**IR Society Best Practice Awards - FAQs**

**What are the IR Society Awards?**The annual awards have run for two decades and are a celebration of companies that wish to demonstrate their commitment to leading investor communications. This important Society initiative is regularly reviewed by the Best Practice Committee and represents an integral part of the Society’s mandate to promote best practice in IR.

**What are the benefits and why should I enter?**The business environment is challenging, recognition is scarce, time is short and entering our awards is an opportunity to demonstrate what a major difference each one of us can make to the companies we represent:

* Evidence excellence – to win or to be shortlisted, shows that you have reached the very highest standard, as judged by leading experts
* Raise your profile – with your peers, internal and external stakeholders, strengthening your corporate reputation
* Make your company proud - it’s a great recognition for all the hard work, commitment and dedication that goes in every day
* Reflect on your work – the process of entering the awards often helps one to understand the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation’s communications strategies and provides a springboard of ideas on what to focus on for the future
* Incentive to improve - the competitive nature of the Awards provides an opportunity to challenge the internal ‘status quo’

**How many different awards are there?**There are up to 5 *Self-entry* Award categories (see **Appendix 1** for an overview of each Award):

* Most effective overall communication of company investment proposition
* Best communications of ESG
* Most effective use of digital communications
* Best IR relating to a corporate transaction
* Best annual report

There are up to 4 *Voted* Award categories with input from Extel Surveys, an Institutional Investor company:

* Best newcomer to IR (individual)
* Best investor relations officer (individual)
* Best overall company IR (company)
* Best investor engagement (Buy-side firm)

 **Who can enter?**The awards are open to all companies under 5 main categories for the Self-entry Awards, including: FTSE 100; FTSE 250; Small cap & AIM; and International. These companies must be quoted on a recognised stock exchange.

**How do I enter the Self-entry Awards and how long does it take?**Companies/agencies can enter as many awards as they wish. Just download and complete the self-entry form along with the relevant guidance notes for each award you wish to enter. This year we have changed the process for our self-entry awards and introduced an easy-to-use Q&A entry form in place of the previous essay-style written entry statement. This gives the company an opportunity to share their approach to the award and to highlight what works for them and their audience. Potentially, this should be an important opportunity to differentiate your company and investor communications for your target audience.

Once completed, your entry form can be submitted online along with any additional supporting information and payment. All in all, your submission, including the Q&A should take no more than a couple hours to complete.

**What is the difference between the Self-entry awards and the Voted Awards?**The Self-entry Awards require a company and/or its agency to submit an entry on the prescribed Q&A entry form provided by the IR Society. This information can all be found online on the IR Society website: www.irsociety.org.uk

The Voted Awards, run in partnership with Extel Surveys, generally address a large buy- and sell-side audience who vote for their preferred companies/IROs under each category. Alongside the Extel Surveys voting process, nominations can be submitted by a company and/or anyone else in line for consideration. Any nominations will be combined into the Extel Surveys voting process, from which a short list (ranked by number of votes) of candidates will be drawn up. The winner for each category will be determined by the most number of votes.

**When do the award entries open for 2020?**The 2020 Best Practice Awards, both Self-entry Awards and nominations for the Voted Awards, will be launched on 01 April 2020.

**What is the deadline for award entries?**The 2020 Best Practice Voted awards nominations will close on 30 April 2020 and the Self -entry Awards entries will close on 30 June 2020.

**When will the short lists and winners be announced?**The short lists for both the Self-entry and Voted awards will be announced in October, at least a month before the IR Society Annual Awards dinner, on **24 November**, when the winners are announced.

**If my company is international, but listed on the UK Stock Exchange, which category should I enter for?**If your company is listed on the FTSE 100 or FTSE 250 index or AIM or any other UK index, then it will be entered under the relevant category for UK listed companies. If the company is not listed in the UK, then it will be entered in the international category (wherever the company is based).

**What does the judging process for the Self-entry entail? Who are the judges?**Entries for the Self-entry Awards are judged by a panel of esteemed investor relations and investment community professionals with significant expertise in the area they are judging.

In 2019, the judging panel included industry professionals, academics, professional bodies, regulators and other interested parties who make up our IR community. We aim to add to the panel each year and a full list appears on the IR Society website.

In order to short-list each Award for submission to the judging panel, all entries are scored against criteria based on the Society’s guidelines for best practice in investor communications, which can be found [here](https://irsociety.org.uk/resources/best-practice). The scoring of entries is completed on both a qualitative and quantitative basis.

We also receive expert input from independent third parties, including Alliance Manchester Business School, Edinburgh University Business School and Lancaster Management School, for example, who assess the entries.

**What if my company’s annual report isn’t published until after the deadline – am I eligible to enter?**All entries need to have been published before the entry deadline of 30 June 2020. Any entries for *Best Annual Report, Best Communication of ESG, and Most Effective Overall Communication of Company Investment Proposition* should be accompanied by one printed copy of the relevant annual report and any other supporting documentation by 30 June 2020. If you have delivered a digital-first report, you may also enter this for consideration – please highlight the URL for judges to consider.You can still enter even if your company’s report is inaccessible online. However, to assist with the judging process, please indicate in your entry the pages or sections of your annual report, website or investor presentations where key information is covered/ can be found, and you can specify the date when the report will go live, including, within reason, if this occurs after 30 June 2020.

**Have there been any changes to the Awards this year?**Through the work of the Best Practice committee we continually review and adapt our awards criteria in line with best practice. This year we have further refined each of our five Self-entry Awards to simplify the entry process and ensure that they reflect

any changes in regulation and current best practice. (See **Appendix 1** for an overview of each Self-entry Award)

**What is the award for Best Investor Engagement?**This is under the Voted Awards and addresses the importance of the target audience that IR seeks to engage. This award will be decided by the most number of votes by Company IROs for an investor/buy-side firm that the investment community believes represents the best in investor engagement with companies. The process for nominations follows the same timeline as other Voted Awards.

**Where can I find out more information about the awards and past winners?**On the IR Society [website](https://irsociety.org.uk/events/dinner), members can access Best Practice Guidelines, and a review of the 2019 Best Practice Awards, including a summary of the entries, names of the judging panel, key highlights and comments from the judges on the 2019 award winners. We also included a summary of feedback from the judges as part of our coverage this year.

For more information on this year’s Best Practice awards, please do not hesitate to contact the team at the IR Society, or the [Best Practice Committee](https://irsociety.org.uk/about/board-and-committees/category/best-practice-committee).

**Any other enquiries?**Do please get in touch with the team at the IR Society:

Kate Heseltine: kate.heseltine@irsociety.org.uk

**Appendix 1: Overview of Self-entry Awards**

***Most effective overall communication of company investment proposition***

A highly compelling narrative of a company’s competitive advantage and differentiators

* Evidence of clear, concise and consistent communication of an investment proposition, considering the channels used and effectiveness of the messaging
* Communication will focus on a number of different channels, including but not limited to the annual report, investor presentations, corporate websites, capital markets days and site visits

***Best communication of ESG***

We recognise that this is a developing area for many companies, and each will be at different stages of their journey!

* Evidence a of year-round communication approach to investors and wider stakeholders
* Insight into how environmental, social and governance (ESG) risks and opportunities are identified, understood and proactively managed and measured to contribute to a business' competitive advantage
* A consistent and proactive point of view on material ESG issues and long-term value creation across all communications with investors

***Most effective use of digital communications***

The integration and connectivity of digital channels is essential

* Quality, design, usability, functionality, accessibility and above all else, the content of the website and related materials will be the main areas of focus for the judges
* Utilising other tools in addition to the corporate website to support the IR message and equity story across these channels are important
* Channels can include but are not limited to social media, data visualisation, audio or video webcasting, Virtual AGM, corporate video etc

***Best IR Relating to a Corporate Transaction***

Evidence of effective and successful investor relations activity relating to a corporate transaction

* IPO, merger, significant sale or acquisition of a business, rights issue, defence
* Supporting materials may include press releases, presentations, sell-side coverage, media coverage, stakeholder feedback

***Best Annual Report***

A ‘shop window’ into your company and its culture

Best practice considerations include:

* A forward looking, engaging, concise and entity-specific report
* Clear links between strategy, KPIs, risk and remuneration
* An investment case that explains the growth drivers that promote long-term value
* Explanation of how the company is actively incorporating sustainable practices into its strategy, operations and governance agenda