

## **Code of Conduct**

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### **Regional Studies Association**

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## **Code of Conduct**

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### **Purpose and scope of the Code**

Anyone associated with the RSA should endeavour to maintain the highest standards of personal and professional conduct. We have put this Code in place to ensure that our members and associates can engage with each other in a supportive and mutually respectful manner. The Code underpins our commitment to develop a community dedicated to open scholarly exchange and the dissemination of knowledge in Regional Studies.

All members and non-members associated with the RSA are expected to act in accordance with the principles outlined in this document. Breach of the principles of this code may result in the suspension or termination of RSA membership or cessation of association by the RSA, such action to be at the discretion of the RSA Board.

This Code does not refer to research ethics which are covered by universities. The Code should not be construed as compromising in any way our commitment to the principles of academic freedom, defined by UNESCO as 'the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely [your] opinion about the institution or system in which [you] work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies.'

### **The principles of the Code of Conduct**

The Code is based on six key principles outlined below:

#### 1. Responsibility and accountability

You should be aware of the ethical, legal and professional responsibilities of the RSA and of your own institution. You should avoid personal and professional misconduct that might bring the RSA or the reputation of the field into disrepute, recognising that,

in particular, legal action that reflects on your suitability to operate in the field of regional studies may be regarded as misconduct by us.

You are encouraged to advance public knowledge and understanding of regional studies and to counter false or misleading statements which are detrimental to the wider academic and policy community.

You should encourage and support fellow members in their professional development and, where possible, engage with and mentor new entrants to the field.

You should not speak in the name of the Association, our Board or sub-committees, without the authorisation of the Board.

## 2. Integrity and honesty

You should:

- Be honest and accurate in representing your professional affiliations and qualifications, including such matters as knowledge, skill, training, education and professional experience.
- Take reasonable steps to ensure that your qualifications and competencies are not misrepresented by others and to correct any misrepresentation identified. You must recognise and clarify the limits of your knowledge, skills, training, qualifications, education and experience.
- Be honest and accurate in conveying professional conclusions, opinions, and research findings, and in acknowledging their potential limitations.
- Not use your RSA membership as a means of conveying a level of competency or professional standards, as we are not an accrediting body and there is no assessment of competency to attain/retain membership.
- Neither offer nor accept bribes or inducements either on a personal basis or on behalf of the Association.

## 3. Respect and fairness

We are committed to maintaining and promoting a scholarly community in which people treat each other with dignity and respect. You should not discriminate against,

bully or harass others on the basis of cultural and role difference, including (but not exclusively) those involving age, disability, education, ethnicity, gender, language, national origin, political beliefs, race, religion, sexual orientation, marital or family status and socio-economic status. You should respect the knowledge, insight, experience and expertise of fellow members, (regardless of career stage and length of RSA membership) relevant third parties, and members of the general public.

We recognise as bullying, behaviour that may be characterised as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying does not need to be deliberate; someone may demonstrate bullying behaviour, which falls within the above definition, without intending it. Whatever form it takes, bullying is unwarranted and unwelcome, and can cause embarrassment, fear, humiliation or distress to an individual or group of individuals. Bullying often results from a misuse of individual power derived from status/position, physical strength or force of personality. It can also follow from collective power arising out of a strength of numbers.

We recognise as harassment any unwelcome verbal or physical behaviour, including sexual advances, when the unwanted conduct has the purpose or effect of either violating another person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person. Harassment does not need to be deliberate; someone may harass another person without intending to. In some situations, where the unwanted conduct is serious, a single incident may constitute harassment. In other situations, conduct may become harassment if it is repeated or sustained.

The following list provides examples of the types of behaviour which can amount to harassment, although the list is, by no means, exhaustive:

- Unwelcome physical contact or physical interaction: This may range from unnecessary touching or brushing against another's body, physical assault, coercive sexual relations, physical threats, insulting or abusive behaviours or gestures. It may also encompass invading someone's "personal space" by standing very close to him/her where this is unnecessary.
- Unwelcome verbal conduct: This may include the making of remarks and comments about appearance, lewd comments, sexual advances, innuendo and

banter, the making or repetition of offensive or stereotyped comments, jokes or songs, the making of threats and the making of patronising comments.

- Unwelcome written or visual interaction: This may include sending unwelcome emails, notes or pictures, and displaying or sending offensive material on any RSA social media/websites/blogs etc.
- Harassment, bullying and victimisation of members, or by members by electronic methods.

Given the current reliance upon electronic means of communication it should be specifically noted that harassment, bullying and victimisation by electronic means is also unacceptable. For example, this might involve:

- Sending emails (with or without attachments) which breach the terms of this Code.
- Inappropriate copying of emails to parties not seen as relevant to the discussion, as a way of intimidating or inappropriately gaining leverage over other members, guests, volunteers or staff.

#### 4. Privacy and confidentiality

You should respect the individual and collective rights to privacy and maintain confidentiality in compliance with UK and international law and regulations. In particular, you should maintain complete confidentiality about all sensitive/confidential information you receive in the course of any RSA activities or roles and maintain any such information securely. You may only use such information in compliance with relevant laws and regulations and for the purpose of furthering the objects and aims of the RSA. Please refer to the Privacy Policy on the RSA website which explains how and why we use your personal data.

#### 5. Conflict of interest

You should declare to the RSA Chief Executive any competing professional or personal interests that may be pertinent to your activities within the RSA and RSA-supported events and working groups. This includes any professional/academic disputes, whistleblowing activity within your academic work and issues/disputes over your research integrity. Any activities undertaken in the RSA name must be consistent with our vision, strategic objectives and the principles outlined in the policy documents section of the RSA website.

If a conflict of interest does arise, you must inform the RSA Chief Executive immediately the matter becomes apparent and should take one of the following actions:

- abstain from the activity or association which creates the conflict;
- declare a conflict of interest and pass the role to a colleague; or
- stand down/withdraw from the RSA activity or role in question.

Failure to do so, may lead to the imposition of actions, including a ban on attendance/participation at specific RSA events or activities and ultimately termination of membership.

RSA Trustees should refer to the RSA Conflict of Interest Policy which specifically addresses the activities of RSA Trustees.

## 6. Collegiality

You are encouraged to collaborate with external learned societies and organisations in order to exchange knowledge and help disseminate learning and good practice. If you put in place barriers or are obstructive to such collaboration or act in a way that brings the RSA into disrepute through these collaborations you may be in breach of this Code.

## **Summary**

This Code of Conduct specifies principles to which all RSA members and associates should adhere. It is intended to encourage trust and respect within our community. While the Code is comprehensive in scope, it may not cover every issue that may arise. If you have any doubts or queries as to its contents or purpose you are free to contact the RSA Chief Executive or Chair of the RSA Board to discuss. Finally, if you feel any aspect of the Code has been breached in your interactions with RSA activities and events, please make use of our complaints procedure as outlined in the Complaints Management Policy in the Policy Documents section of the RSA website.

This Code will be reviewed annually.

*This Code was based on a document originally created by the British International Studies Association and used with their kind consent.*