



ResearchBridge Africa

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Admission • Participation • Integrity • Accountability • Fair Process

Policy purpose To establish a fair, transparent and consistent framework for membership across ResearchBridge Africa while preserving the special obligations attached to institutional, lecturer, reviewer, editorial and service roles.

Document control	Approved information
Policy owner	ResearchBridge Africa Governance and Administration
Version	1.0 - Master Policy
Effective date	Upon formal approval
Review cycle	At least every two years, or earlier when required
Jurisdictional orientation	Ghana; subject to applicable law and approved contractual terms

From Research Idea to Published Impact

Master Template | July 2026 | Ghana

1. Policy Statement, Purpose and Scope

Policy statement Membership is a privilege of participation in a research-development community. It carries rights, safeguards and opportunities, together with duties of honesty, respect, confidentiality, competence and responsible use.

1.1 Purpose

- Define the categories, eligibility requirements and status of ResearchBridge Africa members.
- Provide transparent processes for application, verification, approval, onboarding and renewal.
- State the rights, benefits, responsibilities and conduct expected across all membership categories.
- Protect academic integrity, confidential information, intellectual property, personal data and platform trust.
- Establish fair procedures for concerns, complaints, restrictions, suspension, termination and appeal.
- Clarify the relationship between this general policy and role-specific agreements, institutional MOUs and platform terms.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to individual and organisational members, applicants, verified role-holders, and members acting through an institutional affiliation. Visitors who only view public content are governed by the platform Terms and Privacy Policy but are not members unless they create or receive an approved membership account.

1.3 Policy Hierarchy

This policy supplies the common membership rules. A signed MOU, employment contract, service contract, assignment letter, lecturer pack, peer reviewer agreement, editorial protocol, publication licence or other approved instrument may impose additional role-specific duties. If two instruments conflict, the more specific duly approved instrument governs that issue, subject to applicable law and mandatory platform safeguards.

1.4 No Automatic Legal or Financial Relationship

Membership alone does not create employment, agency, partnership, guaranteed income, admission to an institution, publication entitlement, supervisory responsibility or a minimum number of assignments. Any paid, commissioned or manuscript-specific work requires separate written terms and acceptance.

2. Definitions

Term	Meaning in this policy
Applicant	A person or organisation seeking membership or a verified platform role.
Member	An applicant whose membership has been approved and remains active under this policy.
Verified member	A member whose identity, affiliation, qualification or professional status has been checked to the level required for the role.
Institutional partner	An approved university, college, research institute, professional body or other organisation participating under an institutional agreement.
Assignment	A separately offered activity such as consultation, facilitation, review, editing, data support or another defined service.
Confidential information	Non-public submissions, reports, data, identities, decisions, communications, payment records, credentials or institutional information.
Conflict of interest	A circumstance that may improperly influence, or reasonably appear to influence, impartial judgement or performance.
Platform	The ResearchBridge Africa website, repository, learning, support, editorial, payment and administrative systems.
Research output	A topic, proposal, dataset, dissertation, article, report, learning product or other scholarly material handled through the platform.
Serious misconduct	Conduct that materially threatens safety, academic integrity, confidentiality, legal compliance, financial integrity or platform trust.

3. Membership Categories

Category	Primary participation
Student / Emerging Researcher	Learns, develops topics, seeks authorised guidance, submits work and builds research capacity.
Independent Researcher / Author	Uses research-development, support, submission, review, repository or dissemination services without relying on student status.
Lecturer / Mentor	Provides topic consultation, mentoring, learning support or other accepted academic assignments within verified competence.
Peer Reviewer	Provides confidential, independent and constructive manuscript assessment under the reviewer agreement.
Editor / Publication Officer	Performs authorised screening, assignment, decision-support, publication and record-management functions.
Course Facilitator / Content Contributor	Develops or delivers approved learning content under stated quality, copyright and participation terms.
Research Support Professional	Provides ethical methodology, analysis, language, formatting or related assistance without impersonating the researcher.
Institutional Administrator	Manages institution-level verification and permitted aggregate functions within approved access boundaries.
Institutional Partner	Participates through an approved proposal, acknowledgement, pilot schedule, MOU or other institutional instrument.

3.1 Multiple Roles

A member may hold more than one approved role, but each role must be separately verified where required. Permissions, conflicts and confidentiality obligations apply to the role being performed. A member must not use one role to obtain information or influence a process belonging to another role.

3.2 Role Boundaries

- A lecturer role does not automatically include reviewer, editor, employee or institutional-representative status.
- Reviewers provide recommendations; authorised editors make publication decisions.
- Institutional administrators have no general access to private manuscripts, confidential reviews, individual payments or another institution's records.
- Support professionals may guide and improve work but must not secretly complete assessable work for a member.

4. Eligibility and Membership Principles

4.1 General Eligibility

- Provide accurate, current and verifiable information appropriate to the membership category.
- Have legal capacity to accept the applicable terms or, where relevant, participate through an authorised parent, guardian or institution.
- Demonstrate the qualifications, affiliation, experience or status required for any verified professional role.
- Accept this policy, the platform Terms, Privacy Policy and applicable role-specific instruments.
- Be willing and able to follow academic-integrity, confidentiality, data-protection and professional-conduct requirements.

4.2 Fair Access and Non-discrimination

Membership decisions will be based on legitimate role requirements, verification, conduct, capacity and platform safety. ResearchBridge Africa will not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, race, nationality, sex, gender, disability, religion, age, political opinion, social origin or other protected status. Reasonable accessibility measures will be considered where practicable.

4.3 Institutional and Professional Standing

An applicant's title, institutional affiliation, licence, qualification, ORCID, publication record or professional profile may be checked. Verification confirms the information checked at that time; it is not a blanket endorsement of every claim, opinion, service or future act of the member.

4.4 Discretion and Capacity

ResearchBridge Africa may limit or pause admissions where verification capacity, safeguarding, technical readiness, disciplinary coverage or pilot scope requires it. A complete application does not guarantee approval.

5. Application, Verification and Onboarding

Stage	Membership action
Application	The applicant supplies required identity, affiliation, expertise, contact and consent information.
Initial screening	The platform checks completeness, category fit, obvious duplication, eligibility and risk indicators.
Verification	Relevant records or references are checked proportionately to the role and access requested.
Decision	The application is approved, conditionally approved, deferred or declined, with notice appropriate to the circumstances.
Onboarding	The member accepts applicable policies, completes orientation and receives role-appropriate access.
Periodic review	Status, affiliation, activity, conduct, credentials and role need may be reviewed or reverified.

5.1 Accuracy and Continuing Disclosure

Applicants and members must promptly correct material inaccuracies and disclose changes that affect eligibility, affiliation, conflicts, professional standing, payment status or safe participation. Knowingly false or materially misleading information may lead to refusal, restriction or termination.

5.2 Account Security

- Use a personal account unless an approved institutional or service account is authorised.
- Protect passwords, access links, authentication codes and devices from unauthorised use.
- Do not share, sell, transfer or permit another person to perform verified activities through the account.
- Report suspected compromise, impersonation or unauthorised access promptly.

5.3 Conditional Approval

Approval may be limited by time, pilot cohort, discipline, institution, function, supervision, training, documentation or access level. Conditions must be communicated and satisfied before unrestricted role access is granted.

6. Member Rights and Benefits

- Clear information about membership status, applicable policies and role expectations.
- Role-appropriate access to platform features, learning, support, opportunities and records.
- Respectful, impartial and confidential handling of applications, concerns and protected information.
- Control over public profile information within available settings and lawful platform requirements.
- Recognition for verified contributions where the relevant programme or assignment provides it.
- The ability to decline optional assignments and withdraw from membership, subject to outstanding obligations and record-retention rules.
- A reasonable opportunity to respond to material allegations before a final adverse membership decision, except where urgent protective action is required.
- Access to the applicable complaint and appeal routes described in this policy.

6.1 Limits of Benefits

Features, opportunities, recognition and assignments depend on role, eligibility, availability, institutional arrangements, funding, quality and platform capacity. Membership does not guarantee supervision, research approval, publication, indexing, employment, funding, citations, readership or commercial success.

6.2 Academic and Institutional Authority

ResearchBridge Africa does not replace an institution's authority over admission, supervision, ethics approval, assessment, graduation or staff management. Members remain responsible for meeting the requirements of their own institutions, funders, employers, regulators and publishers.

7. General Responsibilities and Code of Conduct

7.1 Core Duties

- Act honestly, respectfully, competently and within the limits of one's approved role.
- Provide original work and accurate information; acknowledge sources, assistance, funding and material conflicts.
- Protect confidential information, personal data, unpublished ideas and restricted platform records.
- Use platform communication, learning, review, support and payment systems lawfully and for their intended purposes.
- Meet accepted deadlines or communicate promptly when performance is at risk.
- Treat students, authors, lecturers, reviewers, staff and partners fairly and without harassment, intimidation or retaliation.
- Comply with applicable law, ethics requirements, institutional rules and authorised editorial decisions.

7.2 Prohibited Conduct

- Plagiarism, fabrication, falsification, citation manipulation, authorship abuse or submission of another person's work as one's own.
- Contract cheating, impersonation, unauthorised delegation, ghost completion of assessable work or sale of confidential academic services.
- Harassment, hate speech, threats, exploitation, sexual misconduct, discriminatory abuse or targeted humiliation.
- Bribery, kickbacks, undisclosed solicitation, payment diversion, receipt fraud or manipulation of quotations, balances or platform records.
- Unauthorised scraping, security testing, circumvention of access controls, malware, automated abuse or interference with platform operation.
- Misuse of unpublished research, reviewer identities, student information, institutional records or confidential decisions.
- False claims of endorsement, employment, partnership, publication, reviewer status, institutional authority or official representation.

8. Academic Integrity and Ethical Research Support

Central rule Research support must strengthen the researcher's knowledge, judgement and work. It must not conceal authorship, fabricate evidence or substitute another person's work for the member's own academic responsibility.

8.1 Acceptable Support

- Teaching concepts, methods, software use, research design and academic-writing principles.
- Providing feedback, language editing, formatting, reference checks and transparent methodological guidance.
- Helping a researcher interpret their own data while documenting assumptions and retaining researcher accountability.
- Using approved automated tools for suggestions or assistance with appropriate human verification and disclosure.

8.2 Unacceptable Support

- Writing or completing an assessed dissertation, examination, assignment or manuscript for secret submission as the member's own work.
- Inventing respondents, interviews, observations, datasets, results, quotations, references, approvals or consent.
- Manipulating analysis or reporting to obtain a predetermined outcome.
- Using confidential submissions or data to train, test or prompt an external system without explicit authorisation and adequate safeguards.

8.3 Automated and Generative Tools

Automated suggestions are guidance rather than authoritative academic, ethical, legal or editorial decisions. Members must verify outputs, protect confidential material, follow institutional and publisher rules, disclose material use where required, and remain accountable for accuracy, originality and authorship.

8.4 Research Ethics

Where a study requires ethics approval, permission, consent or another regulatory clearance, the member must obtain and maintain it through the appropriate authority. Platform access, topic improvement, support or editorial screening does not constitute ethics approval.

9. Confidentiality, Privacy and Data Protection

9.1 Confidentiality Duty

- Access confidential information only for the authorised membership or assignment purpose.
- Share it only with persons expressly permitted within the relevant workflow.
- Use secure devices, accounts and storage appropriate to the sensitivity of the information.
- Avoid uploading restricted material to unapproved external tools, cloud services or personal repositories.
- Return, delete or cease using confidential copies when access or an assignment ends, subject to authorised retention.
- Report loss, misdirection, suspected breach or unauthorised disclosure promptly.

9.2 Personal Data

Personal data is handled in accordance with the ResearchBridge Africa Privacy Policy and applicable law. Members must provide only necessary data, keep it accurate, use platform data only for authorised purposes, and respect privacy settings and access boundaries.

9.3 Role-based Access

Access is granted according to role and need. Institutional affiliation does not create a right to confidential manuscripts, peer-review reports, individual learning records, support files, personal payments or cross-institutional information.

9.4 Survival

Confidentiality, privacy, intellectual-property, payment and record-integrity obligations continue after inactivity, withdrawal, suspension or termination to the extent required by their nature, an approved agreement or law.

10. Intellectual Property, Copyright and Publicity

10.1 Ownership

Authors ordinarily retain copyright in their original research outputs. Membership does not transfer ownership to ResearchBridge Africa except to the limited extent expressly agreed in a licence, service agreement, publication instrument or employment arrangement.

10.2 Platform and Contributor Materials

ResearchBridge Africa retains rights in its name, logo, platform design, workflows, policies and original platform materials. Lecturers, facilitators, reviewers, editors and service professionals retain or license their contributions according to the specific written terms governing those materials.

10.3 Repository and Publication Permissions

- Deposit or publication requires the appropriate authorisation, licence and editorial approval.
- A public repository record may remain for citation, integrity or archival reasons even where access to the full text is later restricted, subject to the Copyright Policy and applicable law.
- Members must not upload material that infringes another person's copyright, confidentiality, privacy, contractual or cultural rights.
- Takedown, correction and infringement concerns must follow the platform's designated process.

10.4 Name, Logo and Public Statements

A member may accurately state an approved membership or completed role but may not imply endorsement, employment, institutional authority or partnership beyond the verified record. Use of the ResearchBridge Africa name, logo, testimonials, screenshots or joint branding for promotion requires prior approval where the use is not merely factual reference.

11. Assignments, Recognition and Remuneration

Participation status	Meaning
Voluntary	No fee is payable; scope and time commitment should be disclosed before acceptance.
Recognised	Verified participation may receive an acknowledgement, record or certificate but no payment unless separately stated.
Honorarium	A limited payment or token is governed by the assignment terms and completion requirements.
Paid / Contracted	A separate written instrument states scope, deliverables, fee, payment conditions, confidentiality and applicable deductions.

11.1 Separate Acceptance

Each consultation, review, facilitation, editorial, technical or support assignment must be separately offered and accepted. The offer should identify the role, scope, deadline, expected output, access level, confidentiality status, recognition or payment basis, and any conflict-of-interest requirements.

11.2 No Guaranteed Work

Verified status places a member in an eligible community or role pool but does not guarantee selection, frequency of assignments, income, exclusivity, promotion or renewal.

11.3 Quality and Completion

Recognition or payment may depend on timely completion to the agreed standard. It may be withheld, corrected or recovered where work is fabricated, plagiarised, conflicted, improperly delegated, materially incomplete or obtained through misrepresentation, subject to fair review and applicable written terms.

12. Membership Fees, Payments and Financial Conduct

12.1 Fees and Charges

Any membership fee, subscription, service charge, publication charge or institutional contribution must be disclosed before commitment. Charges may differ by service, category, pilot or partnership arrangement. No fee should be inferred merely from membership unless it is expressly stated.

12.2 Payment Processing

- Use only approved invoices, quotations, checkout routes and accounts.
- Gateway payment credentials, card details, Mobile Money PINs and one-time passwords must not be requested or stored by members.
- A payment is treated as complete only after authorised verification and recording.
- Refunds, reversals, partial payments, balances and receipts follow the stated service terms and verified transaction record.

12.3 Financial Misconduct

Members must not divert payments, issue unauthorised receipts, alter transaction evidence, solicit undisclosed personal payments, charge authors for editorial influence, or offer payment for favourable review, publication or institutional verification.

13. Conflicts of Interest and Independence

13.1 Duty to Disclose

A member must disclose an actual, potential or perceived conflict as soon as it becomes known. Relevant conflicts may be personal, family, supervisory, academic, professional, institutional, political, ideological, competitive, commercial or financial.

13.2 Management

- Proceed with recorded safeguards where the conflict is minor and manageable.
- Limit access, decision authority, communication or public attribution.
- Reassign the matter to an independent person.
- Decline or withdraw from the assignment.
- Review a completed action where a conflict was not disclosed in time.

13.3 Gifts and Improper Influence

Members must not offer, request or accept gifts, favours, payments or advantages intended to influence verification, assessment, review, publication, procurement, payment, complaint or membership decisions. Modest lawful courtesies must be disclosed where they could reasonably create an appearance of influence.

14. Complaints, Safeguarding and Non-retaliation

14.1 Raising a Concern

A member or affected person may report academic misconduct, harassment, discrimination, confidentiality breaches, payment concerns, unsafe conduct, conflicts, process unfairness or other policy violations through the designated Help Center or authorised administrative channel.

14.2 Information to Provide

- The nature of the concern and relevant dates.
- The people, roles, submissions, assignments or transactions involved.
- Available documents, screenshots, messages or other supporting information.
- Any immediate safety, confidentiality, legal or deadline risk.
- The outcome sought, where the reporter wishes to state one.

14.3 Fair Handling

Concerns will be triaged according to seriousness, urgency, jurisdiction, confidentiality and available evidence. Information will be shared only as reasonably necessary. The person affected by a material allegation should ordinarily receive sufficient notice and an opportunity to respond before a final decision, unless doing so would create a serious risk, compromise evidence or breach law.

14.4 Safeguarding and Emergency Matters

Immediate threats to safety, abuse, exploitation, serious fraud or criminal conduct may require urgent restriction, preservation of records, referral to an institution, regulator, payment provider or lawful authority, or another proportionate protective action.

14.5 Non-retaliation

Good-faith reporting, participation in an authorised review or request for accessibility or fair process must not attract retaliation. Knowingly false, malicious or fabricated allegations may themselves constitute misconduct; an unproven good-faith concern does not.

15. Membership Status, Inactivity and Renewal

Status	Meaning
Applicant	Application submitted but no membership rights or verified role yet granted.
Active	Approved and in good standing with applicable access.
Conditional	Approved subject to stated limits, documents, orientation, supervision or time period.
Inactive	No recent participation or voluntary pause; access may be reduced pending reactivation.
Restricted	Some permissions are limited while risk, verification, training or conduct matters are addressed.
Suspended	Membership or specified roles are temporarily disabled pending review or for a defined period.
Withdrawn	The member has voluntarily ended participation, subject to continuing obligations.
Terminated	Membership has ended by final administrative decision.

15.1 Inactivity

Inactivity is not misconduct. The platform may archive or reduce inactive access, request re-verification, or require updated consent before reactivation. Records may be retained according to the Privacy Policy, publication integrity, financial obligations and lawful requirements.

15.2 Renewal and Reverification

Professional roles may require periodic confirmation of affiliation, expertise, good standing, training, conflicts, availability and contact information. Failure to complete required reverification may result in inactive or restricted status rather than automatic misconduct findings.

15.3 Voluntary Withdrawal

A member may request withdrawal, but withdrawal does not erase completed publication records, verified transactions, resolved decisions, audit information or continuing duties where retention is justified by law, integrity, contract or the Privacy and Copyright Policies.

16. Restriction, Suspension and Termination

16.1 Grounds

- Material falsehood, impersonation, credential fraud or account transfer.
- Serious or repeated academic-integrity, confidentiality, privacy, safeguarding, harassment or security violations.
- Financial fraud, bribery, payment diversion or manipulation of platform records.
- Misuse of role access, unpublished work, reviewer identity, institutional information or protected data.
- Failure to meet a reasonable corrective condition after notice.
- Legal, regulatory, institutional or technical requirements that make continued access unsafe or impermissible.

16.2 Proportionate Measures

- Advice, warning, training, correction or closer supervision.
- Removal from a specific assignment or role.
- Temporary access limitation or interim suspension.
- Correction or withdrawal of recognition, profile claims, records or publications where justified.
- Time-limited or indefinite suspension.
- Termination of membership or institutional access.
- Referral to an affected institution, publisher, funder, regulator, payment provider or lawful authority where appropriate.

16.3 Interim Protective Action

ResearchBridge Africa may restrict access before a final decision where reasonably necessary to protect people, evidence, confidential information, funds, systems or publication integrity. Interim action is preventive, not a final finding, and should be reviewed without undue delay.

16.4 Notice and Response

A final adverse decision should ordinarily identify the material issue, information considered, outcome, effective date and available review route. The member should have a reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to safety, confidentiality, legal and evidential constraints.

17. Review and Appeal

17.1 Requesting Review

A member may request review of a material refusal, restriction, suspension or termination within the period stated in the decision notice, or within 14 calendar days if no period is stated. The request should identify the decision, alleged error, relevant new information and desired remedy.

17.2 Review Standard

- Whether the correct policy and role requirements were applied.
- Whether the member had a fair opportunity to provide relevant information.
- Whether material evidence was overlooked, misunderstood or newly available.
- Whether the outcome was proportionate to the risk, conduct and circumstances.
- Whether a conflict affected the original decision.

17.3 Reviewer of the Decision

Where practicable, the review should be handled by a person not materially responsible for the original decision and without a relevant conflict. The outcome may affirm, vary, replace or return the decision for reconsideration.

17.4 Limits

An appeal does not automatically restore access or pause urgent protective measures. The internal process does not remove any lawful right to approach an institution, regulator, court or other competent body.

18. Institutional Participation

18.1 Governing Instruments

Institutional participation is governed by this policy together with the approved partnership proposal, pilot schedule, acknowledgement of interest, MOU, data-sharing arrangement, implementation plan or other signed instrument. The institutional instrument should identify authorised contacts, scope, roles, branding, information access, reporting, finance and duration.

18.2 Institutional Responsibilities

- Nominate authorised representatives and promptly update changes.
- Verify affiliations and role claims only within delegated authority.
- Respect academic autonomy, confidentiality, data-protection and access boundaries.
- Avoid representing platform membership as institutional admission, assessment approval or employment unless separately true.
- Cooperate with monitoring, safeguarding, complaint and offboarding arrangements stated in the institutional instrument.

18.3 Individual Autonomy

Institutional partnership does not remove an individual member's rights or responsibilities under this policy. An institution may manage permitted affiliation and aggregate functions but does not automatically control private manuscripts, confidential peer review, personal payments or data beyond its lawful and agreed authority.

19. Governance, Records and Policy Administration

19.1 Policy Administration

ResearchBridge Africa's authorised governance and administration function is responsible for implementation, interpretation, membership decisions, record integrity, role coordination and periodic review. Specialist academic, editorial, technical, institutional or legal advice may be sought where needed.

19.2 Records

The platform may keep proportionate records of applications, verification, consent, assignments, contributions, decisions, complaints, payments and offboarding in accordance with the Privacy Policy, lawful obligations and integrity needs. Access should be limited to authorised persons.

19.3 Policy Changes

This policy may be revised to reflect law, technology, platform development, safeguarding, institutional partnerships or good practice. Material changes should be communicated through the platform or another reasonable channel. Where required, continued participation may depend on renewed acceptance.

19.4 Severability and No Waiver

If a provision is invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions continue to the extent possible. Failure to enforce a provision on one occasion does not permanently waive it.

19.5 Legal Review

This master policy is an operational governance document and should be reviewed by a qualified Ghanaian solicitor before formal public adoption, particularly in relation to data protection, consumer protection, employment status, payments, dispute handling and institutional contracting.

20. Acceptance and Member Declaration

Acceptance Electronic acceptance, approved application, signed declaration or continued use after effective notice may record agreement to the applicable policy version, subject to the platform Terms and law.

- ☐ I have read and understood the ResearchBridge Africa General Membership Policy.
- ☐ The information I provide is accurate, and I will promptly correct material changes.
- ☐ I will comply with academic-integrity, confidentiality, privacy, conduct and role-specific requirements.
- ☐ I understand that membership alone does not create employment, payment, publication, institutional authority or guaranteed assignments.
- ☐ I consent to proportionate verification and membership-record administration as described in the applicable policies.

Full name	
Membership category/categories	
Institution or professional affiliation	
Email / telephone	
Signature	
Date	

Administrative Approval

Application reference	
Status	☐ Approved ☐ Conditional ☐ Deferred ☐ Declined
Approved role(s)	
Conditions / review date	
Authorised officer	
Signature / date	