

# IRIS Governance – April 12, 2012

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## Membership

At the heart of IRIS are the people who collectively make it work. IRIS has four membership categories: the administrative staff of the Institute, Core Faculty, Senior Fellows and Junior Fellows. These categories cut across IRIS’s core constituencies of faculty, students, staff, and members of the broader sustainability community.

### 1. Institute Membership Categories

#### 1.1 IRIS Administrative Staff

Administrative staff are those individuals employed on a full- or part-time basis by the Institute to develop and administer Institute projects and activities. The Institute has three staff positions at present:

- IRIS Coordinator - administers IRIS-led initiatives, provides administrative support to the Executive Board, and administers IRIS research projects not delegated to Project Manager.
- Project Manager (part-time) – administers specified research projects. Also takes on the role of IRIS Coordinator when the Co-ordinator is unavailable.
- Web Co-ordinator (part-time) – maintains the IRIS website.

#### 1.2 Core Faculty

Core Faculty are York faculty members, engaged in sustainability-related research or innovation, who are integrally involved with the activities of the Institute. Core Faculty may serve on the Executive Board. They may also take leading roles in Institute programs or projects. Core Faculty are appointed by the Director, on the advice of the Steering Committee, for a two-year term. There is no limit to the number of Core Faculty or the number of times their membership may be renewed. IRIS’s goal is to have Core Faculty members from each York faculty.

#### 1.3 Junior Fellows

Junior Fellows are graduate and undergraduate students of York or another university who engage in IRIS-led or IRIS-supported projects. Junior Fellows are appointed by the Director, on the advice of the Steering Committee, for a two-year term or a shorter term reflecting the expected duration of their substantial relationship with the Institute (for example, students nearing completion of a degree). There is no limit to the number of Junior Fellows or the number of times their membership may be renewed, provided they meet the following eligibility criteria. To qualify as a Junior Fellow, a student must typically be receiving financial support through IRIS, for example as a Graduate Assistant, Research Assistant or Undergraduate Field Assistant. Students who are

conducting their own sustainability-focused research or innovation project, for example through course work, may also be appointed.

The activities of Junior Fellows may involve research, IRIS administrative support, and other kinds of collaborative work. Junior Fellows come to IRIS from a variety of academic disciplines. This diversity supports and gives meaning to the interdisciplinary nature of York University and IRIS.

#### **1.4 Senior Fellows**

Senior Fellows are individuals, based at York or elsewhere, engaged in sustainability-related research or innovation, who maintain a substantial relationship with IRIS but do not fall into the category of Core Faculty or Junior Fellow. They may include faculty, post-doctoral fellows, staff, professionals, visitors to the Institute, and people working in government, the private sector or the voluntary sector. Senior Fellows are appointed by the Director, on the advice of the Steering Committee, for a two-year term or a shorter term reflecting the expected duration of their substantial relationship with the Institute (for example, individuals visiting IRIS for a single term or academic year). There is no limit to the number of Senior Fellows or the number of times their membership may be renewed.

### **2. Responsibilities**

Because building a collaborative community among individuals and organizations on the cutting edge of research and innovation in sustainability is part of IRIS's mandate, every IRIS member is expected to maintain a substantial relationship with the Institute. This may take numerous forms, including active involvement in IRIS projects or programs, participation in IRIS governance, attendance at IRIS events such as conferences and Speaker Series, submission of research funding applications through IRIS, and participation in IRIS-administered research projects.

All Core Faculty and Junior Fellows are expected to be actively involved in at least one IRIS program or project at any given time.

### **3. Privileges**

Alongside the intangible advantages of involvement in a community of sustainability researchers and innovators, membership provides members with various privileges including administrative support, access to office space in certain circumstances, use of the IRIS website to disseminate information, the opportunity to apply for funding in association with the Institute, and the right to associate themselves publicly with the Institute and to use IRIS business cards. The details of these privileges are outlined in the Institute's Policies and Procedures.

### **4. Membership review**

The Steering Committee monitors the IRIS membership to ensure that relevant constituencies are represented and members are fulfilling their responsibilities. At least once a year the Steering Committee reviews the membership of IRIS to determine:

- Whether each member is maintaining a substantial relationship with the Institute. If not, the Director takes appropriate action, which may range from friendly reminders to revocation of privileges and termination of membership.
- Whether there are gaps in the current membership that should be filled by recruiting new members.

The results of these reviews are reported to the Executive Board.

## **5. Termination of membership**

An individual's membership in IRIS may come to an end in three ways:

- The member's term expires and is not renewed.
- The member withdraws before the expiry of his or her term, by giving written notice to the Director. Such withdrawal is effective no earlier than three months after notice is given.
- The Director terminates the individual's membership before the expiry of his or her term, in accordance with the Conflict Resolution policy, by giving written notice to the member. Such termination is effective no earlier than the date it is ratified by a decision of the Executive Board.

## **Governance**

Decision-making at IRIS revolves around the Executive Board and the Steering Committee. The main executive officers of IRIS are the Director and Deputy Director. IRIS has an external Advisory Board to give it high-level advice and provide invaluable connections to the broader sustainability community.

### **1. Guiding Principles**

IRIS's governance arrangements are:

- **Simple**, avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy;
- **Flexible**, responding to the changing interests and needs of its constituents, and fostering innovation and experimentation;
- **Collaborative**, reflecting the Institute's mandate to facilitate collaboration across academic disciplines and between academic and non-academic constituencies; and
- **Grassroots-Driven**, fostering bottom-up initiative and reflecting the Institute's voluntary nature.

### **2. Executive Board**

The Executive Board's mandate is to approve the Institute's policies, procedures, budgets, annual reports, and strategic plans, and oversee their implementation. The Board consists of 25 members, to reflect the diverse groups and sustainability initiatives at York University that IRIS engages with. Specifically the board consists of:

- The Director (ex officio)
- The Coordinator (ex officio)
- At least ten Core Faculty

- At least three Senior Fellows
- At least three Junior Fellows,

up to a maximum of 25 Board members in total.

Core Faculty, Senior and Junior Fellow Board members serve two year terms. The Director is responsible to ensure that the terms of approximately half of the Board members in each category expire each year. There is no limit to the number of terms a Board member may serve.

Core Faculty, Senior and Junior Fellow Board members are appointed by the Director, on the advice of the Steering Committee. When appointing Board members, the Director seeks to ensure that the Board reflects as diverse a range of interests, experiences and constituencies as possible.

Only members of the Institute are eligible to serve on the Board. A member's term on the Board is normally aligned with his or her Institute membership term. If an individual's IRIS membership comes to an end before his or her Board term expires, his or her Board membership normally ceases at the same time unless the Board decides to allow the individual to serve the remainder of his or her Board term. The affected individual takes no part in this decision.

The Director chairs the Board. The Board normally reaches decisions by consensus, but votes may be held at the request of any two Board members. A vote is carried by a simple majority of Board members present and voting, with the Director casting the deciding vote in the event of deadlock.

The Board may create *ad hoc* or standing committees to assist in its work. Membership of these committees is not restricted to members of the Board. At present there are no such committees.

The Director reports to the Board twice yearly on the Institute's finances.

### **3. Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee's mandate is to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Institute, plan and coordinate fund-raising and project development, implement the Institute's policies and procedures, nominate Executive Board members, and keep IRIS membership under review. Steering Committee members are appointed by the Executive Board upon the recommendation of the Director. Steering Committee members are appointed for a term of one year, normally coinciding with the academic year (July 1- June 30). There is no limit on the number of terms a Steering Committee member may serve. The Steering Committee consists of five members:

- The Director (ex officio)
- The Coordinator (ex officio)
- One Junior Fellow

- One Senior Fellow
- One Core Faculty

The Director chairs the Steering Committee.

#### **4. Director**

The Director provides overall leadership and day-to-day direction of IRIS. In addition to the responsibilities set out in this document, the Director's responsibilities include:

- Cultivating relationships with, and facilitating collaboration among, individuals and groups interested in sustainability within and outside York;
- Promoting IRIS within and outside York;
- Raising funds for IRIS activities;
- Allocating IRIS research funds, in accordance with the policy on allocation of research funds;
- Recruiting new IRIS members and taking appropriate action to ensure that members are fulfilling their responsibilities;
- Hiring and firing IRIS administrative staff;
- Discharging the Institute's obligations to funders and the University, including SCOR reviews
- Drafting annual reports.

#### **5. Deputy Director**

The Director may appoint a Core Faculty member as Deputy Director. The Deputy Director performs the functions of the Director when the Director is unable to do so.

#### **6. Advisory Board (proposed to be reconstituted)**

The Advisory Board is an external, arm's-length group that provides high-level advice to the Institute on strategic direction, priorities and other matters. The Advisory Board meets two times per year. Note: Specific tasks need to be assigned to the Advisory Board prior to it being reconstituted.