

Statutes of the Young Academy of Scotland

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1. Introduction

1.1 Preamble

The Young Academy of Scotland brings together innovative young professionals across all sectors to work collaboratively for the benefit of society in Scotland and beyond.

By sharing our knowledge and practical expertise, we investigate pressing social issues, inform public debate, amplify marginalised voices, and drive transformational change. We do this through a wide range of interdisciplinary projects, led by our members. In our work, we always seek to be creative, collaborative, and evidence-based, and our members grow rapidly as leaders as well as citizens during their time with us.

The Young Academy of Scotland was established by the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2011 as part of a growing movement of national young academies worldwide. Our activities are coordinated by a member-led Facilitating Group of elected co-chairs, together with staff members, employed by the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

1.2 Purpose of this Document

This document comprises the Statutes of the Young Academy of Scotland (the Statutes), setting out the rules and practices by which the group has agreed to organise itself and its business. It is intended as a public document to ensure that YAS operates in a transparent manner but will primarily be of interest to members and YAS office bearers in respect of decision making and organisational processes.

1.3 Guiding Principles

The Statute is founded on a core of principles to which all members of YAS subscribe and should be interpreted with reference to these principles:

- **Equality** between all members and of opportunity for all;
- **Openness** of operation, thinking and decision making;
- **Respect** for the views of others and the decisions of a majority;
- **Service** to society through the application of learning and joining all our talents;
- **Excellence** as the benchmark of acceptability for our work and actions;
- Commitment to the principles of the **YAS Charter for Responsible Debate**¹
- **Ethical behaviour**, in line with the RSE's Values² and RSE Awards Ethics Statement³

¹ <https://www.youngacademyofscotland.org.uk/our-work/smarter/sign-the-charter-for-responsible-debate/>

² Excellence, Integrity, Impartiality, Partnership and Inclusivity <https://rse.org.uk/about-us/>

³ The RSE adopts the statement on Ethics Policy published by the British Academy. The Academy requires the research it funds to be conducted in an ethical manner... Applicants should indicate whether their proposed research raises any special ethical issues, and whether their application has been approved by the institution's Research Ethics Committee or other relevant authority. Independent researchers without access to formal ethical scrutiny and approval should briefly describe any special ethical issues, and explain how they will be addressed.

2. Name

The group shall be known as the “Young Academy of Scotland” which may be abbreviated to “YAS”. Given its association with the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), it may also be known as the “Royal Society of Edinburgh Young Academy of Scotland” or “RSE Young Academy of Scotland”.

3. Purpose

The purpose of YAS is to bring together young professionals from across the arts, business and industry, government, the public sector, research and academia, the third sector and beyond to work together on projects that benefit Scotland and the world.

3.1 Objectives

The objective of the Young Academy of Scotland is to provide public benefit through the application of the knowledge and talents of its members in pursuit of:

- a) the advancement of education;
- b) the advancement of health;
- c) the advancement of citizenship and community development;
- d) the advancement of prosperity, economic and social wellbeing;
- e) the advancement of the arts, heritage, culture and science;
- f) the promotion of equality and diversity; and
- g) the advancement of environmental protection and improvement.

In pursuit of this objective YAS will:

- a) bring its members together to discuss common interests and pursue innovative and interdisciplinary approaches to problems of national and international significance;
- b) encourage and facilitate its members to interact with and influence the media and policy makers;
- c) interact with and encourage other like-minded groups pursuing similar or overlapping objectives, including providing representation to such bodies from the membership;
- d) promote international links and working to broaden its benefit and build beneficial collaborations with similar groups from around the world;
- e) develop the skills of its members to pursue its objectives more effectively, both individually and collectively; and
- f) broker mentorships to enhance the leadership, influence, and effectiveness of its members.

YAS may also pursue any other objectives (consistent with the RSE’s charitable objectives⁴) as the membership may decide from time to time.

⁴ for the advancement of education, the arts, heritage, culture or science.

The YAS Vision is set out in the YAS Strategic Plan⁵, which is reviewed on a five-year basis. It identifies the distinctive impact we aim to make nationally and internationally, and the benefits that a vibrant, multidisciplinary Young Academy can bring to Scotland.

4. Organisation Form

YAS was established by, and is an activity of, the Royal Society of Edinburgh (Scottish Charity No. SC000470), but works at arms-length from the RSE. YAS outputs are issued under their own name, and do not necessarily represent the views of the RSE.

The objectives of YAS are and must remain consistent with the charitable objectives of the RSE.

4.1 YAS Advisory Group

The YAS Advisory Group provides a structure for discussion, support, and guidance about YAS membership, strategy, management and work programme. The YAS Advisory Group also acts as the primary channel of communication between YAS and the Council of the RSE, with opportunities for two-way communication, discussion of opportunities for collaboration, and a structure for advising the RSE Council on issues impacting on YAS' operation and its effectiveness.

YAS Advisory Group membership includes YAS members and Fellows of the RSE. Although the primary role of the group is to provide guidance and advice, the RSE Council does delegate a small number of governance roles to the YAS Advisory Group. Full details are set out in the Remit of the YAS Advisory Group.

5. Membership

YAS is composed of Members who all have an equal right to vote and to exercise all the rights and responsibilities of Membership.

Members of the YAS will be selected for one term of 5 years without the possibility of re-election. Extensions of membership may be granted to members who take a career break, or to account for an unavoidable disruption to the membership term. These extensions will be approved by the Facilitating Group (see Section 7), as set out in the Extensions of Membership guidance document.

The FG shall be responsible for agreeing the selection process, including the level and type of membership required for YAS to meet its objectives.

5.1 Rights of Membership

Members of YAS are entitled to refer to themselves as "Member of the Young Academy of Scotland", or "MYAS". They are not members, nor will they later be automatically elected as members (Fellows), of the RSE.

⁵ <https://www.youngacademyofscotland.org.uk/about-us/our-governance/>

Members have a right of equality with other members and to be treated with respect according to the Guiding Principles (Section 1.3).

5.2 Responsibilities of Membership

It is the responsibility of all Members of YAS to:

- a) pursue the objectives of YAS through active participation in its work;
- b) uphold the Guiding Principles of YAS;
- c) pay membership fees in a timely manner;
- d) not hold themselves out to speak on behalf of, or represent YAS or any of its groups unless expressly authorised to do so (in line with the Representing YAS guidance document);
- e) adhere to relevant RSE and YAS policies (such as unconscious bias and conflict of interest); and
- f) not bring the name of YAS or the RSE into disrepute.

5.3 Membership Process

5.3.1 Criteria and Selection

Application for membership of YAS is open to any person in early to mid-career stage who considers that they have a contribution to make to the work programme of YAS, who has demonstrated outstanding talent and ambition in their work. The application and selection processes shall be determined by the YAS Facilitating Group in consultation with the YAS Advisory Group and set out in the YAS Recruitment process document. These processes will be designed to maximise diversity of membership and should also evidence robustness, inclusivity, and credibility to a reasonable external observer. The final list of new members must be endorsed by the YAS Advisory Group.

5.3.2 Resignation

Any member may resign their membership at any time by way of a letter to the YAS Office. Such members may be regarded as Alumni, subject to approval by the Facilitating Group, if they had fulfilled the Responsibilities of Membership prior to their resignation.

Any member who is no longer committed to the objectives of YAS, or who is not able to meet the Responsibilities of Membership should resign their Membership forthwith.

5.3.3 Lapse of membership

YAS members are expected to pay membership fees in a timely manner and to engage actively in the work of YAS through, as a minimum, contributing to at least one project or operational activity of YAS, and by attending a minimum of one YAS event per year.

If a member has failed in these obligations without declaring extenuating circumstances, the member's membership may be deemed to have lapsed. The circumstances in which an individual's membership may be regarded as lapsed, and the procedure for notifying them of this are detailed in the Resignations and Lapse of Membership policy.

5.3.4 Alumni and Emeritus Membership

Former members, other than those whose membership has been terminated because of Disciplinary procedures, or whose membership has been deemed lapsed, are Young Academy alumni.

All YAS Alumni shall be given the opportunity to become Emeritus Members by paying an annual fee. Emeritus members shall have the opportunity to engage directly with the YAS work programme.

The rights and benefits accorded to Alumni and Emeritus members are determined by the Facilitating Group and set out in the Alumni and Emeritus Membership policy.

6. Plenary

The Plenary is the highest decision-making body of YAS and comprises all Members. The plenary is represented by the Facilitating Group who will take actions on its behalf.

6.1 Rights of the Plenary

The Plenary shall be empowered, subject to the provisions of this Statute, to make decisions on all matters affecting YAS. The plenary shall delegate to the Facilitating Group on some decisions and urgent matters. These will then be endorsed by the membership.

The Plenary may:

- a) Amend the Statutes of YAS;
- b) Endorse rules and regulations set up by the Facilitating Group for the different groups, committees and officers of YAS;
- c) Approve the members of the Facilitating Group which will represent the Plenary;
- d) Take any other decisions required to promote the goals of YAS, according to its Statute; and
- e) Exercise any other right arising from the law or the Statute;

6.2 Responsibilities of the Plenary

The Plenary, represented by the Facilitating Group, has overall responsibility for:

- a) pursuing the objectives of YAS;
- b) ensuring that the Guiding Principles are upheld;
- c) ratifying annual budgets and accounts; and
- d) deputising to the Facilitating Group for reporting on outcomes and progress to the RSE, other funders and the public.

6.3 Plenary Process

- a) Plenary and Special meetings may take place in person or virtually, in any way that will ensure clarity of communication, equality of participation and the integrity of the voting process.

- b) The Plenary must meet at least once every calendar year for an Annual General Meeting at a date and time set by the Facilitating Group giving at least one months' notice in writing⁶.
- c) Other meetings of the Plenary may be arranged from time to time. If more than one meeting of the Plenary occurs during a year, one such meeting each calendar year shall be designated the Annual General Meeting.
- d) The Facilitating Group may call for a Special Meeting of the Plenary giving at least ten working days notice in writing. A Special Meeting must also be called if requested by at least one third of the membership.
- e) Any proposal to be discussed in a Meeting submitted by a member and forwarded in writing to one of the Co-chairs at least ten working days before the meeting must be put on the agenda of the meeting. The Facilitating Group may put on the agenda additional proposals at any time.
- f) Decisions will be taken by the Plenary, during or outside of General Meetings, by way of physical or electronic voting. The procedure for such votes shall be set out by the Facilitating Group with a clearly worded resolution and a reasonable period for voting to take place.
- g) The Facilitating Group must call for a vote (in person or electronic) at the request of the Members. The Facilitating Group shall be responsible for determining the terms of the question to be put to the Plenary.
- h) Decisions shall be passed by a majority of those voting. Non-participation will be classed as an abstention, and abstentions are not considered a vote.
- i) The resolutions of any General Meeting or Electronic Vote shall be recorded in a minute that shall be distributed to the Members within ten working days of the Meeting or Electronic Vote.
- j) The YAS Co-Chairs shall preside over Plenary Meetings including General Meetings.

7. Facilitating Group

The Facilitating Group (FG) is in charge of overseeing the strategic direction of YAS and will be accountable to the Plenary for the operations of YAS. The Facilitating Group shall be composed of up to five Co-Chairs (job-sharing can be accommodated), collectively responsible for membership, YAS events, work programme, communications, external engagement and finance. The FG may choose to delegate responsibility to working groups of members when appropriate. Subject to the provisions of the Statute and the decisions of the Plenary, the Facilitating Group shall take such initiatives and actions as are necessary for the achievement of the objectives of YAS. FG Co-Chairs are normally appointed for a period of two years.

7.1 Rights of the Facilitating Group

The Facilitating Group may:

- a) exercise full powers with regard to the management and administration of YAS;
- b) represent the Plenary and by extension YAS's members;
- c) represent YAS, or nominate other members to do so, at events where general invitations are received;
- d) issue statements or communications in the name of YAS;

⁶ "in writing" in this Statute means either by way of letter to Member's registered home or work address, or by email to registered email address.

- e) approve changes to YAS guidance documents, subject to the provisions of the Statutes; and
- f) represent YAS at RSE functions and committee meetings (for example RSE Council and the YAS Advisory Group).

7.2 Responsibilities of the Facilitating Group

The Facilitating Group has responsibility for:

- a) setting the time and venue for the meetings of the Plenary including General Meetings;
- b) preparing the agenda of the meetings of the Plenary including General Meetings;
- c) preparing and implementing votes of the Plenary;
- d) taking reasonable steps to secure funding for the programmes and activities of YAS;
- e) approving programmes and activities, as well as their budgets in line with the overarching YAS budget;
- f) ensuring that actual spending is in accordance with these budgets; and
- g) advertising to the Plenary and appointing (following an appropriate selection process if required) representatives to external committees or bodies as may be requested of YAS.

Further details of the operational running of the Facilitating Group are set out in the Facilitating Group Processes guidance document.

7.3 Facilitating Group Membership & Elections

7.3.1 Co-Chairs

- a) up to five Co-Chairs can be appointed as members of the Facilitating Group and serve for a term of two years. Details of this process are set out in the FG Processes guidance document.
- b) it is desirable for the membership of the Facilitating Group to reflect the diversity of the full YAS membership.
- c) the Co-Chairs shall preside over meetings of YAS.
- d) the Co-Chairs represent YAS on a day-to-day basis, and work alongside any administrative staff.
- e) should a Co-Chair resign before a date 3 months prior to the end of his or her term or become otherwise unable to continue as a Co-Chair, the Facilitating Group shall instigate the election procedure for a replacement to serve for the remainder of the term of the original Co-Chair.
- f) one of the five Co-Chairs shall have specific responsibility for finance, with day-to-day responsibility for managing budgets and authorising expenditure on behalf of YAS within budgets agreed by the Facilitating Group. Financial auditing of YAS expenditure will be carried out as per RSE-YAS processes.
- g) if at any time no Co-Chair is able to take on this finance role, the Facilitating Group may co-opt from the Membership until such a time as a replacement is elected.
- h) in addition to the five Co-Chairs, the FG may establish additional 'lead' roles to facilitate the delivery of YAS activities.

8. Groups and Committees

YAS members work collaboratively and collectively to pursue the YAS objectives. Members are encouraged to form groups or committees at any time, for example for event planning, project delivery or regional networking. Groups and committees may also be organised under the priorities set out in the YAS Strategy.

Groups may either be short-life with fixed end points either in time or through achieving stated objectives, or may be ongoing. They may be established by any Member, with the support of at least two other Members.

Groups are responsible for communicating their work to the FG and the membership through agreed channels (for example Project Initiation Documents and funding applications).

Groups may choose to involve Emeritus YAS members, in line with the Alumni and Emeritus Membership Policy, where this is considered appropriate and beneficial.

9. Staff

YAS shall not be an employer but may engage staff through other employers, in particular the RSE. The terms and conditions of employment of any staff member engaged shall be a matter for their employer.

10. Disciplinary

YAS members are expected to adhere to the guiding principles of YAS (section 1.3), and the Responsibilities of Membership (section 5.2). Any YAS member not adhering to these may be subject to the YAS disciplinary process.

11. Children and Vulnerable People

YAS is not established to assist or care for children or protected adults. No member should work with such individuals on YAS business unless under the policies and procedures of a partner organisation properly established to do so (for example, a school), or in the case of children, under the supervision of their parent or guardian. In such cases, it is the Member's responsibility to familiarise themselves with, and follow the relevant policies and procedures of the partner organisation, including obtaining suitable types of disclosure and consent in advance of any project. In undertaking such work, Members must act in line with the YAS Guiding Principles (section 1.3).