Rio Tinto
Centre for
Future Materials

Imperial College London

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Rio Tinto Centre for Future Materials
Early Career Researchers Network

Terms of Reference for the RTCFM-ECRN Committee

Background

The Rio Tinto Centre for Future Materials is a global research centre. We support and empower scientific innovators and industrial disrupters to deliver a step-change in our approach to extract, use and reuse materials.

Our mission is to address the fundamental question: how do we deliver the materials the world needs for the energy transition at pace and in a safe and responsible way?

The Centre's objectives are embedded in four pillars:

1. Global thought leadership.
2. Underpinning research.
3. Innovation for sustainability.
4. Developing the next generation of leaders.

The Rio Tinto Centre for Future Materials Early Career Network (RTCFM-ECRN) supports the Centre's objective to develop the next generation of leaders. All ECRs working on RTCFM projects are automatically members of the ECRN.

The aims of the RTCFM-ECRN are to

1. Support early career researchers (ECRs) – PhD students, post-doctoral research associates and research fellows – working on RTCFM projects to develop a global network, leveraging the community established by the RTCFM.
2. Identify and secure access to relevant training, provided by RTCFM academic partners and Rio Tinto, that supports the development of ECRs as future leaders aligned with the RTCFM's vision and mission.
3. Provide a route for the ECR community to provide feedback and suggestions on relevant RTCFM operations and strategy.

The RTCFM-ECRN program runs in parallel with training and professional development offered by each host institution and leverages existing offerings: it allows the Centre's ECR community to engage with the best opportunities available across all partners. Examples of potential training include:

- Courses on ESG and First Nations interests relevant to Centre activities, delivered by leading proponents;
- Mine visits and/or relevant fieldwork to world-class mineral deposits;
- Training in relevant advanced technical developments such as AI/ML;
- Innovation, entrepreneurship and R&D for industry applications.

The RTCFM encourages the RTCFM-ERCN to seek and secure external funding to support these activities but asks that the Centre be informed before such funding is accepted.

The RTCFM-ECRN is led by an organising Committee, supported by the RTCFM administrative staff.

RTCFM-ECRN Committee – Constitution

The RTCFM-ECRN Committee comprises two ECR representatives from each partner institution – one acting as a Member with voting privileges, the other as an Observer. Committee Members and Observers are elected to serve for one year. Re-election to serve for longer is permitted.
Except for the first year of operation, the current Committee is responsible for appointing the new Committee. Representatives must be members of the ECRN and be democratically elected. Only

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members of the ECRN are eligible to vote. Elections are held in June each year, with the new Committee serving from 1st July that year to the 30th June of the following year.

RTCFM-ECRN Committee – Remit & Responsibilities

The Committee is expected to meet online every 1-2 months depending on need. The responsibilities of the RTCFM-ERCN Committee include:

- organising online ECR events (presentations, networking, and other events) with the support of RTCFM staff;
- organising one or more in-person events for ECR staff at the annual in-person RTCFM Conference, with the support of RTCFM staff;
- liaising with RTCFM administrative staff and the Co-Directors to identify bespoke training opportunities to ECRs;
- coordinating with RTCFM administrative staff to develop a web presence for the ECRN via the RTCFM website;
- writing brief quarterly updates, and a short report at the end of the term, outlining the activities of the Network;
- Providing a route for the ECR community to provide feedback and suggestions to the RTCFM staff and co-Directors on relevant Centre operations and strategy.

Each of the five voting members of the RTCFM-ECRN Committee holds one of the following roles:

- Chair:
  - Sets the direction and priorities and ensure the Committee remains focused on delivering the aims of the ECRN
  - Chairs Committee meetings to ensure inclusive discussion, clear decisions, and fair distribution of tasks among members.
  - Oversees delivery and follow-through of actions.
  - Serves as the main point of contact for the RTCFM staff and co-Directors.
- Vice-Chair:
  - Supports the Chair in planning and delivery
  - Deputizes when the Chair is unavailable.
  - Coordinates member contributions and monitors progress between meetings.
  - Gathers and synthesises feedback from ECRN members to to provide feedback and suggestions on relevant RTCFM operations and strategy.
- Secretary:
  - Manages meeting records by preparing agendas with the Chair, taking clear and accurate minutes, and circulating actions promptly after each meeting.
  - Oversees the Committee's web presence to keep webpages, event listings, and resources up to date.
  - Maintains documentation and information flow by organising shared files, tracking decisions, and ensuring Committee members have access to required materials.
- Social Coordinator:
  - Plans and delivers ECRN community-building activities by organising online talks, informal gatherings, and other events that support ECR development and connection.
  - Leads in-person event logistics, working with the RTCFM Centre team to secure space, manage practical arrangements, and ensure events run smoothly.
  - Promotes engagement and visibility by coordinating event announcements, encouraging participation, and gathering feedback to improve future ECRN activities.
- Training Coordinator:
  - Identifies relevant training opportunities by scanning internal and external sources for courses, webinars, and skills-development resources suited to early-career researchers.
  - Shares and promote opportunities across the network through agreed communication channels so members can access and benefit from them.
  - Monitors training needs and gaps by gathering feedback and helping shape future ECRN training priorities.

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Observers contribute to the Committee by taking part in discussions, offering perspectives from across the ECR community, and supporting the planning and delivery of training and events. They help with tasks such as outreach, logistics, communications, and evaluation, and act as links to external partners by sharing opportunities and feeding back needs or ideas. Their involvement also provides additional capacity for working groups and projects.