



Royal Society of Biology

**Guidelines for Branches of the Royal Society of
Biology
May 2016 Edition**



1. Objectives of the Royal Society of Biology

According to the Royal Charter for the Royal Society of Biology, the objectives of the Society are to advance for the public benefit the science and practice of biology, to advance education therein and to regulate, co-ordinate and encourage the study of biology and its application.

The objective of Branch Committees is to work to help fulfil these objectives within agreed Branch catchment areas, with the support of Head Office (HO) staff, primarily via the Regional Coordinators.

Branch Committees primarily achieve these objectives by organising and delivering a programme of events and activities throughout the year that:

- Promote education and the increased public understanding of and engagement with the biological sciences;
- Engage members and the general public in Branch areas with current developments in Biology;
- Encourage the exchange of ideas and information between biologists from different fields of expertise and areas of employment and/or between biologists and those working in other science, technology, engineering and mathematics networks (STEM) and non-STEM fields;
- Enhance the professional status of bio-scientists, thereby encouraging young people who aspire to become professional biologists;
- Assist the Society in the recruitment of members;
- Collaborate with other local groups, Member Organisations, Special Interest Groups, sister Societies and *ad hoc* entities created by the Regional Grants Scheme.

2. Minimum requirements of Branch Committees

The Royal Society of Biology (RSB) values the breadth of expertise and experience contained within its membership, especially within its volunteer Branch Committees. As a result of this diversity, however, it is appreciated that there will be variation in the content and format of events and activities that various committees are confident and qualified to deliver regionally. The autonomy, self-direction and distinct strengths of Branch Committees is to be celebrated and encouraged. However, the following are expected of Branch Committees as a minimum requirement:

A Branch Committee will:

- Promote biology and the aims and objectives of the Royal Society of Biology;
- Have the three main Officer roles filled: Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer;
- Ideally consist of between 9 and 12 Members in total (including the three (3) main Officer Positions)
- Ensure that all Branch Committee members are registered members of the Royal Society of Biology;

- Meet at least four (4) times a year or at least to be able to show that event planning is clearly in progress;
- Be open to receiving new members of the Branch Committee;
- Run at least four (4) events per year
- Regularly review all Committee roles and hold an Annual General Meeting of Branch Members (AGM) to elect the principal Officers and other Committee Posts or Members;
- Update the Regional Coordinators of any contact changes or make up of the Branch Committee;
- Provide details of upcoming events to the Regional Coordinator so that they can be advertised on the RSB website and directly to members in the Branch catchment area and those of adjoining Branches as appropriate;
- Ensure that all Health and Safety guidelines are adhered to for each event, including the completion of a Risk Assessment and compliance with the RSB's child safeguarding policy.

3. Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM)

All Branches are required to hold an AGM each year. In practice the AGM can be a very short session held before or after a regular Branch Event.

All Committee Roles, including those of the principal officers are required to be reviewed, either formally or informally, on an annual basis. This is to ensure that Branch Members:

- remain happy with their roles
- have the opportunity to change roles
- are able to stand down from the Committee
- can create new roles
- can propose changes to the Committee

Nominations for new Committee Members must be made in advance of the AGM:

- Any registered Branch Member can nominate themselves for election for a vacant position
- If more than one nomination is made for a specific Committee Role a formal vote should be taken at the Meeting
- Absent Members may vote by email or in writing to the Branch Secretary or other nominated Branch Officer before the AGM takes place;
- If only one candidate stands for a vacant position then that person shall be duly elected and no vote needs to take place, unless any serious objections are raised by other Branch Members.

All Branch Members should be invited to the AGM and informed of the meeting well in advance (the recommendation is 6 weeks in advance).

It is recommended that the ideal length of Term in Office for Branch Members should be not less than three (3) and not more than five (5) consecutive years, though this will depend on specific local conditions and availability of Branch Members willing to serve on the Committee.

All Committee roles, including those of the principal officers, are required to be reviewed each year. This review should take place in advance of the AGM where any formal changes can be made. The Branch Secretary must be informed if Committee Members wish to remain in post, stand down, change roles or nominate themselves for another Committee Position.

The Agenda for the AGM, including details of candidates standing for election, should be sent out to all Branch Members at least one week before the AGM takes place. Any Branch Member can request a specific Agenda Item to be added but must notify the Branch Secretary in writing at least 2 weeks prior to the AGM.

Any changes to the composition of the Committee or of principal Officer roles should be notified to the HO Regional Coordinator immediately following the AGM.

The AGM is also an opportunity for a review of the year's events, the financial position of the Branch and to allow discussion on future plans and direction of the Branch.

4. Principal Officer Roles

- **Branch Chair:**
 - Lead and motivate Branch Committee to create a programme of public events
 - Help develop and drive forward new event ideas
 - Consider ways in which the Branch can reach new audiences and raise its profile in the area
 - Consider ways in which the Branch could become more sustainable, for example, through additional recruitment or fundraising
 - Involve new people/organisations/partners within Branch Initiatives
 - Delegate tasks/roles/responsibilities appropriately amongst the committee
 - Chair Committee Meetings and the AGM; lead the informal annual review of Branch Committee roles
 - Represent the Branch within the Royal Society of Biology and externally
- **Branch Secretary:**
 - Act as primary contact for the Branch, internally and externally
 - Inform RSB HO of any changes in Branch Committee membership

- Deal with enquiries from Regional members either directly or through the HO Regional Coordinator
 - Arrange Committee Meetings and the AGM
 - Notify Committee Members and confirm attendance
 - Produce Minutes and Notice of Actions at Committee Meetings.
- **Branch Treasurer:**
 - Maintain records and copies of Branch Finances
 - Attend Branch Meetings to provide financial reports
 - Approve expenditure and ensure that the Branch remains within Budget and is cost-efficient
- **Vice Chair (where appointed):**
 - Assist the Chair directly with his/her Role
 - Act as Chair in cases where the Chair is absent or unavailable at Branch or Society events
- **Education Liaison Officer (where appointed):**
 - Build relationships with local schools or higher-education providers within the Branch catchment area
 - Develop opportunities to support schools or HE facilities with events, competitions or other activities

5. By-laws and Regulations

- a) Council By-Law 38: Branches and Specialised Groups – extract from the Charter of the Royal Society of Biology:
- The Council may at its direction upon receipt of a request to that effect from not less than 10 individual voting members, create a Branch of the Society in a particular district or a Specialised Group with appropriate terms of reference and powers as published in the Regulations, and the Council shall have the power to dissolve any Branch or Group so created. The Council may contribute towards the costs of the formation and maintenance of a Branch or Specialised Group from the general funds of the Society.
 - Each Branch or Group shall be constituted and its affairs shall be carried on subject to and in accordance with the Charter, By-laws and Regulations of the Society
 - Membership of a Branch shall be open to all members of the Society without payment of any fee in addition to that payable to the Society in accordance with the By-laws. No member shall belong to more than one Branch (though may attend events at all Branches) but may belong to more than one Specialised Group.

b) Regulations concerning Branches:

- The HO Regional Coordinator shall have responsibility for liaising with the Branch Committees and will represent the views of the Branches to staff at Head Office and Council.
- The Regional Coordinator will provide details of membership where possible in line with Data Protection Regulations
- The Regional Coordinator or any other member of the Membership, Marketing and Communications Team will email members on behalf of Branch Committees and distribute content as requested but retains the right to edit material within RSB policy and guidelines in order to comply with RSB Style Guidelines.
- The Regional Coordinator or any other member of the Membership, Marketing and Communications Team will upload Branch Events onto the RSB Website and organise any booking or payment requirements following receipt of Event Details form the Branch Committees, ideally provided on the Branch Event Form.
- The Director, Membership, Marketing and Communications Team will be the budget holder for any funds allocated to the Branch to enable it to carry out its activities during the Financial Year.
- Each Branch approved by Council shall adopt the model Branch Constitution as approved by Council.
- Each Branch shall adopt any Council-approved amendments to the Constitution at its next AGM.
- No Branch or Branch committee is empowered to bind the Society to a particular policy or financial commitment without the prior approval of Head Office, any such approval being normally sought through the HQ Regional Coordinator.
- Each Branch, acting through its Treasurer, shall send to the HQ Finance Administrator a Return of Branch Income and Expenditure at the end of each Financial Year.
- The catchment area for each Branch is set by the Society according to geographic Counties.
- Members of a Branch may attend meetings organised by any other Branch.
- The Rules for the appointment and responsibilities of Branch Officers and Committee members are set out in the Branch Constitution.
- The appointment of all Branch Officers and Committee Members is “honorary”, no remuneration is paid but Members may claim reasonable expenses in accordance with the scale of reimbursement set from time to time by Council.
- Branch Officers are responsible to the Society for the day-to-day running of their Branch, in accordance with the Regulations and Constitution of the Society and the Branch.
- Elected Officers and Committee Members have delegated powers in accordance with the society’s Charter, By-laws and Regulations.
- Provided that Officers and Committee Members have acted in a lawful manner and have also fulfilled their obligations as described

in this Compendium, then the Society's insurers will cover any potential liability arising from their actions.

- However, Members should consult HO for more detailed information on matters that may affect individual and collective liability.

c) Calendar for Society and Branch Budgeting and Reporting:

- The Society's Financial Year runs from 1st October to 30th September
- Branches should organise their activities so that they provide information in a timely manner and in accordance with the Society's budgeting timetable.
- It is pertinent to highlight any major changes proposed in future Branch activities including any specific future events that may incur high costs as soon as they are known. No assumption should be made that such events might be funded without the prior approval of Head Office.
- In general, once the total funding available for Branches is agreed, funds for specific Branches will be allocated according to individual bids. If no submission has been sent in to HO the allocation of funds will be at the discretion of Head Office.
- Notification of approved budgets is sent to Branch Committees prior to 30th September each year.
- Branches are encouraged to have their funds managed directly by HO rather than through separate Branch bank accounts.
- Specific rules apply to Branches that continue to maintain their own bank accounts, namely a requirement to only keep a float of £150 or less in the account at the end of the Financial Year and that new funds will only be transferred across once the Annual Return for the previous Financial Year has been submitted and approved.

d) Planning Branch Events, Budget Guidelines and Financial Records.

- Branch Committees should maintain an up to date list of activities and promote these through the Society's website.
- Once a Branch Committee has approved a programme of events and associated costs, this forms the basis for a Branch budget proposal, which is normally required by HO by July/August each year for the following Financial Year.
- Branch Administration and Travel costs are added to the event costs in the above submission.
- It is important for Branch Treasurers to keep HO informed of events that are likely to cost significantly more than the original budget; similarly events that are well under budget should also be reported as funds can be re-directed elsewhere as appropriate.
- The Branch Treasurer is responsible for maintaining an up to date record of Branch income and expenditure and a spreadsheet is available for this purpose as required

- Where Branches continue to maintain their own Bank Accounts, these must not be allowed to go overdrawn and the HO Finance Department must be kept aware of the Bank Account details and current balance; The HO Finance Administrator must also be one of the signatories to the Account.
- The Branch Treasurer must also prepare an account of Income and Expenditure for the previous Financial Year for approval at the next AGM. Back up paperwork supporting items of income and expenditure must be retained either by HO or by the Branch Treasurer in case they are required by the Society's Auditors.

e) VAT and the Branches

- All Branch activities form part of the Society's activities and, as such, are subject to inclusion within the Society's VAT Returns.
- The Society is a partially exempt body and is, therefore, unable to recover all of the VAT it pays out.
- It is imperative that HO is provided with all VAT invoices and receipts in order to be able to account for them correctly with HMRC; similarly it is essential that Branches consult with HO before setting any event charges or issuing invoices.

f) The status of Branch Officers – Charity Trustees

- The Royal Society of Biology is a registered Charity (Registered Number: 277981). It is, therefore, subject to the control of the Charity Commissioners acting under their authority conferred by the Charities Acts.
- Whilst the Constitution of each Branch comes from the authority of Council that defines the powers of the Branch and its Officers, no definitive statement can be made that the Officers are, in fact, Charity Trustees.
- However, it is certain that the Charity Commission could hold Branch Officers and Committee members to account for problems that might arise in the management of a particular Branch's affairs if they are contrary to the Charity Acts.
- Branch Officers and Committee Members must, therefore, ensure that they do not act outside of the overall remit of the Society as set out in the Royal Charter and of the powers granted to a Branch by Council.

g) Insurance and the Branches

- The Society is insured against a number of risks including professional indemnity insurance but it may not cover every risk. It is the responsibility of Branch Officers to check with HO in the event of any uncertainty.
- Branch Officers are responsible for advising all potential motor expense claimants of the need to have business use extension

insurance in place on their personal motor insurance policies before starting a claimable journey.

h) Risk Assessments for Branch Events

- Any event organised by a Branch that takes place away from Society premises should have a Risk Assessment carried out beforehand, using templates provided by HO. This is particularly important for outdoor events where additional hazards can be anticipated.
- Copies of Risk Assessments should be kept for 3 years after the event has taken place.
- Specific Risk Assessments should be undertaken when any person under the age of 18 is likely to be present.
- In all cases, Branch events must comply with the Society's Safeguarding Children Policy.
- If, even after exhaustive efforts, there is still a risk to a minor then it is likely that the event should not be held.
- Under no circumstances should an event be held where there is any likelihood of death or danger to the public.

i) Use of electronic communication and the holding of personal data

- Branches must adhere to the Society's Policies with respect to the use of electronic communication and the holding of personal data.
- Bulk emails to members will be sent out by HO only.
- Individual email addresses are not to be disclosed to anyone who is not a Branch Officer or member of staff.
- Any email address list held by the society is only to be used for Society business.
- Branch Committees must not hold a general database of members' information.
- Member's contact details obtained and held by the committee should only be used for the specific purpose they were originally provided for.
- Any limited data that is held is done so under the terms of the Data Protection Act

6. Branch Constitution

CONSTITUTION OF THE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF BIOLOGY

1 Name

The name of the Branch shall be the Royal Society of Biology xxx Branch.

2 Objectives

The objectives of the Branch shall be to further the Aims and Objectives of the Royal Society of Biology at all times by:

- a) promoting and fostering the public understanding of Biological Sciences in the Branch area
- b) encouraging the exchange of ideas and information between biologists from different fields of expertise and areas of employment
- c) representing the views of the members of the Branch to the Officers, Council or other Branches of the Society
- d) enhancing the professional status of bio-scientists thereby encouraging young people who aspire to become professional biologists
- e) organising activities of biological, social and general value to members of the Branch, thereby keeping them in touch with current developments in biology
- f) assisting the Society in the recruitment of members
- g) collaborating with other Branches and Specialised Groups of the Society and with sister Societies in the furtherance of the above objectives.

3 Membership

Membership of the Branch shall be for all members of the Royal Society of Biology of any grade living or working within the area of the Branch and any other member who has chosen to be affiliated with the Branch.

- 4 **Organisation.** The Branch shall be organised and administered by a Committee elected by the Branch members.

5 Composition

The Branch Committee shall consist of the following:

- a. the Honorary Officers: Chairman, Vice-Chairman (optional), Secretary and Treasurer, nominated from the Individual voting Members of the Branch
- b. up to twelve ordinary members, nominated from all grades of membership of the Branch
- c. up to three additional members of the Branch, co-opted by the Committee

6 Election of Officers and Committee Members

The election of Officers and Committee Members shall be conducted and ratified at an Annual General Meeting of the Branch or, exceptionally, at a Special General Meeting (SGM) convened for that purpose and annually thereafter.

Elections of Officers and Committee Members shall be by ballot of those Individual Voting Members, registered in the Branch one month prior to the election. The ballot shall be carried out at the AGM or SGM or by postal vote held at the discretion of the Committee and ratified at the AGM or SGM.

7 Tenure of Office

Normally no person shall serve as an Honorary Officer in the same capacity for a period of more than five (5) consecutive years. Normally, no person shall serve as an Ordinary Member of Committee for more than ten (10) consecutive years.

8 Unexpired Term

In the event of the resignation of an Honorary Officer, the Committee shall appoint another member of the Committee to take over the relevant responsibility until the following AGM. In the event of a resignation of a Committee Member, the Committee shall have the power to co-opt to fill the unexpired term of membership.

9 Records

The Branch Secretary shall notify members of forthcoming meetings and shall keep a permanent record of all proceedings, which shall include:

The names of all Officers and Members of the Branch Committee attending meetings

All decisions taken by the Branch Committee

All decisions taken at the AGM or at a Special General Meeting of the Branch

10 Quorum

A quorum of the Committee shall consist of one third of the total elected Committee Members and Honorary Officers. In the absence of the Chairman, the Vice Chairman or other Honorary Officer shall take the Chair.

11 Special General Meetings of the Committee

Any three elected members and/or Honorary Officers may request the Honorary Secretary to convene a special meeting of the Committee within a period of 21 days, stating the business to be discussed. The Honorary Secretary should also advise the HO Regional Coordinator of the requirement to hold a special meeting of the Committee.

12 Duties and Responsibilities of Officers

- a) The Honorary Treasurer shall keep accounts of all monies received and expended by the Branch and shall report to the Committee at each meeting on the state of the finances.
- b) The Honorary Treasurer shall ensure that the accounts are examined annually and shall forward a copy of the Branch Accounts, together with such other information as may be required, to the Finance Administrator at the Society, by such date as may be set.
- c) The Honorary Treasurer shall produce a budget for the forthcoming year that shall be agreed with HO and submitted for approval by such date as may be set.

13 Annual General Meeting

A General Meeting of the members of the Branch shall be held in each calendar year. A quorum of 10 members shall regulate the annual meeting which shall be chaired by the Chairman, or in his/her absence the Vice-Chairman, or in the absence of both officers by a member of the Branch Committee. Notification of the Annual General Meeting shall be given at least 21 days prior to the date of the meeting stating the date, place and time of that meeting, together with the Agenda and any call for nominations for election to the Committee.

14 Special General Meeting

Any ten corporate members of the Branch may request the Honorary Secretary to convene a Special General Meeting of the Branch, stating the business to be discussed. At least 21 days notice of such a Special General Meeting shall be required.

15 Powers of Branch Committee

The Branch Committee shall have the powers to decide on matters not provided for in the foregoing Constitution so long as such decisions do not contravene the Charter, Bye-Laws or Regulations of the Society.

16 Changes to the Constitution

The Constitution and Bye-Laws shall be changed only after notice of the proposed changes have been made to the Annual General Meeting and thereafter agreed by a vote of at least two-thirds of those attending a subsequent Annual or Special General Meeting. Any proposal for changes to this Constitution shall be agreed with the Regional Co-ordinator on behalf of the Society prior to adoption at an Annual or Special General Meeting of the Branch. Any proposal for changes arising at an AGM or SGM not previously agreed with Head Office must be approved before implementation.

17 Dissolution of the Branch

In the event that the Branch is unable to operate for any reason, a motion to dissolve the Branch shall be made by the Branch Committee at a Special General Meeting convened for that purpose. If the motion is carried, then any monies or property currently held by the Branch must be returned immediately to the Society.

18 Date of Effect

This Constitution was agreed at an Annual General Meeting of the xxxxx Branch on xxx(date) and shall be effective from that date.