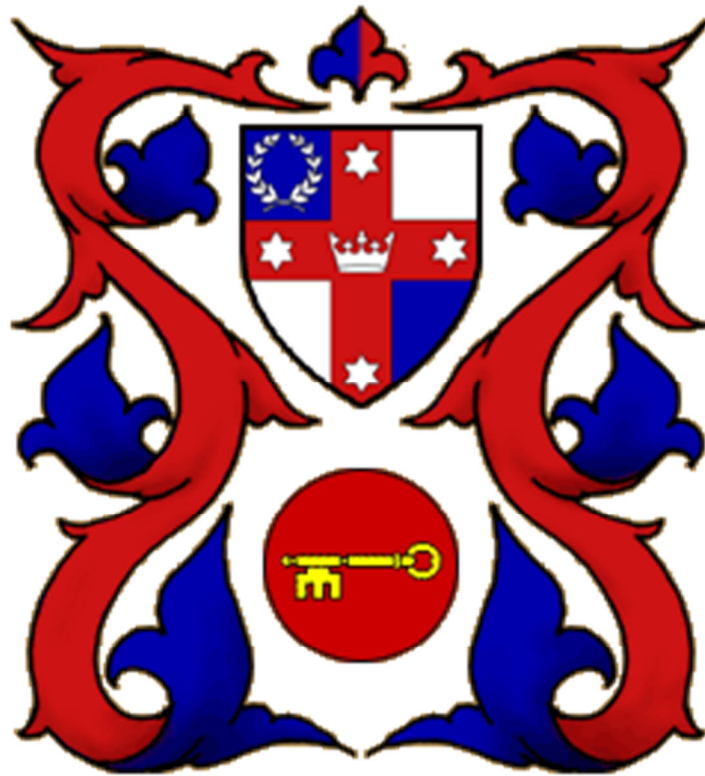


Kingdom of Lochac

New Seneschal's Handbook



A helpful Introduction to being a Seneschal

Version 2.2, June 2021

Contact: seneschal@lochac.sca.org

<http://seneschal.lochac.sca.org>

Introduction

Thank you for being willing to take on the role of group Seneschal, and welcome!

This guide should get you up to speed with being a group Seneschal in the Kingdom of Lochac.

Your first step is to read the **Web Instructions for New Group Seneschals!** It's near the very end of this handbook. It puts you in touch with the rest of the Kingdom, and those who need to know about you.

Just as importantly, there is a forum -- the College of Seneschals mailing list -- where you can ask questions and float new ideas: <http://lochac.sca.org/mailman/listinfo/cos> - join this as soon as your appointment is confirmed, even before handover.

As you progress, you may find you need more specific information -- there are many resources available to you outlined in this guide.

Help is also readily available from the Kingdom Seneschal, Deputy Seneschal or the Seneschal of your parent group.

Rules to live by:

- **Don't Panic!** Someone can help - start by asking your parent group's Seneschal
- **Temperance or Restraint** - by practicing self-control and avoiding extremes
- **Prudence or Good Sense** - by making sensible judgments about reasons for actions, with due regard to context and appropriateness -- both for yourself and others
- **Fortitude or Courage** - by exhibiting forbearance, endurance and the ability to deal evenly with fear, doubt, and intimidation of friends, acquaintances and others
- **Justice or Fairness** - by always doing your best to make a proper judgment regarding individual interests, rights and appropriate rewards
- **Patience or Perseverance** - by enduring difficult circumstances without becoming annoyed or upset -- especially when faced with delay, uncertainty or frustration.

and finally:

Human error is common.

Slackness too, sometimes.

Misunderstanding is easy, especially via email or on social media-- messages can and do go astray or get overlooked.

Whereas deliberate ill intent is rare.

Therefore, quoting Napoleon Bonaparte:

"Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence"

Care and Feeding of Your Group

Under SCA rules, a group Seneschal:

- serves as the principal mundane legal representative of the SCA within your group - you have final responsibility on things like whether and when events happen, and who stewards them. Stewards are effectively your deputies for the duration of an event's lifetime, until it is done *and* reported back.
- receives reports from all group officers on the status of their office - ultimately, if they are failing in their office, you need to be helping them, and/or communicating with their next-up superior about finding a replacement
- makes such reports as may be required by the Crown - which in Lochac is every quarter - see <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/reports> for details

Your primary task is to foster the group's operation and development, and make sure that it is soundly based, well run, well behaved, growing and connected to the rest of the SCA.

You do not have to slavishly imitate the groups around you. Work to the strengths and interests of your current and intended populace. But do be mindful of the broader Lochac and SCA rules, customs and culture so that your group and its members feel like they are part of the Kingdom. And do operate in a way which fosters good, robust, inclusive governance and the group's long-term growth and interests.

Work with your members and officers to develop events and/or activities to keep people enthused and give them a reason to be active. These activities will also play a big part in giving new members something to do, and if your schedule includes some public activities, promotional work or demos there will be new members, which *every* group needs to survive.

Keep an eye on the group website, any social media sites and mailing list/s, as those will be major communication channels. Use them and, in the case of the website, ensure that they are accurate and up to date.

Touch base with all your members as often as possible, electronically if you can't do it (or never see them) in person. Sharing this task out amongst the other officers or deputies may be best.

Work closely with your group officers to ensure they are meeting their office requirements and make sure they know clearly what those role and requirements are - whether reporting, attending Council meetings, training replacements and potential replacements, and encouraging the populace to grow and learn.

Try to keep a constant focus on recruitment and retention - the two secrets to survival and growth. A group which remains dependent on one set of officers for more than 2-3 years is likely to stumble, and some may even fail. Remember that the group needs to survive when people leave the area, lose interest, have a baby, get a new job, walk under a bus... To allow for that, you always need to be finding new people and bringing them into the fold and up to speed.

For lots of help in both these areas, see the Recruitment and Retention resources at <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources/#officer>

Make sure you keep a good record of just about everything, and encourage all officers to do the same. Getting copies of their reports helps to keep a record and most groups table them at their regular business or officers meetings. (Be smart – get them to email their reports to you in advance, so the minutes-taker can just paste them in!)

Don't forget about the required reporting to Kingdom through the various officer chains – in your case, that's to the Kingdom Seneschal via the online reporting form detailed below. DO publish your meeting agendas to your group in advance and their minutes soon after the meetings – on the mailing list and website, for example. This helps a lot in creating a transparent, active group, with good buy-in when tasks need doing – and when the time comes for offices to change hands.

After you, the most important officer is the group's Reeve – its financial officer. Always aim to have the group's finances operated in a legal, clear and very transparent manner – meaning that everyone in the group has access to regular financial reports at Council meetings and also via their published minutes. Reeves need to report quarterly to Kingdom. If your Reeve is falling down, find a way to help them, or urgently talk to Kingdom Exchequer - exchequer@lochac.sca.org - about finding a replacement.

After the Reeve, the most important role may well be your Hospitaller/Chatelaine – see the above notes on recruitment and retention, and support their efforts avidly!

Finally, always check and double-check what is required at every stage and make sure it is done in a timely manner. **Use some kind of reminder system to help!**

Examples:

OneNote for Windows, Evernote for Mac or Windows, Google Calendar...

Remember, there are no dumb questions and attention to detail is your friend.

A Quick Introduction to the Art of Being a Seneschal

Firstly, thanks for being willing to step up as Seneschal – without help from people like you, neither the Kingdom nor the SCA would exist. Being a Seneschal can be tough at times, with a very real workload - but it can also be remarkably rewarding to see your group functioning well and people having fun and doing wonderful things.

There are many acceptable ways to approach the task of serving as a local Seneschal but some are more successful than others. Below are a few things you may wish to consider that will make your task just a bit easier and help things to run relatively smoothly.

Handover

Hopefully your predecessor will have given you a good briefing on any current issues, provided you with useful resources and all relevant documents/files and made it easy to take up your office. To be sure of that, see the Office Handover Checklist:

<https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/handover>

Sometimes long-serving officers are simply looking forward to a break, so don't be surprised if this doesn't happen – try to get the information any way you can, and be sure that you help your successor when you come to step down. The Handover Checklist above should give you a good idea of what to expect – and what to offer your successor.

Don't forget to appoint a “Drop dead” deputy as soon as possible – it can be the outgoing Seneschal for a few months if they are willing, but ensure you always have one and provide their contact details in your quarterly reports to the Kingdom Seneschal.

Update Information

Contact the following and give them your details (e.g. SCA and mundane name, phone numbers, email address, physical/postal address):

- Kingdom Seneschal seneschal@lochac.sca.org – typically by the process described in section 3 of **Web instructions for new Group Seneschals** below
- Regnum editor regnum@lochac.sca.org
- Next-up Seneschal if you are in a new or dependent group, e.g. Canton
- B&B if you're in a Barony or Canton
- Dependent group Seneschals if you have any – Cantons, Colleges and incipient groups you may be looking after
- Village leaders of any Hamlets associated with your group
- Your other group officers, especially Reeve and Webwright or Chronicler

Organise with your Reeve to change the signatories on the bank account.

Get any files the previous Seneschal may have – both paper and electronic!

Get warranted. Contact the Lochac Seneschal and have them update the Seneschal database so that you are warranted for the next two years. You'll be asked to sign in to the database and update your group's Seneschal contact information (see **Web instructions for new Group Seneschals**). Do it!

Join the College of Seneschals emailing list if you aren't already on it!

Check out the Resources

Kingdom Seneschal Website: <http://seneschal.lochac.sca.org> (basically, you can start here for everything you need, especially <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/resources>)

CoS mailing list: <http://lochac.sca.org/mailman/listinfo/cos> - join immediately!

Office Handover Checklist: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/handover>

Lochac Procedure Manual: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/lochac-procedures-manual>
(how Kingdom Law is are interpreted and put into action)

Lochac Kingdom Law: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/laws-of-lochac/>

SCA Corpora: <http://www.sca.org/docs/pdf/govdocs.pdf>

SCA Society Seneschals Handbook: linked right below Corpora at:
<http://socsen.sca.org/kingdoms-and-seneschals/seneschal-resources/>

SCA Australia Ltd: <http://sca.org.au/board> (look for local policies, e.g. financial and publishing, which override US rules)

SCA NZ Inc (as above): <http://sca.org.nz>

Lochac Information Guide: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/lochac-information-guide> - where to find more good stuff!

Masonry Deputy Website <http://masonry.lochac.sca.org> (maintains the Kingdom's web servers and mailing lists – contact for support when your Webwright can't help)

Hospitaller Website <http://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org/> (resources/articles on recruitment etc – don't miss the Recruitment Tips and Retention Tips documents)

SCA online demo: <http://scademo.com>

The Provost's Handbook: <http://jducoeur.org/Justin/provhand.html> (loads of handy recruitment ideas, just ignore the Borough stuff at the top)

You'll also find more recruitment ideas in the Recruitment and Growth section of the New Groups Guide: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/new-groups-guide>

How to apologise well (it's usually fairly important that it means something to the person on the other end): <https://quartzzy.qz.com/1132594/this-is-how-to-apologize-like-you-actually-mean-it/>

The importance of kindness and generosity:
<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/06/happily-ever-after/372573/>

Finally, get this book from the library or order it online. The \$30 or so it may cost could save you and your fellows tens or hundreds of hours of sweat and strife in the long run:

The Zen of Groups - a Handbook for People Meeting With a Purpose

Start Off by Touching Base

Get in touch with all your officers. Do this individually or as a group; formally at Council meetings or informally at potluck dinners. This gives you all a chance to talk, come up with ideas, support each other, socialise and vent. It will help you get a good feel for what is happening.

In a Canton or especially Barony, talk with your B&B. You'll be liaising a lot with them as, between you, you represent the legal mundane authority and the in-game authority. It helps to ensure that you have good communications and work well together, understanding where your different lines of authority start and end.

Touch base with sub-group Seneschals and any nearby group Seneschals and B&Bs. Introduce yourself, find out what is in the pipeline on a local level. Figure out when their next group meeting is on and make an effort to go or be represented – this can be quite important.

Check out previous meeting minutes and help ensure that any on-going issues continue to be managed. This may mean, chasing any outstanding payments or deposits that need to happen, looking at what events are just about to be run and make sure they are on track etc. You'll need to be doing this for your whole term – it's a key part of your role to ensure that the group properly *actually finishes* the tasks it begins.

Keep Communicating

As Seneschal, you are likely to be the main conduit for the more mundane communications that will help ensure your group keeps running efficiently. That means you take responsibility for ensuring things happen, such as announcing when and where group meetings are being held and the agenda and minutes for each one; seeing that calls for Officer volunteers are made and the appointments process followed; checking that event stewards have the resources they need to run successful events.

The more you communicate, the more you model good communications for others. By asking open-ended questions in public communications you give them "permission" to reply and communicate themselves, and thus take part in the life and evolution of the group.

Make the time to answer communications you get. If you really are tied up, see if you can delegate - or at least quickly let people know that you will be getting back to them - and make sure you do!

You will be expected to report several times a year:

- Reports to Council – monthly, if that's your group's meeting cycle
- Domesday report (this is normally filed by your Reeve, but you should see it first!)
- Quarterly report to Kingdom
- End of office term report – this is for your successor - your most recent report to Kingdom should be a good starting point for this

Keep an eye on your officers to ensure they are reporting appropriately.

The **most** important reporting that you and your officers do will be **to your group** – certainly at Council meetings. But also via the published minutes and, more importantly,

via Meaningful and Interesting Announcements to the rest of your group. Keep them in the loop, and you'll have a stronger group.

This may help you think about and structure your communications for maximum effect: <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/constructivecommunications-lots2020-bartholomew/>

Delegate

Ensure that your officers and stewards know that they are expected to do their jobs. You can help by seeing that they have the resources they need to do so. Be ready to provide advice or suggest suitable people to assist them, whether locals or officers up the line.

Make sure you file a copy of all your reports. Keep backups of electronic information!

Be Organised

Use a diary (either online or physical) to keep track of events, practices, meetings, deadlines, officer appointment periods and reporting. Take note of important regional and Kingdom events too. If you have a computer or phone which you use all the time, have them remind you when important deadlines are due!

Use the standard office@group.lochac.sca.org public email addresses for you and your officers. Sticking to that format for everyone saves so much time down the line!

Get a lever arch file or clear file to keep track of paperwork associated with events and activities.

Ensure that minutes of meetings are kept, noting decisions taken, people responsible and relevant deadlines. Make sure these are freely available - such as by posting them on the group website or mailing list.

Join the College of Seneschals mailing list to keep in touch with other Seneschals. It provides a valuable source of information and ideas.

See **Check out the Resources** above.

Prioritise

Try to prioritise any issues that occur so that the greatest attention is paid to the more important issues; sort tasks into "must do today", "must do this week" and "must do this month" - and keep to it!

Regularly review your tasks list and upcoming deadlines.

Delegate tasks if need be, rather than putting them off. This provides a chance to evaluate and/or train possible successors. Monitor how issues progress to ensure they are dealt with.

Acclimatise

As Seneschal, you are responsible for ensuring that what's happening meets the various SCA requirements as laid out in the governing documents, Kingdom Law and (above all)

applicable mundane laws. Generally this means things cannot go ahead in the group without your endorsement.

As the group's authority figure you will need to get used to a certain amount of power and, conversely, lack of power. The appropriate and reasonable wielding of this perceived power is arguably the greatest challenge you will face as a Seneschal.

Support your officers in their endeavours, especially those that will have obvious long term benefits to the group, such as the Hospitaller/Chatelaine.

Make sure everybody gets the opportunity to express what they want/need/feel about what is going on, and look for outcomes that all can agree on. Or at least those that don't leave people disgruntled. Find out what people want and also find out what they really need - it helps in finding the middle ground.

Always remember to ask nicely, and ensure you *always* give genuine and appropriate thanks or recognition where it is due. Make sure you note who's doing the work and achieving things and write people up for their good deeds in your reports. It's a very good idea to write award recommendations to the Crown too.

As group seneschal you represent the SCA and your actions should always be driven in the first instance by what is best outcome for the SCA. If you are not sure what this may be, discuss it with the other Seneschals or officers.

Be Positive and Courteous

As Seneschal, you are likely to be seen as a group leader and role model for others.

Remember the one SCA rule that always applies is "treat others with courtesy". It can be extremely hard at times, but always aim for that. Courtesy shouldn't just imply formal or surface politeness - it conveys respect, empathy and consideration also. Model that!

Whether you like it or not, you are a representative of your group. Your actions reflect on the group, reflect on the flavour of the group and reflect on yourself. This also works in reverse, where the actions of the group can reflect on you - so make sure you set a good example and you shouldn't have too many worries.

Always be courteous when you are talking *about* people, reinforce positives rather than bad-mouth them.

If you must correct somebody use a positive sandwich - say something positive, make your constructive critique and end with a positive. Think about what you have to say and be genuine.

Ensure there is a chance to learn from any problems. If you do screw up, here are some questions to ask yourself.

<i>Did anyone die because of what you did or didn't do?</i>	
Yes...	No...chalk it up to experience and ask yourself the following:
ok, you might be in some	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened?

trouble	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why? ● Could it have been prevented? ● What would you do differently next time? ● Do you need to put some fires out? ● Do you need to apologise to anyone? ● Can you learn or teach from the experience?
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Take a negative and try to turn it into a positive – and once you’ve finished reflecting and you’ve got your headspace back, let it go!

Notice good work, and say thank you publicly as well as privately – encourage and promote the writing of award recommendations. Not everyone likes awards per se, but everyone likes to be appreciated. Never, ever underestimate the power of a timely and sincere thank you. Even the old-timers will feel more appreciated and more motivated.

Another useful resource – see “Helping Make Behaviour Better”:
<https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/helping-make-behaviour-better>

Build Group Cohesion

All groups work best when there's good buy-in from the populace. This is even more important when you have lots of newcomers to assimilate, or an older, fairly exclusive culture to improve on. The difference between a group which is just getting by - and along - and one which is really humming is both obvious and lasting.

Here are some tips and strategies for increasing buy-in – making your group run better, officers and stewarding teams easier to find, and much more besides.

Transparency

- Are you taking *and publishing* meeting minutes so that non-meeting-attendees can follow what is going on – and also so there is enough institutional memory from meeting to meeting?
- Do you ask for agenda suggestions, then email out a meeting agenda a day or two beforehand, so that those interested in any specific issue can attend and/or send in comments ahead of time?
- As you grow – and particularly if you have or head for Barony status – these mechanical but-transparency-related things assume more importance. *It's your job to pioneer them* if they're not in place already or have fallen by the wayside.
- No need to turn into a paperwork mavin - the inspirational stuff you're already doing is just as important. But with group governance issues, getting the culture right fairly early on is a Good Thing.
- Regularly encourage others to consider officer roles – half an hour invested at a long event running through this resource can work wonders:
<https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/the-sca-needs-you>

Involving newcomers

Talk to all your experienced people and ask them to make a point of giving small-but doable tasks to newcomers, and building them up - which also means backing off, of course. If they are aware that involving newcomers is an issue, they can act on it. If you're the only one thinking about it, the effect is too narrow.

Best of all is to give newcomers tasks at their very first event - "hey, would you like to help set up these tables?", "you're tall/nimble, can you please hang a few of these decorations?", "we need extra hands in the kitchen, are you busy?" Train your stewards and their helpers to do this as a matter of course!

If your existing folk understand that this *actually generates buy-in and ownership* and hence increases the chances of people sticking around, they'll act on it. Most people think the opposite, so they don't do it.

Small and quick interventions are just as important as long-term ones. That is, noticing the quiet/lonely/idle body in the corner and drawing them in on one occasion can have a very profound effect - it doesn't need formal mentoring relationships, though those have their places too, especially with deputy offices and the like...

Accessible event stewarding

A good partial solution to getting newcomers involved in leadership roles like stewarding, cooking and so on: Make it clear that lower-end events and a variety of approaches are ok. Consider feasts with tightly capped numbers, revels etc. - things that lower the bar for less-experienced folk to consider running them. And be very sure that your calls for events and discussion of events at Councils and so on are quite clear that such folk are "in the frame" - i.e. not just invited but basically expected to give their visions a go.

Leaving space

Any of us who occupy too much of the spotlight - in terms of venue, activity, bandwidth, rule-making, agenda-setting, you name it - is in danger of eclipsing the best of what others have to offer.

At any given time, it could be me, could be you, and it could well be some of your shinier folk at present who are doing the eclipsing in your group. It's a hard ask anyone to alter things away from that pattern, but it's definitely worth a go.

Use the techniques above, and encourage the relatively newer, fresher people to have their says. Their visions deserve air-time too.

Build positive vibes

All roles involve hard work and sometimes stress. By all means rely on your most trustworthy friends if you need to vent from time to time. But try not to share too widely, and encourage your fellow officers to also be circumspect during the toughest times, especially in public.

Instead, encourage them to recognise and publically mention positive aspects of their role in ads, job descriptions and while undertaking their activities and reports.

Why? Well, for one thing, they'll find it a lot easier to find a successor if your populace understands that SCA jobs involve benefits, rewards and positive vibes as well as hard work! It's normal human nature to complain and focus on threats, so invest some effort in building positive impressions to help balance that out.

Handle Issues and Disputes Carefully

One of the more difficult tasks for any Seneschal is handling issues or disputes.

Read the relevant sections of Kingdom Law, the Lochac Procedures Manual and the Issue Resolution Handbook (See **Check out the Resources** above). Apply them!

Some basic points to bear in mind:

- Don't let people drag you into personal stuff
- Put water on fires, do not add fuel
- Remember that the rumour mill is just that and should never be respected – you have to hear as many sides to a story as you can – at least three!
- Talk directly and evenly to those involved; do not rely on second or third-hand reports and do not lead with an accusation
- If the problem is being reported by a sub-group Seneschal (e.g. in a quarterly report), work with them quietly to provide support and advice, and only step in directly if they are not handling it and are clearly unable or unwilling to do so
- If you get stuck or run into turf disputes, contact the Kingdom Seneschal for advice
- Know who you can and can't work with; and be sure that the latter get justice too, even if it means delegating the task to someone else

Also: if you see a problem brewing – especially if you directly witness problematic behaviour – you *don't* have to wait for someone else to raise a complaint. You can do it yourself, as you have both the power and the responsibility if it is damaging the group. But do make sure your intervention is timely, fair, and private.

Example: if someone is behaving very badly at a meeting, suspend it briefly and ask to speak to them in a private room or outside. Quietly explain the ill effects of their behaviour on the group and ask them to moderate it. Give them the choice of leaving if they prefer. Then resume the meeting.

Once again, see “Helping Make Behaviour Better”:

<https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/helping-make-behaviour-better>.

You can't please everyone. You can't solve everyone's problems. But if you give it a genuinely good effort, then that is a good start. If things do prove intractable, or are costing you sleep, seek advice from the Kingdom Seneschal.

Parent Group Seneschals

If you have dependent groups, you have a special responsibility to help them in as friendly and supportive way as possible. Work closely with a College, Canton or incipient group Seneschal, or the village leader of a Hamlet. In particular:

1. Quarterly Reports that you receive from sub-group Seneschals must be redacted prior to wider distribution. In particular, the problems and questions sections must be treated as “In Confidence” and never (for example) released in group minutes or elsewhere. Use your judgement about sensitive/ delicate information in other report sections or in other reports – going to relevant uplines is always ok and may be necessary, going out to the populace may well not be.

2. Upline seneschals should follow up with reporting Seneschals if there are issues within the group. This provides the relevant support to the group seneschal. If further support is required, chat to your uplines.

Mailing Lists & Social Media

Behaviour on SCA mailing lists and official social media feeds is fundamentally a Seneschallate responsibility - just like behaviour at events. Of course you can delegate that responsibility to a moderator or to your Webwright or Social Media person, just as at-event responsibility is delegated to stewards, constables etc.

Fundamentally, the rule for an SCA-owned or managed mailing list or social media feed is the same rule as for other situations - everyone should treat others with respect and courtesy. Slagging, back-biting, flaming or trolling should all be privately admonished and publicly discouraged, i.e. generically -- naming no names.

If bad behaviour persists, the next escalation is to again talk with the offender privately, and to set a moderation flag for them in the mailing list software for a defined period, or whatever is possible for social media. If there are further repeats, consider removing or blocking them from the system, and possibly other sanctions for egregiously bad cases.

Of course you should exercise sensible discretion - everyone can have a bad hair day (or moment) from time to time which can be overlooked. But if any forum even *starts* to feel like an unsafe place, become increasingly firm with everyone who abuses it, whatever their rank or experience.

In such cases, also consider adding a clear message (e.g. a footer on all mailing list posts) for a period of 3-6 months or so, saying "List rule: you must treat others with respect and courtesy", This sort of response usually works - problems subside rapidly once it's clear you are prepared to take action.

If bad behaviour is happening on a *private* (non-SCA) social media feed, you have far less direct control. Nonetheless, if it has direct SCA associations in its content or extent, and is leaking into public space, then consider taking quiet action to calm it down. By all means talk to the Kingdom Seneschal if you hold serious concerns about it.

Avoid Burnout

The SCA tends to be a way of life, and as such can be very full-on. Watch for burnout in yourself and your officer corps.

A good way to do this is to build your group and strengthen its members so that the same small subset of people isn't always being called on - again, see <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/the-sca-needs-you>. Encourage a variety of activities and events of different scales and intensities to keep things fresh and give different people a chance to be involved.

For yourself: pace yourself. If you need to take a break, do so. Remember that you have just as much right to have fun as any other member of the populace.

Most importantly: if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen. This may mean that if you cannot cope, you may need to stop. For many and varied reasons (both SCA and mundanely), you may find that there are factors contributing to you not coping with your

office. Take a break and get your deputy to act for a while. Or quit - formally, tidily and clearly - while you are ahead.

Don't let the wheels fall off completely, it's not fair on yourself or the group. It *is* acceptable to call it quits when you need to.

And don't forget to laugh at yourself from time to time, it's easy to forget your sense of humour.

Golden Rules

Whatever you do should be reasonable.

Try to break goals down into achievable portions that can be shared out.

Decisions with long term-effects should be discussed with as many people as possible, so that the whole group has ownership and understands why such moves are being made.

Always try to make it fun for as many people as possible – including yourself!

And once again:

“Never ascribe to malice that which is adequately explained by incompetence”

Web instructions for New Group Seneschals

1. College of Seneschals (CoS) mailing list

This email list is hosted by the Kingdom Seneschal for all group Seneschals throughout Lochac, their deputies (including announced successors) and hospitallers (if they wish). It is a good first point of call when you have a question, carries announcements and commentary, and gives you access to a range of friendly advice and experience on issues relating to your role. Use it!

Point your web browser at this page: <http://lochac.sca.org/mailman/listinfo/cos>

Joining is fairly simple. You enter your email address, your name, and a password (twice). Your subscription has to be confirmed by the Kingdom Seneschal. Once that's done, please **send an email to the list** at: cos@lochac.sca.org introducing yourself, saying who you are and what group you are from, and saying hello to your fellow Seneschals.

The Kingdom Seneschal also operates a Facebook group for the Seneschals of Lochac. If you don't get an invite to it on day one, don't be shy – get in touch and ask for one!

2. Kingdom Seneschal's Web site

Familiarise yourself with the Kingdom Seneschal's Web site, here:

<http://seneschal.lochac.sca.org>

Bookmark this site and visit it at least once per month. This site contains the Book of Laws, links to things like Corpora, reporting dates, administration handbooks, this document, and vastly more resources. For recruitment resources, don't miss the Kingdom Hospitaller's site too! <http://hospitaller.lochac.sca.org>

3. Seneschal's Database

Starting at the Kingdom Seneschal's web site, hover over Reports, then select Online Report form. Or go here directly: <https://seneschaldb.lochac.sca.org/report>

As a group seneschal, log in to this site with the name of your group but *without* spaces (e.g. adora, or southrongaard) – for the password, ask the Kingdom Seneschal or Deputy Seneschal. Then select your group name from the drop down list.

Select the name of your group and there's your personalised reporting form – initially it may be showing your predecessor's contact information.

Do this as soon as you take office so you can update the Kingdom Roster:

Change the name and address details in the form and press the Submit button way down the bottom of the page to file an otherwise-empty quarterly report – doing that updates your contact details in the database. You can't change the warrant dates – please contact the Seneschal if you notice they haven't changed from your predecessor's dates.

And then: email your name, SCA name, phone number and your public email address - seneschal@<groupname>.lochac.sca.org - to regnum@lochac.sca.org so that Pegasus will be updated. But don't do that without changing your details in the database first!

NB: your **public** (office) email address can't be edited by you, but you can change what address it forwards to. If you're in NZ, your Webwright will know how to do this, otherwise ask Masonry via <https://masonry.lochac.sca.org/ask-masonry>. In Australia, first ask your predecessor if they have a webmail login they use to access a seneschal@ mailbox for your group, in which case no forwarding is needed – see <https://masonry.lochac.sca.org/services/email/> for more information on how to use a mailbox. Many groups don't have that - instead you should see the Manage Email Address Aliases function mentioned in the last paragraph of this section. *Please make the forwarding change now, without delay!*

Remember to update your details here whenever you move house, get a new phone number, etc. – just follow the same “empty report” process described above.

4. Quarterly Reports

The form above is also where you will post your quarterly reports. For a schedule of when reports are due, see <https://seneschal.lochac.sca.org/reports>

To submit your report, you'll need to fill in all of the boxes before you press “Send Report”. Here's a list of the main report categories (the sections coloured **in red** are automatically treated as “In Confidence” by those who receive reports; other sections may also be treated that way – or may end up published in redacted form - where they contain sensitive information or mundane personal details):

- STATISTICS -- Members:
- Active Members this quarter (est.):
- Active Non-Members this quarter (est.):
- Total Funds (from latest Reeve report):
- “Drop Dead” Deputy Name, email and phone number
- Summary of Regular Activities
- Special Achievements and Ideas That Worked (please do share these on the CoS mailing list also)
- Summary of Events
- **Problems of Note (please include names, not just “somebody went and...”)**
- **Questions**
- Plans for the future, ideas etc.
- Subgroup observations (e.g. Hamlets)
- General Comments
- Officers – brief *summary* of key points (please don't paste the whole report!)
 - Marshal
 - Herald
 - Arts and Sciences
 - Reeve
 - Constable
 - Chirurgeon
 - Chronicler and/or Webminister
 - Chatelaine/Hospitaller
 - Other offices, e.g Lists, DEI, Youth, Historian...

Strong hint: It's probably best to copy and paste the above headings into a Word or text document that you write locally at your leisure. Then go to the Quarterly Report form and cut-and-paste from your local copy into appropriate categories of the report form.

If you have any trouble using the Report form, email your report in instead – to reports@lochac.sca.org. Mention the difficulties - *include details*, so the problem can be sorted out for you.

Very strong hint: Be thorough, but be concise. For example, brief event summaries are wanted, not copies of full event reports! The Kingdom Seneschal's reports to the Crown and Society Seneschal are almost invariably 50+ pages long. Save time (and tired eyes!) by sticking to the key information.

The database also handles other kinds of information on other matters such as postcodes assigned to your group, the contact information for your B&B (if any) and the full roster of the Kingdom's seneschals. For Australian groups, the Manage Group Email Aliases tool also allows you to set or alter the forwarding destinations of email addresses like officetitle@yourgroup.lochac.sca.org, e.g. seneschal@stormhold.lochac.sca.org. New Zealand groups use a different mechanism for that, managed by each group's Webwright.

5. Registry and Membership information

Both the SCA Ltd and SCA NZ Inc operate a local Registry system and, as a Seneschal, you have special access so you can find out:

- How many members does your group have (and its sub-groups, if any)?
- Who are they, and when does their membership expire?
- Are your officers current members? (they need to be)
- What is their email address, postcode and telephone number?
- Who is subject to permanent banishments or temporary sanctions?

Your special access will happen after you are appointed – *provided* you first update your details (including membership number) in the Seneschallate Database, per section 3 above.

Once your details are correct, go to <https://registry.sca.org.nz> or <https://registry.sca.org.au> and log in with your normal SCA membership number and password. You'll see either a Membership Search menu item (AU) or in NZ a line like the one below just after the Welcome message, in which case click on your group's name to see its membership listing:

Your membership is valid until **Jan 31, 2012**. You are the Seneschal of **Southron Gaard**.

The precise user interface varies depending on whether you are in NZ or AU but in either case you'll be able to show either current group members or all of them, including expired and pending ones. If the email address is displayed (currently in NZ only), you can hover your mouse over it to get still more contact information. If your current officers aren't all showing up, check the Show expired and pending members checkbox and you'll probably find them there.

Please use the group membership listing to:

- a) Verify that officers, stewards and subgroup officers etc. are current members - insurance and SCA Ltd/SCA NZ Inc requirements are quite clear on this
- b) Check that your groups and subgroups are meeting membership count requirements, and find a way to resolve the issue if not

- c) Obtain the membership stats being requested in the quarterly Seneschal's report (this is now done automatically by the reporting form, but you can check it manually whenever you like).

Another useful Registry report is the Sanctions listing (see under the Uploads menu) – its Revocation and Denial listing in particular can be provided in confidence to event stewards so they can screen attendees if required.

There are other reports available in Registry, including ones which let you track your group's membership over time – very handy when tracking how your recruitment and retention efforts are going.

Finally, as Seneschal, you'll also get a reminder email whenever anyone who lives in your group's area either signs up or renews as a member. *For newcomers in particular, be sure to get in touch and make them feel welcome!* Also keep good track of how they found us!

Credits

This handbook is derived from the New Group Guide on the Kingdom Seneschal's website, which was developed in Lochac over many years and included work from:

- Justin du Coeur (East Kingdom - much original content)
- Master Delbert von Strassburg
- Don Emrys Tudur
- Mistress Finnabhair an Einigh ui Binnech

and

- Sir Peter du Gaunt Noir (many revisions, 2009-10)
- Mistress Katherine Kerr (who extracted the content for the New Seneschal's Handbook)
- Master Bartholomew Baskin (revisions and additions in 2010-2011, 2020-21)

Finally, thanks to all those who have previously contributed but whose efforts remain unidentified.