

Introduction & Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to describe how the Test & research Centre (T&R) ensures independence, impartiality and transparency in all its activities.

T&R structure and policies have been designed to avoid any potential or actual conflict of interest.

Policy Statement

T&R provides an objective, fair assessment and certification process. Impartiality is at the core of our business ethos. T&R has put in place procedures, practices and policies to safeguard the impartiality of its activities.

We strive to deliver services which provide the marketplace with transparency and confidence of our activities, while maintaining the professionalism and credibility to ensure continued client confidence.

T&R Mechanism for Impartiality

In order to demonstrate top management commitment and to ensure the objectivity of T&R's impartial activity, T&R has formed a Mechanism for Impartiality committee.

The purpose of the Committee is to ensure that compliance with competence, impartiality and integrity requirements for certification schemes is provided. All members of the Committee have knowledge and value adding experience in the individual sectors which they represent.

The Impartiality Committee membership is made up from representatives from relevant stakeholders.

The structure of the committee will have a balance of interest where no one group predominates.

The Committee monitors the activities of T&R through regular meetings where certification activities are reviewed, and staff provide reports and respond to queries from committee members.

The wider activities of T&R are also reviewed to assess for any potential areas which might impact the Certification Bodies capacity to function impartially.

Threats to Impartiality

We recognise the following as threats to our impartiality:

- Self-interest - threats that arise from a person or body acting in their own interests
- Self-review – threats that arise from a person or body reviewing their own work
- Familiarity - threats that arise from a person/body being too familiar with of another person/entity, instead of seeking out objective audit evidence to back up conclusions
- Intimidation – threats that arise from a person/body having a perception of being coerced

T&R evaluates potential risks to its impartiality on an on-going basis using a number of mechanisms including internal audit, management review and consultation with stakeholders. Where any such risks are identified, T&R shall put appropriate measures in place to eliminate or minimise them. These measures are monitored for effectiveness.

Confidentiality & Conflicts of Interest

All staff involved in the certification process sign agreements, which require them to declare any conflict of interest that may impact on or affect the process.

Conflicts of interest and risks are recorded using a risk register. The register notes any conflict of interest that may arise or potentially arise and any issue that may present a risk to the impartiality of certification activities. The register also records the measures to be taken should any identified risk arise. The risk register is reviewed by managers and updated as necessary.

Certification decisions are made solely by T&R by competent, nominated staff. All decisions are taken purely from information gathered during the assessment/certification process. Decisions are not influenced by other factors such as financial return or by third parties.

T&R staff appointed to carry out certification functions are dedicated solely to that area of work and are not involved in the evaluation process.

Review Arrangements

- We will continually improve our Impartiality Policy through reviews of our activities and revise it in line with any feedback from customers, regulatory authorities or external agencies.
- As a minimum our Mechanism for Impartiality Committee will review this policy annually to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our customers and the Regulators.
- If you have any queries about this policy, please send an email to info@testandresearch.org.