

The MRS Company Partner Quality Commitment Guidelines

These guidelines are designed to assist organisations meet the criteria for becoming and remaining an MRS Company Partner.

Mandatory Conditions

The organisation ensures that it has one MRS member per £1 million turnover, at least one of whom must be a Full Member.

MRS membership grades are listed below. At least one member must be either a Fellow or a Full Member.

Grade	Entry Criteria & Conditions
Fellow	By nomination and/or application. Full Member for a minimum of five years. Significant contribution for at least 10 years to market research and/or to MRS. Details of criteria and procedure are available from the Director General or at www.mrs.org.uk/membership/fellow.htm
Full Member	By application and with the support of two sponsors, one of whom must be an MRS Full Member or Fellow. Applicants must have three years' relevant experience and must provide evidence of having completed one of the following MRS recognised development schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS Diploma • Accredited Masters Degree • Fast Track Scheme • Professional Development Scheme • Intensive Professional Development Scheme
Associate Member	By application and with support of one Full Member or Fellow of MRS. Applicants must provide evidence of one of the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MRS Advanced Certificate • Recognised first degree meeting one of the following criteria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relevant subjects including Business Studies, Psychology, Marketing, Statistics etc ○ Evidence that the degree contained a research methods module ○ A project demonstrating the use of research skills • Recognised first degree plus one year's relevant research experience. • A higher degree (eg MBA/PhD) that demonstrates research skills • Relevant professional qualification (eg CIM Diploma, HND/HNC in relevant topic, graduate membership of the British Psychological Society etc) • Professional membership of the British Psychological Society, etc
Affiliate Member	By application and with no formal entry criteria. Must agree to abide by the Society's <i>Code of Conduct</i> .

The organisation ensures that adequate process standards and professional development of staff (knowledge, competence, qualifications) to support compliance are in place.

Staff should be aware of their responsibilities under the MRS Code of Conduct and have the skills to fulfil them. To this end organisations should make sure that:

- Copies of the MRS Code of Conduct are available to all staff
- Legal requirements under applicable legislation such as the Data Protection Act 1998 have been clearly explained
- There is adequate supervision to ensure that standards are followed
- Staff have the training and qualifications, where appropriate, necessary to do their jobs

MRS offers training and accredits other suppliers. Additionally, the MRS Codeline service is available to answer staff queries on the application of the MRS Code of Conduct, best practice guidelines and associated legislative issues.

The MRS Quality Commitment is designed as a commitment to standards and self-regulation across a wide range of organisations. The MRS Company Partner Service is structured in such a way as to allow maximum participation while ensuring that the standards that underpin it are robust. It is a commitment to regulation of:

- Ethical standards i.e. the Code of Conduct
- Adequate process standards
- Professional development of staff
- Employee contracts/terms of employment
- Regulation of sub-contractors
- Dispute resolution in relation to field staff
- Use of ID cards and Thank You leaflets
- Training of interviewers



BS7911, and the new ISO that will replace it, may be a suitable way for some MRS Company Partners to demonstrate that they have adequate process standards. It is not however a standard that all MRS Company Partners should or could adhere to. In any event, adequate process standards are just one part of the much broader ethical, technical and professional commitment required to become an MRS Company Partner.

The organisation complies with the MRS Code of Conduct (the Code) and will cooperate with the MRS to assist in the early resolution of any complaints involving the company and/or its employees.

Under the Company Partner Complaints Procedure and the MRS Disciplinary Regulations, MRS may investigate MRS Quality Commitment and MRS Code of Conduct breaches further to complaints made to it by third parties or by its own initiative. Investigations are conducted by an Investigations Committee (under the auspices of the MRS Market Research Standards Board) with the assistance of the MRS Standards Department.

The MRS Code of Conduct covers all stages of research projects. For example, Code rules B1 to B7 set out the process of agreeing the scope of the project including a requirement for adequate written contracts. Analysis and reporting is covered by Code rules B49 to B61, while rules on data storage are to be found at B62 to B64.

Conditions to be fulfilled within six months

The organisation ensures that the Code is written into employee contracts/terms of appointment.

This can be achieved in a number of ways. The MRS Code of Conduct can be appended to the contract made with the employee or it can be referred to in an exchange of letters appended to the contract. Alternatively it may be incorporated into the staff handbook which is then referred to in the contract of employment.

When sub-contractors are used, the organisation ensures that the MRS Code of Conduct is unlikely to be breached.

Again the MRS Code of Conduct should be appended to any contract concluded. The contract should also provide for adequate supervision and checks to ensure that the MRS Code of Conduct is in fact followed.

The organisation’s field departments have a dispute resolution and/or disciplinary procedure in place.

Detailed information on appropriate procedures is available from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The procedures must comply with the Employment Act 2002 (Dispute Resolution) Regulations and the Employment Act 2004. Brief model procedures, excerpted from the DTI Employment Relations website, are outlined below.

Standard grievance procedure	
Step One	The employee must set down in writing the nature of the alleged grievance and send the written complaint to the employer.
Step Two	The employer must invite the employee to at least one hearing at a reasonable time and place at which the alleged grievance can be discussed. The employee must inform the employer what the basis for the grievance is. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend. After the meeting, the employer must inform the employee about any decision, and offer the employee the right of appeal.
Step Three	If the employee considers that the grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, he/she must inform the employer that he wishes to appeal against the employer’s decision or failure to make a decision. Where possible, a more senior manager

	should attend the appeal hearing. After the meeting, the employer's final decision must be communicated to the employee.
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Standard dismissal and disciplinary procedure	
Step One	The employer must set down in writing the nature of the employee's conduct, capability or other circumstances that may result in dismissal or disciplinary action, and send a copy of this statement to the employee. The employer must inform the employee of the basis for his/her complaint.
Step Two	The employer must invite the employee to a hearing at a reasonable time and place where the issue can be discussed. The employee must take all reasonable steps to attend. After the meeting, the employer must inform the employee about any decision, and offer the employee the right of appeal.
Step Three	If the employee wishes to appeal, he/she must inform the employer. The employer must invite the employee to attend a further hearing to appeal against the employer's decision, and the final decision must be communicated to the employee. Where possible, a more senior manager should attend the appeal hearing.

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The organisation's field staff use MRS Interviewer Identity Cards (when such ID cards are necessary) or uses an alternative card of comparable standard.

An interviewer identity card should comprise of the following elements:

- The name of the organisation responsible for the project
- The identity of the interviewer
- A passport style photo of the interviewer
- Contact details of the responsible organisation

MRS IID cards can be issued to organisations that have a Full Member or an Associate Member of two years standing. MRS IID cards are to be used where the interviewer is conducting a research (not a mixed purpose or non-research) project.

The organisation uses the MRS Thank you leaflet template or an alternative of comparable standard for face to face interviews.

A Thank you leaflet should comprise of the following elements:

- The name of the organisation responsible for the project
- Contact details of the responsible organisation
- The identity of the interviewer
- An explanation of the purpose of the interview
- Rights of the respondent
- Details of the freephone service (if appropriate)

When providing direct training of new interviewers, the organisation's training is either the MRS Accredited Interviewer Training Scheme or training of a comparable standard.

The MRS Accredited Interviewer Training Scheme (AITS) comprises of initial training followed by course work and assessment to be completed over the period of 12 months. It gives interviewers the opportunity to develop their skills while working. The AITS covers the following topics:

- The purpose and process of market research
- The role of the market research interviewer
- The difference between market research and direct marketing or 'selling'
- Quality standards and quality issues
- Quality control in data collection
- Laws and standards for data collection
- Interviewing children
- Methods and types of research
- Types of qualitative research
- Types of quantitative research
- Sampling



- Interview and questionnaire structure
- Interview techniques

Organisations that do not subscribe to AITS must ensure that their training covers the above topics.