New routes to membership

Risk management and leadership at the top, middle and bottom of an organisation is vital. We’re updating our routes to membership to reflect this.

Customers and regulations take less on trust and expect more assurances than ever before. This, together with the changing nature of working practices, the link between staff wellbeing and productivity and competitive edge, plus events such as climate change, wide-spread terrorism, cyber-crime, artificial intelligence, mass migration and political uncertainties, means organisations need more than ever, competent people with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Fundamental to effectively identifying and managing risks are a good understanding of the context in which we work and good leadership at every level. Risk professionals have a responsibility to work beyond silos to facilitate and educate others about the importance of risk management in protecting profits, reputation and more importantly, keeping people safe.

Good working relationships between management, supervisors and workers, and perceptions that management values ‘bottom up’ communication is the only way to truly mitigate risks and capitalise on opportunities. Trust and engagement at all levels are key determinants of an effective organisational culture. As so coherently explained by leading South African judge and governance guru, Professor Mervyn E King, ‘leadership doesn’t ‘Stop at the Top’ – it must translate to the ‘Tune in the Middle’ and ‘The Beat of the Feet on the Ground’. Without a truly embedded set of values across an organisation, those values don’t translate into behaviours and behaviours into appropriate actions.

The risks being managed might be different, but the principles, systems, working practices and language should be comparable. Risk management is integral to strategy development, business planning, organisational culture and decision-making.

Why the change?

At the 2017 AGM, members voted to streamline our membership structure and merge the Member and Specialist routes in recognition that many people are involved in risk management. The new routes will require candidates to demonstrate how they meet:

- a minimum level of knowledge and competence through qualification and relevant demonstrable practical experience – competences include behavioural, technical and business
- compliance with IIRSM’s continuing professional development scheme
- compliance with IIRSM’s Code of Conduct.

These changes recognise the risk landscape in which we now live and work. A well-rounded OSH professional not only has the technical knowledge, but more importantly has the right behavioural and business competences to successfully influence and educate stakeholders such as senior management, customers, colleagues, suppliers and clients.

There are different risk disciplines as well as occupational safety and health, such as security, business continuity, environmental, compliance, insurance and emergency planning, in addition to many non-risk roles who are responsible for managing risks, such as finance, contract, facilities, HR and legal. Creating a diverse membership of risk, safety and business professionals will provide a unique community in which to network, influence and learn from.

From early 2019, new applicants will be able to join as either a Student, Affiliate, Associate (AIIRSM), Member (MIIRSM) or Fellow (FIIRSM). Applicants applying for a grade with designatory letters will need to provide:

- evidence of qualifications
- self-assessment of their competence, demonstrating how they meet the level of competence expected of somebody joining at a particular grade
- a reference from a suitable person to confirm their professional competence and character.

IIRSM’s competency framework

IIRSM’s new competency framework is to be published at the end of the year and sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of those working in different roles, functions and levels of seniority. It also underpins the competency statements that will form the new criteria to apply for each membership grade. These are being reviewed at present.

The framework can also be used as a tool to help identify any knowledge or skills gaps that can help you progress through the membership structure, or achieve that next career opportunity.

Impact on current members and transitional arrangements

Full transitional arrangements are being developed and will be published shortly. However, in summary, all current Specialists will be able to remain Specialists or choose to transfer to Member. All Specialists who wish to upgrade will become Fellows, as the Specialist Fellow grade will no longer exist and all Specialist Fellows will automatically be transferred to a Fellow.

All existing Associates, Members and Specialists will be given until January 2020 to upgrade under the current or new process. After this time, the current processes will no longer be available.

Communication

We will keep you up to date on the changes and what it means for you through regular communications over the coming months. Please look out for updates on IIRSM’s website, dedicated emails, Insight and our monthly eNewsletter. We welcome feedback on the changes via membership@iirsm.org.