

Royal Society of Biology

Role description of President and Chair of the Council of the RSB

The President is an elected officer of the Royal Society of Biology and the Chair of Council.

The President provides leadership to Council, enabling the Trustees to fulfil their responsibilities for the overall governance and strategic direction of the Royal Society of Biology. The President plays an integral role in ensuring that appropriate decisions are correctly made including developing the Royal Society of Biology's strategic aims, objectives and goals in accordance with its Royal Charter, Bylaws and other legal and regulatory guidelines.

The President sets the conditions for the overall board and the individual effectiveness of Trustees and establishes clear expectations concerning the Royal Society of Biology's culture, values and behaviour, leading Council in ensuring that these are embedded and enforced.

The President needs to work in partnership with the Chief Executive to ensure that Trustee decisions are acted upon and the charity is managed responsibly. The President and CEO should fully understand the difference between the role the Council plays in governance, developing and agreeing the strategic direction of the Royal Society of Biology and that of the Senior Leadership Team in applying that strategy to day-to-day operations.

Key duties and responsibilities of the President:

- Understand and appreciate the Society's Royal Charter, Bylaws, Regulations, policies and procedures, financial and legal situation, and strategic plan.
- Act as Chair of the meetings of the Council. In their absence, the Chair shall be taken by a member of Council nominated by the President.
- Act as Chair at General Meetings, save that in their absence a member of Council nominated by the President shall do so.
- Sit on the Society's Remuneration Committee.
- Have the final deciding vote in the event of equal votes being cast at either Council meetings or General Meetings.
- Instigate and facilitate discussions on the strategic development of the charity.
- Provide clarity of vision to the Council in fulfilling the Royal Society of Biology's charitable object.
- Act between full meetings of Council in authorising actions to be taken under the powers of the President, e.g. legal documents in accordance with relevant mandates.
- Support and appraise the performance of the Chief Executive.
- Present the President's Medal at the Society's Annual General Meeting and Annual Awards Ceremony.

Person Specification:

- Member, Honorary Member, Fellow, or Honorary Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology
- A distinguished reputation within the profession of biology or relevant policy areas
- Outstanding contribution to the advancement of biology as a discipline through research, teaching, business or policy
- Demonstrable interest in biology and the biosciences from a personal and professional perspective.
- Expected to devote necessary time and effort to trusteeship
- Thought leadership and influences at the most senior levels
- A compelling advocate willing to engage with the media, public, politicians and the profession
- Understanding of the Royal Society of Biology, its purpose and its work.
- Influential, innovative and impactful in their practice of science or wider discipline

- High level understanding and interest in the issues that the Royal Society of Biology seeks to address and represent
- A commitment to the values and principles of the Royal Society of Biology
- Strong business and financial acumen in either a commercial, academic, or civil society setting
- Understanding & acceptance of legal duties, responsibilities and liabilities of trusteeship
- Acceptance of the Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life; selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership.

Alongside the specific duties above, as a Trustee of the Royal Society of Biology the President also has the following key responsibilities:

Legal

- To ensure that the Society complies with its governing documents, charity and company law, and any other relevant legislation or regulations.
- To ensure that the Society pursues its objects, as defined in its governing documents.
- To ensure that the Society uses its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objects.
- To act in the best interests of the Society, its beneficiaries and future beneficiaries at all times.

Strategic

- To contribute actively to the Council's role in giving clear strategic direction to the Charity, setting overall policy, defining goals and objectives, and evaluating performance against agreed targets; and to keep under review the long-term development of the Charity in light of the political, economic and social environment in which it operates.
- To safeguard the good name and values of the Charity.

Financial

- To support the Honorary Treasurer and lead Council in ensuring the financial stability of the Charity.
- To ensure the assets of the Charity are managed and protected through appropriate delegation, checks and balances

Other

- To appoint the Chief Executive and to monitor their performance.
- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the Charity.
- To ensure appropriate advice is taken from professional advisers on matters where there may be material risk to the Charity or where Trustees may be in breach of their duties.
- To maintain the confidentiality of all sensitive / confidential information received in the course of a Trustee's responsibilities.
- Trustees elected from the College of Organisational Members have the responsibility to engage with Member Organisations to facilitate dialogue and maintain strong relationships with these organisations.
- The President is entitled to attend any Principal Committee of the Society but is not entitled to vote on any resolution.

Further information that may of interest to applicants;

- [The Seven Principles of Public Life](#) by the [Committee on Standards in Public Life](#)
- [The Essential Trustee: What you need to know](#) from the [Charity Commission](#)

Nolan Principles: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Notes:

<http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publications/cc3.asp#b2>

This section summarises the main duties and responsibilities of charity trustees. It is not a legal document, but sets out the legal principles in everyday language. The headings on this page are also used for sections of the more detailed guidance that follows.

Trustees and their responsibilities

Charity trustees are the people who serve on the governing body of a charity. They may be known as trustees, directors, board members, governors or committee members. The principles and main duties are the same in all cases.

(1) Trustees have and must accept ultimate responsibility for directing the affairs of a charity, and ensuring that it is solvent, well-run, and delivering the charitable outcomes for the benefit of the public for which it has been set up.

Compliance – Trustees must:

(2) Ensure that the charity complies with charity law, and with the requirements of the Charity Commission as regulator; in particular ensure that the charity prepares reports on what it has achieved and Annual Returns and accounts as required by law.

(3) Ensure that the charity does not breach any of the requirements or rules set out in its governing document and that it remains true to the charitable purpose and objects set out there.

(4) Comply with the requirements of other legislation and other regulators (if any) which govern the activities of the charity.

(5) Act with integrity, and avoid any personal conflicts of interest or misuse of charity funds or assets.

Duty of prudence – Trustees must:

(6) Ensure that the charity is and will remain solvent.

(7) Use charitable funds and assets reasonably, and only in furtherance of the charity's objects.

(8) Avoid undertaking activities that might place the charity's endowment, funds, assets or reputation at undue risk.

(9) Take special care when investing the funds of the charity, or borrowing funds for the charity to use.

Duty of care – Trustees must:

(10) Use reasonable care and skill in their work as trustees, using their personal skills and experience as needed to ensure that the charity is well-run and efficient.

(11) Consider getting external professional advice on all matters where there may be material risk to the charity, or where the trustees may be in breach of their duties.