

Assurance Committee Terms of Reference

1. Executive Summary

This document provides an overview of the RJC Assurance Committee's responsibilities and duties as well as the rules and details of appointment of members of the committee.

2. Committee responsibilities and duties

The role of the Assurance Committee is to oversee the ongoing evolution and maintenance of the RJC assurance system. Assisting in the development of policies and procedures relating to the certification of members and accreditation of third-party audit firms, duties include:

- Provide guidance and assisting in the development and review of policies and procedures relating to the RJC assurance system such as the RJC Assessment Manual and RJC Accreditation Criteria.
- Reaching a consensus decision on the accreditation or sanctioning of third-party audit firms.
- Scrutinise the results of the RJC's annual review of its Assurance System and suggest improvements or actions to be taken.
- With the support of the RJC Assurance Team, conduct internal reviews of the RJC certification and accreditation process (where requested).
- Oversee RJC's compliance with the ISEAL Assurance Code and assist with the development and implementation of corrective action plans.
- Monitor complaints related to RJC accredited audit firms, auditors, certification decisions and the RJC's assurance policies and procedures.
- Provide technical advice to the Executive Director (ED) and the Management Team on matters relating to assurance.
- Monitor representations of RJC certification or RJC accreditation by third parties and recommend courses of action to prevent misrepresentations.

The committee chair will be responsible for chairing each meeting, ensuring that all members are invited to express their views. They will present updates on the work of the committee to the Executive Committee (ExCo) and Board.

3. Composition

- The Board or the ExCo shall appoint a maximum membership of four members with appropriate qualifications to the committee, consisting of:
 - 1 x RJC member chair
 - 2 x external experts
 - 1 x secretary (RJC Assurance Manager)
- External representation can be from other standard systems, non-RJC accredited audit firms/auditors, accreditation bodies, technical consultants with assurance experience or non-governmental organisations with assurance experience.

4. Eligibility criteria

Members of the committee are expected to have sound knowledge and expertise in:

- auditing and/or certification of management system standards;
- development and implementation of sustainability standard assurance methodologies;
- familiarity with the [ISEAL Assurance Code](#) and general standard systems operational policies;
- accreditation of third-party conformity assessment bodies;
- knowledge of ISO standards i.e. ISO 17021 or ISO 17011.

5. Appointment

- The Executive Committee on the recommendations of the ED will appoint the members of the Assurance Committee and the Chair of the committee.
- The ED's recommendation will be based upon consideration of the eligibility criteria (see Section 4)
- An external member of a committee is not eligible to be the chair or secretary.
- Committee tenure is for **three years**, subject to reappointment. No committee member shall, unless otherwise agreed with the ExCo, be eligible to remain a committee member for more than six consecutive years. Should any positions become available, new appointments will be approved by the ExCo.
- If for any reason the number of members of this committee falls below the quorum (see Section 6), a call for recruitment and appointments by ExCo shall be held.

6. Quorum

- The quorum for the Assurance Committee is **three members**, including the chair.
- The secretary shall monitor and keep a register of attendance and advise the Chair if committee members are absent on a regular basis, in which case the ExCo reserves the right to remove somebody as a member of the committee.

7. Meetings

- Meetings will be conducted using electronic means such as teleconferences to the extent possible to maximise participation.
- The committee shall have four conference call meetings per year in addition to ad-hoc conference calls or in person meetings and other online work where required.
- Committee meetings shall be open to all appointed members, and their participation in discussion and debate will be encouraged, subject to appropriate confidentiality constraints and practical considerations.

8. Decision-making

- Committee meetings will be held to reach decisions through the majority agreement
- To reach agreement, the committee Chair will invite all participants to express their views. Enough time to discuss and debate decisions will be allocated.
- If an agreement cannot be reached a vote will be taken among the committee members.
- Decisions related to accreditation of a third-party audit firm will be supported by a briefing and recommendation from the RJC Assurance Team.

9. Reporting

- Minutes of each committee meeting will be recorded by the secretary and submitted to committee members within two weeks from the meeting date.
- The chair of the committee shall report to the ExCo and/or board on matters within its duties and responsibilities.

10. Confidentiality

The agenda, papers and minutes of the committee shall be held in confidence by committee members.

11. Impartiality

All committee members will be bound by the RJC Conflicts of Interest Policy and must declare potential or perceived conflicts of interest by completing the RJC Conflict of Interest Declaration annually and prior to the discussion of agenda items.

12. Expenses

External committee members may be paid all reasonable travelling, hotel and other expenses incurred by them in connection with their attendance at in-person meetings.

Further information on RJC governance can be found in the RJC Governance Handbook available on the RJC website. Please contact the RJC Assurance Manager with any questions on these terms of reference: accreditation@responsiblejewellery.com