RESPONSIBLE JEWELLERY COUNCIL

ASSURANCE SYSTEM CHANGE PROTOCOL

V2.0 JANUARY 2026

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1. Introduction

The Responsible Jewellery Council (RJC) assurance system works to ensure a robust and credible evaluation process that supports members to implement and maintain the RJC standards as a pathway to addressing sustainability best practices, responsible sourcing and supply chain due diligence. This is a version-controlled document and the RJC reserves the right to revise it based on implementation experience and emerging good practice.

This document outlines the RJC's Assurance System Change Protocol, in accordance with the relevant requirements of the ISEAL Alliance Code of Good Practice for Sustainability Systems (V1.0 December 2023), hereinafter called the ISEAL Code and is the equivalent for assurance to the [Standards Setting Procedure](#). The RJC provides requirements for approved certification bodies, individual auditors and members through scheme documents, which establish minimum requirements for the auditing and certification process, accreditation of certification bodies and individual auditor approval for the RJC scheme. This document describes the RJC's procedures and processes for reviewing and updating the key assurance scheme documents, making up the RJC assurance system, as described under section 2, Assurance model overview.

The official language of the RJC is English. Translations of various relevant RJC documents are available in a range of languages and are published on the RJC website, as applicable. In the case of inconsistency between versions, reference shall default to the official-language version.

ENQUIRIES, FEEDBACK OR COMPLAINTS If you have any enquiries or feedback on this document, please contact:

Email: assurance@responsiblejewellery.com. Telephone: +44 (0)20 7321 0992

Any complaints relating to this document can be submitted through the RJC Complaints Mechanism https://www.responsiblejewellery.com/contact-rjc/#complaints or by telephone: +44 (0)20 7321 0992.

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The Responsible Jewellery Council is the trading name of the Council for Responsible Jewellery Practices Ltd, which is registered in England and Wales with company number 05449042.

2. Assurance model overview

The RJC plays a crucial role in promoting responsible practices and ethical standards within the jewellery and watch industry, bringing together member companies of all sizes, from mining to retail. Through the RJC Code of Practices (COP), the RJC Chain of Custody (COC) and the RJC Laboratory Grown Materials Standard (LGMS), hereinafter also collectively referred to as the RJC standards, and through third-party certification and collaborative initiatives, the RJC aims to build trust, transparency and sustainability across the entire jewellery and watch supply chain, ultimately benefiting consumers, communities and the environment.

As a Code Compliant ISEAL member, the RJC is committed to upholding the Credibility Principles of the ISEAL Code, which are incorporated at every stage of our operations. Changes made to the assurance system are done to continually improve the system by increasing clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in the auditing and certification process.

The RJC assurance system is designed to provide a robust and credible framework for evaluating and certifying responsible practices across the jewellery and watch supply chain. The assurance structure and assessment model are designed to align with the ISEAL Code, ISO/IEC 17065:2012 Conformity assessment – Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services standard, and applicable regulatory requirements, namely EU and UK legislation on accreditation, while supporting the aims of the RJC (ISEAL 7.1).

This approach ensures that assessments remain relevant and proportionate to the complexity of the jewellery and watch supply chain and meet the conditions for third-party independent certification according to international standards. This approach also takes into account inherent risks, which vary according to materials in scope, sector characteristics, geographic regions, and position within the value chain.

Drawing from these requirements, the desired outcomes from implementing the RJC assurance system are the following:

- The accurate evaluation by an independent third-party of RJC members' conformity, resulting in third-party independent certification against the RJC standards.

- Approval of independent third-party certification bodies and their associated personnel involved in RJC certification services, based on the defined eligibility criteria and process.

- An effective and efficient RJC assurance system, which continually improves over time.

- The RJC assurance system is accessible and adds value to RJC members.
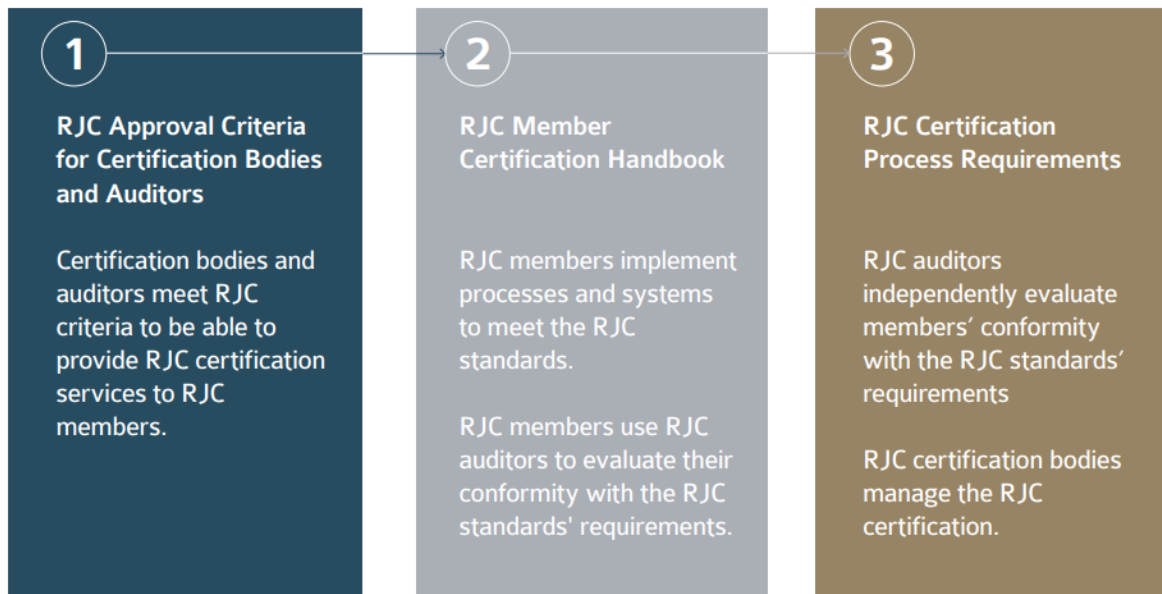
The key assurance scheme documents, making up the RJC assurance system include the following:

- [Certification Process Requirements for Certification Bodies and Auditors (CPR)](#)

- [Member Certification Handbook](#)

- [RJC Approval Criteria for Certification Bodies and Auditors](#)

For the purposes of this document, the above are referred to as "key assurance documents".

The purpose of reviewing and updating the key assurance documents is to improve the assurance system by increasing clarity, consistency, and effectiveness in the audit and certification process and accreditation programme, as well as maintaining compliance with the relevant regulatory requirements,

FIGURE 1: : THE RJC ASSURANCE SYSTEM

① RJC Approval Criteria for Certification Bodies and Auditors

Certification bodies and auditors meet RJC criteria to be able to provide RJC certification services to RJC members.

② RJC Member Certification Handbook

RJC members implement processes and systems to meet the RJC standards.

RJC members use RJC auditors to evaluate their conformity with the RJC standards' requirements.

③ RJC Certification Process Requirements

RJC auditors independently evaluate members' conformity with the RJC standards' requirements

RJC certification bodies manage the RJC certification.

The assurance system reflects the intended impacts and strategic objectives of the RJC as per the RJC Theory of Change. The scheme is designed not only to promote responsible practices, but also to drive continuous improvement among member organisations. This alignment ensures that the assurance process contributes meaningfully to the RJC's mission and delivers measurable outcomes for stakeholders.

In addition, the RJC considers how its assurance scheme creates value for clients. Beyond compliance evaluation, the RJC provides members with tools and guidance to strengthen their due diligence processes, enhance transparency, and build trust with consumers and business partners.

The RJC also defines the types of claims that member organisations are permitted to make, in its standards and policies. These claims are carefully controlled to prevent misleading statements and to maintain the integrity of the RJC certification system.

The implementation of the RJC assurance system is subject to the RJC Oversight Mechanism, which is the umbrella term for a range of procedures to assess, review and improve its competency, accuracy, effectiveness and efficiency, as well as to regularly review and ensure consistency with applicable regulatory requirements, reinforcing the credibility and legal compliance of its assurance framework.

3. Frequency of review and revision

Reviews can draw on implementation experience, the data management system, learnings from risk management, stakeholder feedback, regulatory changes, and findings generated through MEL activities.

The Assurance Change Protocol, and associated key assurance documents, will be reviewed at the start of every revision of the Assurance scheme components, including planned substantive and, as necessary, non-substantive reviews of the assurance system. At a minimum, the Assurance Change Protocol will be reviewed at least every five years (ISEAL 2.8).

4. Assurance stakeholder engagement

Eligible assurance stakeholders are identified as members of the Assurance Committee, certification bodies, programme managers, approved auditors, members, assurance/oversight providers and/or approval/accreditation bodies or third parties with a material interest in the auditing and certification process, or that may be affected by the scheme, such as community groups, non-government organisations or trade unions.

The RJC has determined the scope and engagement plan with the eligible stakeholders for new key assurance documents and/or revisions, as follows:

- Assurance Committee – Comprising industry and non-industry representation, this committee oversees substantive changes and provides governance to the Assurance departments. The Assurance Committee meets six times per year. When key assurance documents are under revision, substantive changes are shared with the group when they are in draft for discussion and input, and again when in the final draft.

- Programme Manager Roundtables – Comprising RJC Programme Managers (PM) and administrative staff from approved Certification Bodies, these roundtables provide a platform for dialogue, input to key assurance documents, assurance reporting metrics and helpful reminders. PM Roundtables are held in two time zones (GMT a.m. and p.m.) six times per year. When key assurance documents are under revision, substantive changes are shared with the group when they are in draft for discussion and input, and again when in the final draft.

- Targeted stakeholder consultations – where required, the Assurance Departments undertake focused consultations through one-to-one calls with relevant stakeholder groups to gain deeper insights into specific topics. This includes PMs and Auditors from approved Certification Bodies, as well as members for non-regulatory requirements.

- Assurance/oversight providers and/or approval/accreditation bodies and other third parties with a material interest in the auditing and certification process.

Open feedback mechanism – stakeholders may submit feedback or raise change requests (improvement suggestions or exception requests) at any time via email or phone (detailed information provided in Section 1, Introduction and below). These are considered in the annual prioritisation of change requests.

Contact information for stakeholders who have engaged with the RJC is retained in the Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) system. New stakeholders may identify themselves and their interests by emailing the Assurance department at assurance@responsiblejewellery.com, or calling +44 207 321 0992, with further details available on the 'Contact Us' page on the RJC website.

5. Assurance stakeholder consultation

The RJC aims to ensure open and transparent consultations on the development of its assurance system. The RJC will hold a combination of webinars, teleconferences, and direct consultations to engage with identified stakeholders. All consultations will seek to obtain a balance of interests in the subject matter and geographic scope. Steps taken during consultations include:

- Define a workplan for the revision work, including the parties/roles involved and the timing of events aligned to the Assurance Change Protocol (ISEAL 2.8).
- Open a consultation to all identified stakeholders (Section 4, Assurance stakeholder engagement), asking for comments and recommendations on proposed changes.
- Facilitate dialogue on the received input with the Assurance Committee.
- Share initial and final drafts with identified stakeholders of the new key assurance document, developed with the RJC Assurance Committee.
- Recommendation by the Assurance Committee to the Executive Committee that it should seek adoption of a new or revised key assurance document by the Board based upon an assessment as to whether the correct procedure was followed.
- If, after review by the Executive Committee, the Executive Committee does not agree to seek adoption of the new or revised key assurance document by the Board, the key assurance document will be reverted to the Assurance Committee for further revisions; and
- The Board will have the sole discretion as to whether to adopt a new or revised key assurance document.

Stakeholders are proactively informed and engaged about the opportunities to provide input on proposed changes to the assurance system throughout the ideation, development, implementation and

revision phases of scheme changes, including how their input will be taken into account. When desired by the stakeholder, the RJC ensures that information can be provided securely and confidentially (ISEAL 3.3).

The RJC seeks to address the barriers to participation and engagement from these stakeholder groups by proactively seeking contributions from such stakeholders. This includes identifying where stakeholders may be in varying time zones, and holding a number of meetings in different time zones to ensure inclusivity; and meeting stakeholders on a one-to-one basis, where the stakeholder is more comfortable to engage freely, instead of a group setting (ISEAL 3.4).

6. Recording change requests

The RJC maintains a log for recording identified or proposed changes or change requests (improvements and/or exceptions) to the key assurance documents. Changes to the key assurance documents may be suggested by any stakeholder, but are usually proposed by the Assurance Committee, approved certification bodies, individual auditors, members or from within the RJC team (ISEAL 2.8). The log is accessible to the Quality Assurance, Compliance Assurance and Standards teams, who can also log change requests for the wider RJC team. The change requests are logged consistently.

Any changes that are not driven by regulatory requirements are reviewed against applicable regulatory requirements to ensure the assurance system maintains alignment of the same. The RJC reviews regulatory requirements related to the assurance system by monitoring any changes to relevant legislation such as the UK and EU regulation, ISO 17065 and associated ISO standards, as well as part of the agreement with Assurance Services International (ASI) as the RJC's approval body for certification bodies (ISEAL 7.1). ASI monitor the developments of the different legislation as part of their main core assurance services.

7. Prioritisation of change requests

On an annual basis, the General Manager, Quality and Compliance Assurance will review the log and hold an internal workshop where necessary, and shall involve relevant stakeholders who logged substantive changes for further input or clarification. The purpose of the internal workshop is to collectively review and agree on the prioritisation of all substantive changes. This also creates an opportunity for teams to collaborate on resolving cross-departmental improvements. Prioritisation of changes is based on a criterion of business need, volume of feedback, strategic alignment to other projects, and internal capacity to address. The prioritised changes are then summarised to the Executive Director for awareness and approval of planification.

Prioritised substantive changes first go through consultation with the RJC Assurance Committee, who approve or suggest amendments to the proposed plan and solutions. At this stage, the Assurance Committee may also object to any of the changes.

8. Revision and document control of key assurance documents

In order to maintain a clear and accurate record of all changes made throughout the review period, changes must be clearly and consistently marked in draft scheme documents, making full use of the tracked changes and comment functionalities in Word. Draft documents shall then be saved with a new clean version created, so the draft with changes may be referred back to. The RJC Compliance Assurance Department operates the tracked changes in the key assurance documents for further review by the Assurance Committee, in line with section 5, Assurance stakeholder consultation.

Once changes are approved, a Summary of Substantive Changes (Table 1) will be published alongside the new key assurance document. The Summary of Substantive Changes details the following information related to each change: clause or section, previous wording, new wording, impact (to account for unintended consequences and evaluate whether the intended beneficial outcome will be achieved) and rationale.

Table 1 – Summary of Substantive Changes

Clause or section	Previous wording	New wording	Impact	Rationale

To avoid duplication and conflicting changes across the RJC's scheme documents, all substantive changes must be reviewed by at least one other department that works with or is familiar with those requirements. Where the change to a key assurance requirement affects or is conflictive to a requirement in any other RJC department, this must be resolved. Where the other scheme documents are not under review, and therefore it is no possible to update to account for the change, the assurance change cannot go ahead and must be postponed until it can be implemented without conflicts.

9. Transition period & publication

The RJC will establish effective dates for when the key assurance documents shall come into effect and include them in these key documents, under Status and Effective Date. These effective dates will allow stakeholders adequate time to notice and comply with the new requirements. As a general rule, at least three months is provided between the publication date and the effective date of any key assurance document (ISEAL 2.9).

Where changes that affect the audit and certification process are made, relevant stakeholders shall be invited to input on the timeline so they may become familiar with the changes and complete any required training before implementing them.

All new key assurance documents will be free to download and available in the RJC's official language, English, on the RJC's website. Any translations will be issued as and when required and should always refer to the English version for points of clarification and interpretation.

10. Stakeholder change communication

The RJC provides clear and simple messaging to its stakeholders to support their understanding of any forthcoming and effective changes to key assurance documents. This is conducted through a number of methods, such as webinars, in-person roadshows, newsletters, training modules, email campaigns, digital tools, and guidance documents, as well as website FAQs (ISEAL 2.9).

The transition period between the outgoing and new key assurance document will be clearly indicated in the relevant assurance documentation as per Section 9, Transition period & publication. All new key documents will clearly state the status of the document, official language, version and contact information of RJC to address any queries.

11. Decision-making process for key assurance documents

The RJC aims to operate in conformance with the ISEAL Code of Good Practice when reviewing or developing key assurance documents. The decision-making for the RJC to adopt new or revised key assurance documents will pass through the steps outlined in Section 5, Assurance stakeholders consultation.

In addition, any revision of the RJC Assurance Terms of Reference (ToR) shall be approved by RJC Executive Committee and the Board, to negate any conflict of interest from the Assurance Committee.

Finally, other non-key assurance documents (internal procedures, work instructions etc.) will be approved by the General Manager, Quality and Compliance Assurance who may also request approval from the Executive Director, as applicable.

12. Version control

Document version	Date of approval and job role	Date of implementation	Changes
2.0	13 January 2026 Executive Director	13 January 2026	• Updates to all sections to align with the ISEAL Code and the key assurance documents • Update of the list of key assurance documents • Addition of sections (Assurance model overview, Assurance stakeholder engagement)
1.0	November 2020 Executive Director	November 2020	First version