

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Introduction

To maintain a vigorous and open Society, the Council supports the concept of competitive elections for members and officers of the Council. To this end it recognises that campaigning should allow candidates to put their views to voters with a minimum of restriction, but in a fair and honest manner. Council considers it appropriate to have a Code to guide the conduct of candidates and their supporters. Whilst the terms of this Code could be covered within the Society's existing Code of Conduct, it is felt appropriate to state clearly the conditions which apply to those seeking election.

This Code applies to candidates, their proposers, other 'active' supporters and all members of the Society (an 'active' supporter being anyone who, either verbally or in writing, attempts to influence the vote of another member). A copy of the Election Code will be issued to all candidates and to all members at the time of nomination and its terms will be expected to apply at all times to anyone seeking election. Any possible breach of the Code which is brought to the attention of the Council and subsequently adjudged to have occurred would be disciplined under Section A of the MRS Code of Conduct.

Preamble to Code

The overall objectives of this Code are to:

- (a) Ensure that campaigning by candidates for Council or Council offices is carried out in an honest and fair way.
- (b) Protect the standing and repute of the Society, its members, officers and employees.

I. Terms of Code

To satisfy the above aims, all members of the Society will abide by the following conditions:

- (i) Not carry out or participate in any action, or make any statement, orally or in writing, which might bring the Society or its members, its officers or employees into disrepute.

This includes:

- (a) attacks on candidates' characters and abilities which are irrelevant to the Election and/or could bring the Society into disrepute.
 - (b) spreading of rumours which could adversely reflect on the Society's professional status and reputation.
- (ii) Not misrepresent, nor mislead voters as to a candidate's qualifications, position or experience.

- (iii) Not misrepresent the qualifications, position, or experience of other candidates.
- (iv) Not mix in the same conversation, correspondence or meeting, material relating to a candidature with matters relating to business or potential business.
- (v) Not offer or imply any inducement – in relation to a candidature, or possible election.
- (vi) Not use any of the Society's publications or mailing facilities to advance a candidature.
- (vii) Satisfy all other conditions specified in Section A of the existing MRS Code of Conduct relating to membership.

II Proposing a candidate

- (i) Any voting member of the Society whose subscription is fully paid up, has the right to propose a candidate for election whether the candidate is standing for Chairman or Council member. Two proposers who must also be voting members whose subscriptions are fully paid up are required.

Once a member has given his/her name as a proposer he/she may not withdraw his/her name except:

In writing to the candidate and the MRS Chief Executive.

- (ii) The proposal of a candidate must not be lightly or casually undertaken.

III Complaints

Complaints against this Code will be dealt with by the Market Research Standards Board (MRSB) (formerly the Professional Standards Committee (PSC)) following the Guidelines set out for handling complaints. Once registered a complaint cannot be withdrawn or otherwise stopped unless and until:

- (i) the MRSB has completed its investigation or
- (ii) it has become absolutely clear at an early stage that the complaint has no basis.

Any investigation of the Electoral Code will be carried out by a small team of senior and experienced researchers (not an individual), selected by the MRSB, who quite clearly will be selected on the basis of having no business interests in the issue complained of or close connections with any of the parties involved.

It is the right and duty of all members of the Society to see that this Code is observed, in spirit as well as letter, and where appropriate to bring to the attention of the Council any behaviour which they consider to be contrary to the Code.

This Code of Conduct is not intended to discourage fair and truthful comment and debate.