

Ethical Policy

Regional Studies Association

Updated June 2025

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The Regional Studies Association is a Company Limited by Guarantee
Company Number 04116288, Registered Charity Number 1084165.

1. The RSA's ethical principles and commitments

The Regional Studies Association (RSA) is a membership organisation and charity and, as such, acts in an ethically responsible manner in pursuit of its charitable objects and on behalf of its membership. As a UK-registered charity, the RSA operates in accordance with the National Council for Voluntary Organisation (NCVO) Ethical Principles (updated August 2022), as well as meeting all relevant legislation and the UK Charity Governance Code.

The RSA applies the following ethical standards when it comes to its trustees and board members, volunteers, staff, members and any person who has contact with the RSA:

- ensuring they experience integrity and openness
- respecting their dignity, their right to feel safe, their privacy and confidentiality.

Consequently, the RSA is committed to challenging and acting upon unethical behaviours including instances of prejudice, stereotyping or discrimination based on another person's sex, gender, beliefs, values, social class, age, disability, religion, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language or nationality.

This policy underpins all the work of the RSA and may overlap, or duplicate, provisions made in other RSA policies. Nothing in this policy should be construed as compromising the RSA's commitment to academic freedom, defined by UNESCO (1997) 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 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 ethical principles above are the foundation of our operations. They help ensure the RSA:

- maintains the trust of its members, stakeholders and the wider public and reinforces confidence in our work and mission
- ensures accountability, as clear ethical guidelines hold the RSA responsible for its actions and decisions
- promote inclusivity, fostering an environment where diversity is respected and valued
- uses its ethical framework to make choices that align with its values and objectives.

2. Working with purpose

The RSA carries out its charitable purposes for the public benefit and in the interests of its members and beneficiaries.

Therefore, the RSA:

- has a clear purpose
- knows who its members, beneficiaries and other stakeholders are
- ensures the views of members, beneficiaries and stakeholders are actively listened to and taken account of
- ensures that all relevant policies and procedures are drawn up with the interests of its members, beneficiaries and its commitment to providing public benefit in mind.

3. Working with integrity

The RSA will uphold the highest level of institutional integrity and expects its trustees, and board members, volunteers, staff and members to exhibit personal and professional integrity at all times.

Consequently, the RSA will:

- ensure appropriate systems are in place to help guarantee that all decisions are robust, defensible and free from conflict of interest
- consider the effect of activities on the reputation of the RSA
- ensure their resources are managed responsibly and their funds are properly protected, applied and accounted for, including policies and procedures to combat the risk of bribery, fraud, corruption and extortion
- exercise due diligence in understanding the ethical standards of commercial partners and individuals, to seek support or collaboration from those with ethical values that are consistent with those of the RSA.

4. Working with openness

The RSA seeks to maintain a culture and space where trustees and board members, volunteers, staff and members and the wider public, can see and understand how the Association works, including how it spend its funds and deals with problems when they arise

The RSA therefore:

- operates a presumption of openness and transparency, subject to complying with existing legal and regulatory requirements
- is willing to share information about how it works, ensuring it this information is accessible
- maintains clear lines of responsibility and accountability for its work, both internally and externally where applicable
- publishes or makes available on request:
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- annual reports, including reference to how the RSA's purposes and values are being fulfilled
- its approach to safeguarding, bullying and harassment
- its complaints procedure
- its whistleblowing policy

5. Ensuring the right to be safe

Every trustee and board member, volunteer, member of staff, subscribing members and any person who has contact with the RSA should be treated with dignity and respect, and feel that they are in a safe and supportive environment.

The RSA recognises its responsibility to create an inclusive culture that does not tolerate inappropriate, discriminatory, offensive or harmful behaviour towards any person who works or volunteers for, is a member of, or who encounters the RSA.

The RSA is an association where people's wellbeing and mental health are valued and promoted.

Consequently, the RSA:

- stands against and will maintain a clear approach to prevent abuse of trust and power including bullying, intimidation, harassment, discrimination or victimisation in all its activities
- will create a culture that supports the reporting and resolution of allegations, suspicions or concerns about abuse or inappropriate behaviour of any kind
- ensures that anyone who is a trustee, board member, volunteer, member of staff or subscribing member understands the expectations placed upon them, and provide training where relevant to support them in meeting their responsibilities
- recognises its responsibilities for staff health and wellbeing
- ensures that anyone who works or volunteers for the RSA has access to proper support and advice if they:
 - experience or witness unacceptable behaviour
 - raise a concern or make an allegation about the actions of others
 - don't feel safe.

6. Related RSA policies

Conflict of interest

Complaints management

Membership termination

Data protection

Dignity at work

Safeguarding [forthcoming]
