

Charter of the International Working Conference on Requirements Engineering: Foundation for Software Quality

1. SCIENTIFIC MATTERS

1.1 Goals

The goals of REFSQ are to advance Requirements Engineering (RE) knowledge:

- by providing a forum for researchers and practitioners to expose their work to the RE community
- through active and open discussions that are stimulated by high-quality paper presentations
- by publishing of proceedings in a readily-accessible form by a recognised publisher of computer science

1.2 Name

The full name of the conference series is:

International Working Conference on Requirements Engineering: Foundation for Software Quality

The conference abbreviation is *REFSQ*. Every REFSQ instance is abbreviated as *REFSQ <year, 4 digits>*, for example in REFSQ 2021.

REFSQ instances do not have special, major themes as part of the title of the conference, but the Program Chairs can emphasize one or more specific areas of interest in the text of the call for papers.

1.3 Timing & Location

REFSQ takes place annually in the period March-April at a location within Europe.

1.4 Audience & Format

The audience of REFSQ includes researchers, practitioners, educators, and students in Requirements Engineering.

The format of the conference is explicitly designed to stimulate open discussion. Time allocated to the presentation of papers is at least balanced by time for discussion. Formally assigned roles such as **discussant** and **session chair** are key elements of the REFSQ **scientific programme**.

Submissions shall be elicited from academia, industry and public administration for presentation in the scientific programme. A separate **industry programme** will comprise invited talks of interest to industry and public administration.

Generally, a REFSQ instance includes tracks and co-located events such as the doctoral symposium, a posters & tools track, and workshops. A typical schedule of a REFSQ instance is as follows:

- Day 1: workshops + doctoral symposium
- Day 2: scientific programme including posters & demos
- Day 3: industry programme
- Day 4: scientific programme including posters & demo

1.5 Success criteria

Criteria for success of a REFSQ instance include:

1. Quality and quantity of submissions;
2. Appropriate programme, including maintenance of REFSQ's normal balance of presentations and discussions;

3. Appropriate mix of researchers and practitioners among the attendees;
4. Appropriate mix of students and faculty among the researcher attendees;
5. Appropriate mix of attendee nationalities;
6. Financial viability.

1.6 Composition of the Program Committee

A REFSQ instance Program Committee shall be composed of representatives from academia, industry, and public administration with recognized expertise in the broad area of RE. REFSQ aims to renew approximately 1/3 of the Program Committee members from one instance to the next one.

1.7 Assessment of submissions

All paper submissions, except specially elicited keynote and invited industry programme presentations, will be peer-reviewed by at least 3 members of the Program Committee. Conflict of interest rules as stated in ANNEX B, shall be followed during the assignment and review process.

A Program Committee meeting is held to select the submissions to be presented at the coming REFSQ instance. The Program Committee meeting is chaired by the Program Chairs. All members of the Program Committee are invited to attend the Program Committee meeting. The Program Chairs are not allowed to submit to the REFSQ instance that they are chairing. Members from the same institution as the Program Chairs are allowed to submit as long as conflict of interest rules are respected. For each workshop associated with REFSQ, the workshop organizing team should include at least one program chair who does not submit any paper to the workshop.

1.8 Awards

The Program Chairs may choose to assign a Best Paper (BP) award to a paper presented at their chaired REFSQ edition.

The SC may choose to assign a Most Influential Paper (MIP) award to a paper presented at the REFSQ edition held 10 years earlier, recognising research that has made a significant long-term impact on the field. The awardee, if any, is selected by a committee nominated and presided by the SC Chair.

2. GOVERNANCE

REFSQ is governed by the Steering Committee (SC).

The SC delegates responsibilities for the scientific program to the Program Chairs of each REFSQ instance.

The SC delegates responsibilities to the Industry Program Chairs for the industry program.

The SC delegates financial and organizational responsibilities to the Local Organisation.

The SC delegates support and coordination functions (e.g., organizing periodic meetings), and the maintenance of the organizational memory (see Article 3) to the Background Organisation.

The Local and Background Organisations may be the same or separate organisations.

2.1 Steering Committee (SC) composition

Mission:

The SC is responsible for ensuring REFSQ's long-term health, by setting strategy, selecting locations, appointing organizers, maintaining oversight of financial and operational matters, ensuring that REFSQ retains its scientific rigour and characteristic features and by securing organizational memory through continuity of experience.

Composition:

1. Program Chairs become members of the SC upon their appointment, and will remain members for 4 years after the REFSQ instance for which they are responsible. For example, the PC chairs of RESFQ 2030 will

become members of the SC as soon as they are appointed (e.g., November 2028) and will remain until the end of REFSQ 2034.

2. The Head of the Background Organization becomes a member of the SC upon his/her appointment, and will remain member for two additional instances after the last instance of REFSQ for which he/she is responsible. For example, if the appointment ends with REFSQ 2025, the Head of the Background Organization will stay on the SC until the end of REFSQ 2027.

3. Two members of the SC are elected, one as Chair and another as Vice-Chair, by a vote of the SC members. The SC Chair and SC Vice-Chair serve for 3 REFSQ instances. In absence of the SC Chair, the Vice-Chair assumes the responsibility of the Chair.

4. The SC chair will remain as SC member until the maximum of: one REFSQ instance after the end of his/her chair mandate AND the regular appointment period.

5. If necessary, the SC Chair can propose additional SC members, which are elected by a majority vote of the SC.

6. The SC can vote to terminate an inactive member's membership.

7. The REFSQ SC can include up to two Industry Representatives. The mandate will be for 3 years. The Industry Representatives are proposed by the SC chairs, and elected by a majority vote at a SC meeting. Industry Representatives should have demonstrated a dedication to REFSQ and commit to attend the conference and one SC meeting per year during their mandate.

Meetings:

Two SC meetings are held annually; one at the REFSQ instance, and one after approximately six months, possibly at the IEEE International Requirements Engineering Conference. Additional ad-hoc virtual meetings, electronic discussions, and electronic voting procedures may take place as needed throughout the year. SC members are expected to engage fully in SC discussions and to attend all meetings of the SC. Reasonable constraints on SC members' ability to travel are recognised, but attendance at one meeting per year is the minimum that is acceptable.

2.2 Voting Procedures

Voting can take place at the SC meetings and electronically. At the SC meetings, voting is eligible if at least 50% of the SC members are present. An electronic voting result is eligible if the response rate is at least 50%. All decisions based on votes, except *special decisions* as defined in this charter, require single majority of at least 50% of the participating votes. Special decisions require *qualified majority* of at least 2/3 of all SC members. If the voting result is a tie, then the chair's vote determines the result.

Special decision requiring explicit voting and qualified majority:

- The decision to stop the REFSQ series.
- Major changes to the governance section of the REFSQ charter.

2.3 REFSQ instance roles

1. The Programme Chairs are two experienced researchers in RE responsible for appointing the programme committee (in line with the guidelines of article 1.6 of this charter); soliciting submissions; managing the review and selection of submissions, including chairing of the Program Committee meeting; defining the REFSQ scientific programme; approving the industry programme; chairing the working conference and editing the proceedings; deciding on the tracks for a given instance (e.g., workshops, doctoral symposium, posters & tools); appointing chairs for the tracks.

2. The Industry Programme Chair(s) is responsible for establishing and maintaining relations with industry; eliciting presentations for the industry programme. If considered convenient, this role may also be occupied by more than one person.

2.4 REFSQ instance process

1. The SC appoints Program Chairs who take full responsibility of the scientific part of the corresponding REFSQ instance. The appointment of the Program Chairs should occur two instances of REFSQ in advance,

but in any case, no later than 1.5 years before the REFSQ instance the PC chairs are appointed for. The SC-Chair and Vice-Chair collect suggestions for candidates, and the appointment takes place via a vote of the SC.

2. The Industry Programme Chair(s) is proposed by the Programme Chairs and appointed by the SC Chair.
3. The Program Chairs appoint the other REFSQ chairs and the Program Committee. Nominations should be completed as soon as possible, especially in the case of Industry Chairs, and no later than 6 months after the Program Chairs' appointment.
4. The SC appoints the Head of the Background Organization at the same moment that the allocation of REFSQ is decided.

2.5 Background and Local Organization Appointment & Finance

Appointment:

The SC appoints Program Chairs who take full responsibility of the scientific part of the corresponding REFSQ instance. The appointment of the Program Chairs should occur two instances of REFSQ in advance, but in any case no later than 1.5 years before the REFSQ instance the PC chairs are appointed for. The SC-Chair and Vice-Chair collect suggestions for candidates, and the appointment takes place via a vote of the SC.

Financial Aspects:

If the Local Organisation is separate from the Background Organisation, then the Background Organisation and the Local Organization have to agree on the services provided by the Background Organisation, within the constraints defined by this charter.

The Local Organisation presents and discusses the registration fee with the SC Chair and Vice-Chair before making this information publicly available.

The Local Organisation running REFSQ provides a financial report to the SC at the conference itself.

REFSQ aims to fund the activities of the Background and Local Organizations from registrations.

2.6 Location decision

The SC Chair and Vice-Chair solicit bids for future REFSQ locations, including local and/or background organizations. The SC Chair and Vice-Chair present the elicited proposal(s) to the SC. The decision is made by an explicit vote by the SC.

The REFSQ location decision should be at least two instances of REFSQ in advance in order to allow fixing the contracts with hotels etc. Consequently, the SC must take a decision about the location of REFSQ n at the SC meeting at REFSQ $n-2$ at the latest.

3. Organizational Memory

To help maintain REFSQ's organizational memory and continuity across REFSQ instances, the Program Chairs, the SC Chairs and the Background Organization are responsible for collecting and archiving at least the following:

Data:

1. Submission and acceptance data (Program Chairs)
2. Attendee names, contact details and affiliations (Background Organisation);
3. Programme committee names, contact details and affiliations (Program Chairs);
4. Sponsor details (Background Organisation);
5. Financial data (Background Organisation);

Other Material:

1. Accepted papers and presentations (Program Chairs);
2. REFSQ web pages (Background Organisation);

3. Calls for papers (Program Chairs);
4. Calls for participation (Background Organisation).

ANNEX A: Current state of the REFSQ conference

This annex is updated as changes occur. Last update: April 8, 2025

1. Current Background and Local Organization

The current Background Organization is the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, Basel, Switzerland.

The current Local Organization is Poznan University of Technology, Poznan, Poland.

2. Current Proceedings Editor

REFSQ proceedings are currently edited by Springer Nature in the LNCS series.

3. Current SC membership

Expiration takes effect on the SC Meeting at REFSQ at the below stated expiry year.

Chairs:

Fabiano Dalpiaz (Chair 2025-2027, SC Member until 2027)

Paola Spoletini (Vice-Chair 2025-2027, SC Member until 2027)

Members:

Xavier Franch (Program Chair 2013, Head of Background Organisation 2021 – 2025, expires 2027)

Samuel Fricker (Programme Co-Chair 2015, Head of Background Organisation 2016 – 2019, expires 2031)

Andreas Vogelsang (Programme Co-Chair 2022, SC Member until 2026)

Vincenzo Gervasi (Programme Co-Chair 2022, SC Member until 2026)

Alessio Ferrari (Programme Co-Chair 2023, SC Member until 2027)

Birgit Penzenstadler (Programme Co-Chair 2023, SC Member until 2027)

Daniel Mendez (Programme Co-Chair 2024, SC Member until 2028)

Ana Moreira (Programme Co-Chair 2024, SC Member until 2028)

Anne Hess (Programme Co-Chair 2025, SC Member until 2029)

Angelo Susi (Programme Co-Chair 2025, SC Member until 2029)

João Araújo (Programme Co-Chair 2026, SC Member until 2030)

Renata Guizzardi (Programme Co-Chair 2026, SC Member until 2030)

ANNEX B: Rules of conflict of interest

A reviewer is considered to have a conflict of interest on a paper that has an author or co-author in any of the following categories:

- a) yourself,
- b) your past and current graduate students,
- c) your graduate advisors,
- d) members of your research group within the last 5 years,
- e) a co-author of a paper submitted for publication within the last 5 years,
- f) an employee of the same organization (academic department, research lab unit, etc.) within the last 5 years,
- g) someone with whom you have had a significant funding or financial relationship within the last 5 years,
- h) a member of your family or anyone you consider a close personal friend, or
- i) someone whose work you cannot evaluate objectively.

Reviewers are not allowed to see the reviews of papers on which they have conflicts.

Conference submissions under review and discussions by the Program Committee are considered to be confidential.

The Program Chairs will be able to view all reviews for all papers, but an alternate chair is assigned for any papers on which both chairs have a conflict of interest. For those papers, the alternate chair will select the reviewers and will chair the discussion at the Program Committee meeting in the Program Chairs' absence.