



FLORENCE
network

Florence Network

Official Guidelines and Regulations

European Cooperation in Nursing and Midwifery
in Higher Education

Updated 30.08.2024 (AC)

1. Introduction to the Florence Network guidelines and regulations handbook	3
2. Florence Network organizational structure	4
3. The Goals of the Florence Network.....	5
4. The Roles in the Florence Network	6
4.1. Role of the Presidency	6
4.2. Role of the Academic Committee	6
4.3. Role of the Visibility Group	7
4.4 Role of the Research Group	7
4.5. Role of the Florence Network Exchange Coordinator	8
4.6. Role of the Student Board	8
4.6.1 Student Board Voting Procedures	9
4.7. Role of the Host Institution/Institutions	10
5. Decision Making in the Florence Network	11
5.1. General Assembly	11
5.1.1. Opening General Assembly	11
5.1.2. Closing General Assembly	11
5.2. FL-ECO Meetings at the Florence Network Annual Meeting	12
5.3. Students' Meetings at the Florence Network Annual Meeting	12
6. Regulations of the Florence Network	14
6.1. Goals	14
6.2. Membership	14
6.3. Responsibilities of members in achieving of Florence Network Goals	16
6.4. Dissolution of the Florence Network	18
6.5. Management and permanent groups	18
6.6. Annual meeting	20
7. Appendix.....	21
Appendix 1	21
Appendix 2	22
Appendix 3	23
Appendix 4	24

Table of Abbreviations

AC:	Academic Committee
AM:	Annual Meeting
CGA:	Closing General Assembly
FLE-CO:	Florence Network Exchange Coordinator
FN:	Florence Network
FNAM:	Florence Network Annual Meeting
GA:	General Assembly
OGA:	Opening General Assembly
RG:	Research Group
SB:	Student Board
VG:	Visibility Group

1. Introduction to the Florence Network guidelines and regulations handbook

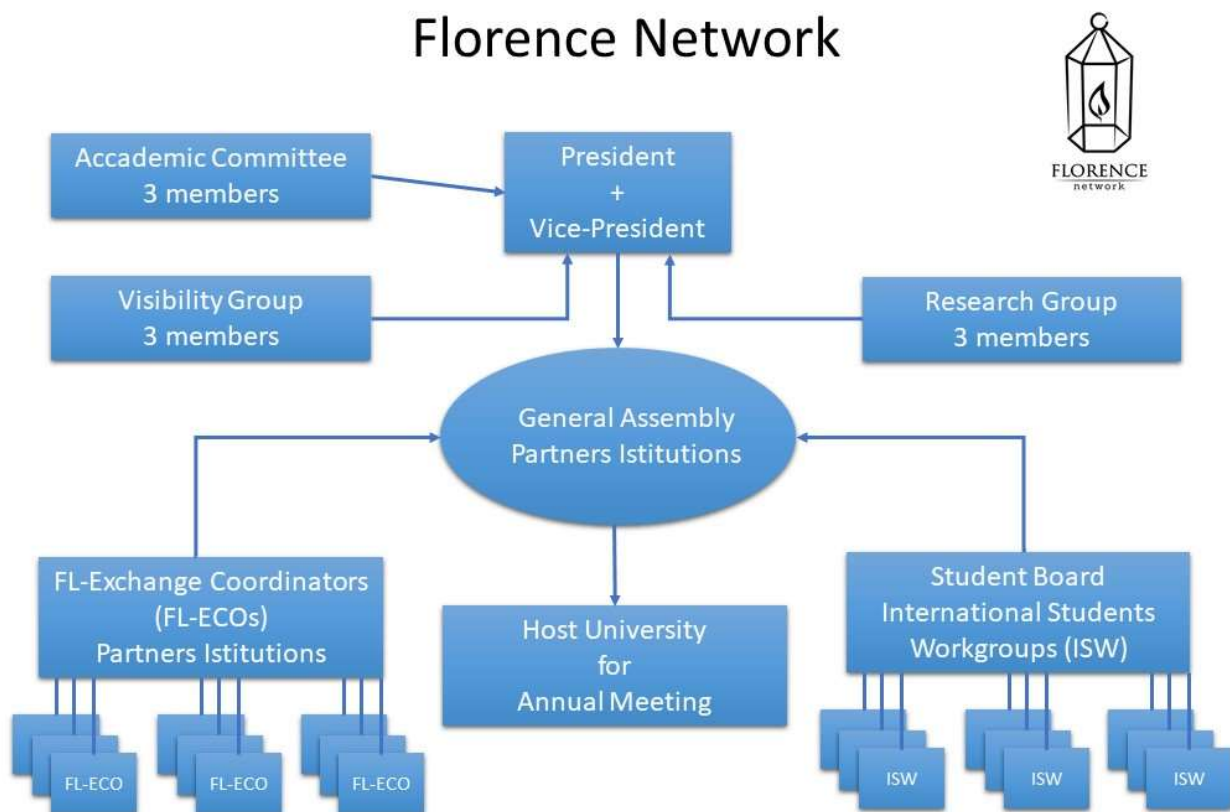
This handbook is designed to make visible the guidelines and regulations that members in the network have agreed upon. Supplemental information such as an updated list of member institutions, the contact details for the Florence Network institutional representatives, known as FL-ECO and various forms can be found in the webpage. This webpage also contains links to member institutions, notes from meetings, information concerning the network's elected officials, and other documents of use for members in the network. It's function is to make visible network members and activities. The Florence Network maintains and supports dialogue between its members and is inclusive in all decision-making processes. Please feel free to share with the Presidency, AC, VG and RG your comments, ideas and suggestions for discussion and potential inclusion in the annual regulations update.

The Florence Network guidelines and regulations handbook is reviewed and updated when necessary by the Presidency, AC, VG and RG. Major changes must be approved at the FL-ECOs Meeting.

If you have any questions regarding the guidelines, then please don't hesitate contacting us. We look forward to cooperating with you in the Florence Network.

2. Florence Network organizational structure

According to the guidelines and regulations, the organizational structure can be represented by the following diagram that describes the relationship of the permanent groups of the Florence Network with the General Assembly and the Host Institution.



3. The Goals of the Florence Network

- To raise the profile of European Nursing and Midwifery
- To stimulate and organize the exchange of students between Florence Network members
- To stimulate and organize the exchange of lecturers between Florence Network members
- To contribute to the development of the quality of European Nursing and Midwifery curricula and education
- To identify common nursing and midwifery research interests and develop research collaboration
- To develop and organize common projects, and intensive Nursing and Midwifery programmes and/or activities within ERASMUS+ and other programmes.

4. The Roles in the Florence Network

4.1. Role of the Presidency

The Presidency consists of the President and the Vice-President. The Presidency is responsible for promoting Nursing and Midwifery practice, education and research throughout Europe and will undertake the following:

- To stimulate the discussion and the dissemination of good practices with respect to Nursing and Midwifery
- To supervise and monitor the daily functioning of the network in order to aid the achievement of the network's goals
- To coordinate the up-dating of the Florence Network Official Guidelines and Regulations
- To interact with the Academic Committee (AC), Visibility Group (VG), Research Group (RG), Student Board (SB) and other members, in order to coordinate the results and decisions of the network
- To raise the profile of the Florence Network
- To ensure that member institutions fulfil their network obligations as stipulated in the Membership Agreement and Network Regulations
- To coordinate the planning of the AM in cooperation with the AC, VG, RG, Host Institution and SB, and chair the network meetings
- To deal with and resolve emerging issues and challenges relevant for the functioning of the network
- To accept and present new member institutions in conjunction with the AC, VG and RG.

4.2. Role of the Academic Committee

- To advise the Presidency concerning academic matters relating to the daily governance of the network

- To stimulate and organize the exchange of students and lecturers between Florence Network members
- To contribute to the development of the quality of European Nursing and Midwifery curricula and education
- To develop and organize common projects, and intensive Nursing and Midwifery programmes and/or activities within ERASMUS+ and other programmes.
- To exchange ideas and discuss innovations with regard to Nursing and Midwifery curricula
- To participate in the updating of regulations

4.3. Role of the Visibility Group

- To take responsibility for the internal network information hereunder, the evaluation of network activities, updating of member information.
- To enhance the Florence Network's visibility outside of the network
- To advise the Presidency with respect to visibility issues
- To work with the SB in order to enhance the network's visibility among students
- To maintain the website of the FN
- To co-operate with the Presidency, AC and the RG with respect to matters concerning the daily governance of the FN

4.4 Role of the Research Group

- To stimulate and facilitate research interest and partnerships within the FN.
- To collect from the FLECOs research ideas, current topic of interest or research taking place in each department to be presented on the annual meeting
- To prepare/up-date the guidelines and a template for presenting posters on the annual meetings.

4.5. Role of the Florence Network Exchange Coordinator

- To take responsibility for the communication and the dissemination of information relevant for the Florence Network Exchange Coordinators (FL-ECOs, i.e. Institutional Representatives) and for the FL-ECOs home institution
- To promote and organize student and teacher exchanges within the FN in cooperation with and the Exchange Coordinators at the home institution
- To submit data to the VG data to be used in quality assurance and the generation of statistical profiles relating to their home institution regarding FN activities
- To raise the profile of the Florence Network both within and outside of their home institution
- To guarantee the organization, supervision and coaching of exchange students
- To submit to the Presidency applications for new member institutions to the FN
- To welcome and support new FL-ECOs into the network
- To take responsibility for updating their institutional information on the webpage concerning the FN.

4.6. Role of the Student Board

The student board (SB) is composed of seven elected members, hereunder a President, a Vice-President, an Academic representative, a Visibility representative, a Newsletter/Communication representative and 2 additional board members.

The SB has the following responsibilities:

- In cooperation with the FN Permanent Groups and the Host Institution, to prepare and organize the student program for the FNAM
- To help in the practical organization of the FNAM
- To co-operate with the Permanent Groups with respect to student affairs
- To promote the visibility of the Network among students

- To make public the conclusions and minutes of their meetings
- To encourage student exchanges between the Network Institutions.

4.6.1 Student Board Voting Procedures

SB members are elected by the students present at the SB Annual Meeting and there is one student vote per institution. One and a half months before the Annual Meeting, the Student Board will announce the positions open for election and distribute to the FL-ECOs the application forms for student elections, which must be filled out and returned to the Student Board for the election process. Voting procedures will take place within the FNAM as described below:

- During the first day of the Annual General Meeting, candidates will have the opportunity to introduce themselves and give a short speech explaining their reasons for their candidacy.
- The elections will take place on the third day of the FNAM. Each position on the Student Board can be filled by a candidate from different universities, while the two extra supplementary positions can be filled by candidates from the same university as one of the other five Student Board members. One place in the extra position will be reserved for a student from the University hosting the next FNAM.
- Voting papers will be issued by the Student Board, and each university represented in the FN will have the opportunity to vote. At least two students from the hosting university will be present to oversee the voting process and ensure its accuracy.
- The count of the votes will be conducted by two Students from the host university, the Vice President of the Student Board, and a representative from the FL-ECOs (when available). The President of the Student Board will announce the election results.
- The newly elected Student Board members will be presented during the closing session of the Annual Meeting, and the first SB afterwards will be held with the old Board members.

A student that is elected to a position must be able to attend the next FNAM. Before applying to and/or accepting a position the student should receive clearance from his/her home institution.

4.7. Role of the Host Institution/Institutions

Every year a Member Institution takes the responsibility for the organization of the Annual Meeting (AM). The hosting of the AM should be discussed and announced at the General Assembly at least one year prior to the coming AM. When more than one institution is interested in hosting the AM, the Permanent Groups is responsible for the final decision regarding the choice of host institution. However, when institutions are in close proximity to each other, it is possible for more than one institution to co-host a Florence Network Annual Meeting (FNAM). In cooperation with the Permanent Groups and the SB, the Host Institution/Institutions assume responsibility for the agenda, organization, administration, programme, and the minutes of the AM.

5. Decision Making in the Florence Network

5.1. General Assembly

The General Assembly (GA) is the main representative organ of the FN. Final decisions on important questions, such as those concerning regulations, the strategy plan, admission or exclusion of new members and electing permanent boards, both from the FL-ECOs meeting and the SB meeting, are presented at the GA.

5.1.1. Opening General Assembly

The first day of the FNAM, before the FL-ECOs Meeting, a short Opening General Assembly (OGA) takes place for the Presidency to inform all the participants of the following:

- New members and institutions applying for FN membership
- Positions open for election and candidates' names that have been submitted.

5.1.2. Closing General Assembly

The Closing General Assembly (CGA) is the last governing event of the AM and occurs before the Closing Ceremony. It is open to all the participants and has the following agenda:

- Presentation of election results where newly elected officials briefly present themselves
- Briefing of discussions and results from FL-ECOs, students, and other groups meetings
- Presentation of changes in the regulations
- Presentation of the results regarding approval of new members to the network
- Presentation of institutional host for coming FNAM
- Participants are also free to comment upon issues relevant for the network.

5.2. FL-ECO Meetings at the Florence Network Annual Meeting

At the FNAM, the FL-ECOs discuss and vote on the topics/candidates to be presented to the FN during the CGA.

The FL-ECO meetings at the FNAM are chaired by the Presidency. Only FL-ECOs have the right to participate and vote at FL-ECO meetings. There is only one FL-ECO per institution. An institution offering both the nursing and midwifery educations can have two representatives at the FL-ECO meeting but only one may vote representing their institution. If a FL-ECO cannot participate to the FL-ECO meeting, he/she can delegate their votes to a FL-ECO from another institution. In order to delegate this role to another FL-ECO one must submit a written statement in advance confirming this agreement to the FN Presidency.

More specifically the FL-ECOs:

- Discuss and vote on the proposed changes to the Regulations, Membership Agreement and other documents under consideration, as presented by the Presidency, AC, VG, RG and SB
- Vote upon the election of the Vice-President, members of the AC, VG and the RG
- Discuss and promote the vision, mission, and objectives of the FN
- Discuss and approve the strategy for achieving the network goals.

5.3. Students' Meetings at the Florence Network Annual Meeting

During the FNAM the students have specific meetings chaired by the SB. The goals of the meetings are to:

- Provide an atmosphere that allows all the participants to know each other and share information, perspectives and characteristics of their Country
- Promote involvement amongst the participating students

- Share information and opinions about nursing and midwifery educations
- Discuss nursing and midwifery professional issues taking into consideration the context, particularities and specifics of their Countries
- Promote exposure to different cultures.

6. Regulations of the Florence Network

6.1. Goals

Article 1 The FN is a European Higher Education co-operation in Nursing and Midwifery with educational, scientific and pedagogical aims. The FN guarantees to respect the different ideologies, strategies and visions existing within Nursing and Midwifery education across Europe. The network also strives to identify commonalities and enable convergences as required by European educational treaties.

Article 2 The objective of the FN is to develop and improve the quality of European higher education in nursing and midwifery by means of international co-operation in the field of education, scientific research and development. In this way the Network aspires to improve the image of the Nursing and Midwifery professions and to improve the quality of European health care.

6.2. Membership

Article 3 The FN holds persons legally and professionally accountable according to the laws, professional regulatory bodies and customs of their country of origin. If a member institution wishes to resign from the Network, the Director/Dean of the School and the FL-ECO Exchange Coordinator are required to offer the resignation, in writing, to the Presidency of the Network. The Presidency will then terminate the Membership Agreement with immediate effect.

Article 4 The admission of new members is subject to the following conditions:

Principles and Structures for Accepting New Institutions as Members of the Florence Network

- The Network will admit a maximum of three institutions from each Country

- Applications for membership may be made by institutions within Countries that are Bologna declaration signatories
- The new institutions will be required to agree with the Regulations of the Network and to sign the Membership Agreement. The Membership Agreement should be signed by the Director/Dean of the Member Institution and the FL-ECO.
- When reviewing new applications for membership it is important to try to encourage that at least one member from each country offers the midwifery education.

Application Procedures

- Applications for membership to the network should be submitted to the Presidency. Potential new members should submit two references and must be accredited to offer bachelor level programs in nursing and/or midwifery.
- The AC will publish annually on the webpage and on other relevant media, the FN strategy, the procedures and timetable for the admission of new members.
- The AC, VG, RG and Presidency will make the final decision regarding the admittance of new members. If a vote is required, it will be decided by a simple majority. Upon acceptance, the President completes the formal application procedure by sending the new institution the Membership Agreement for signing.
- The Membership Agreement when returned and signed by the Director/Dean and, the FL-ECO of the new member institution is signed by the President. This process confirms the admittance of the institution to the network. A copy of the signed agreement will then be returned to the institution.

Article 5 Members may be excluded from the network under the following criteria:

- If they do not comply with the regulations/goals of the network
- If they do not facilitate student/teacher exchanges or other established network activities
- If they are not present at the FNAM on three consecutive occasions
- The AC, VG, RG and the Presidency must put forward the decision to exclude a member. A simple majority of the FL-ECOs present at the FNAM must then approve the motion for exclusion

- The General Assembly will be informed of the exclusion of members who fail to meet the requirements of the Network. Following exclusion, the President will inform the Director/Dean and FL-ECO at the Institution no later than one month after the decision (see form in the Appendix 4).

6.3. Responsibilities of members in achieving of Florence Network Goals

Article 6 The FN Member Institutions are responsible for the fulfilling of the objectives of the FN. The FL-ECOs facilitate this process. Member institutions are required to promote the objectives of the Network. Therefore, they accept responsibility for the following:

- **Quality:** contribute to the quality of education by maintaining international contacts, being aware of international developments in the field of Nursing and Midwifery, and being active in international fora regarding the development of the Nursing profession, Nursing education, and Nursing research
- **Development of the Nursing and Midwifery profession:** contribute to the development of the Nursing and Midwifery professions and educations, and raise and make visible the profile of Nursing and Midwifery within Europe
- **Internal respect:** all members will be considered equal in the network, Institutional identity will be respected, and each member will be accepted with their specific vision, background and experience in Nursing/Midwifery with respect to the profession, education, and research.
- **Professional development:** to constructively promote and share professional knowledge, and to enhance the awareness of qualifications obtained in a European context, in order to contribute to the development of the Nursing/Midwifery professions in Europe

- **Personal development:** contribute to the personal development of students and teachers. Participation in a European forum stimulates personal development of students and teachers. Cultural horizons will be broadened, and a greater sense of commonality fostered through the experience of theoretical and clinical exchanges in Europe.

Article 7 The GA meets under the chairmanship of the Presidency, at the annual conference. An agenda will be circulated to all Members at least 30 days prior to the FNAM.

An exceptional General Assembly may be convened by the request of at least one third of the FL-ECOs attending the FNAM.

Article 8 Every Florence Member institution is allowed to be represented by another institution by means of a written mandate after informing the Presidency.

Article 9 The decisions from the voting at FL-ECO Meetings are presented at the GA. Decisions from voting at FL-ECO Meetings are only legitimate if more than half of the Member Institutions are present and vote.

Article 10 Decisions at FL-ECO meetings are made by a simple majority of the Member Institutions represented. Normally, decisions can be approved if at least 50% of the member institutions cast their vote. However, changes to the Network Regulations are only valid if two thirds of the Member Institutions approve the proposal.

Article 11 If at the FL-ECO meetings a decision cannot be approved due to too few participants or a tied vote, the decision can be voted upon at the GA. The GA will have the authority to legitimize final decisions regarding propositions, though with an exception of changes to regulations, irrespective of the number of Member Institutions present. The rules concerning one vote per institution and with respect to voting mandates are applicable here.

Article 12 Decisions presented at the GA will be conveyed to all Member Institutions. Decisions at the FL-ECO meetings cannot be made on items which are not included

on the agenda unless a simple majority of the FL-ECOs present agree to have the item added to the agenda for discussion and subsequent decision.

Article 13 All reports and records concerning decisions taken at the FNAM are kept under the supervision of the Presidency. Notes from the FNAM must be sent to all Member Institutions no later than one month after the FNAM.

6.4. Dissolution of the Florence Network

Article 14 Proposals to dissolve the FN must emanate from the President or from a minimum of five Members. At least two thirds of the FLE-ECOs must vote on the proposal and the decision can only be approved with two thirds of the FL-ECOS voting.

Article 15 If the network is dissolved it is the GA that will determine the manner in which this should be done.

6.5. Management and permanent groups

Article 16 The network is managed by the Presidency (President and Vice-President), assisted by the AC, VG and the RG.

Article 17 There are three permanently established groups within the Network: the AC, VG the RG and the SB. These groups will meet in presence at least twice per year (see article 21), but can also be asked to meet at the special request of the Presidency. If a member of one of these groups cannot attend a meeting they should orientate themselves with respect to the discussions that occurred so that they can contribute with their perspectives to the issues at hand. Videoconference meetings in order to pursue the management duties within the FN are also to be expected.

Reports from the official meetings held by the Permanent Groups should be available for Member Institutions on the webpage.

Article 18 The President and Vice-President of the FN are elected by simple majority under the following conditions:

- There will be one President and one Vice-President. The President serves in office for a period of two years.
- The Vice-President is elected for a two-year period. Thereafter, he/she assumes the role of President and a new Vice-President is elected.
- The President and Vice President may be dismissed by a simple majority of the FL-ECOs present at the AM.

Article 19 The AC consists of three members, elected among the FL-ECOs for a period of three years, together with the Presidency. Members of the AC are elected by simple majority and may be re-elected for one additional term.

Article 20 The VG consists of three members, elected by simple majority among the FL-ECOs for a period of three years. Members of the VG may be re-elected for one additional term.

Article 21 The RG consists of three members, elected by simple majority among the FL-ECOs for a period of three years. Members of the RG may be re-elected for one additional term.

Article 22 The SB consists of five members and two supplement members, elected by simple majority among the students present in the AM. The term of mandate is two years for the President and Vice-President and one year for the other positions. In the condition that the President leaves the position, and the Vice President have the possibility, the Vice President will assume the role of President until the end of the mandate.

Article 23 FL-ECOs elected to the FN Permanent Groups must actively participate in the administrative and coordinating functions of the network. If there are problems concerning a FL-ECO's participation, the issue should be raised by the FN management and exclusion can be an option. It is important when assuming a FN

management position that the FL-ECO's home institution is willing to support his/her participation in the network. The FN does not cover elected officials' expenses in conjunction with their network duties. It is the responsibility of a FL-ECO running for election to advise the home institution and receive their approval before accepting a FN post. It is expected that FL-ECOs participate in at least 50% of the face to face and online meetings. An additional 2 weeks of hours working for the network work should also be expected. The decision for exclusion from a FN Permanent Group rests upon the other Permanent Group members.

Article 24 Students from each Higher Education Institution will be invited to participate in the FNAM. The students participating in the AM are selected by the FL-ECOs in accordance with the Member Institution. Institutions where both the nursing and midwifery educations are represented in the FN should aim at sending a representative from both of these educations to the FNAM.

6.6. Annual meeting

Article 25 The planning of the FNAM is done in cooperation with the Network Permanent Groups, representatives from the Host Institution/Institutions, the FL-ECO from the host institution and representatives from the SB.

Article 26 The AC must notify the Members at least one month prior to the date of the FNAM which proposals will be discussed at the AM.

Article 27 Normally, each lecturer present at the FNAM is invited to bring one student for free. That includes the student's participation at the AM, as well as accommodation and breakfast. Additional students are able to participate but their institution will be required to pay a specified fee.

Article 28 The financing of the FNAM is managed by the Host Institution/Institutions. Costs are covered by the FNAM registration fees. The network cannot be held responsible for the covering of an eventual deficit.

7. Appendix

Appendix 1

Membership Agreement

I _____ (Print Name) Director or Dean of
_____ (Name and address of the Higher
Education Institution in question) hereby declare that I will abide with the Florence Network Official
Guidelines and Regulations and to co-operate with the existing Members to fulfil the aims of the Network
as stipulated in the Official Florence Network Guidelines and Regulations.

On behalf of this institution, I have appointed the following as Florence Network FL-ECO to be the official
Florence Network contact person:

Director/Dean Signature

Florence Network FL-ECOs Signature

Florence Network President's Signature

Date and Place of Signature

Appendix 2

Letter for Elections

Date _____

Dear Florence Members,

I would like to inform you that there are positions vacant within the Florence Network.

I am requesting nominations for possible candidates for the following:

- Academic Committee: applicable/not applicable ____ number of vacancies ____
- Visibility Group: applicable/not applicable ____ number of vacancies ____
- Research Group: applicable/not applicable ____ number of vacancies ____
- Vice-President: applicable/not applicable ____

I would therefore like to initiate the procedure for the Election.

I am looking for possible candidates for the above positions as signified.

Candidate's proposal can be made directly by a member, who is interested in a position or by nomination from another member, forwarded to me via e-mail.

Prior to accepting nominations, I will verify that there is interest by the member to hold the position.

Please, forward nominations before ____/____/____ (date).

Kind regards,

The Florence Network President

Appendix 3

Procedure for Elections

The purpose of this *procedure* is to permit that the election proceeds as smoothly as possible in order to permit the presentation of the candidates nominated before the election and that the positions are filled without creating difficulties.

1. The **President**, in accordance with the Academic Committee, will forward the **Letter of Election** (see Appendix 2) to the members of the Florence Network requesting nominations with the **second invitation to the Annual Meeting**.
2. **Nomination** will be accepted up until **2 weeks prior the Annual Meeting**
3. Via e-mail the President accepts nominations directly from a member who is interested in being a candidate or via a nomination from another member.
4. The President or the Vice president will verify the interest and/or the consent to be an official candidate prior to the Annual Meeting
5. In the case that **no nominations** are received, the President will contact the Vice-President, the Academic Committee, the Visibility Group and the Research Group to identify possible candidates.
6. One week prior of the Annual Meeting the President will send the list of the candidates to the FL-ECOs.

Appendix 4

Exclusion Letter Form

Dean/Director

ECO

Institution's Name

Address

Place and date

Dear Dean, Dear FL-eco,

As President of the Florence Network for Nursing and Midwifery I have to announce you that, according to the regulations, during last annual meeting in _____, the Board decided to exclude your School as a member of the Florence Network because your Institution did not comply with the following criteria _____, under the Article 4 of the regulations.

Nevertheless, we wish you a lot of success with your nursing/midwifery education.

Yours sincerely,

The Florence Network President

