



# **MRS Handbook: Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

**December 2016**

**Jointly developed and supported by the  
Association for Qualitative Research (AQR)**





With members in more than 60 countries, MRS is the world's leading authority on research and business intelligence.

MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme (RAS) – Handbook Issued September 2016  
© The Market Research Society 2016

## **MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

### **Background and introduction**

Qualitative research is used to describe exploratory research which uses a wide range of approaches and methods to understand underlying attitudes, opinion and motivations. Qualitative recruiters undertake the process by which qualitative research participants are identified, screened and selected against certain research recruitment criteria.

The MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme has been developed for those involved in recruitment of participants for qualitative research.

Although the focus is on the recognition of the knowledge, skills and competence requirements for professional recruiters, the **overall aim of the scheme is to improve the quality of qualitative recruitment by all parties throughout the qualitative recruitment supply-chain:**

- ✓ For recruiters and recruitment organisations the accreditation will provide professional recognition and build professional status.
- ✓ For those that commission qualitative recruitment to raise awareness of the problems of poor recruitment commissioning and improve overall standards, including the need for more realistic recruitment quotas, timescales, etc.
- ✓ For buyers access to a pool of professionally recognised accredited recruiters to enable positive purchase discrimination.

The success of the Scheme will ultimately depend upon buyers making the positive choice to buy quality recruitment from recognised accredited recruiters and recruitment organisation, as this will drive demand for recruiters to seek accreditation.

### **Organisations responsible for the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

The MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme (RAS) has been developed by the Market Research Society (MRS) and the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR). The Scheme itself is administered by the MRS as follows:

- **The MRS Company Partner accreditation scheme is the foundation for organisations to become accredited as part of the RAS.**
- **Individual MRS Membership is the foundation for individual recruiters to become accredited as part of RAS.**

### **Role of each organisation**

AQR were responsible for originally encouraging the sector to consider developing a scheme to raise the professional status of qualitative research recruiters. AQR approached MRS, as the standards setting body, to develop a scheme which would be suitable. Table 1 summarises the roles and responsibilities of the two organisations in relation to the development of the Scheme.

**Table 1: Roles of MRS and AQR: Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

<b>MRS is responsible for...</b>	<b>AQR is responsible for...</b>
➤ Structure of the Scheme	➤ Training materials
➤ Assessment materials	➤ Developing research participant materials
➤ Liaison with buyers and commissioners of qualitative research recruitment services	➤ Liaison with buyers and commissioners of qualitative research recruitment services
➤ Promotion of the Scheme	➤ Promotion of the Scheme
➤ Setting and enforcing standards including the Recruiter Regulations	

### **Why RAS has been created**

The working environment for qualitative research recruitment can be very challenging. There is excellent qualitative recruitment where:

- high standards are maintained
- in quota participants are recruited
- robust procedures are adopted confirming participant identities, etc.
- strict adherence to all legal and ethical requirements is maintained

There are however, examples of bad practice exemplified by:

- repeat participants
- fake participants
- poor show levels
- biased recruitment e.g. online recruitment sites “earn cash”
- data collected and used in breach of Data Protection Act 1998
- no appreciation or understanding of MRS Code of Conduct

Often the examples of bad practice are due to stresses within the environment for recruiting participants, particularly:

- Reduced/unrealistic time scales
- Squeezed budgets:
  - agencies with reduced margins
  - recruiters who have had no real fee increase for + 10 years
- Lack of time:
  - for agencies to check quality
  - for recruiters to meet quotas
- Unrealistic/too demanding quotas encourage corner-cutting:
  - by agencies and fieldwork companies
  - by recruiters
- Poor questionnaires:
  - difficult to understand
  - difficult to administer
  - difficult to fulfil

- Very high demand in certain areas:
  - participant pool is small
  - public does not perceive value of research
- Low coverage of recruiters in certain areas plus an ageing recruiter profile

The aim of the RAS is to raise awareness of the challenges facing qualitative recruiters, increase understanding of the issues by all those involved in the supply chain to ease some if not all of the constraints, and improve the research recruitment environment with improved recruitment undertaken as a result.

## **Materials to support the Scheme**

A holistic set of materials have been developed to support the Scheme (Figure 1) which includes:

### ***Register of Accredited Recruiters***

A public searchable online register (not a list) hosted by MRS of accredited individual and corporate recruiters will be maintained to enable:

- Accredited recruiters to publicly demonstrate their recognition having met the standards of the Scheme.
- Commissioners and buyers of qualitative research recruitment services to check the credentials of recruitment suppliers.

### ***Recruiter Regulations***

There are two regulatory guidelines which underpin the Scheme:

- *Qualitative Research Recruitment – Legal Requirements and Best Practice: Regulations for Recruiters*
- *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment*

Both documents are based upon the rules and principles of the MRS Code of Conduct. The *Qualitative Research Recruitment – Legal Requirements and Best Practice: Regulations for Recruiters* are binding on all Company Partners, Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners and members plus all accredited recruiters.

All mandatory requirements detailed within the *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment* are binding on Company Partners, Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners and members, where they are in a position of authority which includes the selection and use of research services and suppliers.

It should also be noted that the MRS Code of Conduct rule 4 is important in the undertaking of qualitative recruitment. This rule which is binding for all MRS Company Partners, Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners and Members states:

4. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that others do not breach or cause a breach of this Code.

*Comment: This includes:*

- *Members taking reasonable steps to ensure that the people with whom they work (including for example other members, non-member practitioners, colleagues, clients, consultants, sub-contractors) are sufficiently familiar with this Code that they are unlikely to breach or cause it to be breached unknowingly or unintentionally, and*
- *Members with responsibility for implementing processes, procedures and contracts, taking reasonable steps to ensure that they are such that this Code is unlikely to be breached or caused to be breached by others unknowingly or unintentionally.*

By only using accredited suppliers, including recruiters, this significantly reduces the likelihood of breaching rule 4. In instances where a non-member/non-Company Partner supplier is used by a member and/or Company Partner the member/Company Partner would have to take responsibility if a breach were to occur.

### **Compliance Support**

Underpinning the Regulations are self-regulatory support mechanisms should any complaints arise regarding accredited recruiters. By becoming accredited, individual recruiters become members of MRS and organisations become Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners.

Both individual membership and the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partnership are supported by complaint and compliance mechanisms which would be used to investigate any complaints that the MRS Code and its associated Regulations and guidelines are not being upheld by accredited recruiters and/or accredited recruiter organisations.

If a complaint is received that indicates the MRS Code of Conduct and/or the associated Recruiter Regulations have been breached, individuals will be subject to the MRS Disciplinary Regulations (which underpins the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme for individuals) and the MRS Company Partner Complaint Procedure (which is the compliance framework which underpins the corporate Recruiter Accreditation Scheme) and to co-operate with any investigation of the matter by the Market Research Standards Board.

The compliance arrangements are detailed within the separate document [Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Compliance Framework](#).

**Figure 1: RAS Support Materials**



### **Professional Development Materials**

A comprehensive set of training materials have been developed by the AQR, with input from MRS and a number of qualitative and recruiter practitioners. The 6 online training modules cover:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Module: Introduction to qualitative research
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Module: Traditional recruitment methods
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Module: New and evolving recruitment methods
- 4<sup>th</sup> Module: Data protection
- 5<sup>th</sup> Module: Client and project management
- 6<sup>th</sup> Module: Toolkit of useful information

The training will be kept up-to-date to ensure that the training continues to reflect current practice ensuring that standards are maintained over time. This is particularly important for evolving knowledge areas such as privacy and data protection.

The training has been developed for online delivery. However, if there is sufficient demand for supplementary face to face delivery of the training MRS and AQR will consider ways to deliver this to ensure that there is broad accessibility to the training.

### General Guidance

A set of general guidance documents are being produced to assist with recruitment and qualitative research. Already developed are the following guidelines:

- [MRS Regulations: Administering Incentive and Free Prize Draws](#)
- [MRS Guidelines: Researching Children and Young People](#)
- [MRS Guidelines: Viewing Facilities – Viewers Commitments to Participants](#)
- [MRS Guidelines: Viewing Facilities – Commitments to Participants](#)
- [MRS Guidelines: Guide to Observer – Legal & Ethical Responsibilities](#)
- [MRS Best Practice Guide: Research Participant Vulnerability](#)
- [MRS Guidelines: Collecting Data on Sex and Gender](#)
- [MRS Checklist: Buying and Using Data](#)

Further promotional guidance is being developed for use by recruiters to encourage participants to agree to participate in research projects and these should be available later in 2017.

### How to become accredited

There are two routes to accreditation:

**New and inexperienced recruiters** will first have to undertake a comprehensive online training programme covering all aspects of qualitative research recruitment before being ready to undertake the online assessment.

**Experienced recruiters** do not have to undertake the training if they believe they have all the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the assessment. Equally if some training is needed e.g. on newer techniques or current legislation an experienced recruiter can decide to undertake some training before the assessment.

**Figure 2: Three Stages of Accreditation**



## The benefits of Accreditation

The recruiter scheme was designed to address two aims:

- Provide recognition for professional and competent recruiters
- Address quality concerns about some recruitment practices

As such the scheme should benefit both recruiters and research.

**For recruiters** it aims to provide:

- ✓ Professional recognition
- ✓ Professional status
- ✓ A pathway into the profession for new recruiters
- ✓ Positive discrimination for accredited recruiters = improved fees
- ✓ Differentiation from 'poor' practice and practitioners
- ✓ Improved understanding of difficulties facing recruiters
- ✓ Better qualitative recruitment briefs

**For research** it aims to provide:

- ✓ Access to qualified recruiter practitioners
- ✓ Assurance of quality recruitment
- ✓ Improved recruitment practices across the supply-chain including realistic quotas, etc.
- ✓ Assurance that legal & Code requirements are being met
- ✓ Improved confidence in the research supply chain
- ✓ Better qualitative recruitment
- ✓ Re-assessment and appreciation of the difficulties facing qualitative recruiters

## Fees

### *Individual Recruiter Fees*

Individual recruiter accreditation fees: £150 + VAT

The accreditation fee includes:

- access to the training
- access to the assessment
- accreditation
- MRS membership
- Certificate of accreditation

Re-takes for failed assessments will cost £25 +VAT per re-assessment.

Thereafter there is an annual accreditation fee of £75 + VAT which includes MRS membership and continued accreditation.

Access to the training materials will soon be available and free. All you have to do is create an online MRS account and you will be able to access the training materials.

### *Corporate Recruiter Fees*

Corporate recruiter accreditation fees: £150 + VAT per staff member for the first 10 employees and reduced to £125 + VAT for additional staff. A minimum of 50% of all staff involved in recruitment (excluding temporary staff) must be accredited before an organisation can become accredited as part of the Scheme.

For subsequent years annual accreditation fees reduced by 50% e.g. £75 + VAT for first 10 recruiters and £62.50 + VAT for additional staff.

The accreditation fee includes:

- access to the training for all recruiter staff within an organisation
- access to the assessment for all recruiter staff within an organisation
- accreditation for all recruiter staff within an organisation
- MRS membership for all recruiter staff within an organisation
- Certificate of accreditation (individuals and corporate)

Access to the training materials is free. Re-takes for failed assessments will cost £25 + VAT per re-assessment.

### *IQCS and ISO 20252 Certified Telephone Units*

It is recognised that for those telephone units which have had their telephone operations certified to ISO 20252 and/or IQCS, and the training and monitoring requirements that this places upon the telephone unit, will mean there is less need for all the recruiters to undertake accreditation.

For IQCS and/or ISO 20252 Certified Telephone Units to become accredited as Corporate Recruiters requires only the Compliance/Quality Manager responsible for training and the quality standards to be accredited as individual Accredited Recruiter, not 10 staff as for non-IQCS and ISO 20252 organisations. In these instances, the individual recruiter fees would apply. This does not prevent more staff from the Telephone Unit being individually accredited if they wish to.

## **Next Steps**

### **STEP 1: To get started**

Create an online RAS account in order to access the training materials, register to undertake assessment, etc.

### **STEP 2: Corporate Accreditations Only**

Companies that have multiple staff to undertake the accreditation will have an additional registration process to register all staff to be assessed as part of the accreditation.

### **STEP 3: Training**

Once registered, recruiters can access the online training materials and progress with the training at their own pace. The online system will keep track of what training has been undertaken and what is outstanding.

Experienced recruiters do not have to undertake the training if they believe they have all the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the assessment. Equally if some training is needed e.g. on newer techniques or current legislation an experienced recruiter can decide to undertake some of the training (but not all) before taking the assessment.

#### **STEP 4: Assessment**

Once ready to undertake the assessment recruiters can register for the online assessment via their online account and take the assessment whenever they are ready.

#### **STEP 5: Accreditation**

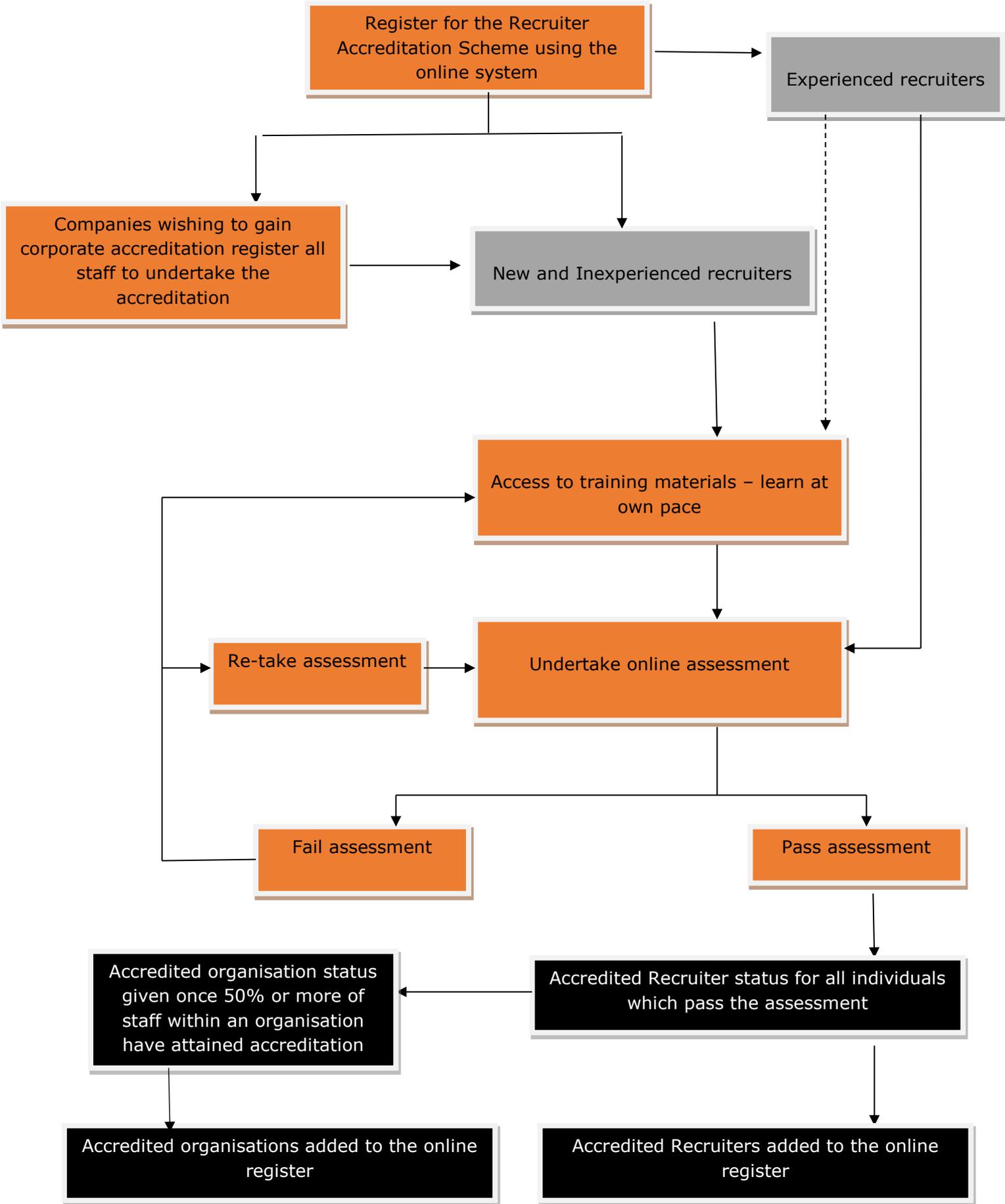
When the RAS assessment has been successfully achieved and a pass grade or above has been issued, accreditation will be given automatically to individual recruiters and their details will be added to the online register of accredited recruiters.

For companies accreditation of an organisation will be given once 50% or more of the organisations recruiters have successfully achieved accreditation. For IQCS and/or ISO 20252 certified Telephone Units accreditation will be given to the organisation once the Compliance/Quality Manager responsible for training and the quality standards has successfully achieved accreditation via the scheme.

#### **STEP 6: Renew Accreditation**

Accreditation is renewed on annual basis.

**Figure 3: Steps to Accreditation**



## FAQs

### Background to the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme

#### *What is the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme?*

The MRS Recruiter Accreditation Scheme (RAS) has been developed to raise the profile and status of recruiters, by devising a training and accreditation scheme that recognises the knowledge, skills and competence of professional recruiters.

#### *Why was the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme introduced?*

Increasing concerns were being raised about the quality of some recruitment, particularly with the emergence of newer techniques particularly online and using social media. In conjunction with these concerns there was a need to recognise the excellent professional recruiters who are able to deliver quality recruitment time and time again. In order to address the quality issues and provide the recognition it was decided, after consultation with the sector including recruiters, that an accreditation scheme would be the best way to address the concern and provide the recognition.

#### *How does the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme fit into MRS?*

The MRS Company Partner accreditation scheme is the foundation for organisations to become accredited as part of the RAS. Individual MRS membership is the foundation for individual recruiters to become accredited as part of RAS.

### Who can participate and what are the benefits of the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme?

#### *Who is eligible to become accredited?*

Anyone who provides recruitment services and passes the accreditation assessment is eligible to be recognised as an accredited recruiter.

#### *Is accreditation different for individuals as opposed to organisations?*

The assessment standards are exactly the same for individuals and organisations providing recruitment services. The differences are with the administration and application process which is applied.

#### *What does it mean if a recruiter is accredited?*

If a recruiter is accredited it means that they will have met an adequate standard of knowledge and skill to have passed a third party assessment which tested a recruiter's competence and the individual has maintained their annual re-accreditation.

#### *How does the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme benefit me as a recruiter?*

The recruiter scheme was designed to address two aims:

- Provide recognition for professional and competent recruiters
- Address quality concerns about some recruitment practices

As such the scheme should benefit both recruiters and research.

**For recruiters** it aims to provide:

- ✓ Professional recognition
- ✓ Professional status
- ✓ A pathway into the profession for new recruiters
- ✓ Positive discrimination for accredited recruiters = improved fees
- ✓ Differentiation from 'poor' practice and practitioners
- ✓ Improve understanding of difficulties facing recruiters
- ✓ Better qualitative recruitment briefs

*How does the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme benefit my business which buys recruitment services?*

The recruiter scheme was designed to address two aims:

- Provide recognition for professional and competent recruiters
- Address quality concerns about some recruitment practices

As such the scheme should benefit both recruiters and research.

**For research** it aims to provide:

- ✓ Access to qualified recruiter practitioners
- ✓ Assurance of quality recruitment
- ✓ Improved recruitment practices across the supply-chain including realistic quotas, etc.
- ✓ Assurance that legal & Code requirements are being met
- ✓ Improve confidence in the research supply chain
- ✓ Better qualitative recruitment
- ✓ Re-assessment and appreciation of the difficulties facing qualitative recruiters

*I am already an MRS member, what difference will accreditation make?*

Entry into MRS membership needs to contain criteria which is widely applicable across the research supply chain to enable all stakeholder access to membership. Within this MRS offers a range of qualification and accreditation routes to recognise specialist skills and knowledge on top of the membership recognition. For recruiters the applicable route is the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme. Once accreditation is achieved you will automatically be awarded MRS Member status, in addition to accredited status. If you are already a member of a different grade (e.g. a certified member) you will retain this grade.

By being a member and having the recruiter accreditation demonstrates that you meet the standards required to be recognised as a professional and competent recruiters, plus the wider professional standards to be recognised as a member.

*What grade of MRS membership will I be if I achieve accreditation?*

Once accreditation is achieved you will automatically be awarded MRS Member status, and can use the designation MMRS, in addition to your accredited status. If you are already a member of a different grade (e.g. a certified member) you will retain the higher membership grade recognition.

*I am a recruiter who works for an MRS Company Partner organisation, so do I need to be RAS accredited?*

The MRS Company Partner Scheme is the world's largest network of accredited professional research organisations. MRS Company Partners abide by the MRS Code of Conduct and benefit from this by being recognised for their commitment to the very highest level of research standards. However individual practitioner recognition is not part of the company Partner Scheme, and to receive recognition for individual knowledge and skill requires individual practitioners to undertake a separate form of assessment suitable to their skills set e.g. the Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice for researcher or RAS for recruiters.

## **Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Recruiter Requirements**

*I am a non-MRS member can I sign up to become accredited?*

Yes. All MRS qualifications and accreditations are equally open to members and non-members.

*What do recruiters have to do to become accredited?*

There are two routes to accreditation:

**New and inexperienced recruiters** will first have to undertake a comprehensive online training programme covering all aspects of qualitative research recruitment before being ready to undertake the online assessment.

**Experienced recruiters** do not have to undertake the training if they believe they have all the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the assessment. Equally if some training is needed e.g. on newer techniques or current legislation an experienced recruiter can decide to undertake some training before the assessment.

*Is the Scheme different for experienced recruiters?*

Yes there are two routes to accreditation – one for experienced recruiters the other for new and inexperienced recruiters.

Experienced recruiters do not have to undertake the training if they believe they have all the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the assessment. Equally if some training is needed e.g. on newer techniques or current legislation an experienced recruiter can decide to undertake some training before the assessment.

*I am new to recruitment what should I do to get started with the Scheme?*

As you are new to recruitment the first stage is the online recruitment training. There are 6 modules:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Module: Introduction to qualitative research
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Module: Traditional recruitment methods
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Module: New and evolving recruitment methods
- 4<sup>th</sup> Module: Data protection
- 5<sup>th</sup> Module: Client and project management
- 6<sup>th</sup> Module: Toolkit of useful information

### *Once accredited, what has to be done to retain accreditation?*

As part of accreditation, accredited recruiters will receive access to up-to-date training to ensure that they continue to maintain the standards of the Scheme. This is particularly important for evolving knowledge areas such as privacy and data protection.

Underpinning the accreditation is a complaint and compliance mechanism which is linked to recruiter accreditation. Should an individual accredited recruiter and/or accredited recruitment organisation have a complaint upheld against them it is possible that accreditation may be lost. However, this would not prevent an individual or company seeking re-accreditation.

Accreditation is also dependent upon annual renewal of any accreditation, including continuing to meet any criteria (i.e. maintaining the 50% membership for the corporate accreditation).

## **The Accreditation Process**

### *What are the steps I need to take to become accredited?*

First off you need to create an online RAS account in order to access the training materials, register to undertake assessment, etc.

### *Are the steps different if you are an individual?*

The steps are fundamentally the same, the only difference is that companies will have multiple staff that can undertake the accreditation and assessment.

### *Are the steps different for organisations?*

The steps are fundamentally the same, the only difference is that companies will have multiple staff that can undertake the accreditation and assessment. A minimum of 50% of all staff involved in recruitment must be accredited before an organisation can become accredited as part of the Scheme.

### *Are the steps different if you are experienced? If so how?*

Experienced recruiters do not have to undertake the training if they believe they have all the necessary knowledge and skills to pass the assessment. Equally if some training is needed e.g. on newer techniques or current legislation an experienced recruiter can decide to undertake some of the training (but not all) before the assessment. Either way the first step towards accreditation is to create an online RAS account.

### *Are the steps different if you are new to recruiting? If so how?*

The first step towards accreditation for anyone is create an online RAS account. Thereafter, new and inexperienced recruiters have to undertake a comprehensive online training programme covering all aspects of qualitative research recruitment before being ready to undertake the online assessment.

### *How long will accreditation take?*

As with all professional development, the time it takes will largely be dependent upon you in terms of your existing knowledge and skills, the amount of time you dedicate to training and so on. However based upon doing an estimate of 5 hours a week the accreditation should take between 6 – 8 weeks.

*Is the accreditation process shorter if you are an experienced recruiter?*

Yes the process could be done immediately. The steps would be to register for the Scheme and then to immediately progress to undertaking the online assessment. However, only if the assessment is passed will accreditation result.

*What happens if I fail the assessment?*

Failed assessments will not be publicised. You can undertake multiples re-assessments however these will be charged at £25 per re-assessment. If you fail an assessment it is recommended that the training materials are reviewed before further assessments are taken to reduce the likelihood of repeatedly not passing the assessment.

## **Training Materials**

*What training materials have been developed to support the Scheme?*

The online training materials have been developed by the AQR and there are 6 modules:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Module: Introduction to qualitative research
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Module: Traditional recruitment methods
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Module: New and evolving recruitment methods
- 4<sup>th</sup> Module: Data protection
- 5<sup>th</sup> Module: Client and project management
- 6<sup>th</sup> Module: Toolkit of useful information

The assessment which is undertaken after the training and before accreditation can be awarded is based upon all 6 of the training modules.

*Are the training materials available in alternative formats?*

The training has been developed for online delivery. However, if there is sufficient demand for supplementary face to face delivery of the training MRS and AQR will consider ways to deliver this to ensure that there is broad accessibility to the training.

*Can I access the training materials even if I don't wish to be accredited?*

Yes. The training materials are free for anyone to use.

*Is there other training available, such as general IT training?*

MRS is currently investigating whether more general skills training – outside of the specialist recruiter knowledge and skills – could be added to the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme provision.

## **Compliance Structure for the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

*Who is responsible for setting the standards which underpin the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme?*

MRS as the regulator and Code-holder for market, social and opinion research is responsible for setting the legal and ethical standards which underpin the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme. The MRS Market Research Standards Board is the MRS Board responsible for setting and regulating the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme standards.

*How does the accreditation of recruiters link to the MRS Code of Conduct and MRS compliance procedures?*

There are two regulatory guidelines which underpin the Scheme and which are brought together via the RAS Quality Commitment (see Appendix A) which is the quality 'contract' which binds the individual and corporate recruiters to the RAS requirements. The two regulatory guidelines are:

- *Qualitative Research Recruitment – Legal Requirements and Best Practice: Regulations for Recruiters*
- *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment*

Both documents are based upon the rules and principles of the MRS Code of Conduct.

The *Qualitative Research Recruitment – Legal Requirements and Best Practice: Regulations for Recruiters* are binding on all Company Partners, Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners and members plus all accredited recruiters.

All mandatory requirements detailed within *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment* are binding on MRS Company Partners, Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners and members where members are in a position of authority which includes the selection and use of research services and suppliers.

By becoming accredited, individuals become members of the MRS and organisations become Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partners. Both individual membership and the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partnership are supported by complaint and compliance mechanisms which would be used to investigate any complaints that the MRS Code and its associated Regulations and guidelines are not being upheld by accredited recruiters and/or accredited recruiter organisations.

*Do recruiters have to be an MRS member to become accredited?*

Accreditation of individuals is linked to membership of MRS. Individual recruiters who achieve accreditation also gain MRS membership status, at a grade which matches the qualifications and experience of the recruiter.

*Do organisations have to be an MRS Company Partner to become accredited as an organisation?*

Accreditation of organisations is linked to MRS Company Partner accreditation. Organisations which offer recruitment services which achieve accreditation also gain Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partner accreditation status.

*What happens if an organisation loses its accreditation, will all the staff within the organisation also lose their accreditation?*

It depends on the nature of the complaint which resulted in the removal of accredited status. If a complaint showed direct involvement of accredited recruiter staff it is possible that individuals may also lose their status. However there may be occasions where an organisation loses its status but not all of the recruiter staff.

*If an organisation breaches the MRS Code or associated guidelines which underpin the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme what happens?*

If a complaint is received that indicates the MRS Code of Conduct and/or the associated Recruiter Regulations have been breached, organisations are obliged to co-operate promptly with MRS to enable MRS to complete an investigation using the MRS Company Partner Complaint Procedure (which underpins the corporate Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partner scheme).

Serious complaints may result in the removal of an organisation's accreditation.

*If an individual accredited recruiter breaches the MRS Code or associated guidelines which underpin the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme what happens?*

If a complaint is received that indicates the MRS Code of Conduct and/or the associated Recruiter Regulations have been breached, individuals are obliged to co-operate promptly with MRS to enable MRS to complete an investigation using the MRS Disciplinary Regulations (which underpins the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme for individuals).

Serious complaints may result in the removal of an individual's accreditation.

## **Buyers of Recruitment Services**

*As a buyer of recruitment services are there any specific rules that I need to follow?*

MRS has developed some additional Regulations setting out the rules for qualitative research recruitment. The *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment* are binding on Company Partners when buying recruitment services and also members who have responsible for the purchasing policies and can determine the selection of suppliers.

However, whilst the Scheme is getting off the ground and recruiters are undertaking the necessary steps towards accreditation, the mandatory requirements within these Regulations, which are in addition to the current MRS Code of Conduct rules, **are best practice only**, this includes the need to only use accredited recruiters unless specific identified circumstances or geography prevent this. The aim is that the transitional period will end in January 2018 when all the rules within these Regulations will become binding on Company Partners.

*As a Company Partner do I have to use the services of accredited recruiters?*

The *MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment* are binding on Company Partners when buying recruitment services. Within these Regulations there is a rule which states that Company Partners must ensure that only accredited recruiters are used unless specific and identified circumstances of geography prevent this.

However, whilst the Scheme is getting off the ground and recruiters are undertaking the necessary steps towards accreditation, the mandatory requirements within these Regulations **are best practice only**, which includes the need to only use accredited recruiters unless specific identified circumstances or geography prevent this. The aim is that the transitional period will end in January 2018 when all the rules within these Regulations will become binding on Company Partners.

### *As a member do I have to use the services of accredited recruiters?*

The MRS Regulations for MRS Company Partners: Qualitative Recruitment are **binding on Company Partners and members when buying recruitment services.**

**For members, not working for a Company Partner, who are not in a position to determine purchasing policies for research services the Regulations are advisory only.** However, it should be noted that for Members and Company Partners the wider Code rule 4 applies when undertaking qualitative recruitment. This rules states:

4. Members must take reasonable steps to ensure that others do not breach or cause a breach of this Code.

*Comment: This includes:*

- *Members taking reasonable steps to ensure that the people with whom they work (including for example other members, non-member practitioners, colleagues, clients, consultants, sub-contractors) are sufficiently familiar with this Code that they are unlikely to breach or cause it to be breached unknowingly or unintentionally, and*
- *Members with responsibility for implementing processes, procedures and contracts, taking reasonable steps to ensure that they are such that this Code is unlikely to be breached or caused to be breached by others unknowingly or unintentionally.*

By only using accredited suppliers including recruiters, members would significantly reduce the likelihood of breaching rule 4. In instances where a non-member/non-Company Partner supplier is used by a member and/or Company Partner the member/Company Partner would have to take responsibility for the breach.

### *What is the benefit of using an accredited recruiter?*

There are a significant number of benefits to using an accredited recruiter:

- ✓ Access to qualified recruiter practitioners
- ✓ Assurance of quality recruitment
- ✓ Improved recruitment practices across the supply-chain including realistic quotas, etc.
- ✓ Assurance that legal & Code requirements are being met
- ✓ Improve confidence in the research supply chain
- ✓ Better qualitative recruitment

### *Why aren't all recruiters accredited?*

The Recruiter Accreditation Scheme is a voluntary accreditation scheme that has been developed by MRS and AQR to encourage recruiters and recruiter organisations to improve best practice in the collection, use and retention of participant data for qualitative recruitment purposes.

Some recruiters and recruiter organisations may claim that they meet all the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme requirements, but only those that have successfully achieved accreditation can demonstrate, via the independent verification of accreditation, that they meet the legal and ethical requirements which underpin the Scheme.

### *Where can I find a list of accredited recruiters?*

All accredited recruiters will be listed on the MRS website: [www.mrs.org.uk/recruiters](http://www.mrs.org.uk/recruiters)

## **Promoting the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme**

### *Can I publicise accreditation on my website and promotional materials?*

If an individual or an organisation is accredited via the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme, they will be issued with a logo which can be used on individual and corporate websites and promotion materials, etc. in accordance with the rules of the Scheme.

## **Costs**

### *I am a freelance recruiter how much does accreditation cost?*

Accreditation costs £150 + VAT and includes access to the training, assessment fees to become accredited and MRS membership. Thereafter there is an annual accreditation fee of £75 + VAT which includes MRS membership and continued accreditation.

### *I own/manage an organisation which offers recruitment services how much does accreditation cost?*

Corporate recruiter accreditation fees: £150 + VAT per staff member for the first 10 employees, and reduced to £125 + VAT for additional staff. These fees include access to the training, assessment fees to have individual staff accredited (and to receive MRS membership) plus the organisation accredited as a Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partner. A minimum of 50% of all staff involved in recruitment (excluding temporary staff) must be accredited before an organisation can become accredited as part of the Scheme.

For subsequent years annual accreditation fees reduced by 50% e.g. £75 + VAT for first 10 recruiters and £62.50 + VAT for additional staff.

### *What is included within the fees?*

All fees cover training, initial assessment (not re-takes) and MRS membership and/or Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Company Partnership as appropriate.

Re-takes will cost £25 per re-assessment.

### *I wish only to use the training materials, how much does training access only cost?*

Access to the training materials will soon be available and free. All you will have to do is create an online MRS account and you will be able to access the training materials.

## **Recruiter Accreditation Scheme Administration**

### *How do I register for the Recruiter Accreditation Scheme?*

When developed, once you are ready to start training and/or undertake the assessment to become accredited you need to register an account on the MRS website.

### *How do I get access to the training materials which support the Scheme?*

To access the training you will need to create an MRS account which will enable access to the training which supports the Scheme.

### *How long will accreditation take?*

As with all professional development, the time it takes will largely be dependent upon you in terms of your existing knowledge and skills, the amount of time you dedicate to training and so on. However based upon doing an estimate of 5 hours a week the accreditation should take between 6 – 8 weeks.

### *What do I receive once I am accredited?*

Once accredited individual recruiters will receive a membership card confirming that they are an MRS Accredited Recruiter and member of MRS.

Accredited organisation will receive an Accredited Recruitment Services Company Partner Certificate and a digital logo to use on corporate materials.

## **More Information**

### *Is there more information available?*

Find out more via: [https://www.mrs.org.uk/recruiter\\_resources](https://www.mrs.org.uk/recruiter_resources)

## **Appendix A: RAS Quality Commitment**

Being finalised.