

Terms of Reference for Royal Society Te Apārangi Early Career Researcher Forum Committee

Purpose of document

1. To outline the scope and expectations of the Royal Society Te Apārangi ('Te Apārangi') Early Career Researcher (ECR) Forum Committee:

- Articulation of ideal membership and tenure, as well as individual and group responsibilities, including expectations of participation and engagement.
- Establishment of guidelines for working.

2. Clarify purpose and objectives for ongoing mahi with stakeholders of interest and scope for ECRs including professional development, networking opportunities, and input and direction for policies that affect ECRs.

- Establish a set of guidelines to provide a voice to represent ECRs.

These Terms of Reference have been approved and are due for review no later than December 2026.

Te Whakapapa | Background

In 2011 Te Apārangi took its first important steps towards engaging with, and addressing issues associated with, ECRs in Aotearoa New Zealand by co-opting an ECR onto Te Apārangi Council. The aim was to provide insight and ideas on how the Society could better assist and provide services for the ECR community. This led to a national conference in 2014 that brought together over one hundred ECRs across diverse organisations and disciplines. The conference provided a forum for discussion, advice, and support for ECRs on issues that impact their careers.

As a result of this conference, Te Apārangi initiated its own ECR Forum by forming a working group composed of ECRs from various institutes and disciplines within Aotearoa. In 2015, this working group presented a successful proposal for the establishment of a national ECR Forum within Te Apārangi and began developing its purpose and structure. In March 2016, the official Te Apārangi ECR Forum was launched and the working group became the first ECR Forum Committee.

Since 2016, with the support of Te Apārangi, the ECR Forum Committee has organised a wide range of activities including: holding a series of [ECR video competitions](#); conducting ECR discussions and surveys; engaging in advocacy on ECR issues with key stakeholders (including MBIE); webinars; and facilitating responses to Te Ara Paerangi – Future Pathways. These wide-ranging activities have inspired the creation of ECR groups in RSI organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand.

During her term as the Society's President (2018-2021), Professor Wendy Larner nominated 'engaging with early and mid-career researchers' as one of her themes for driving change. One initiative during this period was the He Pito Mata ECR wānanga in 2021. This two-day event for the ECR community was hosted by the ECR Forum Committee and Te Apārangi. It was successful in providing a networking and educational event for ECRs and a second He Pito Mata event was run in 2023. In 2021 at He Pito Mata, a special issue of the *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* to showcase ECR research excellence

was announced. Following communications and engagement with key stakeholders by Te Apārangi and others, the MBIE Science Whitinga Fellowships for ECRs were announced shortly thereafter. Both the 2021 and 2023 He Pito Mata events have contributed insights to inform the Committee's ongoing work. One of the key responsibilities of the Committee is to organise events, such as He Pito Mata, with the support of Te Apārangi and as resources allow.

These Terms of Reference were prepared following the 2023 He Pito Mata event to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the ECR Forum Committee in ensuring the continued support of Aotearoa New Zealand's ECR community.

Te Kaupapa | Purpose

Te Apārangi's ECR Forum seeks to represent the national voice of Aotearoa New Zealand's ECR community and celebrate their achievements and contributions in the fields of physical, biological, and social sciences, as well as technology and the humanities.

The Forum is dedicated to engaging ECRs on the issues important to them and fostering a collaborative, communicative, and respected community under the auspices of Te Apārangi.

The purpose of Te Apārangi ECR Forum is to:

1. Foster a national ECR community in Aotearoa New Zealand by:
 - Providing ECRs with opportunities for personal and professional development;
 - Creating and promoting opportunities for ECRs to engage in national, international, and cross-disciplinary interactions and networking;
 - Promoting diversity and equality in early career research in Aotearoa New Zealand and abroad;
 - Provide a forum for the discussion of issues and opportunities of relevance to ECRs;
 - Promote, engage, and celebrate the research contributions of ECRs.
2. Enhance engagement between Te Apārangi and Aotearoa New Zealand's ECRs by:
 - Acting as a national entity to represent ECRs and communicate their knowledge, expertise, and perspectives to the Society and its stakeholders;
 - Providing an avenue for ECRs to participate in expert advice providing perspectives and expertise that could inform public policy, as per the Society's legislated function;
 - Promoting the activities of the Society to ECRs.

Ngā Mematanga | Membership of the forum

To be eligible for this group, ECRs must be current Professional Members of Te Apārangi – and an ECR is defined as being within 10 years of completing their highest research qualification, normally (but not necessarily) a PhD, who can demonstrate research independence as per [the criteria for professional membership](#) of Te Apārangi. Parental and other forms of leave can be deducted from the 10-year post-qualification time limit.

Te Komiti | Membership of the Committee

The ECR Forum Committee is an appointed group of 10-16 members that serve on behalf of ECRs and advocate for ECRs across Aotearoa. Committee members generally commit to serving a three-year term. The ECR Forum Committee is a Committee of the Society under Rule 7 of the General Rules.

Committee members will be selected with concern for the ECR Forum's representativeness regarding gender, ethnicity, geographic location, occupational sector, and disciplinary affiliation. In particular, the Committee will seek to include one or more ECRs from the following historically underrepresented groups:

- Māori and Pacific
- Social science and humanities
- CRIs and IROs
- Māori research organisations
- International/non-NZ researchers
- PhD candidates (where eligible)

Furthermore, selection of new members will consider the added value of having committee members with expertise in higher education, connections to government or other strategic relationships, and/or who are located in Pōneke/Wellington.

Co-chairs will also be selected with consideration of diversity. They will generally serve for two years and remain on the Committee for an additional year.

Te Kōwhiringa | Committee selection process

The Society's membership team will maintain the register of Committee members and provide any updates at the Committee's monthly meetings. The Committee itself will also maintain a membership officer. Co-Chairs will maintain a shared membership folder which will include the following documents:

- An email invitation to apply for a Committee/Co-Chair role
- An 'in-principle' acceptance email (for successful applicants, prior to Te Apārangi Council or CE approval)
- An acceptance email (following Te Apārangi Council or CE approval)
- A thank you email (for unsuccessful applicants)
- A thank you email (for outgoing Committee members/Co-Chairs)

New Co-Chairs and Committee members will be proposed by the existing Committee and approved by Te Apārangi Council or CE (as per delegations under the Rules). Three months before a Co-Chair or Committee member's term ends, the Committee will hold a discussion on next steps for appointing new member(s) during its regular monthly meeting.

A detailed timeline of the selection process is appended to this document.

Ngā Kawenga | Roles and responsibilities

Co-chair responsibilities:

- Responding to external requests (e.g. MBIE)
- Event organisation and coordination (e.g. He Pito Mata or ECR Wānanga)
- Attending external hui on behalf of the Forum
- Planning and facilitating monthly meetings
- Formal communication on behalf of the Committee (e.g. answering emails sent to the ECR Forum, emailing Forum members, sending thank you letters)
- Liaising directly with Te Apārangi
- Induction of new committee members
- Coordinate social media responsibilities

Committee member responsibilities:

- Regular participation in monthly and subcommittee meetings
- Attending and helping to organise events (e.g. He Pito Mata or ECR Wānanga)
- Joining at least one subcommittee and helping to advance its work plans
- Willingness to represent ECRs at relevant events
- Building connections with other ECR rōpū

Council representative:

- Updating the ECR Forum Committee on relevant Council activities as appropriate
- Communicating to Council ECR perspectives

Te Apārangi employees:

- Provide guidance and support to the ECR committee as appropriate
- Promote and assist with connecting ECR members with other organisations and/or members of Te Apārangi (in line with the Privacy Act 2020) as appropriate
- Assistance with organization/coordinate of events (e.g. He Pito Mata or ECR Wānanga)
- Regular participation at monthly meetings.

Ngā Whanaungatanga | Relationships

The ECR Forum Committee is a Committee of Te Apārangi, under the Rules. As such:

- The Committee is bound to operate within these Terms of Reference, the Act and the Code of the Society
- Te Apārangi will promote the involvement of ECRs in relevant RSI initiatives by forwarding timely information on upcoming opportunities to the Committee
- Committee members will maintain the reputation of Te Apārangi when representing the ECR Forum at events
- Committee members will keep Te Apārangi staff informed on planned ECR Forum activities, and provide staff with an opportunity to review and comment on all outputs published on behalf of the ECR Forum
- Where decisions of Te Apārangi Council are required, the Committee will notify the Council in time for the item to be added to their regular meeting agenda
- Where Committee members are requested to participate in events on behalf of the ECR Forum, Te Apārangi will cover their reasonable travel expenses (to be agreed in advance)

- Resources, including staff assistance and budget, may be made available by Te Apārangi to deliver ECR Forum initiatives, and will be provided as Te Apārangi resources allow at the discretion of Te Apārangi Chief Operating Officer.

Ngā Hui | Meetings

The Committee will meet once a month on a regularly scheduled day and time for a one hour video conference call. Additional meetings may be scheduled to deliver specific tasks.

The Committee Co-Chairs are responsible for identifying a suitable regular meeting day and time at the beginning of each semester; setting up a recurring calendar invite; maintaining the rolling agenda shared document; and facilitating meetings.

Committee members are expected to attend and participate in all scheduled meetings. Where sickness or other commitments prevent members from attending, they are expected to notify the Co-Chairs or add their name to the agenda apologies list before the meeting. If members identify a recurring clash with the regular meeting time, they must discuss this with the Co-Chairs. Committee members who attend less than $\frac{2}{3}$ of scheduled meetings will be invited to meet with Co-Chairs to discuss their ability to commit to their role on the Forum.

In preparation for meetings, Committee members are expected to review and add items to the agenda, read or review documents circulated in advance, and contribute to preparing an update on their subcommittee's work plan.

Responsibility for karakia and note taking will be shared among Committee members, with a different person nominated to deliver the karakia and take minutes at the start of each meeting. Minutes will be taken in the rolling agenda document.

Decisions of the Committee are normally made through deliberation and informal consensus. If the Committee is unable to come to consensus, one of the Co-Chairs may proceed with a vote on the question. For the vote to be valid, more than half of Committee members must cast a vote (quorum). A simple majority is required for voting based decisions.

Appendix 1. Timeline for the appointment of a new Co-Chair or Committee member

Three months before the end of a Co-Chair/Committee member's term:

- During the regular monthly meeting, current and outgoing Committee members will make recommendations for new members, taking into consideration the Committee's diversity goals.
 - They may look to previous applications stored in the shared membership folder for inspiration.
- The Committee will make a decision on how to proceed:
 - If suitable replacements are identified in this process, the Co-Chairs will email them an invitation to apply to collect their letter of interest and CV.
 - The Committee could also request that the Co-Chairs email the full ECR Forum mail list (via Mail Chimp) and/or Te Apārangi Alerts Newsletter to invite a wider range of applications.
 - Applications will be due within three weeks from the meeting date.

Two months before the end of a Co-Chair/Committee member's term:

- Co-Chairs will add any application received to the shared membership folder.
 - All of the applications will be stored in the shared membership folder for future consideration.
- The membership officer will create a spreadsheet in the shared membership folder with basic details about the applicants (name, institution, alignment with diversity goals).
- The membership officer/subcommittee and Co-Chairs will review the applications (other Committee members are also welcome to review them, but it is not mandatory).

One month before the end of a Co-Chair/Committee member's term:

- At the regular monthly meeting, the membership officer will facilitate a discussion about the applicants and the Committee will make a decision on their first, second and third choices for each open position.
 - If a decision cannot be made, the final decision will be made by the Co-Chairs.
- After the meeting, the Co-Chairs will notify the Committee's first choice via email. This will be an 'in-principle' acceptance subject to approval by Te Apārangi Council or CE.
 - If the first choice provisionally accepts the role, the Co-Chairs will forward their application to Te Apārangi Council or CE and invite them to the next monthly ECR Forum Committee meeting.
 - If the first choice turns down the role, the Co-Chairs will send an 'in-principle' acceptance letter to the next person on the list.
 - Once Te Apārangi Council/CE approves the new member, Co-Chairs will send them an official acceptance letter.
 - If Te Apārangi Council/CE has questions or concerns about a new member, the Co-Chairs will engage in dialogue and communicate any outcomes to the applicant.

A Committee member's final meeting/a Co-Chair's final meeting as Co-Chair:

- At the regular monthly meeting, the Co-Chairs will welcome the incoming members and thank those who are outgoing.
- After the meeting, the Co-Chairs will send a thank you letter to the outgoing member.
- Within their first two months of their role, Co-Chairs will invite the incoming Committee member to a one-to-one meeting to better understand Royal Society Te Apārangi their interests and strengths, go over the terms of reference, and support them in deciding on which subcommittee to join.