

openEHR Specifications Editorial Committee (SEC)

Terms of Reference

Amendment Record

Version	Who	Date	Description
2.0.0	openEHR International Board	13 May 2022	Reviewed and approved.
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1.0.0	K Atalag MD (U Auckland, NZ), R Chen MD (Cambio, SE), G Klein MD (Örebro University School of Business), I McNicoll MD (FreshEhr, UK), T Nordheim Alme MD (DIPS, NO), S Iancu (Code24, NL) T Beale (openEHR, UK)	19 Dec 2014	Initial writing, based on openEHR ToR template and original ToR material from Heather Grain and Evelyn Hovenga, plus general review.

1 Definitions

In this document, the following specific terms are used:

Term	Meaning
openEHR International Board	Refers to the top board of openEHR International, formally known as the openEHR CIC (Community Interest Company) Board
PR	Problem Report, often known as an 'issue report'.
CR	Change Request. Usually created in response to one or more PRs.
member of openEHR	<i>A member of openEHR</i> is any individual who is either: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a currently subscribed individual or professional member of openEHR OR• an employee of a currently subscribed Industry or Organisational Partner of openEHR.

2 Introduction

This document constitutes the formal Terms of Reference for the **openEHR Specification Program** Board, known as the Specifications Editorial Committee (SEC), as approved by the openEHR International Board.

The intention of these Terms of Reference is to provide a clear basis for:

- openness to new participation;
- representation of stakeholders;
- a meritocratic membership model;
- quality decision making;
- transparency of deliverables and activity to the outside world;
- a defined relationship with the openEHR International Board;
- professional conduct.

This document does not seek to define working structures, plans or communications specific to the work of the Program; the latter are understood to be the delegated business of the Program Board.

3 Specification Program

3.1 Structure

The Specifications Program structure consists of the following entities:

- The **Specifications Editorial Committee (SEC)** is the governing Board of the openEHR Specifications Program, representing major stakeholders;
- The **Specifications Editorial Committee Expert Panel (SEC Expert Panel)** is an additional group of experts invited by the SEC, which has access to internal communications, and write access to the SEC tool environment, but has no formal responsibilities or voting rights.

3.2 Relationship with openEHR International Board

The SEC and its Expert Panel organisationally subordinate to the openEHR International Board, which gives it authority for running the Specification Program. The SEC is required to report to the openEHR International Board

(see Section 10); the SEC must also obtain approval for proposed changes to these Terms of Reference (see Section 13). In matters of misconduct, the openEHR Board has final authority (Sections 5.6 and 7.6).

3.3 Aims

The openEHR Specification Program is the part of openEHR that develops, manages and maintains specifications and their computable expressions, in support of the openEHR goal to enable the development and deployment of open, interoperable and computable patient-centric health information systems.

The responsibilities of the Program are to:

- a) Develop the specifications library and maintain its quality;
- b) Ensure the utility and relevance of the specifications to the larger e-health community;
- c) Work with *de jure* standards development organisations (SDOs) to improve the coherence and robustness of formal standards and reduce their cost of use.

The goals of the Specification Program include:

- a) *quality in health information*: to enable data quality, validity, reliability, consistency and currency of clinical data across the data lifecycle from creation to archival, and across enterprises and sectors;
- b) *support for industry technologies*: to actively support widely used ICT technologies e.g. major programming languages and frameworks;
- c) *de jure standards integration*: to provide means for the specifications to be useful to users of related de jure standards, e.g. by providing additional transformation or mapping specifications and/or implementation guides;
- d) *to manage impact of change*: to ensure the preservation of validity of clinical data created according to previous releases of the openEHR specifications.

The Program achieves its goals in the following way:

- a) by developing new technical specifications where required by the community;
- b) by accepting and adapting donated specifications;
- c) by managing and maintaining the openEHR specifications in a coherent way, so that they satisfy the needs of production systems/solutions developers, application and data users (including patients), and user organisations;
- d) by making all specifications openly available and free to use, under liberal open source / content licenses.

4 Specifications Editorial Committee (SEC)

4.1 Definition

The Specification Program is managed by the [Specifications Editorial Committee \(SEC\)](#). The SEC membership consists of openEHR members who are qualified and who have an interest in maintaining the specifications into the future on behalf of the community. The SEC aims to be as representative as possible of the interests of major stakeholders, including vendors, healthcare professionals and government.

The SEC membership is posted online at <http://www.openehr.org/programs/specification> at an easily accessible location, known as the *SEC home page*.

4.2 Responsibilities

The responsibilities of the Specifications Editorial Committee are:

- 1) Maintenance of the Roadmap, i.e. set of future releases, entailing:
 - a) the identification & creation of new specifications;
 - b) the definition of new releases;

- c) the prioritisation of Change Requests (CRs) and Problem Reports (PRs);
- d) the assignment of CRs and PRs to future releases;
- 2) PR/CR processing:
 - a) the review of PRs;
 - b) the raising of CRs either in response to PRs or de novo, according to perceived need;
 - c) implementation of CR changes in the specifications;
 - d) promotion of specifications through the development lifecycle;
- 3) Communication to the wider openEHR community of:
 - a) requests for technical input;
 - b) roadmap changes;
 - c) CR reviews;
 - d) completed CRs;
 - e) new Releases;
 - f) changes to governance documents;
 - g) changes to Specifications Editorial Committee;
- 4) Publishing of the specifications and related materials;
- 5) Risk management:
 - a) identification and management of risks related to planned work;
 - b) development of appropriate alternative paths / solutions;
- 6) Reporting to the openEHR International Board:
 - a) routine progress;
 - b) risks to planned work and possible alternatives;
 - c) resource requirements.

In addition, the openEHR International Board may advise of requirements for releases and prioritisation of work.

4.3 Size

The minimum membership of the Specifications Editorial Committee is determined by the following needs:

- a) to have sufficient representation of the interests of implementers;
- b) to have sufficient members with health informatics expertise.

An absolute minimum of five (5) is required. Beyond this, it is intended that there are members representing:

- a) other major openEHR implementations (including academic);
- b) other major stakeholders, particularly government e-health programmes, and the healthcare sector.

It is assumed that clinical expertise will be represented via membership of the SEC Experts Panel by current or previous clinical professionals.

Maximum membership is limited to 40. This limit is considered to be the maximum size of an effective online or face to face meeting.

4.4 Co-chairs

The Specifications Editorial Committee has 1-3 elected co-chairs who facilitate the work of the committee. The exact number is based on practical needs, and will normally increase with the size of the SEC.

The responsibilities of the co-chairs are as follows:

- a) to plan and run SEC meetings and perform appropriate follow-up of tasks;
- b) to facilitate the execution of the work of the SEC, mainly by managing completion of modification of task deadlines;
- c) to report progress and issues to the openEHR International board;
- d) to arbitrate in case of disputes.

4.5 Length of membership

There is no limit on duration of membership of the SEC.

4.6 Establishment

The SEC is established from a historic membership of the Architecture Review Board (ARB).

5 SEC Operation

5.1 Basis

The SEC operates in its steady state according to the meritocracy approach established by Apache Foundation and other large open source organisations. Accordingly, new members are added via acceptance by the existing SEC membership, according to the rules defined in this document.

5.2 New Members

Candidacy for membership of the SEC is by nomination. New nominations may be made in the following situations:

- a) The Specification Program advertises within the community for a new member, e.g. due to a resignation, or need for more human resource;
- b) Community members, typically representing a newly joined organisation may self-nominate at any time.

A new nominee must satisfy the SEC Member Qualifications described below.

5.3 Candidature

The candidate should supply a short CV and other qualifying information providing their:

- a) statement of interest in working on the Specification Program;
- b) statement of commitment of time & availability;
- c) statement of qualifications, according to Section 6;
- d) statement of known conflicts of interest;
- e) statement of current openEHR member status.

The SEC may choose to verify the candidate's openEHR membership, since it is a pre-requisite for SEC membership.

5.4 Election

The election process is as follows:

- a) A new nomination is sent to the co-chairs of the Specifications Editorial Committee, who will publish it within the committee.
- b) A period of up to 28 days may follow to allow for assessment by the current membership. During this period:
 - i. the candidate may be asked for more information;
 - ii. the candidate may be asked to participate in an online or face to face interview;
 - iii. the nomination may be rejected on formal grounds, such as lack of qualification;
- c) If the nomination is not rejected, a formal vote is taken, in which the new member is accepted into the Program based on a simple majority vote of the existing members, with no objections.

5.5 Resignation

An existing Program member may resign at any time from the SEC. In this case, the fact and effective date of resignation will be published, and the published Program membership updated accordingly.

If the resignation is of an SEC co-chair, nominations for a new co-chair are called for, and the SEC rules for co-chair election described below followed.

5.6 Termination

A SEC member will be asked to resign in the case of pertinent conflicts of interest.

An existing member who has been referred to the openEHR International Board by the SEC for disruptive or other unprofessional behaviour, according to the [openEHR Code of Conduct](#), may be removed by the openEHR International Board following attempts at arbitration.

Where termination leaves a vacancy, the same rules as for resignations are followed.

5.7 Co-chair Elections

Co-chair positions last 2 years. Elections of co-chair(s) by the Program Board are held every 2 years at a fixed date, as well as in the case of resignation of a co-chair. At election time, the positions of co-chairs who have spent 2 years in the position and/or who have resigned are considered vacant. A vacating co-chair may re-nominate or be nominated for a successive term.

The co-chair election process is as follows:

- Existing co-chairs formally indicate resignation to the SEC;
- During the period prior to new co-chairs being elected, a previous co-chair (or his/her nominee) volunteers to execute the election process;
- If the SEC wishes to agree a change in the number of co-chairs, it should do so and announce the intended number;
- Nominations for co-chairs are requested within the SEC;
- A period of up to 14 days, by consensus, is allowed for gathering of nominations;
- The nominations are announced and posted clearly within the SEC;
- The number of open co-chair positions is the originally announced number or the number of nominees, whichever is lower;
- At the close of the nomination period, a vote is run either in a meeting or asynchronously; in the latter case, up to 7 days may be allowed for votes to be received;
- A separate vote is made by each SEC member for each open co-chair position;
- Votes are tallied for the nominees and the new co-chairs are declared as the nominees with the highest number of votes according to the required number of co-chairs;
- The new co-chairs are announced publicly and indicated on the SEC home page.

Election to each co-chair position requires a 2/3 majority SEC membership vote.

A system of alternating / rotating terms may be used to spread the workload and experience across the SEC membership, although this is not strictly required.

6 SEC Member Qualifications

A new candidate for membership of the SEC **must be a member of openEHR** (as per Definitions section) and should demonstrate the following qualifications.

6.1 Skills and Knowledge

The following qualifications are required for membership of the SEC.

- a) An understanding and acceptance of the [openEHR mission](#);
- b) Health informatics background: a demonstrable knowledge of key health informatics areas such as EHR, interoperability, terminology, clinical environments, public health, medical research;

- c) Technical competency: a knowledge of the modelling / language formalisms used in the specifications;
- d) openEHR experience: at least 1 year of active participation in the openEHR community.

6.2 Commitment

The following commitment is agreed to.

- a) An expressed interest in actively working on the specifications;
- b) Agreement to work as an expert for the aims of the Program rather than the goals of their employer;
- c) Availability to attend ideally 70% of calls / meetings over the year;
- d) Availability to contribute sufficient time to perform the work, generally a few hours a month;
- e) Maintenance of openEHR membership.

It is up to the SEC to agree the engagement mode of any particular member, which may be more or less asynchronous, depending on time-zone and other factors.

6.3 Conflicts of Interest

Any potential conflicts of interest must be declared by the candidate, and the candidate must agree to indicate any such conflict of interest in discussions and decision-making processes of the Program in which they are involved.

7 SEC Expert Panel

7.1 Definition

The SEC Expert Panel is an adjunct group of experts invited by the SEC to provide expert input and guidance.

7.2 Size

There is no formal size limit on the SEC Expert Panel, but it is expected that it be limited to a number such that the total number of SEC + SEC Experts Panel members may comfortably participate in calls and meetings.

One of the purposes of the SEC Expert Panel is to include members with professional clinical background who may advice the SEC on use cases, priorities and other domain specifics.

7.3 Nomination

Individuals are nominated to the SEC Expert Panel by a SEC member on the basis of specifically recognised expertise relevant to the work of the SEC.

7.4 Candidature

A nominee becomes a candidate for invitation following a SEC discussion and general consensus, or a vote if requested by any member. The candidate is asked to provide:

- a) a CV or similar description of qualifications;
- b) a declaration of any conflicts of interest;
- c) a declaration that he or she is willing to participate on an ad hoc basis, including review of specific Problem Reports (PRs), Change Requests (CRs) and strategic questions to do with specifications that are in the area of the candidate's expertise.

Following a successful vote, the candidate is invited to join the SEC Expert Panel.

7.5 Resignation

A SEC Expert Panel member may resign at any time.

7.6 Termination

A SEC Expert Panel member will be asked to resign in the case of pertinent conflicts of interest.

An existing member who has been referred to the openEHR International Board by the SEC for disruptive or other unprofessional behaviour, according to the [openEHR Code of Conduct](#), may be removed by the openEHR International Board following attempts at arbitration.

7.7 Length of Membership

There is no time limit on SEC Expert Panel membership.

7.8 Rights

SEC Expert Panel members have access to all the same materials and resources as the SEC, including private discussion groups and modification rights to Change Requests, private wiki pages and internal documents.

SEC Expert Panel members do not participate in formal voting, including PR progression or CR acceptance.

7.9 Responsibilities

The primary responsibility of members of the SEC Expert Panel is to participate in particular SEC work items to which their expertise is relevant, including review and/or proposal of changes to specifications, technical directions and so on.

8 Decision-making

Decisions are taken by the SEC on two categories of item: governance and routine work items (i.e. items relating to deliverables). Governance questions require a 2/3 majority vote, while routine work items require a simple majority.

8.1 Voting Rules

A *simple majority* is defined as:

- a) For an odd number of members, the integral number above the total $\times 0.5$, e.g. 4 out of 7, 6 out of 11 etc;
- b) For an even number of members, half the member count plus one, e.g. 4 out of 6, 6 out of 10 etc.

A *2/3 majority* is defined as:

- a) The integral number above $2/3 \times$ number of members.

For the purposes of this document, the term *majority* is always with respect to the total SEC membership, rather than the number of members present at a particular meeting or call. This may mean that although a meeting or call has quorum, it may not have a majority in attendance in situations where a vote is needed. In such cases, a vote may be run asynchronously (see Formal Vote Process below).

8.2 Quorum

For the purposes of formal voting on routine matters requiring simple majority, a regular meeting or call is regarded as quorate with a simple majority of SEC members present.

For meetings or calls whose objective is to undertake a vote requiring 2/3 majority, 2/3 of the membership is required to constitute a quorum.

8.3 Consensus Process

Decisions on change and release management are primarily made by consensus, i.e. agreement of a quorum of members with no serious objections voiced. Where there are objections, the following process will be used:

- a) the co-chairs will manage a more formal round of discussions which seek to expose the points of difference and disagreement;
- b) If this fails to result in consensus, the co-chairs may initiate either a formal vote (see below) or an open community review of the issue with a fixed timeline, whichever appears most appropriate;
- c) In the case of a community review, the results will be the basis of a further round of SEC discussion aimed at finding a consensus position;
- d) In the case of a formal vote, the procedure in Section 8.4 is followed.

Where there is any remaining dispute, it can be referred by the SEC co-chairs to the openEHR International Board for resolution. This may require an extraordinary meeting / conference.

8.4 Formal Vote Process

Sometimes a formal vote will be required. This can only occur when there is a quorum of 2/3 of the SEC members available in a face to face meeting or live teleconference / webconference. The procedure is as follows:

- a) a motion is tabled;
- b) the motion is seconded;
- c) votes are gathered;
- d) vote by proxy is allowed, supported by a written confirmation (e.g. email) from the absent voter;
- e) the motion is considered passed if a simple majority of the SEC membership is obtained.

Asynchronous voting may be used once a motion is tabled and seconded in a meeting. A period of at least 7 days and no more than 28 days is stated for the gathering of asynchronous votes.

9 Meetings

9.1 Venue

Most work of the SEC is performed via teleconferences, and asynchronously (primarily via the online issue tracker). Online meetings of the SEC are held by teleconference at least once a quarter.

9.2 Frequency

Calls / meetings of the SEC should be held on average at least once a month. This may vary for reasons of holidays, external events etc.

9.3 Chairing

Calls and meetings are chaired by any available co-chair, by agreement among co-chairs. A proxy nominated from the SEC membership may chair a call/meeting where the need arises.

9.4 Note-taking

Minutes or appropriate notes will be taken for each call and meeting, including agenda, main discussions, decisions and actions. These should be made visible on e.g. a dedicated area on the openEHR Confluence site or a similar location such as Discourse.

9.5 Guest Attendance

Guests may be invited to calls and meetings by consensus of the SEC.

10 Reporting

A report of Specifications Program activity to the openEHR International Board is to be provided by the SEC co-chairs quarterly as well as on request. Other issues, including identified risks to progress and resourcing problems are to be reported to the openEHR International Board in a timely fashion.

11 Deliverables

11.1 Identification

The specifications under management by the Program are uniquely identified by name, and grouped under *Components*, each of which corresponds to a distinct topic area, e.g. Reference Model, the Archetype Model, Querying, Conformance and CDS. **A Component is defined as a collection of deliverables that is separately releasable.**

The definitive list of Components at any time is shown on the [specifications site home page](#).

Each specification within a Component consists of:

- a) a definitive publishable documentary form, typically in PDF and/or HTML format;
- b) the source materials required to create the publishable specification;
- c) a definitive publishable computable form, typically a UML model file, parser grammar(s) etc;
- d) potentially, formal educational materials accompanying the specification, including example uses and files.

11.2 Change Management

The specifications are required to be change-managed and released within their owning Components, e.g. 'Reference Model' etc, each of which has its own publicly visible online Change Tracker, enabling community and public participation.

11.3 Problem Reporting

A global Specifications Problem Tracker is required to be available to the whole community for reporting issues with the specifications.

12 Professional Conduct

SEC members are required to respect the [openEHR Code of Conduct](#).

In order for the SEC development and decision-making processes to run efficiently, and to provide an enjoyable experience for participants, contributions should follow the following guidelines:

- a) contributions to discussions and debates should be based on considerations (e.g. technical, clinical) relevant to the matter at hand;
- b) debates (online and face to face) should be conducted in a professional and scientific manner, with a willingness to follow the governance principles stated here, and in cases of dispute, to accept consensus, votes, and the outcome of any arbitration.

In the event of a member's participation causing problems, the matter should be referred to in the first instance to the co-chairs of the Specifications Editorial Committee, and if necessary, an extraordinary meeting or meetings called for the purpose of arbitration. Arbitration will proceed with the Specifications Editorial Committee. If an agreement cannot be reached this way, the matter will be referred to the openEHR International Board.

13 Evolution of these Terms of Reference

The governance structures and procedures described above will inevitably need to change over time. The process for proposing and executing changes is as follows:

- a) A change can be proposed by anyone within the Specification Program. This request should include a statement of the problem being experienced with the current governance;
- b) Requests for change are welcome from the wider community, but need to be advocated for by an existing SEC member;
- c) The openEHR International Board can also request a change;
- d) The SEC co-chairs undertake to refine the request into a specific change in the rules that addresses the problem.
- e) This is then published within the SEC for review for a stated period, e.g. 28 days;
- f) Further refinement may be carried out on the back of the review;
- g) When no further modifications are proposed, the SEC holds a vote to accept the modified version of the governance document; this must pass by a 2/3 majority;
- h) A final detailed proposal is presented to the openEHR International board by the SEC co-chairs.
- i) The openEHR International Board will notify its acceptance or otherwise within a period of 14 days;
- j) If accepted, the change is publicly notified to take effect on a certain date, at which time the governance provisions in these Terms of Reference are modified accordingly;
- k) If not accepted, an explanation is provided as a basis for further adjustments by the SEC, after which the new version may be re-submitted.

The openEHR International Board can unilaterally request a change to these Terms of Reference, usually in order to ensure alignment of governance provisions of the Program with the organisation as a whole. Such changes may be made and accepted without undertaking the review process described above.