

RIBA: Volunteer Code of Conduct

Volunteer Code Protocol

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The background of the page is a detailed architectural floor plan in a light purple color, overlaid on a solid dark purple background. The floor plan shows various rooms, corridors, and structural elements. A large, semi-circular area on the left side of the plan is filled with a pattern of small hexagons. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the page.

Section A

Volunteer Code of Conduct

1

Introduction

- 1.01** The purpose of this Volunteer Code of Conduct is to encourage high standards in the governance of the RIBA. In turn, the RIBA will be supportive of its Volunteers and will provide access to a helpline equivalent to the Employee Assistance Programme and access to the SafeCall whistleblowing hotline.
- 1.02** This Code applies to all RIBA Trustees, members of Council and members of any RIBA committees reporting directly to the RIBA Board and/or RIBA Council and their respective sub-committees or panels, together with Council Task & Finish Groups. (whether remunerated or not), who are together referred to in this Code as Volunteers. *All Volunteers agree to be bound by the Volunteer Code of Conduct and the Volunteer Code Protocol.*
- 1.03** Any reference in the Royal Charter, Byelaws, Regulations and any other RIBA documents to the Trustee Code of Conduct or the Council Code of Conduct is a reference to this Code.
- 1.04** This Code was approved by the Council on **22 June 2023** and by the Board of Trustees on **8 June 2023**, and was adopted by the RIBA on **1 January 2024**.
- 1.05** Every Volunteer commits to upholding and promoting the charitable purposes of the RIBA, which are “the advancement of Architecture and the promotion of the acquirement of the knowledge of the arts and sciences connected therewith”. Every Volunteer will uphold and promote the core values of the RIBA membership in achieving those charitable purposes. The core values form the pillars of the Professional Code of Conduct (which this Code echoes at a different level) and may succinctly be identified as
- o Integrity,
 - o Competence,
 - o Respect for others.

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Integrity

- 2.01** Volunteers shall at all times act honestly and with integrity, seeking to fulfil their role diligently in the RIBA's best interests, with the intention of helping the RIBA to achieve its purposes as a charitable professional institution. "Acting in the RIBA's best interests" means acting in a way that is most likely to further RIBA's charitable purposes both now and in the future, and not for the benefit of any other person or body, whether or not connected with the RIBA.
- 2.02** Volunteers shall not, either for themselves or for any other person or organisation, gain or attempt to gain a financial or other material benefit in connection with carrying out their role or through the use of any property, information or opportunity that comes to them in the course of carrying out their roles, unless that has been specifically authorised (in advance and in writing) in line with the relevant procedure notified to them from time to time.
- 2.03** Volunteers shall comply with the RIBA's policies and procedures so far as relevant to their respective functions. Specific attention is drawn to the non-exhaustive list of policies and procedures specified in Appendix 1 to this Code.
- 2.04** Volunteers shall continue to comply with this Code after ceasing to be a volunteer, so far as it continues to be relevant to their situation in respect of provisions relating to confidentiality and reputation.
- 2.05** Volunteers shall maintain confidentiality of information and documents received or created in the course of carrying out their roles that are marked or categorised as confidential or which, from the contents of the document, can reasonably be regarded as confidential.
- 2.06** Volunteers shall protect and uphold the reputation and good standing of the RIBA at all times, subject to the wider consideration of protecting the public interest in the standards of the profession (see provision for "whistleblowing", below).
- 2.07** Volunteers shall notify the Honorary Secretary as soon as possible if they become aware of any circumstance that might adversely affect their ability to discharge their duties or to comply with their obligations under this Code.
- 2.08** Volunteers shall notify the Honorary Secretary as soon as possible if they become aware of any "serious incident" (as defined by the Charity Commission) that ought to be reported to the Charity Commission as such in accordance with its guidance¹.
- 2.09** Volunteers shall, subject to their fiduciary duties and general duties of confidentiality, foster a culture of openness, seeking to maintain the confidence of the public, members and other stakeholders, staff and regulators.

¹ see <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>

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Competence and compliance

- 3.01** Volunteers shall comply with the general law and with the RIBA's Royal Charter, Byelaws and Regulations².
- 3.02** Volunteers shall act in accordance with the Terms of Reference or other governing provisions of their respective Committees.
- 3.03** Volunteers shall participate in induction, training and development activities organised for their roles.
- 3.04** Volunteers shall act responsibly so that disproportionate or wasteful use of the RIBA's resources can be avoided.
- 3.05** Volunteers shall give adequate notice of an intention to resign, at least three months' if reasonably possible.

² see <https://www.architecture.com/about/history-charter-and-byelaws>

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Respect and relationships with others

- 4.01** Volunteers shall be collegial, respectful and courteous towards all with whom they come into contact at the RIBA and when representing the RIBA externally and in carrying out their role or roles, including when dissenting on any matter.
- 4.02** Volunteers shall respect the principle of collective decision making and not to seek to frustrate the implementation of any decision properly reached, without prejudice to the principle that volunteers may dissent or challenge decisions through the proper channels.
- 4.03** Volunteers shall not make any public comments or issue any press releases in any medium which purport to be made by or on behalf of RIBA without the prior knowledge and approval of the Chair of the Board, the President or anyone to whom the power of approving such comments shall have been delegated. Volunteers shall not represent themselves as speaking officially for RIBA when they have not been authorised to do so.
- 4.04** Volunteers shall uphold the RIBA's commitment to equality/equity, diversity and inclusion.
- 4.05** Volunteers shall not behave in a way that causes a material risk of subjecting others to harm (as that term is defined by the Charity Commission), recognising the RIBA's obligation to protect its staff, all Volunteers and others who come into contact with the RIBA.
- 4.06** Volunteers shall work within the RIBA committee and management structures and recognise that staff are responsible to their line managers and not directly to Volunteers. All complaints or concerns about members of staff should be raised with the Chief Executive, or to the Chair of the Board if the matter concerns the Chief Executive (to be dealt with through RIBA employment procedures).

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Breaches and complaints

- 5.01** The Volunteer Code Protocol makes provision for the resolution of complaints about compliance with this Code. .
- 5.02** Whistleblowing is the reporting of suspected wrongdoing or dangers in relation to the activities of the RIBA. This includes bribery, fraud or other criminal activity, miscarriages of justice, health and safety risks, damage to the environment and any breach of legal or professional obligations. Volunteers should report any such concerns using the confidential SafeCall hotline.

Definitions

Words will generally be taken to have their ordinary/dictionary meaning. Some additional specific definitions are here by way of additional guidance:

Term	Definition
Committee	Any group of Volunteers who report directly or indirectly into the Board or Council or who form part of the RIBA branch network, together with all Trustees and Council Members of the RIBA
Volunteer	All RIBA Trustees, members of Council, members of any RIBA Committee (whether remunerated or not).

Appendix 1

Relevant RIBA Policies and Procedures

RIBA Volunteer Code Protocol
RIBA Conflict of Interest Policy & Procedures
RIBA Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy
RIBA Members' Expenses Policy
RIBA Anti-Bribery & Corruption Policy
RIBA Data Protection Policy
RIBA Modern Slavery Statement
RIBA Statement on Climate Change
RIBA Code of Professional Conduct
RIBA Disciplinary Rules
RIBA Communications Guidelines,

Please note: This is a dynamic list to which new versions and additional policies may be added from time to time.

The background of the page is a light red color with a white architectural floor plan overlaid. The floor plan shows various rooms, including a large central area with a curved wall, a kitchen area with a stove and sink, a dining area with tables and chairs, and several smaller rooms and corridors. The lines of the floor plan are thin and white, creating a technical drawing effect.

Section B

Volunteer Code Protocol

Definitions

In this Protocol the following words shall have the following meanings:

Term	Definition
Chair	means the person who is appointed to chair the meetings of the relevant "Committee";
Committee	any group of Volunteers who report directly or indirectly into the Board or Council or who form part of the RIBA branch network, together with all Trustees and Council Members of the RIBA;
Complainant	means an Eligible Person who has raised a concern under this Protocol;
Eligible Person	means a person who is entitled to raise a concern about a Volunteer's compliance with the Volunteer Code of Conduct under this Protocol;
Respondent	means the Volunteer against whom a formal complaint has been made pursuant to Stage Two of this Protocol;
Volunteer	means all RIBA Trustees, members of Council and members of any RIBA Committee (whether remunerated or not).

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General

- 1.01** The RIBA has adopted a Volunteer Code of Conduct that sets out the standards of behaviour expected of all those who are Volunteers.
- 1.02** There will be occasions when an Eligible Person wishes to raise a concern that a Volunteer has not met those standards. This Protocol sets out the procedure by which such concerns may be raised, dealt with, and resolved.
- 1.03** A person is an Eligible Person if they have witnessed, been directly involved in and/or been directly affected by the actions of a Volunteer. Only an Eligible Person may raise a concern under this Protocol. The Chair's decision as to whether or not an individual is an Eligible Person is final. Concerns raised by those who are deemed to not be Eligible Persons by the Chair will be closed upon receipt and written notice will be issued to the person raising the concern.
- 1.04** A Volunteer who is the subject of a complaint may resign from the relevant Committee at any time, in which case any action under this Protocol shall cease, although this provision does not affect the procedure in respect of a complaint made under the Code of Professional Conduct.
- 1.05** The matters that are considered pursuant to this Protocol and the proceedings of the Panel are confidential. In the event of a breach of confidentiality the Panel will take such action as it considers appropriate including but not limited to considering the imposition of a sanction and/or referring the matter to the Director of Professional Standards where appropriate.
- 1.06** An allegation that a Volunteer has failed to comply with a sanction imposed on them pursuant to this Protocol will be dealt with in accordance with this Protocol and treated as if it were raised by an Eligible Person, met the requirements contained in paragraph 3.01 and was not dismissed pursuant to paragraph 3.06. Such an allegation will be referred to the Panel who will deal with it in accordance with paragraphs 3.07 to 3.09 of this Protocol.

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Stage One: Informal resolution

- 2.01** In the first instance, wherever possible, the Complainant should ask the Volunteer to stop any unwelcome and/or inappropriate behaviour, pointing out that their behaviour is unwelcome. The Volunteer may not be aware that their behaviour is causing offence; a quiet word may be all that is needed to stop the behaviour. Both parties are advised to keep a note of any actions taken at this stage.
- 2.02** If a private informal discussion is not possible or does not resolve the concern, the Complainant should raise the matter informally with the Chair of the relevant Committee. The complaint shall be considered by the Chair who shall first determine whether the Complainant is an Eligible Person. If they are, the Chair will first attempt to resolve the complaint informally. If the Chair is conflicted or otherwise unable to deal with this, the matter shall be referred to an alternative Volunteer nominated by the Chair to seek to resolve the complaint informally, and reference to the Chair in this Protocol shall be to that nominee.
- 2.03** The Chair will invite a response from the Volunteer and will consider how best to deal with the issue raised. The Chair may, for example, resolve the matter informally or may initiate a conciliation or mediation process (including any such process that may be administered by the RIBA). If the complainant wishes, the other person agrees and the Board authorises the spend, mediation may be an appropriate way of resolving the matter in a constructive manner. The mediator should be independent, impartial and cannot impose any outcome on the parties, the mediator's role is to help the parties seek a resolution amongst themselves. The Chair will be responsible for seeking Board's approval to the appointment of the mediator, including payment of the mediator's costs, and for making the necessary arrangements. The RIBA's governance team will support the Chair in the administration of this process.
- 2.04** If the alleged behaviour is more serious, the matters complained of informally have not been resolved, or the Complainant wishes the matter to be dealt with formally, then the Complainant may proceed to Stage Two (formal resolution).

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Stage Two: Formal complaints handling process

- 3.01** Any formal complaint under the Volunteer Code of Conduct must comply with the requirements set out in paragraph 3.02. Any complaint that does not meet those requirements shall be dismissed.
- 3.02** The formal complaint shall be submitted in writing to the Chair of the relevant Committee. The complaint shall include the following details.
- a) A signed and dated complaint form (template attached at Appendix 1);
 - b) Details of the conduct complained of, identifying the provision of the Volunteer Code alleged to have been breached, including a summary not exceeding 500 words;
 - c) Supporting documentation to evidence the allegations contained within the complaint; and
 - d) A chronology setting out a timeline of events. The total submission must be no more than 20 pages. If this limit is exceeded, the Chair will return the paperwork to the Complainant with a request to revise and resubmit. If the requirements are still not met, the Chair may close the file. The Chair's decision is final.
- 3.03** The Chair will send the complaint and all supporting documents to the Respondent who must submit a written response to it within a period of 28 days (or such longer period as may be agreed by the Chair). The written response must include a signed and dated response form (template attached at Appendix 2), a summary response not exceeding 500 words, supporting documentation, and a chronology – in total being no more than 20 pages of submissions. If this limit is exceeded, the Chair will return the paperwork to the Respondent with a request to revise and resubmit. If the requirements are still not met, the Chair may make such decision on the complaint as they see fit and then close the file. The Chair's decision is final.
- 3.04** Upon receipt of a valid complaint and response, the Chair will refer the complaint and response to a Grievance Panel who shall be appointed by the Board from time to time following recommendations from the Nominations Committee. Every effort will be made to refer the complaint to a Grievance Panel within no more than ten (10) working days. The Grievance Panel will be made up of three members drawn from the list and would usually comprise at least one lay and one chartered member¹. The RIBA's governance team will support the Chair in the administration of this process.

¹ RIBA will maintain a list of suitably qualified chartered members or lay persons who would be suitable to join a Grievance Panel, from time to time.

3.05 Following initial consideration of the complaint, the Grievance Panel shall consider whether the complaint meets the threshold test for complaints, as follows:

“Is the subject-matter sufficiently serious, i.e. not frivolous or vexatious, to warrant investigation (and, in this context, a “Vexatious Complaint” is a complaint that is made without apparent foundation or merit; is substantially the same as a previous complaint which has been closed; appears to be made substantially to harass, annoy or subdue RIBA or the subject(s) or recipients(s) of the complaint or to impose on them disproportionate inconvenience or expense; or otherwise appears malicious, frivolous, repetitive, unreasonably burdensome or unwarranted)?”

3.06 If the Panel decides that the complaint is a Vexatious Complaint and/or does not satisfy the threshold test it will close the matter and notify the Complainant and the Respondent of that decision. The Panel’s decision on the application of the threshold test will be final.

3.07 If the Panel decides that the complaint is not a Vexatious Complaint and does satisfy the threshold test, it will determine the process to be followed, including setting out the timetable for considering the complaint, which will be shared with the parties. At a minimum this must allow the Complainant and the Respondent a separate opportunity to make verbal representations to the Panel in accordance with such arrangements as the Panel may direct.

3.08 The Panel will apply the civil standard of proof (the balance of probabilities) and will conduct its proceedings in private.

3.09 Following consideration of the statements and evidence submitted the Panel may uphold all or part of the complaint or it may dismiss the complaint. It will notify the parties in writing of its decision which, subject to the provisions set out in section 4 below, shall be final.

3.10 If the Panel upholds all or part of the complaint it may:

- Require the Respondent to make a written apology to the Complainant;
- Impose a formal warning on the Respondent requiring them to correct the behaviour in respect of which a finding has been made within a specified timescale. Where the Respondent is a RIBA member, the warning shall be recorded in their membership record for such period as the Panel may direct;
- Require the Respondent to undertake training or development activities within a specified timescale;
- Make recommendations to the relevant Chair(s) in relation to any governance position the Member may hold with RIBA, including that they cease to hold a governance involved role for a relevant period of time provided that where the Volunteer is a member of either or both Board and Council, the recommendation shall be made to the President as Chair of Council and/or to the Chair of the Board, or to the Honorary Secretary if the complaint is about the President or Chair or they are otherwise conflicted; and/or
- Where the Respondent is a RIBA member, refer the matter to the Director of Professional Standards in line with standard process where it considers that the complaint or any part of it that has been upheld engage the Code of Professional Conduct [or to the Architects Registration Board].

3.11 The Panel will communicate its decisions in writing and give reasons for its decisions.

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Stage Three: Appeal

- 4.01** A Volunteer who has been sanctioned by a Grievance Panel has a final right of appeal to the RIBA's Honorary Secretary. The Honorary Secretary cannot overturn a decision by a Grievance Panel unless they are satisfied that the Panel failed to follow due process or reached a decision which no Grievance Panel, acting reasonably, could sensibly have reached. Only in such cases, the Honorary Secretary has the power to overrule or vary the Grievance Panel's decision or sanction or to remit the matter back to the Grievance Panel or a to a newly constituted Panel.
- 4.02** Where the Honorary Secretary is conflicted because of involvement in the complaint or with either party, then the Chair of the RIBA Board will nominate an alternative Volunteer to consider the appeal.
- 4.03** The decision of the Honorary Secretary or the nominated alternative will be final.

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Reporting

5.01 Decisions of the Grievance Panel are reported in camera to the RIBA Board

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