

GUIDANCE ON LEVELS OF RESPONSIBILITY & CURRENT RESPONSIBILITY

Purpose

These notes provide guidance on interpreting the levels of responsibility referred to in the IRSE Bye-Laws, with the object of ensuring that consistent standards are maintained. They are intended for use by those Members who sponsor applications for election/transfer and to assist applicants who are considering applying for election/transfer to a higher class of membership.

Background

All applicants for membership of the Institution are required to demonstrate that they have held, and successfully discharged, positions of responsibility within the profession of Signal and Telecommunications Engineering. The level of responsibility and period over which it must have been discharged varies according to the class of membership being sought and the route being followed. The specific requirements are set out in the Bye-Laws, sub-clauses 1.16, 1.17 and 1.18 define what is considered to constitute “Responsibility”, “Senior Responsibility” and “Superior Responsibility”.

The following are typical guidelines for the various levels of responsibility necessary for membership:

Responsible Experience

A Responsible position is one entailing the exercise of professional engineering judgement in the field of railway signalling or telecommunications. This may include any of the following areas of work:

- Research, feasibility studies and options evaluation
- System, hardware or software development and manufacture
- Applications engineering and/or data preparation
- Verification, validation, testing or conformance assessment
- Installation and commissioning
- Maintenance and servicing
- Definition and interpretation of standards, rules and regulations

A person in a “responsible” position is typically making decisions about an individual deliverable, such as a document, a design or a test.

Senior Responsibility

A person in a position of “Senior Responsibility” takes more significant engineering decisions affecting technical and organisational output. He/she will typically be making decisions at the level of a project or an area of activity. He/she will variously engage in technical and commercial management and possess effective inter-personal skills for dealing with customers, suppliers and colleagues.

Usually, such a person will have fulfilled a Responsible position in the railway signalling or railway telecommunications engineering field (or possibly in another engineering discipline), and will now be giving guidance to those in Responsible positions.

Superior Responsibility

A position of “Superior Responsibility” is one held by someone who dictates business and/or technical policy and who has previously been in both “Responsible” and “Senior Responsible” positions in the railway signalling or railway telecommunications engineering field (or possibly in another engineering discipline).

Such a person will usually be widely recognised as “eminent” within the profession. He/she may be either:

- A senior manager in a railway signalling or telecommunications business
- **or**
- Recognised as an industry-wide expert in a particular field of railway signalling or telecommunications engineering.

A person with “Superior Responsibility” is expected to exhibit leadership, vision and strategy within the profession by advancing the science of railway signalling and telecommunications, promoting the professional development of individuals and furthering the objectives of the Institution.

Current Responsibility

Where an applicant is currently not working, or working in a less responsible position than that required for the class of membership applied for, the Institution may take into consideration previous positions held by the applicant in the last 2 years where more responsibility was exercised.

GUIDANCE ON ASSESSING RESPONSIBILITY LEVELS FOR RAILWAY SIGNALLING OR RAILWAY TELECOMMUNICATIONS CONSULTANTS

It is usually possible, using the above Guidelines, to assess levels of responsibility held by long-serving staff in a railway authority or major supplier, as their career progression provides evidence of their growing contribution to the organisation.

In contrast, it is not always easy to understand the real technical contribution of a consultant during his/her period of attachment to a specific project. Claims for levels of responsibility made by applicants from railway signalling or railway telecommunications engineering consultancy should be assessed using the following additional criteria:

Type of consultancy organisation:

A large consultancy with a body of competence in the signalling and telecommunications field:

Such organisations are likely to have internal staff assessment and development procedures, and grading structures that reflect responsibility level.

A small company, selling the services of individual specialists, or a freelance specialist:

In this case, job titles like "Director" may be misleading, and it is necessary to look carefully at all contract roles performed over the period claimed as responsible (or senior/superior responsible) experience, if necessary seeking additional information from the applicant, and/or advice from the applicant's sponsors.

Type of client organisations:

Large, informed customer organisations, which often retain responsibility for decisions themselves, even when using quite senior consultants as extra resources in their engineering departments:

Non-specialist customers, employing the consultant to provide skills they choose not to possess in-house. The length of the relationship and the successful achievement of results may indicate the level of responsibility of the consultant in this case.

Career history:

If the applicant has moved into consultancy from a railway administration or a major supplier, would the previously-held career path normally have led to the claimed level of responsibility?

Note on Confidentiality:

Consultants are often obliged by confidentiality agreements not to divulge details of their work to other organisations. This may mean that a consultant does not maintain a conventional Engineer's Log-book detailing their work to the level which must be assessed for a membership application. Where an applicant declares this to be the case, the membership process must allow for it, but it is the applicant's responsibility to work with the Institution to demonstrate their experience in other ways.

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