

SECTIONS MANUAL

Revision 2025

This manual outlines the administrative and operational procedures related to the establishment and conduct of the LASA Sections, and describes the relationship of Sections to the Association.

Purpose of Sections

Sections exist to promote the common interest of Association members in specific areas of Latin American studies. They are a means of increasing communication and interaction among persons of similar interests within the framework of the larger organization. They help to democratize leadership selection in LASA activities, and to make LASA more participatory and responsive to constituencies.

Through active Section membership individuals may receive recognition for accomplishments in their specialty and also ensure that their interests in their subfield are recognized in the program at LASA Congresses and in other activities of the Association.

Section Membership

Since Sections are a part of the Association, membership in them requires membership in the Association or as a Friend of LASA, as well. LASA members or Friends of LASA may join as many Sections as they so desire by paying the corresponding dues. Continued Section membership is contingent upon continued LASA membership and the payment of annual Section dues. When joining/renewing a Section membership, it is required that the LASA membership or Friend of LASA be active and will not expire within the next three months.

Establishment of Sections

The Executive Council of the Association has approved the following policies regarding the establishment of Sections:

Founding members of a new Section will notify the Secretariat of their intention to organize a Section. This notification should include a statement at least of 500 words establishing the scope of the Section and the type of activities envisioned. The statement must be signed by at least 75 active LASA members who commit to becoming dues-paying members of the Section. The submission should also include a statement about the purpose of the Section (50 words) that can be published in LASA's website.

A formal petition for the organization of the Section will be referred to the Sections Sub-Committee within the Executive Council (EC) of the Association for approval or other action. The Sections Sub-Committee has discretion to approve or reject the proposal at this stage, but it will support all proposals that are consistent with the purposes of LASA as a professional Association and do not represent a duplicate of an existing Section. Once approved, the new Section is added to the membership form for the coming calendar year.

Maintenance of Sections

1. Sections are required to maintain a membership of at least 50 members. Should membership fall below 50, a Section may have a one-year grace period, on a one-time basis only, during which its services and prerogatives will continue intact. At the end of this period, failure to achieve at least 50 members will result in a state of suspension, and normal services and prerogatives (such as rights to a session at the LASA Congress) will be discontinued automatically.
2. Each Section must have a business meeting at the international LASA Congress, open to the Section membership and LASA members interested in joining the Section, who will participate as observers without voice or vote. Sections with fewer than 99 members must have a quorum of 10 active members at their business meeting. Sections with over 100 members must have a quorum consisting of 10 percent of their active membership. The business meeting must be announced in the Congress program. The Section chairs conduct the business meeting.
3. Each Section must have, minimally, the following set of officers elected by the active membership: a Section chair, or co-chairs, a Section chair and a vice-chair, a secretary treasurer, and at least two Council members. These elected officers constitute the Council of the Section and they should be consulted by the Section chair about Section matters. Past section chairs can join to the section Council for a year after their Section Chair service period is over. In the selection of officers, each Section should try to obtain broad representation of its membership. All candidates must be dues-paying members both of LASA and of the Section. When there is only one candidate for any of the Section Council positions, the candidate will be automatically elected.
4. Sections may conduct their elections online or at the Congress itself. The chair should be assured in advance of the willingness of the nominees to run for office.
5. Section elections should parallel EC elections; nominees will submit a brief bio and a statement of their priorities if elected.
6. The term of office for the chairs, the secretary-treasurer and the Council members is three years (coinciding with the LASA electoral cycle). The term can be extended by an additional year if there are no nominated candidates. The term of office for all newly elected officers will begin on June 1.

If during the respective term, the chair(s) or the secretary-treasurer fail to carry out their duties, the following steps will be taken:

- 6.1. The Secretariat will contact the chair or the secretary-treasurer to help them understand the importance of fulfilling their assigned duties.
- 6.2. If there has been no satisfactory response within two months, the Secretariat will ask a member of the Section's Board or a past Section chair to temporarily carry out the duties for a period of two months. During this time, a call for nominations for that role will be set up, as well as an online voting portal.
- 6.3. Once the voting has been completed, the results will be communicated to the members of the Section and the elected official will be requested to begin their duties immediately. The elected official will perform their duties for the remainder of the previous official's assignment, plus two additional years, to coincide with the timeline of the other elected officials (June 1).

7. It is recommended that elections for Council members should be staggered to provide continuity to the Council. Two shall be elected each Congress/LASA electoral cycle. (Note: In the first years of a Section, two of the four Section Council members will be elected to serve only one year, to establish the staggered cycle.)

8. Within two weeks after each Congress, the person who chaired the Section will provide the Secretariat with a report of the term activities. Reports with a (maximum of 500 words) may contain additional information to the following:

8.1. A report of the business meeting which was held during the congress and a count of the number of persons present.

8.2. The results of Section elections, including the names, emails and the terms of designation of each new officer.

8.3. A review of the most successful activities and plans for the coming term.

8.4. A list of the Section's grants and the amount of financial support given.

8.5. A list of the Section's awardees, with the following information:

- Name of the award
- Name of the awardee
- Affiliation of the awardee
- Title of the book/paper/article
- Financial amount given
- The Section's selection committee members' information and the awardee selection process followed.

The report will be published in the Section's webpage and the award winners will be published in LASA's webpage.

9. The EC may decide to terminate a Section if it does not comply with LASA guidelines as specified in this document. For example, termination may occur if no quorum is obtained at a business meeting, if dues-paying membership falls and stays below 50, if a Section does not file official reports of its activities, or if it acts in the name of LASA without permission. The Section will be given one term (entailing no more than one LASA Congress) to appeal the decision or reorganize the Section. Sections may also be terminated by their own decision.

Sections Representation in the Executive Council

There is a representative of the sections at the Executive Council of the Association, with voice and vote in the EC, elected by universal vote of the LASA members. The representative must have fulfilled a leadership role in at least one section for at least one year in the last 3-5 years (and be a member of at least one section at the time of nomination). The nomination process will be the same as for other members of the EC. The Nominations Committee will consult with the Sections Chairs to identify candidates. The service period is 3 years, similar to other EC members.

Activities of Sections

Sections have wide autonomy in the development of their activities, providing that the minimal requirements described under “Maintenance of Sections” are routinely met. They may announce activities in their Section’s website, in their social networks or in the “News” section of LASA’s website.

Sections may undertake projects such as publishing internal newsletters, teaching workshops, field trips, conferences, a speaker’s bureau, etc. Section chairs may access a list of their active members at any time.

A Section may appoint ad hoc committees to address issues of relevance to the Section. These committees may meet during the year provided they have their own funding or through online platforms.

Sections may raise money via crowdfunding to support Section activities by following these steps:

- Section chairs must notify the LASA Secretariat of their intention to pursue crowdfunding.
- The purpose of the crowdfunding campaign must be in line with the Section’s and LASA’s mission.
- The purpose of the campaign should be clearly stated and must include a disclaimer stating that contributions are “donations” and that there is no return on investment expected or refunds.
- The campaign must clearly state that it is being undertaken in the name of a LASA Section.
- The funds must be routed through LASA to comply with all accounting regulations. LASA will immediately credit the Section account accordingly. Section chairs should obtain bank account information from the LASA Secretariat to set up the contributions on the crowdfunding site. Usually, crowdfunding platforms charge fees. Sections will receive the contributions minus the fees charged.
- Crowdfunding can also be used to raise funds to issue travel grants to junior researchers.

Policy Statements

Sections are authorized to make policy statements within their area of expertise. Any such statement must include at the end of the statement highlighted the following phrase: “This statement was approved by the (name of the Section) Section membership of the Latin American Studies Association. Approval of the statement was by a vote of the (name of Section) Section by (specify number) of the (specify number) persons in the Section entitled to vote on it. This is not an official policy statement of the Latin American Studies Association, which neither endorses nor rejects the views expressed.”

Personal Data Protection

The privacy of the members of the Sections and the confidentiality of the information that concerns them should be respected at all times. The information obtained on the Section members should not be used or disclosed for purposes other than those related to the Section's activities.

Section Finances

Sections determine their own dues structure. A majority of active members at the business meeting must approve any increase. Dues may be periodically revised to reflect changes in the costs of providing services to Sections. The minimum dues payment for Section membership is \$12, \$5 of which is retained by the Secretariat to cover costs such as:

Coordination, organization and programming

- Receptions inside and outside of the Congress official sites
- Section panels, Section business meetings, annual meeting of the Section chairs, etc.
- Grants and Section awards
- Annual report and Congress Program Book publications
- Section pre-conferences

Use of IT

- Updated lists of Section members
- Electronic voting
- Fieldtrips
- Websites and social media updates
- Awards publications on LASA's website
- Creation of Sections' crowdfunding and travel funds

Finances

- Accounting management of the Sections' accounts
- Section funds used to purchase airplane tickets, LASA and Section memberships and registration.

The remainder of the dues is deposited by the Secretariat in an account in the name of the Section, where unspent funds continue to accrue from year to year. The Secretariat may, with the Sections Sub-Committee's approval, change the amount charged to Sections, in line with changes in the costs of its services.

1. The dues within each Section are equal for all members, regardless of member status or residency.
2. The Secretariat provides the Section chair a link to the current list of active members. This list should be consulted to ensure that all officers elected at the Section business meeting, participants

in the Section-sponsored sessions at the Congress, and travel grantees are current members of the Section, amongst other requirements.

3. The Secretariat provides each Section chair and treasurer with a statement of the current Section balance at least twice a year, in June and December.

4. All Section expenses must be approved by the Secretariat according to the budget that the Section has available. No payments will be approved if funds are not available at the moment of application. Bank commissions are automatically debited from the Section's balance.

5. Refunds must be requested no later than 30 days after payment or event.

Section Publications/Newsletters

Section Publications

Sections may initiate and pursue publication projects that are germane to their interests. However, since Sections are not legal entities but constituent parts of LASA, their publications are subject to the Association's regular policies and procedures regarding publications.

Before making any commitment to initiate a project likely to result in a publication, Sections must submit a proposal to the Sections Sub-Committee describing the purpose of the proposed work, the approach to be employed, and the qualifications of the proposed editors and/or authors. The Sections Sub-Committee will review the proposal and provide final approval for the publication.

Section Newsletters

Since one of the chief functions of Sections is the communication of shared ideas, interests, and activities among its members, Section members may wish to designate a person or committee to be responsible for a Section newsletter or publications on their website. Some ideas for newsletter content include:

- Announcements of conferences of interest to Section members
- A message from the Section chair
- Announcements of grant opportunities, Section receptions, and LASA program activities of particular interest
- Information on books, films, data sets, and software
- Book reviews
- Calls for information about Section member research
- Dialogues on hot topics
- News about nominations, program idea solicitations and awards
- News of Section members--moves, new appointments, grants, publications, etc.
- Teaching tips
- Dissertations in progress

- Short articles by Section members
- Crowdfunding announcements

Sections News in LASA's Website

LASA's webpage has a "News" tab where Sections can publish news in the "Sections" subcategory. In order to do so, the script must be delivered through the Section's official channels, that is, the Sections Coordinator in LASA's Secretariat.

LASA's webpage is available to all members in four languages: Spanish, French, English and Portuguese. Therefore, all news will be sent for translation into the four languages, if needed. Should the President provide the information in the four languages, the script will be sent to LASA's Secretariat translator for revision to ensure the translation quality of the information. The cost of the translation and/or revision must be paid by the corresponding Section. Before sending a document for translation, please make sure to check the translation and/or revision fees with the Section Coordinator.

The articles consist of a headline and a script of three to five paragraphs. All news will have a direct link to the Section's webpage and to the general information about LASA Sections to give them more visibility.

Sections News in LASA's Newsletter

LASA's newsletter is the news release sent to all members on the first Monday of each month. LASA Sections can use the newsletter twice a year either to inform of an event or an activity sponsored by the Section and/or about official declarations from the Section.

Information must be sent no later than the 15th day of the month preceding the month in which the information will be published through the official channels, i.e., sent by the Section Coordinator in LASA's Secretariat. Scripts in the newsletter must be specific, to the point and short but they can include a link to further information. Any published information in the newsletter must have been previously published in the Sections webpages and/or in the "Sections" subcategory under the "News" tab on LASA's webpage.

Sections Visual identity

All Sections must use the full name approved by EC when the Section was created. Sections may choose to update their names to align with their mission. However, the Sections Sub-Committee must approve these changes in advance.

Sections can choose a themed photo or create a graphic to represent themselves on their social media accounts. However, it must incorporate a logo that associates it with LASA.

Sections and Social Media

Social media provide an excellent forum to increase a Section's visibility and to:

- Expand their membership and secure their long-term existence;
- Promote an interest in the scholarly work that takes place within each Section's area of focus;
- Amplify LASA's and the LASA Sections' presence and reputation among Latin Americanists.

This section of the manual provides guidelines for the use of social media. Sections can create their own private channels to communicate with the members of their Section. Additionally, Sections can create public networks, also known as social media, to connect not only with their members but also with the larger academic community that works in related topics.

LASA has guidelines for the Sections regarding social media, as well as a list of best practices to help the chairs and/or their designates to support the effective creation and management of the Section's social media accounts.

1. Creation of a new social media account

1.1. Sections can choose to use the following social media options (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) to communicate with their members and others who share similar interests, within the scope of the Section.

1.2. To ensure consistency, all social media accounts must be created by LASA. Section chairs should contact LASA's Secretariat if they want to open an account or to gain access to an existing Section's account.

2. Management of the Section accounts

Section chairs can opt to ask the LASA Social Media Coordinator to manage (or co-manage) their social media accounts. If the chairs (or their delegates) decide to manage the accounts by themselves, they must pay attention to the following guidelines:

2.1. The chairs of the Sections must send LASA the name and contact information of the person responsible for posting on behalf of the Section. Only current members of the Section can act as delegates for social media activities and the login information should not be shared with others.

2.2. Publication of announcements on these social media accounts is restricted to Section chairs or the Section's social media manager with the exception of Facebook groups, in which all members of the group have the opportunity to post announcements (if such posts fit the scope of the Section).

3. If the Section dissolves, its social media presence must be discontinued.

4. The Section's chairs or the social media manager commit to keeping the account active by posting periodically through the year (with at least one post per month). The LASA Social Media Coordinator can support this work by helping to co-manage the account and posting periodically on behalf of the Section.

The LASA Secretariat will keep records of all the Sections' social media login information. Any changes to the login information must be reported to LASA's Secretariat. This will help guarantee that the management of the accounts will continue under the new Section leadership after the elections and that the accounts can be reactivated if the Sections lose the login information.

5. If the Section chairs are not interested/available to maintain the existing social media account/s, the LASA Social Media Coordinator can manage the accounts or share such responsibility with the Section. An email must be sent to the Secretariat requesting social media support.

6. The following best practices are recommended when managing the Section's social media channels as the Section's account is not a personal account and should therefore reflect the collective voice of the Section. The posts should be consistent with its mission, goals, and audiences, and should promote community building among the members.

6.1. The Sections should frequently post LASA's main deadlines to encourage Section members and potential new Section members to renew or sign up for membership, submit proposals, register for the Congress, etc.

6.2. The Sections should also re-post LASA's major announcements and statements. The account managers should use/share LASA's original posts to maintain the accuracy/integrity of the statements.

6.3. The Sections should promote their activities, competitions, and awards.

6.4. The Sections can promote academic events, scholarly publications, and news stories about policy issues related to the scope of the Section.

6.5. The following content should not be posted on the Sections' accounts:

- Merchandise sales or social/personal announcements unrelated to LASA's purposes.
- Non-LASA fundraisers, crowdsourcing, or GoFundMe campaigns.

6.6. The administrators of the social media accounts should only use images that are licensed for public use or have been created by the Section.

6.7. Facebook groups are a great way to promote dialogue among members of the Section and researchers who are working in related topics. However, in order to be an effective platform, the group should follow the following practices:

- The Section should decide if they want to keep the group private (and restrict it only for current members of the Section) or public. A public setting will allow everyone to see the posts of the group.
- The administrator should monitor access to the group by including membership questions. People wishing to join must demonstrate that they are researchers working in related topics.
- The administrator should monitor the content of the discussion by approving only posts that adhere to the mission of the Section.

Conflicts within Sections

When a conflict arises internally among the Section officers, the officers can communicate directly with the Section Chair or to the LASA Sections, Awards and Logistics Coordinator, who will forward the issue to the Sections Sub Committee for a resolution, with a copy to the Executive Director.

LASA Congress Program

The program of the LASA Congress is the responsibility of the program chair and the Program Committee, in consultation with the LASA President and the Secretariat. They have final authority regarding the composition of the Congress program. Where a Section coincides with a Congress track, the program chair may consult with the Section chair, to enable the Section to suggest up to three candidates from among its members as a possible track chair.

It is strongly recommended that program chairs consult the Section chair before selecting track chairs. Program chairs should create tracks that parallel existing Sections as closely as possible, except in the case of country-specific Sections.

There is one common deadline for Section and general program submissions; only Section panels submitted by the deadline will be considered for the program. Unlike proposals submitted for the general Congress program, proposals for Section sessions are accepted as submitted by the Section chair, and their inclusion in the program is guaranteed, provided that:

1. All information is submitted by the program submission deadline, and
2. The Section has complied with all other Section obligations, as stipulated in this manual.

Section members may be involved in general Congress sessions and/or Section sessions. However, the roles each individual may have at the Congress are limited. Normally a participant may perform two roles only at the Congress. However, an individual participating in a panel organized by a LASA Section may present a paper in that session, and may have two additional roles in the general program. Nevertheless, only one paper may be presented during the Congress.

The chair of a Section is responsible for organizing the Section activities for that Section at each LASA Congress. The Program Committee will cooperate in scheduling necessary meeting room space and arranging program listings provided that materials are submitted by the deadline for proposals for each Congress.

Allocation of Congress Sessions

On May 1 of each year, prior to the annual Congress, the Secretariat will count the number of dues-paying members of each Section to determine the number of sessions allotted to each for the next Congress.

The number of sessions slots any Section may have is contingent on the number of Section members, as specified below. The minimum membership to be guaranteed a session at a LASA Congress is 50. The maximum number of session slots, exclusive of the Sections chairs business meeting, will be five.

All Sections will be given a one-Congress exemption to qualify for a session in the program if they have fewer than 50 members. This provision is designed to help new Sections. A Section need not use all the slots assigned to it but it may not use more.

Number of members	Number of sessions
50–75	1
76–125	2
126–200	3
201–499	4
500 +	5

Three additional spaces in the Congress will be reserved for intersectional panels. The program chairs will decide which proposals will go to the next Congress if the number submitted is greater than the number of allotted spaces.

The intersectional panels must abide by the following characteristics: (1) the theme must be related to the Congress's theme/name; (2) at least two Sections need to participate; and (3) they must have a minimum of three papers and a maximum of five. Any participating Section's chair can submit the intersectional panel into the system, and the participants are only required to have an active membership in one of the participating Sections.

Section Program Formats

Sections are encouraged to hold half of their allotted Congress sessions in the form of alternative formats, i.e., not the traditional panel format. These may be roundtables, the addition of a special speaker, or an author-meets-critics session (focusing on a book relevant to Section members). Roundtables provide an ideal opportunity for dialogue, for discussion of ideas before they are in article-ready form, and for more people to be involved in the program.

Section Receptions

Sections may host receptions for their members during the Congress. A room for a reception can be reserved by the Section chair before the proposal submission deadline. Arrangements for catering must be made by the Sections through the Sections and Logistics Coordinator.

If Sections use an alternate venue from the main Congress venue for their receptions, the catering expenses must be paid by the individuals making the arrangements and will be reimbursed from the Section's restricted account or from outside funds raised by the Section. (For reimbursement from Section funds, the Section must provide the Secretariat a budget before the reception takes place and all the receipts when the reimbursement is requested, within one month after it). A reception does not count toward the program's session allocation.

Co-sponsored Sessions among Sections

Sections may choose to co-sponsor sessions. The session will count toward the allotment of one Section or the other. The participating members may be from either co-sponsoring Section. One arrangement is to have co-sponsorship over two Congresses, with the joint session counting toward one Section in one Congress and toward the other Section at the subsequent Congress.

Sections' Chairs Meetings

Throughout the year, various Section chair meetings will be held with the Sections Sub-Committee to discuss issues of mutual concern. One of these meetings will be held during the International Congress. The meeting will be chaired by the Vice-President of LASA. The Sub-Committee has advisory not discretionary power.

The EC has ultimate authority on matters pertaining to Sections.

Section Awards

Each Section may give up to ten awards per Congress. Section funds are permitted to be used towards the awards.

Research and Training Projects

Sections of the Association may desire collectively to undertake special projects (research or training) of interest to their memberships. As indicated earlier in this manual, such projects may receive Association sponsorship only if they are of major and direct concern to the Association as a whole.

If Section-initiated projects are approved by the Sections Sub-Committee, the Secretariat will cooperate in such matters as budget preparation, negotiations with funding agencies, administration of funds, and the sharing of responsibilities with Section representatives. If Section-initiated projects are not approved by the Sections Sub-Committee, they may not be undertaken in the name of LASA and they may not have LASA sponsorship. In all cases where Sections contemplate seeking Association sponsorship, it is advisable that Association officers be consulted during the preliminary planning of a project.

Relationship of Sections to the Association

The Association encourages a high level of Section activity. Activities that do not affect the rest of the Association's membership, such as the awarding of a prize, may be handled entirely by a Section. Activities that have considerable ramification for the entire Association membership, that involve LASA financial obligations of any magnitude, or that affect the activities of other Sections and their membership will remain in the purview of the Association and be the responsibility of the Association and its administrative and committee structure. There are, however, a number of areas in which Sections may not act without the permission of the LASA Secretariat and/or the Sections Sub-committee:

1. No statement may be circulated by a Section in the name of LASA, nor may a Section commit LASA funds.
2. No Section may spend more funds than it has in reserve in the account managed by the Secretariat). Except in extreme circumstances, all Sections should have a minimum reserve of \$100. The LASA Secretariat administers the deposits and withdrawals of each Section; it is responsible for releasing funds requested by a Section chair or treasurer, provided that the funds are to be used in conformity with LASA guidelines.
3. Sections may not make commitments to other groups, apply for funds, or in other ways affect the constituent relationships between Sections of the Association without prior consultation with the LASA President and the Sections Sub-Committee of the Association.

Coordination

The Sections Sub-Committee of the Executive Council of LASA serves as a liaison to the Sections. The Sections Sub-Committee is composed of the Vice-President of LASA, acting as chair, two additional Executive Council members and the Sections and Logistics Coordinator of LASA's Secretariat.

The Sections Sub-Committee may:

1. Raise issues with the EC on behalf of Sections and act as the Sections' voice at meetings.
2. Interpret EC decisions to the Sections.

In order to facilitate the administrative coordination between Section activities and other aspects of LASA, one member of the LASA Secretariat, Ghisselle Blanco, serves as Sections and Logistics Coordinator. She may be reached at ghisselle@lasaweb.org.

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