org)) or National Officer of Health Policy Tamara Ibrahim ([nohp@cfms.org](mailto:nohp@cfms.org)).