Professional Practice and Code of Conduct
The Royal Society of Chemistry is the professional body for chemical scientists. Under our Royal Charter we have accountability for advancement and certification of competence in chemical science, and maintaining the integrity of our members\(^1\). Our members voluntarily commit to a code of professional conduct and high standards in their practice of chemistry.

We expect all members to uphold the reputation of the Royal Society of Chemistry and our Royal Charter as well as the reputation of the profession. There are disciplinary regulations and procedures in place to maintain these high professional standards.

The profession requires advanced learning and practical skills. Members have a responsibility for maintaining and improving their knowledge through continuing professional development and learning. CPD is important for all members wishing to progress in a professional working environment. This is especially so for those applying for professional recognition awards such as Chartered Chemist (CChem) and other Chartered designations as well as Registered Scientist (RSci) and Registered Science Technician (RSciTech). Those holding professional recognition categories such as CChem are expected to demonstrate maintenance in their chosen field and prove their commitment to professional development on an annual basis.

The purpose of The Professional Practice and Code of Conduct is to help members deal with the demands on their working lives, and any ethical problems that may arise. If appropriate members, should be aware of broader documents relating to specific ethical issues such as the Hague Ethical Guidelines produced by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons\(^2\).

A proactive attitude towards their professional duties will often help members solve concerns independently. Consultation with a senior colleague often resolves problems of this sort. We are always willing to help our members who have doubts on the ethics of any course of action, and can offer guidance if necessary.

The guidance on Professional Practice applies to all fields of chemical science. It is aimed to complement and not conflict regulations that apply locally and internationally\(^3\). It supports our code of conduct, and may be cited in a disciplinary enquiry if a member is criticised in an adverse manner in the public domain. In addition to The Professional Practice and Code of Conduct advice can be found on our website www.rsc.org, and when necessary, can be given on a personal basis.

\(^1\) In this document “member” refers to Honorary Fellows, Fellows, Members, Associate Members and Affiliates.
\(^2\) www.opcw.org/special-sections/science-technology/the-hague-ethical-guidelines/
\(^3\) We acknowledge customs in various parts of the world differ. Nevertheless, all our members accept the same obligations on admission to the Royal Society of Chemistry. We provide appropriate support and advice to our members worldwide, by face-to-face contact, telephone, email or via our web site.
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Positive behaviours should govern the way members act both within and outside of the workplace. Acting professionally and ethically is the bare minimum requirement of anyone working within the sciences as outlined by the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists\(^4\). Many companies will have their own definition of good behaviours. Broadly speaking they come under three headings with wide ranging definitions.

**Inclusivity – Respect**

Members should be inclusive and non-discriminatory at all times. They must be aware of their duties under the Equality Act 2010\(^5\). Inclusivity means being aware of barriers to individuals, particularly those with protected characteristics, from being involved. Diversity within the workplace should be seen as a way of garnering these different views and add strength to any aspect of working life. They should always work without discrimination and bias and respect the rights of others. They should be aware of the risks of unconscious bias, where personal experiences, stereotypes and cultural context can impact decisions and actions. Dignity should be paramount at all times and members should be aware that their actions can be reflected on the chemical sciences community as a whole. They should not make decisions which may be deemed unethical.

**Integrity – Rigour**

Members should be honest within their scientific work and should not wilfully mislead others. They should act as positive role models and use their actions to develop others at all times. Their work should be objective and decisions should be taken in a fair and impartial manner. They should respect the viewpoints of others at all times and ensure their work is both lawful and justified. Avoiding professional misconduct and declaring conflicts of interest are integral to upholding the integrity of the chemical sciences.

**Leadership – Responsibility**

Members should show leadership and act as positive role models to others at all times. They should be willing to challenge poor behaviour when it occurs. They should maintain good listening skills and be aware of the concerns of others. Where appropriate they should exercise judgement in their advice but never act in a way to mislead or allow others to be misled.

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\(^5\) [www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance)
Ethical considerations

The Royal Society of Chemistry is fully committed to ensuring that it operates as an ethical organisation. Members undertaking any activities on behalf of the RSC are expected to be fair and honest and act with a lawfully correct behaviour at all times.

Members:

Inclusivity
- Must never act in a way that could be interpreted as being discriminatory.
- In small organisations may feel exposed. There may be no scientific colleagues from whom they can seek advice. Members can consult the Royal Society of Chemistry in the strictest confidence.

Integrity
- Should never engage in an action that conflicts with their integrity or that of the Royal Society of Chemistry
- Who are considering speaking out against alleged wrong doing on the part of an employer can seek our advice. We may have a role to fulfil in such matters, and have procedures for investigating allegations of questionable behaviour.
- Have a duty to serve the public interest, and maintain and enhance the reputation of the profession.

Leadership
- Will usually find situations which cause ethical problems can be solved by approaching senior colleagues. Members can consult the Royal Society of Chemistry for advice and support in the strictest confidence.
- Should fulfil their contractual responsibilities to the best of their ability.
- Should carry out lawful instructions from senior colleagues and maintain their right to have reservations put on record, or seek further consultation.
- Accept resignation or dismissal may be the ultimate consequence of sustained disagreement with their employer.
Employee responsibilities

When members enter employment their rights and obligations will be specified in a formal contract. All employers in the UK are obliged to produce a document containing the conditions of service.

There are also legally enforceable duties that arise from the relationship between the employer and employee. These apply even if they are not set down in writing.

The main obligations are:

**Inclusivity**
- To treat all colleagues with respect.
- To be inclusive at all times, and not act in a discriminatory manner.

**Integrity**
- To give loyal, willing and diligent service.
- To deal honestly with employer’s property and facilities.
- Obtain the employers permission where there is or may be perceived a conflict of interest before entering additional employment.
- To not attempt to obtain, or accept, any bribe or secret commission of any sort.
- To not use confidential information obtained from employment which is detrimental to the employer (both during and after employment, without time limit).
- To allow the employer to profit from discoveries and inventions arising from the normal duties of the employment (there may be a provision for an employee to derive benefit from an innovation of outstanding benefit to the employer).

**Leadership**
- To be willing to adopt new and improved methods of working.
- To provide whatever skills and competencies were claimed when entering employment.
Employer responsibilities

Members who are employers or supervisors have additional accountabilities. They will influence others by giving instructions and leading by example.

**In addition to meeting the ethical and contractual requirements members have an obligation to:**

### Inclusivity
- Provide equal opportunities for all employees.
- Be strictly impartial when discussing redundancies or promotions.
- Support a diverse workforce and to ensure accessible and inclusive practices.

### Integrity
- Facilitate the professional development of all employees.
- Be accurate and fair in appraising the work of others.
- Be honest and truthful when providing statements to industrial tribunals.
- Follow all laws and regulations in the country where you carry out work.

### Leadership
- Recognise the right of employees to exercise their discretion.
- Provide accurate references on request.
- Resolve conflict with clear procedures.
Much of the advice in the employee and employer sections also relates to self-employment and consultancy. These members must maintain a confidential relationship with clients. They must not reveal information obtained from clients to a third party without consent. Such information may prevent accepting work from additional clients.

These members have direct contact within the chemical science community which could have a significant impact on perception to others outside of this community.

At the outset of any work, the consultant and customer should agree on:

**Inclusivity**
- Any considerations for diversity which should be included in the remit of the work.

**Integrity**
- The assignment of any patent claims arising out of the consultation.
- The scope and manner of final reports and publications.
- Respecting competitor’s reputation and freedom to operate.
- Respecting the rights of clients to use the consultant of their choice.

**Leadership**
- A clear understanding of objectives.
- The estimated cost and fee.
- Sufficient professional indemnity insurance cover.
Members within education at any level have accountability to lay the foundations of scientific and professional standards.

Providers have a responsibility to their students and also to the profession as a whole. The future of the profession may be shaped by their influence on those students.

In addition to their other duties providers should:

### Inclusivity
- Set an example to their students by demonstrating high professional and ethical standards.
- Be aware of ethical implications. The environmental effects of chemical discovery should be a focus throughout a scientist’s training.
- Be responsive to the diversity of their students, ensure teaching practices are inclusive and accessible to meet their needs, and advance equality of opportunity.

### Integrity
- Set the highest standards of personal integrity. Attention to accuracy should be exercised in chemical science investigations.
- Monitor any conflict of interest which may develop between responsibilities for the students and to the institution.

### Leadership
- Be responsible for the health and safety of students in laboratories and ensure that their students observe all relevant safe working practices.
- Conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times so as to act as positive role models.
Students have an obligation to:

**Inclusivity**
- Act as members of an inclusive community that supports equality, diversity, ethical and responsible behaviours.
- Treat all fellow students, staff and visitors with respect and dignity.

**Integrity**
- Behave by acting with honesty and integrity, exercising good scholarship and respecting the views of others.
- Be aware of the critical importance of accuracy and record keeping in chemical science investigations.

**Leadership**
- Work in partnership with providers to strengthen their educational experience and engage in the pursuit of knowledge.
- Show a respect for the health and safety of fellow students, staff and visitors at all times.
Members must be aware of the general principles of law relating to health & safety and the environment, negligence, discrimination, data protection, and any other law relating to their field of scientific work.

**Members should:**

**Inclusivity**
- Be aware smaller organisations will rely on members to ensure compliance of the law.
- Ensure workplaces are appropriate and meet any legislation on accessibility.

**Integrity**
- Have a duty to minimise adverse effects on health, safety and the environment and to recommend the use of best health, safety and environmental practice and give appropriate advice.
- Have a duty to put their objections on record if legal requirements are being overlooked, and to do all they can to put matters right.

**Leadership**
- Maintain a broad up to date understanding of the regulations and other developments in their own field.
Media and information in the public domain

A member who believes it is in the public interest to express a particular opinion should not hesitate to express it because it happens to be contentious. However, members are reminded that media coverage of scientific issues is not always accurate or objective.

The same considerations that apply to contributing to broadcast and press interviews also apply to other forms of communication such as printed materials, lectures and electronic media (including but not limited to email, social and professional networking platforms and content provided for the web).

Members should:

**Inclusivity**
- Not make discriminatory or abusive statements.
- Ensure any communications treat others with the appropriate dignity and respect.
- Be aware of the speed at which digital communications are viewed and the diverse audiences which they are viewed by.
- Consider the diversity of the audience to which they are communicating and ensure communications are appropriately accessible.

**Integrity**
- First obtain the facts of the case and ensure they have a genuine contribution to make.
- Make it clear when they are expressing personal opinions, rather than stating facts. This is especially true when the opinions are not shared by all professional colleagues.
- Not use the Royal Society of Chemistry’s name to imply its endorsement of personal views under any circumstances.

**Leadership**
- Be aware of the potential impact of statements made through new technologies, social media and the media in general.
- Bear in mind that what they say in the media may be taken as representing general opinion among all members.
- Consider the nature and objective of the programme or publication and ensure comments are not taken out of context.
- Be aware that bad news generally attracts more attention than good, and the media may exaggerate the seriousness of an issue.
Communication

Intellectual property laws
Authors should be aware of intellectual property laws governing copyright.

In particular members should:

- **Inclusivity**
  - Acknowledge past scientific work and recognise any substantial help and advice received.

- **Integrity**
  - Guard against wrongful disclosure of confidential information, especially relating to current research and development work.
  - Be unbiased and honest. Refrain from all forms of plagiarism and correct any errors which may arise over time.

- **Leadership**
  - Obtain written permission from the copyright holder for material used in any public domain.
  - Obtain written permission from their employer before signing a contract with the publisher.
Trade union membership and industrial action

Membership of a trade union can bring a number of benefits to employees. However, industrial action may conflict with the duties of a member to serve the public interest.

Lawful participation in industrial action is not unethical and can benefit the public interest. It is an individual’s choice. Members are not obliged to take part in industrial actions against their wishes.

Industrial action will potentially represent a breach of the employee’s contract of employment.

Some contracts of service specify that disputes which cannot be resolved by negotiation be referred to an arbitrator. We recommend this arrangement.

Serving the public interest

All members have responsibilities arising from their duty to serve the public interest and should be concerned with advancing excellence in the chemical sciences. The Royal Society of Chemistry does not condone any attempt to coerce its members into unlawful activity.

Members are expected to:

- advance the welfare of society, particularly in the field of health, safety and the environment.
- use knowledge and experience for the protection and improvement of the environment.
- advocate suitable precautions against possible harmful side-effects of science and technology.
- undertake any lawful scientific activity as required even if in an area which arouses adverse publicity.
- identify the risks of scientific activities and take an active interest in safety throughout their organisations.
Presenting legal evidence

Members may be called on to give evidence to government or parliamentary committees or other public bodies. If so, they are advised to contact us for advice about procedures.

Members should:

- Consider if subjects are of relevance to all members. If so, we can make written or oral submissions.
- Ask to see transcripts of evidence that they have given as a witness so that errors can be corrected before publication.
- Study the terms of reference and establish the capacity in which he/she will appear.
- Not imply endorsement by the Royal Society of Chemistry unless obtained in advance.

Tribunals and inquiries

A tribunal is usually set up after an incident that causes public concern. Tribunals usually follow legal guidance except no charges are brought. Following the hearing, a report is produced. If serious criticisms or allegations of wrong doing are made in the report then legal proceedings may follow. We can advise members about their responsibilities and rights at hearings, but are not able to present the cases of members called before tribunals. We may also decide to be present when a question of principle is raised which affects the profession as a whole.

Members should:

- Exercise their right to receive a copy of the transcript and challenge any misleading statement relating to the evidence.
- Be aware that inquiries and tribunals often determine whether incompetence contributed to an accident or incident.
- Establish the capacity in which they are being called.
- Seek personal legal advice before and during the hearing. This may be in addition to any legal advice provided by their employer.
The Council of the Royal Society of Chemistry has adopted the following code of conduct.

1. This Code of Conduct is applicable to all members (Honorary Fellows, Fellows, Members, Associate Members and Affiliates).

2. All members, having subscribed to the declaration as required under paragraphs 6 and 13 of the By-laws, have a duty to:
   - observe the provision of the Charter and By-laws of the Royal Society of Chemistry and any regulations made under them,
   - conduct themselves honourably in the practice of their profession,
   - maintain the highest standards of competence and integrity, especially in carrying out any statutory duties relevant to a particular appointment or area of employment,
   - have regard at all times to the public interest,
   - further the interests of and maintain the dignity and welfare of the Royal Society of Chemistry.

3. In order to fulfil their duty under this Code, members shall give due attention to any general guidance on professional conduct, together with advice on specific issues, and shall conform to any rulings on such matters that may be approved and issued from time to time by the RSC Council.

Members are reminded of the declaration signed on taking up membership of the RSC (as required under By-laws 6 and 13):

“I, the undersigned, do hereby declare that, while a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry, I will observe the provisions of the Charter and By-laws and any regulations made under them, and that I will conduct myself honourably in the practice of my profession and will further the interests and maintain the dignity and welfare of the RSC for as long as I shall continue to be a member.”

4. The Royal Society of Chemistry has a disciplinary process for members that do not adhere to this code of conduct. [http://www.rsc.org/disciplinary](http://www.rsc.org/disciplinary)
Text approved by the Council of the Royal Society of Chemistry, October 2013

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These Regulations supersede those issued by the RSC’s Council in August 2001