

RSS Statistical Ambassadors: 2024 criteria and guidance

Criteria for applying

- Applications are welcome from data professionals at all career stages, including early-career and postgraduate students, who may have some experience of public outreach and/or media engagement but are looking to develop these skills further with formal training.
- You must be a member of the Royal Statistical Society to apply for this scheme (or in the process of joining).
- The scheme is only open to applicants who are UK based.
- You must be available on 8-9 October 2024 for the induction sessions in London.
- We expect the time commitment to be approximately two-three hours a month, with each ambassador expected to produce a minimum of two outputs per year (i.e. a press interview, a talk etc).
- We expect you to be responsive to media and volunteering requests (including short notice press requests).
- You should demonstrate in your application:
 - Your enthusiasm and interest in public communication of statistics
 - Your aptitude or potential aptitude at communicating complex statistical issues to non-expert audiences.
- While ambassador opportunities are usually requests from the media, we do also welcome applications from those whose job might not allow this but would be willing to take up other outreach opportunities, for example, public talks, science fairs or producing content for the RSS website or social media, with their ambassador affiliation.
- The selection panel will seek to ensure that the diversity of the profession is represented, including (but not limited to) ethnicity, gender, discipline and sector and geographical spread.
- For this cohort, we would particularly like to hear from those with expertise in artificial intelligence, climate and economic statistics.

- The RSS provides:
 - Two days of training, which includes formal media training (on how the media works, voice and presentation skills and radio and TV interview practice)
 - Opportunities to showcase your skills and develop your networks
 - Access to Society experts, as part of the training days and also to assist with specific press requests/projects
 - Ad-hoc training and professional development opportunities throughout your time as an ambassador.

Guidance

To give you an idea of what activities ambassadors will typically undertake we've put together the following examples:

Providing background assistance to a journalist

These are the most common types of requests we receive, and it will be made clear when you receive the request that any discussion is strictly for background only, with no comment from you to be printed. The conversation might take place over email or via a phone call. A journalist may have received a new scientific paper, new research via a press release, or want someone to do a sanity check on a statistical analysis they have conducted themselves. The deadlines will vary depending on the type of request; ones on new scientific papers (usually sent to the journalist a day or so before publication under embargo) may just be a few hours, requests for assistance on their own analysis may have a longer lead time of a few days or even weeks. Journalists may have very specific questions or just want the opportunity to talk something through with an expert for peace of mind. The time commitment will also vary; you may be asked to look through a large data set which you may need several days so will need to be careful of the time commitment, or the journalist may just have a quick question about their own workings.

Providing a written comment

This may come off the back of a background chat with a journalist, that they ask for an on-the-record comment, based on what you've discussed, or they may ask for a comment in the initial request. This will be discussed and agreed with RSS staff

beforehand, who can support with drafting. These comments will be short – a maximum of two or three lines. Similarly to background requests the deadline will vary, it could be two-three working days or just a few hours. A journalist may run a press line past you following a phone discussion for your approval.

Doing a radio/TV interview

Perhaps the most nerve wracking of all media requests but potentially the most rewarding! These can either be live or pre-recorded. Typically, interviews are for news type programmes, which are often very short notice – often just a few hours ahead of the proposed interview time. For radio interviews, these are usually done down the line via your mobile or a video conferencing platform – though you may be invited to the studio. For TV, you may be in the studio with the presenter, at home via a video conferencing link or beamed in from another studio. For both TV and radio requests, you will be given an idea of the questions beforehand, and you will have a briefing chat with the producer. Typically, interviews are short, up to around five minutes, unless you are doing a more feature type programme, which may be longer but often pre-recorded. However, regardless of length, interviews always need careful preparation and practice beforehand at dealing with unexpected questions.

See here this [Significance article](#) from Kevin McConway and David Spiegelhalter offering their tips on how best to communicate with the media.

Doing a talk (to younger people, a particular industry, STEM social etc)

The RSS receives requests for talks from a number of different types of organisations and the type of audience can really vary. The talk may be to school children, to MPs, or to professionals working in a particular sector. Talks may be delivered in-person or online. Some might be more statistical literacy focused, guiding the group through aspects of statistics that are relevant to them or they might be about sharing your experiences as a statistical ambassador. We would encourage all ambassadors to give talks, to develop communication skills and inspire diverse groups about the importance of statistics.

Funding and costs

- The scheme is funded by the RSS and the statistical ambassadors are volunteer roles.
- Reasonable travel and accommodation expenses will be paid to attend the induction days and for any other work carried out as an ambassador.

The application process

- Applications must be submitted by midday (BST) on Monday 24 June 2024 via this [online form](#).
- All applicants will be notified of the result by mid-August at the latest.
- As stated previously, you must be available for the training days in London on 8-9 October 2024.
- Any question should be directed to RSS Head of Media and External Relations, Mags Wiley at m.wiley@rss.org.uk.