Terms of engagement between the SSI and the Society of RSE

Introduction

This is a public document outlining the Society of Research Software Engineering's ("The Society") relationship with the Software Sustainability Institute (SSI) referring to the Charity Commission Guidance (below), outlining how the Society does this transparently and offering guidelines to trustees.

The SSI is a collaboration between the universities of Edinburgh, Manchester, Oxford and Southampton. We define members of the SSI to include staff directly employed by the collaboration, but not other staff at the four universities who are not engaged in the SSI collaboration.

The reasons that the Society have identified the SSI, for these terms of engagement, are:
- Members of the SSI helped in the establishment of the UKRSE Association and the Society itself – in particular Simon Hettrick, the SSI's deputy director
- Some members, and past members, of the Society board of trustees are employed, in various capacities, by the SSI
- One of the current Trustees of the Society is married to one of the SSI's Co-Investigators
- When in discussions with other organisations – e.g. BCS – we have realised that they, to some extent, conflated the Society and SSI
- We don't know to what extent others, including the Society's members, conflate the two organisations, but we need to be mindful of the possibility in the Society's meetings and discussion

In future, other terms of engagement may be created with respect to any other organisations that the Society works with.

Potential risks

- That the SSI could control the Society's decision making through direct meetings with their management.
- That there is an impression from the Society's membership or the public that the Society is controlled or at risk of control by the SSI (or even conflating the two organisations, as mentioned above).

The Society may:

- Work with the SSI on research and education that aligns with the Society's charitable aims.
- Meet with the SSI directorate and staff to exchange knowledge, join forces on common campaigns and to explicitly mitigate potential for risk (outlined above).
- Work together on events and initiatives.
- Have trustees who are employed by, funded by, or work directly with the SSI
- Accept funding from the SSI to support the Society's aims.
- Appoint members of the SSI to the the Society's Advisory Group
- Accept donations of effort from the SSI on a long-term basis

The Society must not:

- Provide funding directly to the SSI or staff of the SSI except through avenues which are open to anyone else (e.g. the Events and Initiatives Policy).
- Work with the SSI to the exclusion of other organisations which may support the Society's aims better.

The Society must:

- Operate independently. All decisions must be made by the trustees or the membership for the benefit of the public and align with the Society's aims.
- Follow the trustee conflicts of interest policy when working with the SSI, including trustees who are employed by, funded by, related to, or work directly with the SSI.
- Keep the Society's financial structures strictly separate from the SSI's.
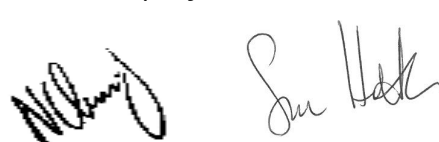- Keep the Society's identities strictly separate from the SSI's.

Signed,

Matt Williams,
President of the Society

2023-04-18

Neil Chue Hong & Simon Hettrick,
Director & Deputy Director of the SSI

2023-04-18

References

1. [Guidance for charities with a connection to a non-charity - GOV.UK](#)
2. [Code of Conduct for Trustees - Society of Research Software Engineering](#)