



CODE OF CONDUCT



August 2016

This Code of Conduct was adopted by resolution of the RAS Executive on 24 November 2005. Updated 12 August 2016.

Royal Agricultural Society of New Zealand

CODE OF CONDUCT

PART ONE: INTRODUCTION

This code of conduct provides guidance on the standards of behaviour that are expected from the RAS Executive and RAS Districts, and all other duly elected officers of the Society. All elected members are required to comply with the code. The code applies to elected members in their dealings with:

- each other
- all staff employed by the Society or its Districts
- the media
- the general public

The objective of the code is to enhance:

- The level of cooperation, support and understanding of the RAS, its delegated officials and District representatives and the roles each play in supporting the overall, unified direction of the organisation.
- the credibility, effectiveness and accountability of the RAS, its officials, affiliates and members.
- mutual trust, respect and tolerance between the elected members as a group and between the elected members and management and staff.

This code of conduct seeks to achieve its objectives by recording:

- an agreed statement of roles and responsibilities (recorded in Part Two of the code)
- agreed general principles of conduct (recorded in Part Three of the code)
- specific codes of conduct applying to particular circumstances or matters (also recorded in Part Three of the code).

Elected members are primarily accountable to electors of the organisation through the democratic process.

The code of conduct that follows is based on the following general principles of good governance:

- **Public interest:** Members should serve only the interests of the RAS as a whole and should never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any individual or group.
- **Honesty and integrity:** Members should not place themselves in situations where their honesty and integrity may be questioned, should not behave improperly and should on all occasions avoid the appearance of such behaviour.

- **Objectivity:** Members should make decisions on merit including making appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits. Elected members should also note that, once elected, their primary duty is to the interests of the RAS nationally, not only the District that elected them.
- **Accountability:** Members should be accountable for their actions and the manner in which they carry out their responsibilities.
- **Openness:** Members should be as open as possible about their actions and those of the RAS, and should be prepared to justify their actions.
- **Personal judgment:** Members can and will take account of the views of others, but should reach their own conclusions on the issues before them, and act in accordance with those conclusions.
- **Respect for others:** Members should promote equality by not discriminating unlawfully against any person and by treating people with respect, regardless of their race, age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. They should respect the impartiality and integrity of the RAS staff.
- **Duty to uphold the law:** Members should uphold the law and on all occasions act in accordance with the trust placed in them.
- **Stewardship:** Members must ensure that the RAS uses resources prudently and for lawful purposes, and that the RAS and Districts maintain sufficient resources to meet the agreed mission, goals and objectives of the Society.
- **Leadership:** Members should promote and support these principles by example, and should always endeavour to act in the best interests of the A&P movement and RAS organization as a whole.

PART TWO: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This part of the code describes the roles and responsibilities of elected officers of the RAS, the additional roles of the President and Vice President, the Executive Committee, RAS Chairpersons and the role of the Chief Executive.

Elected Members

Elected members, acting as RAS officials, are responsible for:

- The development and adoption of RAS policy.
- Monitoring the performance of the RAS against its stated objectives and policies.
- Prudent stewardship of RAS resources.
- Employment of the Chief Executive and other administrative staff.
- Representing the interests of the Ordinary Members of the RAS. (On election, the members' first responsibility is to the RAS as a whole.)

Unless otherwise provided by the Constitution, or in standing orders, the RAS and its Districts and other RAS committees can only act by majority decisions at meetings. Each member has one vote. Any individual member (including the President) has no authority to act on behalf of the RAS unless the RAS Executive has expressly delegated such authority.

President

The President is elected by the membership as a whole and as one of the elected members shares the same responsibilities as other members of Society. The President also has the following roles as:

- Presiding member at Executive meetings. The President is responsible for ensuring the orderly conduct of business during meetings (as determined in standing orders);
- Advocate on behalf of the RAS. This role may involve promoting the RAS and representing its interests. Such advocacy will be most effective where it is carried out with the knowledge and support of the Executive;
- Ceremonial head of the Royal Agricultural Society.
- Providing leadership and feedback to other elected members on teamwork and chairmanship of committees; and to the CEO and other RAS staff.

The President must follow the same rules as other elected members about making public statements and committing the RAS to a particular course of action, unless acting in accordance with the rules for media contact on behalf of the RAS under a delegation of authority from the Executive.

Vice President

The Vice President exercises the same roles as other elected members and, if the President is absent or incapacitated, the Vice President must perform all of the responsibilities and duties, and may exercise the powers of the President (as summarised above).

Executive

The RAS Executive is charged with the responsibility of assisting the President and Vice President to oversee the mission, goals and objectives of the RAS and to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct. The Executive is expected to support the decisions made by the Executive team through the democratic process and to act in accordance with this Code of Conduct and in a manner befitting the status of their position.

Committee Chairpersons and other Elected Officials

A committee chairperson presides over all meetings of the committee, ensuring that the committee acts within the powers delegated by RAS, and as set out in the Constitution. A committee chairperson or other Elected Official of the RAS may be called on to act as spokesperson on a particular issue and when called upon to do so, should reflect the official views of the RAS. Other Elected Officials must act in accordance with this Code of Conduct and in a manner befitting the status of their position. The committee chairpersons and other elected officials are expected to support the decisions made by the RAS through the democratic process and to act accordingly.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

The Executive in accordance with rule 9.1 (a) of the RAS Constitution appoints the CEO. The CEO is responsible for implementing and managing the RAS and RAS Executive's policies and objectives within the budgetary constraints established by the Executive, including:

- Implementing the decisions of the Executive
- Providing advice to the Executive and RAS members and affiliates

- Ensuring that all responsibilities, duties and powers delegated to the CEO or to any person employed by the RAS Executive, are properly performed or exercised
- Managing the activities of the RAS effectively and efficiently
- Maintaining systems to enable effective planning and accurate reporting of the financial performance of the RAS

PART THREE: RELATIONSHIPS AND BEHAVIOURS

This part of the code sets out the agreed standards of behaviour.

Relationships with others

Any organization, to be effective, requires mutual respect between members. The effective performance of the RAS also requires a high level of cooperation and mutual respect between elected officials, RAS members and staff. With this in mind elected officials and members of the RAS will conduct their dealings with each other in ways that:

- maintains member confidence in the office to which they have been elected.
- are open and honest.
- focuses on issues rather than personalities.
- avoids offensive or abusive conduct.

In particular elected officials will:

- be entitled to be treated with respect and tolerance by their fellow elected officials and by staff
- act in good faith in the interests of the RAS.
- act in accordance with this code of conduct.
- ensure that they are aware of the obligations placed on them, be adequately prepared for meetings, including reading agendas and other relevant material prior to meetings and, where possible, asking questions relevant in advance.
- approach decision-making with an open mind taking into account only relevant considerations, and arriving at decisions based upon the individual merits of a matter, free from actual or perceived bias.
- treat each other with courtesy and respect (including the avoidance of offensive or abusive conduct towards other elected officials, members and employees)
- not do anything which compromises, or could be seen as compromising, the impartiality of an employee.
- avoid publicly criticising the RAS Executive, other elected officials and any employees in any way, but especially in ways that reflect on the competence and integrity of the employee.

Relationship with the wider Membership

Effective decision-making depends on productive relationships between elected officials and the wider RAS membership.

Individual members should be accorded with respect in their dealings with the RAS and its elected officials, have their concerns listened to, and deliberated on an appropriate manner.

Contact with the Media

From time to time the RAS or its elected officials are asked to make comment to the media. This part of the code deals with the rights and duties of the RAS Executive or elected officials and staff when speaking to the media on behalf of RAS, or in their own right.

The following rules apply for media contact on behalf of the RAS:

- the President is the first point of contact for the official view on any issue. Where the President is absent, any matters will be referred to the Vice President or relevant committee chairperson.
- the President may refer any matter to the relevant committee chairperson or to the CEO for their comment.
- no other member may comment officially on behalf of the RAS without having first obtained the approval of the President or CEO.

Elected officials are free to express a personal view in the media, at any time, provided the following rules are observed:

- media comments must not state or imply that they represent the views of the RAS.
- where an elected official is making a statement that is contrary to a RAS Executive or membership decision or RAS policy, the elected official must not state or imply that his or her statements represent a majority view.
- media comments must observe the other requirements of the code of conduct, e.g. not disclose confidential information, or compromise the impartiality or integrity of staff.

Confidential Information

In the course of their duties, elected officials may occasionally receive information that may need to be treated as confidential. This will generally be information that is either commercially sensitive or is personal to a particular individual or member organisation.

Elected officials must not use or disclose confidential information for any purpose other than the purpose for which the information was supplied to the elected official.

Elected officials should be aware that failure to observe these provisions will impede the performance of RAS by inhibiting information flows and undermining membership confidence in the RAS and its Executive.

Conflicts of Interest

Elected officials must be careful that they maintain a clear separation between their personal interests and their duties as an elected member. This is to ensure that people who fill positions of authority carry on their duties free from bias (whether real or perceived).

If an elected official is in any doubt as to whether or not a particular course of action (including a decision to take no action) raises a conflict of interest, then the member should seek guidance from the President or Executive Officer immediately.

Standing Orders

Elected officials must adhere to the RAS meeting standing orders.

Ethics

The RAS seeks to promote the highest standard of ethical conduct amongst its elected officials and members. Accordingly, elected officials will:

- claim only for legitimate expenses as laid down by the Executive as policy and as per the policy manual.
- not influence or attempt to influence, any other elected official or RAS employee to take actions that may benefit the member, or the member's family or business interests.
- not use RAS resources for personal business
- not solicit, demand, or request any gift, reward or benefit by virtue of their position.
- notify the CEO if any gifts are accepted.

PART FOUR: COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

This part deals with ensuring that elected officials adhere to the code of conduct and mechanisms for the review of the code of conduct.

Compliance

Elected officials must note that they are bound to comply with the provisions of this code of conduct and as such, will be asked to sign a document to this effect.

Procedure Regarding Alleged Breaches

The President and RAS Executive Committee will monitor compliance. All alleged breaches of the code would be reported to that committee, via the President or CEO or any other RAS Executive Member. (If the President or CEO is the subject of the allegation, the allegation is to be made via the Vice President). Any allegation of a breach of a code of this code of conduct must be in writing, must make a specific allegation of a breach of the code of conduct, and must provide corroborating evidence.

The Executive committee will investigate the alleged breach. Before beginning any investigation, the Executive committee will notify the elected official(s) involved in writing of the complaint and explaining when and how they will get the opportunity to put their version of events. Both the person making the allegation and the person the subject of the allegation have the right (under natural justice) to appear before the Executive Committee and to be heard in a fair and impartial manner.

Responses to Breaches of the Code

The exact nature of the action the Executive Committee may take depends on the nature of the breach and whether there are statutory provisions dealing with the breach. Action may include and is not limited to:

- formal censure
- removal/dismissal of the elected official from their position and/or other representative type bodies.

Review

Once adopted, a code of conduct continues in force until amended by the Executive. The code can be amended at any time but cannot be revoked unless replaced with another code. Amendments to the code of the conduct require a resolution supported by 75 percent or more of the members of the Executive present and voting thereon.