



## Assurance Committee Terms of Reference v1.1 November 2020

### **About this document**

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. These Terms of Reference supersede those published in September 2019 and should be read in conjunction with the RJC's [Governance Handbook](#). Please contact the Assurance Manager with any questions about these Terms of Reference: [accreditation@responsiblejewellery.com](mailto:accreditation@responsiblejewellery.com)

### **1. 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 where appropriate assist in the development of:
  - policies and procedures relating to the impartiality of activities that involve the operation of the RJC system;
  - criteria for accrediting audit firms and auditors;
  - terms and conditions to apply to accredited audit firms and auditors; and
  - quality control methods and procedures for audit firms and auditors.
- Provide guidance in the management of relationships between the RJC and accredited auditors' firms to ensure independence and impartiality.
- Provide technical advice to the Executive Director (ED) and the Management Team on matters relating to certification and accreditation.
- Provide guidance and where appropriate assist in the development of policies, processes and procedures relating to certification of members, to ensure consistency, quality and impartiality.
- Monitor representations of RJC certification by third parties and recommend courses of action to prevent misrepresentations.
- Monitor complaints related to audit firms, auditors and certification decisions.
- Oversee the RJC's compliance with the ISEAL Assurance Code.
- Conduct, with the support of the Management Team, and/or by a person engaged by the Management Team, an annual review of the impartiality and quality of the certification and accreditation decision-making processes relating to the operation of the RJC system. Results will be reported to the Executive Committee by the Executive Director or delegate and, through the Executive Committee, to the Board.

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.

## 2. Composition

The Board or the ExCo shall appoint a maximum membership of **nine members**, and a minimum of five, with appropriate qualifications to the committee, consisting of:

- 3-7 representatives of RJC members, one of whom is Chair
- 2 x external experts

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.

## 3. Eligibility criteria

Members of the committee shall have expertise in:

- Management systems auditing and certification;
- sustainability assurance methodologies;
- familiarity with the ISEAL Assurance Code;
- accreditation of third-party audit firms; and
- relevant ISO standards, in particular ISO/IEC 17021 and ISO/IEC 17011.

## 4. 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.
- The secretariat role is fulfilled by the RJC Assurance Manager.
- 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 5), a call for recruitment and appointments by ExCo shall be held.

## 5. 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.

**Commented [LF1]:** Aligned to Governance Handbook

**Commented [LF2]:** Comments captured Nawal - thanks

**Commented [NA3]:** Add sentence about chair being appointed by the members of the AC

**Commented [LF4R3]:** See bullet #1 – already captured

**Commented [LF5]:** Added as per comment Nawal, thanks



## **6. 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.

## **7. 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.

## **8. 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.

## **9. Confidentiality**

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

## **10. 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.

## **11. 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.