Regional Volunteer Network
Rules and Guidelines

UK Regions &
The Republic of Ireland

Part A–1

Rules and Guidelines
Printed copies are uncontrolled and users should therefore refer to the Volunteer Resource Centre page of the Institution website to ensure that they are using the latest version.

**Amendment history**

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**Document navigation**

Navigate directly to each section by clicking on the section title in the contents list, above. Return to Contents by clicking on the section headings throughout the document.
Section 1  Introduction

1.1 The Regional Volunteer Network Rules and Guidelines: UK Regions and the Republic of Ireland ('the Rules and Guidelines') provides a support, guidance and compliance framework for the regional network. The Rules and Guidelines comprise two separate but interdependent documents, which should be read together:

- Part A-1 Main Rules and Guidelines
- Part A-2 Appendices

Rules 1.2 For clarity, rules are shown in bold italic text. Each paragraph in Part A-1 and Part A-2 that contains a rule(s) is identified by the symbol shown to the right of this paragraph. All members of committees responsible for Regions, Areas and Young Members' Panels (YMPs) shall be subject to the rules. The Chair of each Regional Committee shall ensure that they are brought to the attention of committee members at the time of their election and annually thereafter. The Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary and Honorary Treasurer, as requested by Head Quarters, shall confirm that they have seen, read, understood and will abide by these Rules and Guidelines as amended from time to time.

Guidelines 1.3 Guidelines, in normal text, indicate good practice and are intended to help members fulfil the roles and responsibilities within the regional network for which they have volunteered. Guidelines are not binding and allow for practice among member groups to vary according to local conditions. Under normal circumstances, however, they provide a useful basis for governing and managing regional affairs. When a committee agrees to deviate from the guidelines it should record the fact through committee minutes.

Authority & changes 1.4 The Trustee Board has a duty to set out the duties and responsibilities of regions (Institution Royal Charter, paragraph 16c). Proposals for changes to these Rules and Guidelines should be sent to the Governance and Engagement department; fundamental changes require Trustee Board approval.

Centres 1.5 Centres are not subject to the rules but may find them, and the associated guidelines, to be useful in managing their affairs.

1.6 Appendix A provides interpretations of terms used in this document.

Section 2  Strategic context

2.1 The regional network is a key mechanism for supporting Institution members' professional development and for interacting with other professional institutions and the public. This network comprises Regions, Areas, YMPs and Centres. Between them, these groups identify, manage and co-ordinate activities to meet the needs of various stakeholders within their territories and to help achieve the Institution’s objectives.
2.2 The Objects and Purposes of the Institution are set out in Article 7 (paragraphs a to d and f) of the Institution’s Royal Charter. The Trustees set the Institution strategy to achieve these Objects and Purposes, based on which the Regional Strategy Board (RSB) sets a regional strategy.

2.3 Each Regional Committee Chair is an ex-officio RSB member and the RSB Chair is a Trustee, thus reinforcing the strategic link between Trustees and the regional membership.

2.4 Centres are part of the Institution’s regional network and play a part in achieving the Institution’s objectives. They are however, governed by the member group that established them (e.g. a Division).

2.5 Further detail about the Institutions’ Vision, Values and Key Themes, the RSB Strategic Guidelines and Institution governance and structure, including board and staff structures is available on the Volunteer Resource Centre web pages.

Section 3 Formation

Establishment and dissolution

3.1 As set out in the Institution Royal Charter paragraph 16c and By-law 71.2, Regions are established and, if required, dissolved by the Trustee Board either on its own initiative or by petition. Regional Committees may establish, dissolve and determine the territory of Areas and YMPs as required within the Region. Centres are established and dissolved by their respective member groups (e.g. their Division). Processes governing the establishment [and dissolution] of Regions, Areas and YMPs are at Appendix B.

Names and territories

3.2 Each Region shall be named after its geographical location, as determined by the RSB. Appendix C lists the territories within each Region in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

3.3 Each Area and YMP Committee shall be named after the territory in which it operates, as determined by the Regional Committee.

Membership

3.4 Each member whose recorded home address is within the territory of a Region, Area and/or YMP shall be a member of that group unless they notify the Membership Department, in writing, that they wish to belong to a relevant alternative group. No person shall be a member of more than one Region.

3.5 No subscription shall be required from any member of a Region beyond that payable to the Institution as prescribed in the By-laws.

3.6 Member groups (e.g. Divisions) govern the membership of their Centres.
Section 4  Activities

Objectives 4.1 The Regional Committee shall:
   a. Work with Areas, YMPs and Centres to implement the RSB strategic plan, as far as practicable, and to address regional needs;
   b. Manage funds in accordance with the Institution’s Region, Area and Centre Financial Guidelines (see section 6, below).

4.2 The Regional Committee should work with Areas, YMPs and Centres to provide a balanced range of activities to meet identified Regional needs. Appendix D identifies the primary activities of the regional network.

Prizes and awards 4.3 Prizes and awards may be made and engagement with Institution Prizes and Awards should be encouraged (see Appendix M).

Reporting 4.4 The Regional Committee shall report on its activities within three months of their having taken place, using the reporting tools provided by the Institution’s HQ.

Section 5  Governance

Committees 5.1 Each Region, Area and YMP shall be governed by a committee, formed in accordance with these Rules and Guidelines.

5.2 Committees shall conduct and regulate their activities in accordance with the Institution’s By-laws, Royal Charter and these Rules and Guidelines, including Appendices.

5.3 The Regional Committee shall consider any matters of grievance referred to it subject to these Rules and Guidelines and other provisions of the Institution.

Accountability 5.4 The Regional Committee is accountable to the RSB for co-ordinating all regional activities. The Area and YMP Committees are accountable to the Regional Committee for the activities they undertake. The Regional Committee shall respect the independence of the Centres in the Region.

Annual elections 5.5 The Regional Committee shall be responsible for the overall election process within the Region. Committees shall elect officers and members annually, as set out in Appendix E.

Committee Composition 5.6 Regional, Area and YMP Committees should each include the following officers:
   - Chair
   - Vice Chair
   - Honorary Secretary
   - Honorary Treasurer

5.7 In addition to the officers, ordinary and ex-officio members of committees (may be appointed as shown at Appendix F.)
5.8 Regional, Area and YMP Committees should aim to be representative of the diversity among members within their territory, so far as is practicable.

5.9 Committee officers are, together, responsible for ensuring that the committee:
- Does what it was set up to do;
- Manages within budget and avoids debt;
- Runs according to the Rules and Guidelines.

5.10 To facilitate this each officer has specific powers and responsibilities, as set out in Appendix G. In summary, however, the general responsibilities are:

a. **Chair and Vice Chair** - The role of the Chair is to provide strategic leadership of the committee in achieving its objectives and to represent the committee within the Institution and elsewhere.

b. **Honorary Secretary** - The role of the Honorary Secretary is to support the committee by means of efficient and effective administration.

c. **Honorary Treasurer** - The role of the Honorary Treasurer is to support the committee by means of efficient and effective financial management.

5.11 The term of office for a Chair, Vice Chair, Honorary Secretary, Honorary Treasurer and Ordinary Committee Members should be 12 months, from the date of the Annual Meeting of the Institution following their election until the next Annual Meeting of the Institution.

5.12 Ex-officio Committee members’ terms of office is determined by the term of their qualifying appointment (i.e. how long they are in post as, for example, an Area Committee Chair).

5.13 **The term of office for Ordinary Committee Members should be 12 months from the date of the Annual Meeting of the Institution following their election until the next Annual Meeting of the Institution.**

5.14 **Committee members who have been appointed to fill a casual vacancy should hold office from the date of their appointment until the next Annual Meeting of the Institution and this shall not affect their eligibility for subsequent election.**

5.15 Further rules and guidelines about committee members’ terms and duration of office are at Appendix H.

5.16 **A member of any committee shall vacate office if:**
- They are not re-elected at the relevant Annual Meeting;
- They resign from the committee by writing to the Honorary Secretary;
- They cease to be a member of the Institution;
- They are required to vacate their office in accordance with due process as set out in the Rules and Guidelines.
Conduct: Standards 5.17 Standards for members’ conduct are set out in Institution By-Laws 29 to 31 and the Code of Conduct Regulations referred to in By-Law 32. Committee members are qualified or aspiring professionals. In the vast majority of instances they conduct themselves in a manner that is appropriate to their position and that positively reinforces the reputation of the Institution, their committee and themselves.

Conduct: Children and vulnerable adults 5.18 The Institution publishes its policy for working with children and vulnerable adults on the Volunteer Resource Centre website. All members (both Corporate and Non-Corporate) shall abide by the code of behaviour outlined in the policy when in contact with children or vulnerable adults whilst acting on behalf of the Institution.

Conduct: Committee members 5.19 As well as underpinning professional standards, high standards of conduct lie at the heart of a successful committee. The risk of inappropriate conduct can be minimised by good management and positive professional relationships within the committee. Concerns that do arise about conduct are often resolved informally by these means.

5.20 Appendix J contains suggested committee conduct principles; these being appropriate conduct expressed as positive statements. Committees may wish to consider adopting them as a basis for identifying, promoting and measuring positive conduct. The committee conduct principles do not replace any part of, or lessen any members’ obligation to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with, the By-Laws and Code of Conduct Regulations, as noted above.

Conduct: Resolving concerns 5.21 The Institution operates a complaints process by which members and non-members can complain about improper conduct on the part of an Institution member, judged against the By-Laws and Code of Conduct Regulations. This process is intended as a response to instances of significant misconduct and it would be rare for a member’s conduct as a committee member to warrant a complaint through this channel.

5.22 Appendix K provides guidance on dealing with concerns about:

a. The general conduct of committee members when acting on behalf of a committee;

b. Committee members’ contribution to the work of the committee.

Section 6 Management

Committee procedures 6.1 Committee procedures are shown at Appendix I. The procedures, designed to help committees manage their affairs, were developed over time and in response to experience and cover:

- Running committee meetings, including quorums and voting
- Annual meetings
- Special meetings
- Ordinary meetings
Committee finances

6.2 The Institution is non-profit making and is incorporated by Royal Charter and a registered charity (no. 206882) and as such it enjoys special tax privileges. The activities of the Institution are constrained by the objects set out in the Royal Charter and the relevant laws associated with charities, HMRC and VAT.

6.3 Regions, Areas, YMPs and Centres are constituted under the Royal Charter and By-Laws of the Institution and legally are part of the Institution. Detailed financial rules and procedures are provided in a separate document called “IMechE Region, Area, Panel and Centre Financial Guidelines”, available on the Volunteer Resource Centre webpage. These should be read in conjunction with the additional information provided at Appendix L. Together these outline the requirements for budgeting, funding, financial reporting and operating local accounting procedures and are intended mainly for the benefit of Honorary Treasurers and Honorary Secretaries.

6.4 The main points are, however, outlined below.

a. The Institution’s financial year runs from January to December, and Regions are allocated funds on this basis.

b. Regions are responsible for allocating funds to Areas and YMPs as appropriate, for keeping accounting records and for liaising with the Finance Department.

c. The paperwork for budget bids for the forthcoming year is normally sent out in July and replies requested by mid-September. Bids are collated and administered by the Governance and Engagement department, which submits them to the Finance Department on behalf of the Regions.

d. The Finance Department considers the bids, and proposes an overall budget for consideration by the Trustee Board.

e. The Trustee Board normally approves the budget in mid-November and Regions are subsequently informed.

Communicating with Members

6.5 Effective communication with members is important for all committees whether it is, for example, to promote an event or to encourage engagement. The Institution provides a number of ways to help with this; please see the Volunteer Resources Centre webpage in the first instance and contact the Governance and Engagement department for further information if needed.

6.6 To facilitate communication with members, some committee members have access to personal data about Institution members’ within their Region. All members who require such access shall take an online Data Protection Act course and shall read sign and return a copy of the relevant Data Protection Act form.
6.7 For further information and advice on communicating with members and the use of ICT to support regional activities please refer to the Volunteer Resource Centre website or contact the Governance and Engagement department.

Section 7 Health, safety and risk

7.1 The Institution takes seriously its responsibility for the health and safety of members working on its behalf and of the people with whom they come into contact.

7.2 Each committee within the regional network is responsible to RSB for the health and safety of its members and of those who work with them, while they are working on committee business. Committees are also responsible for the health and safety of the people who attend their events.

7.3 A risk assessment should be included in the planning process for any activity a committee undertakes. A risk assessment form is available on the Volunteer Resource Centre website.

7.4 Committees often use premises provided and managed by a host organization; for example a hotel meeting room for a committee meeting, or company/university facilities for a lecture/visit. In these cases the host organization is responsible for the users’ health and safety and should have in place appropriate policies and practices.

7.5 The Institution recommends that committees undertake a risk assessment for each event for which it is responsible or is jointly responsible. However, when using premises and/or facilities provided by others the committee(s) responsible or jointly responsible for the event shall as a minimum ensure that the host organization has undertaken a risk assessment, for the premises and the event, has carried out a Fire Assessment and has suitable third party insurance in place.

7.6 The host organization, or the committee, should provide First Aid facilities where appropriate.

7.7 The Institution has arranged limited liability insurance and a copy of the certificate is available on the Volunteer Resource Centre website.