

This document is intended as a guide to support RSC member committees in running a competitive prize scheme, and to share good practice and learnings from the [RSC's Review of Recognition Programmes](#).

The first section of the document outlines the questions that, following recommendations from the Review, member committees should address when looking to set up a new prize. If your committee would like to set up a new prize, please complete the Member Committee Prize Proposal form and return it to the RSC Networks team at networks@rsc.org.

The second section of the document is structured chronologically and gives

Any member committee thinking of introducing a new prize or recognition mechanism should carefully consider and have clarity on each of the aspects below.

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Being clear on the purpose of recognition is key. Any prize might satisfy multiple purposes, but ***primary***

Once committees have clarity on this, it is important to consider whether setting up a new prize is the best and most effective way of achieving this identified objective. We appreciate that setting up and running a prize, considering all aspects of good practice, takes considerable time and resource and is a significant investment by current and for future committees. There can be other mechanisms to achieve the same objective.

Committees should also take time to read section II of this document, to get a sense of the different tasks involved with administering a prize.

While recognition should always be of excellence, a key finding from the RSC's report "[Re-thinking recognition: Science Prizes for the modern world](#)" was that there are several valid reasons (Table 1) why organisations or groups might have recognition mechanisms, each with different intended primary beneficiaries.

	The awardee or awardees



Figure 2 – Strategic design of a recognition portfolio

It is important to consider the long-term viability of running any new prize. Many groups look to set up new prizes with the intention that they will run for several years.

Viability encompasses numerous aspects:

- – if there are financial components to the prize, can this commitment be sustained on a regular basis long-term/indefinitely? This can include:
 - Prize money
 - Physical items e.g. medals/trophies/certificates
 - Travel costs associated with attending a meeting
- – how large is the group of candidates eligible to receive this prize? Is this pool sustainable? Would the quality and number of nominations be likely to drop off after the first couple of prize cycles?
- – the time associated with administering a prize, promoting a call for nominations, reviewing nominations, selecting winners, announcing/celebrating winners can be considerable. Consider if this is an activity that your committee is willing to commit their time

Prizes: Guidance for RSC member committees

The nomination and selection process for any prize must be consistent with GDPR regulations. RSC member networks have been provided with information and resources to support GDPR best practice.

Practical guidance around data protection in relation to prizes is provided in Section II of this document. Please contact the Networks Team if you need any further guidance on this.

From an accessibility and inclusion point of view, the name of any prize should make it clear what the prize is for, e.g. *Materials Chemistry Early Career Prize*. See "[Re-thinking recognition: Science Prizes for the modern world](#)"

Coordination

Member committees should appoint an individual, or group of individuals, who will be responsible for administering and coordinating aspects of

Eligibility criteria

In cases where the primary purpose of a prize is to support an individual's career progression, it might be appropriate to restrict eligibility to a particular career stage.

In setting eligibility criteria, committees should consider equality, inclusivity and diversity. In recent years, the RSC has moved towards eligibility criteria based on years of full-time equivalent professional experience, in preference to age. As an example, for the RSC's centrally administered early career prizes, eligibility criteria are outlined as follows:

- *Nominees should be an early career scientist, typically with no more than 10 years of full-time equivalent professional experience*
- *This should be experience gained as part of a scientific career excluding time spent in full-time education. Time spent as a postgraduate student should not be included e.g. Masters, PhD. Time spent as a post-doctoral researcher should be included*
- *Nominators will be asked to provide details of the nominee's professional experience, in relation to the above criteria*
- *Career breaks will be recognised, and applications encouraged*

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Member committees should:

- . Your call for nominations should detail the following:
 - Who is (and is not) eligible to make a nomination
 - Who is (and is not) eligible to be nominated
 - How to nominate/apply
 - When the nomination window closes (date and time)
 - Who will be judging the prize (names and affiliations)
 - The selection criteria judging panels will use
 - How many winners there will be
 - What the winner(s) will receive, and any expectations associated with the prize

The RSC Networks team can provide support to committees by putting information about the prize and a link to the nomination form on your webpage, as well as sending out a call for nominations to your members. Please get in touch with Networks@rsc.org.

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Communications

It is good practice to promote your prize using a number of different channels and routes to reach the widest possible audience. You might consider using a combination of e-alerts/e-mails, group website posts, promotional flyers, social media posts, word-of-mouth, etc.

Committees should consider whether they inform nominees of their nomination. For centrally administered RSC Prizes, RSC staff inform individuals and teams who have been nominated for transparency, but also as a supportive gesture. We also invite them to complete a short diversity monitoring form. The most important thing is to be consistent in your approach.

Late nominations

You might receive nominations after the advertised deadline, or queries asking if late nominations are acceptable. It is good practice to not accept late nominations.

Member committees should:

- guidance on this is given below.
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These guidelines will not cover all eventualities. When considering if there is a conflict of interest, it can be helpful to question whether a judge would stand to benefit from a particular nominee winning. The most important thing is to ensure that any individual judge feels able to make a clear and unbiased assessment of the nomination.

It is important that conflicts of interest are declared soon after nominations are circulated to judges. Centrally administered RSC Prizes have a target for each nominee to be scored by at least four non-conflicted judges. If this target is not likely to be met based on conflicts declared, RSC staff look to appoint an additional judge(s).

The judging process

In deciding the winner of a prize, it is important to have clear criteria combined with expert judgement.

There are a number of different methods that panels might use to reach a decision, but it is preferable for the panel to meet, physically or virtually, and hold a discussion to determine winners, rather than to have solely voting or scoring. The benefits of having a panel discussion outweigh and reduce the impact of potential biases.

For centrally administered RSC Prizes, each judge independently provides a score for each non-conflicted nominee. Individual judges' scores are submitted to and collated by RSC staff, who then circulate the combined scores to all panel members once all scores have been received. When they meet, these scores are used as a guide to help panels in their discussions.

Initial scoring/assessment might take the form of any of the following:

- A single numerical score, e.g. 1 to 10, taking into account all of the selection criteria
- Multiple numerical scores against each of the selection criteria, which can be weighted accordingly and summed to give a total score
- A ranking of nominations

Each scoring system has its own benefits and drawbacks; however, it is important that scores are used only as a guide, rather than as a definitive ranking. The panel discussion offers an important opportunity for judges to hear different points of view and reach the best collective decision.

Independent witness

Committees might consider inviting an independent witness to their deliberation meeting. All selection meetings to determine the recipient(s) of centrally administered RSC Prizes are attended by an independent witness.

The role of the independent witness is to provide constructive challenge or raise concerns about any of the panel's deliberation that may hinder a fair decision or contravene guidelines that the committee have in place. They should avoid being involved in the merits or otherwise of individual nominees and avoid being involved in discussions as to who should win. This is a challenging but unique and important role.

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Selection of winners

Selection criteria should not be based on metrics. Assessing nominees based on quantity-based metrics is susceptible to bias.

The Royal Society of Chemistry has recently signed the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment](#) (DORA), of which a key recommendation is that journal-based metrics should not be used as a surrogate measure of the quality of individual research articles, or to assess an individual scientist's contributions.

Committees should not select more winners than is stated in the guidelines for the prize. Having several worthy nominees is an inevitable consequence of a competitive recognition programme. For transparency, a decision about the number of recipients a prize can have should be made in advance of the prize opening for nominations and should not be taken by a committee during the selection of winner(s).

If, in the committee's judgement, no nominee demonstrates a contribution significant enough to receive the prize they have been nominated for, then the committee should not award.

Committees should have trust in the integrity of their judging panels and understand that there may be no one right decision, but rather, the best decision that the group can make at that time based on their expertise, experience and judgement.

At the end of each cycle, committees should briefly review how the process went and whether there are necessary adjustments/mitigations that can be made before nominations next open for the prize.