



Guidelines on setting up a Branch

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This note for guidance has been prepared to provide members of the Board of Directors, the International General Assembly or other senior members of the Institution with guidance on the process for establishing a new branch of the Institution.
- 1.2 A branch of the Institution is an independent and autonomous body or association of members within a defined geographical area licensed by the Institution to carry on activities as a legally distinct body, established for the purpose of pursuing the object of the Institution.
- 1.3 The good governance of the Institution demands that careful control is maintained over the establishment of a Branch; the use of the Institution's name within the title of the organisation is a privilege not to be bestowed lightly if the reputation of the whole Institution is to be maintained.
- 1.4 There are specific requirements required by the Institution's Memorandum and Articles of Association, By-Laws and Standing Orders. This note has been prepared in conjunction with the requirements of the current (2005) edition) but in any case of doubt, the current published version will have precedence over this note.
- 1.5 This note is not a completely comprehensive step by step process note to establish a Branch. It should be read in conjunction with the Institution's Memorandum and Articles of Association, By-Laws and Standing Orders and those involved are expected to have a reasonable understanding of the management of organisations, the Institution or other professional bodies.

2 Legal & financial matters

- 2.1 Any branch would be bound by the principles outlined in the Memorandum of Association, which although apply to the UK based organisation, nevertheless define the nature of the Institution as an organisation.
- 2.2 Those principles require the organisation to promote the object of the Institution (see 2.3 below) and in doing so to enable members to meet, correspond and facilitate the interchange of ideas. The memorandum also prohibits the Institution from supporting activity that would make it a trade union. The liability of members must be limited and any income or expenditure should be directed solely towards the promotion of the object of the Institution.
- 2.3 The object of the Institution is "To encourage and improve the science and practice of Fire Extinction, Fire Prevention and Fire Engineering and all operations and expedients connected therewith, and to give an impulse to ideas likely to be useful in connection with or in relation to such science and practice to the members of the Institution and to the community at large".
- 2.4 The Institution has within its Memorandum of Association a model constitution for Branches and Groups (groups are a smaller subsidiary organisation linked to branches). The Institution requires branches to submit their constitution to the Board of directors, for approval, which will not be forthcoming, unless certain mandatory elements of the model are included.
- 2.5 Branches established outside of the UK will be required to include within their constitution, the local legal requirements. This is permitted, provided that none conflict with the principles that govern the Institution in the UK.



- 2.6 Branches, either in the UK or internationally, are responsible for their own financial management and responsibility. The annual accounts of the Institution, reported in the Annual Report and at the Annual General Meeting do not incorporate the accounts of any branches.
- 2.7 Once a non UK Branch is formally inaugurated the Branch is entitled to only remit 50% (currently) of the published membership subscriptions for the relevant grades of members. The balance retained provides local funding for Branch activities.

3 Practical steps

- 3.1 The practical arrangements necessary for establishing a branch of the Institution may be conveniently divided into the following phases.
- Establishing a “founding committee or working group”
 - Commencing the recruitment of members
 - Establishing a programme of activities
 - Establishing the democratic arrangements necessary for a Branch Committee.
 - The formal inauguration of the Branch
 - Participation in the International activities of the IFE
- 3.2 Throughout these phases, close contact with the Institution’s Head Office staff will assist in the process.

4 Founding committee

- 4.1 A founding committee for a branch can be established by a small number of willing members of the Institution. It is preferable if a proportion of the members are corporate members, that is Life Fellows, Fellows, Members and Associates. The model Constitution requires that branch Councils are made up of at least two thirds of corporate members. It is preferable, but not essential that a founding committee follows the same proportion. Such an arrangement suggests four corporate members and two non-corporate members would form a reasonably practical founding committee. If this cannot be achieved initially, it will be acceptable to demonstrate a reasonable prospect of meeting the requirement by the time the branch is formally inaugurated.
- 4.2 Experience has shown that founding committees need the support of a host organisation in order to provide the practical facilities for communication meeting and administration. In practical terms, the financial benefits of a formally inaugurated branch are not available to the founding committee, so the ability to fund the initial activities is an important consideration. Employers of fire engineers are often prepared to fund the modest expenses associated with this initial phase of work.
- 4.3 It may be useful for the founding committee to reflect the principle positions in a future Branch Council, that is a Chair, who would become the Branch President, Secretary and Treasurer, with a member to lead on subjects such as recruitment, events organisation and perhaps marketing.



5 Recruitment

- 5.1 There are no hard and fast rules about the minimum number of members for a branch to be viable. Practical matters such as the geographical spread or concentration of fire engineers will be of greater influence. Nevertheless, most of the active Branches in the world have from two hundred members upwards. This should not preclude smaller numbers of members forming a Branch, it is more important that the members are active in support of the Branch.
- 5.2 Recruitment materials are available without cost from IFE Head Office. There is also a promotional Power Point© presentation that can be used in conferences and meetings. This can be emailed to members for their use. The graphic art work for recruitment materials can also be made available to founding committees, although any proposals to modify the art work would require the approval of the Chief Executive Officer at IFE Head Office.
- 5.3 Application forms for membership are available on the IFE website and the Membership Rules for Titles and Grades. IFE Head Office can provide printed copies of membership forms.
- 5.4 It will be helpful for one or two members of the Founding Committee to concentrate on dealing with applications. In this way a good understanding of the rules for membership can be quickly developed and this advice can help applicants be successful in their application.
- 5.5 It will be important that the founding committee establishes lists and contact details of members. IFE Head Office can provide details of existing members of the Institution. A local record of membership will facilitate communication and attendance at Branch events.

6 A programme of activities

- 6.1 A fundamental reason for establishing a Branch of the Institution is to facilitate the meeting of members. A program of meetings should therefore be established. Meetings should be organised to meet local conditions. It may be that initially, meetings takes place alongside other meetings that might be attended by members or potential members. Meetings can be held at whatever time of day is most convenient and can be a long or short as necessary.
- 6.2 The content of meetings is more important than the frequency of location of meetings, since a well thought out agenda is more likely to attract members and potential members. Interesting relevant subjects delivered by high profile and proficient speakers will draw in the members and establish a reputation for the Branch as being an organisation that provides real value.
- 6.3 The cost of meetings may need to be funded by those who attend, or by sponsorship. Access to meeting facilities is something that can sometimes be facilitated by an employer of fire engineers, using company or organisation's facilities.
- 6.4 Fire Engineers who are not yet members of the Branch, or the Institution should be encouraged to attend such meetings and made to feel welcome. This is an ideal opportunity to recruit them into membership. It is a matter for local discretion to determine how many times a prospective member should be allowed to take advantage of the facilities offered by the Branch without becoming a member.



7 Democratic arrangements

- 7.1 As the number of members increases the Founding Committee need to give thought to setting up the democratic election process that will produce a Branch Council.
- 7.2 A Branch draft constitution must be produced and agreed by the Founding Committee, before being forwarded to IFE Head Office in the UK for approval by the Board of Directors.
- 7.3 The Branch constitution will include the arrangements for elections to the Branch Council. All the necessary information is given in the Model Constitution. All (corporate and non-corporate) members of the Branch are entitled to vote in the election. The voting arrangements will need to suit local circumstances but the ballot must be secret.
- 7.4 Once the Branch Committee has been democratically elected, its first task must be to arrange for the inauguration of the Branch. The International President of the Institution normally carries out the inauguration. It is necessary, therefore to plan in advance and, by liaison through IFE Head Office, establish a suitable date. There are no specific requirements of an inauguration ceremony. Branches have typically used the occasion for a high profile launch of the Branch and organised a conference that would attract the attendance of members of the local and international fire community as well as high profile members of government or major employer of fire professionals.

8 Participation in the international activities of the IFE

- 8.1 Once a branch is established, the funding arrangements come into effect that allow the Branch to remit to the UK only 50% of each membership fee. The balance being retained for the use of the Branch.
- 8.2 Each constituted branch is entitled to elect a member who is at least in the grade of Graduate, to become a member of the International General Assembly. This assembly member carried voting rights in the International General Assembly meetings, on behalf of the Branch and in proportion to the number of members registered with the Branch.

9 Additional sources of information

- 9.1 The Institution's website contains useful information and in particular, the Memorandum and Articles of Association, By- Laws and Standing Orders, the rules for membership and the information about the organisation and administration. The website address is www.ife.org.uk
- 9.2 Individual members of staff, the Board of Directors, International General Assembly or other officers from other branches will be happy to answer any questions you may have, or refer you to someone who can assist.
- 9.3 Finally, the path to establishing a Branch is not difficult, but it requires the hard work and commitment of a number of enthusiastic members. Many have been down the same path before you and everyone will be delighted to welcome another Branch into the largest International Fire Engineering Community in the world.