

Guidance for attending a virtual hearing

Version 1, with effect from 6 September 2021

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Virtual hearings

A **practice direction** issued by the presiding chair of the regulatory tribunal (the tribunal) took effect on 1 April 2020. It applies to matters that have been referred to a registration panel, disciplinary panel or appeal panel for consideration and/or hearing.

During the period in which the direction is in force, all registration, disciplinary and appeal panel hearings will take place via online conferencing facilities, in the absence of an order to the contrary. Therefore, tribunals will take place with all participants joining from a remote location.

Hearings must continue to be held in a timely manner, and all RICS members and regulated firms are encouraged to attend and participate.

Attending a hearing

We encourage all RICS members and regulated firms to attend their remote hearing via video link. Seeing other participants helps people feel as though they are present in the meeting, enabling them to participate fully and effectively, and ensures that participants concentrate on the proceedings. The platform used by RICS for this purpose is Microsoft Teams.

You will have a designated regulatory tribunal executive allocated to support your hearing. In preparation, the regulatory tribunal executive will contact all participants and provide them with the relevant links to access the virtual hearing. The executive can also offer test calls to all participants to ensure connectivity and prevent any potential delays on the day of the hearing.

RICS members and regulated firms (and their representatives) will have the opportunity to speak with the independent legal adviser and RICS presenting officer before the hearing, to address any queries.

You will also be sent the case papers electronically in advance of the hearing. Please ensure that you can open the documents; notify your regulatory tribunal executive if you experience any issues.

Joining the hearing

Once you click the link provided by the regulatory tribunal executive, you will be placed in a waiting room until you are admitted.

The executive will be responsible for the overall management of the hearing, and will alert the chair if any participants have lost connection or any other persons have accessed the proceedings. Proceedings will be paused temporarily while such issues are dealt with.

You and/or your legal representative must log in at least 15 minutes before the start time to engage in a private conversation with the independent legal adviser and RICS presenting officer. This discussion will cover the procedure to be adopted by the tribunal, and to identify any preliminary issues that may arise. If more time is needed, the tribunal may be prepared to start the hearing late.

While this conversation is taking place the tribunal members will be in a separate room, which is set up to facilitate their private deliberations.

Once the hearing is due to start, all attendees will be admitted by the regulatory tribunal executive, who will confirm to the chair that all participants are present.

Procedure at the start of a hearing

The chair will introduce themselves, ask attendees to introduce themselves and announce whether there are any observers present. The chair will then deal with any housekeeping, such as ensuring microphones are muted unless you are talking, and so on.

The chair and the regulatory tribunal executive must ensure regular breaks at suitable points, taking into account the length of the hearing. During short breaks it may be best to remain in the meeting; however, you can turn your camera off and mute yourself.

If you leave the meeting, you can re-join using the same link that the regulatory tribunal executive originally sent.

If anyone requires a private discussion, private deliberation rooms can be set up by the regulatory tribunal executive.

Before any break, the chair must clearly announce to parties what time they should return to the meeting.

Observing a hearing

All RICS hearings continue to be public, and details of any forthcoming hearings can be found on [RICS' website](#).

If you wish to attend a hearing, please contact Mrs Jae Berry, RICS regulatory tribunal manager, on 020 7695 1661 or [by email](#).

You will then receive a link that will grant you access to the virtual hearing room. Please note that, as an observer, you are not entitled to participate in the proceedings, your microphone will be muted and your camera must be turned off. At times during the hearing, the tribunal may go into private session, at which stage you will be asked to leave temporarily. You will be contacted by the regulatory tribunal executive when you are able to re-join.

Please note that RICS records proceedings, but participants are not permitted to make recordings of their own.

Notification of hearing decisions

All RICS members and regulated firms that have attended their hearing will, if possible, have the decision on both finding and sanction (where appropriate) announced to them at the conclusion of the hearing, by the tribunal chair.

The regulatory tribunal executive will then email the full written determination, once agreed and finalised by the tribunal. All records of decisions will be notified by email within 14 days of the conclusion of the hearing.

Practical guidance for attendance

- Ensure that your notifications are turned off to prevent messages and emails interrupting the hearing.
- Be aware of what can be seen in the background of your video. Remove any personal photographs or items.
- Please keep all pets out of the room in which you are sitting.
- If you live with other people, ensure they know you cannot be disturbed. If you have headphones, use these to ensure confidentiality.
- It is recommended that you do not sit with a window directly behind you because it may mean you cannot be seen clearly by other participants.
- Wherever possible, have your device at eye level so that you can look directly at the screen and camera.

Delivering confidence

We are RICS. Everything we do is designed to effect positive change in the built and natural environments. Through our respected global standards, leading professional progression and our trusted data and insight, we promote and enforce the highest professional standards in the development and management of land, real estate, construction and infrastructure. Our work with others provides a foundation for confident markets, pioneers better places to live and work and is a force for positive social impact.

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