

Role Description for a Trustee of the Royal Society of Biology

The Trustees set the strategic direction and provide a key leadership and governance role in ensuring the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) meets its charitable aims and objectives through current and future business plans. You will be joining a senior level Board covering all aspects of bioscience from macro-systems to whole organisms to the molecular biosciences.

The RSB Board consists of 15 Trustees, also known as 'Council'. Eight places are elected by members and seven are appointed: three Honorary Officers plus four appointed by Council to fill skills gaps.

Time commitments

The length of a Trustee term is four years, counted from the day of the AGM at which the Trustee is officially elected. The RSB Council meets four times a year, typically alternating between virtual and in-person meetings, which normally take place in central London. Meetings are usually held on a Wednesday afternoon in March, June, September and December). Three of these meetings are normally less than half a day in duration and the fourth is longer (up to half a day) to accommodate a strategy meeting. All reasonable expenses are reimbursed including travel and accommodation if necessary. There is no further remuneration for Trustees.

Trustees may be called upon throughout the rest of the year on an *ad hoc* basis to consult on pressing matters. There are also opportunities to join our subcommittees such as the Finance, Audit & Risk Committee.

Person Specification (essential)

- A current member, or willing to become a member
- Demonstrable interest in the biosciences from a personal or professional perspective.
- Ability to devote necessary time and effort to trusteeship.
- Understanding of the Royal Society of Biology, its purpose and its work.
- The ability to probe facts, challenge assumptions and identify the advantages and disadvantages of proposals.
- The ability to work at a strategic level, think creatively & criticise constructively.
- Good, independent judgement and a willingness to speak their mind.
- Ability to work effectively as a member of a team.
- 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 (see Appendix 1).

Key Responsibilities

Legal (Governance)

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

Financial

- To ensure the financial stability of the RSB.
- To approve the annual budget.
- To protect and manage the assets of the RSB and to ensure the proper investment and use of RSB funds.

Other

- To appoint the Chief Executive and to monitor their performance.
- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the RSB.
- To ensure appropriate advice is taken from professional advisers on matters where there may be material risk to the RSB 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.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion statement

The Royal Society of Biology is committed to ensuring equal opportunities in the life sciences, and supports diversity throughout the pipeline; at school and higher education, in the workplace and training. We are a signatory of the Science Council's Declaration on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. This means that we proactively promote a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion within our discipline by:

- Appointing a board level diversity champion who, in partnership with the senior executive staff member in our organisation, will advocate the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion, and be accountable for improving practice and communicating our diversity strategies to our staff, membership and other stakeholders.
- Planning and implementing a programme of work to embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into our current organisational policies, practices and behaviours, and enhance the equality of opportunity in our activities as an employer and professional/learned body.
- Measuring, assessing and reflecting on our progress annually.
- Sharing these outcomes with the Science Council and supporting the collective progress of Science Council member bodies through joint learning and sharing good practice.

Appendix 1

Further information that may of interest to applicants

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

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.

This section summarises the main duties and responsibilities of charity trustees.

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.