

Responsible use of artificial intelligence in surveying practice

A plain-English guide to the RICS Professional Standard, for surveying firms

THE SHORT VERSION

The RICS AI Standard is supportive of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Its purpose is to ensure responsible, controlled and transparent use of AI, through a governance framework with over 30 obligations.

If your firm uses AI anywhere in delivering surveying services, the Standard asks you to understand it, record how you use it, manage the risks and tell your clients.

The requirements are substantial but can be managed with a good internal control system: clear, documented policies, controls and processes for responsible AI use.

This guide lays out the whole of it and can be read alongside our free checklist.

Who it applies to, and when

- It is a professional, global standard for RICS-regulated firms and members, first edition September 2025, effective 9 March 2026.
- It mixes things you must do with things you should do, and RICS and the courts can take it into account in disciplinary and legal matters.
- If your firm uses AI in its work, it applies to you now.

The first question: is your AI use material?

The Standard turns on materiality. An AI use is material where its output is capable of influencing how you deliver a service.

- Material uses carry the full set of obligations.
- Non-material uses (routine admin, for example) still get recorded, with your reasoning.

EXAMPLE

Summarising documents you rely on, drafting part of an opinion or pointing a surveyor towards a possible defect are all capable of being material.

The honest catch most firms miss: everyday tools like Copilot or ChatGPT, used on client work, can be in scope. A surveyor using Copilot to research comparables and local area information where some of the outputs feed the final client report, could trigger the materiality test.

The Standard asks you to make and record that judgement, not to guess.

All staff must have adequate training in how AI is used in each process, so they understand what it does, the risks it poses and their role in applying judgement to any output.

30+ requirements across 10 areas

The Standard runs across baseline knowledge (section 2), practice management (section 3) and using AI day to day (section 4), with an extra section for firms that build their own AI (section 5).

We break it down into 10 areas and summarise what each asks of your firm.

| Area | Clause | What it asks of your firm |
|-------------------------------|--------|--|
| Baseline knowledge | s.2 | Everyone using AI understands how it works, its limits, the risk of error and bias, and data risks. |
| Data governance | s.3.1 | Data used with AI is stored securely and access-controlled; annual privacy training; no confidential data into public tools without consent and a risk check. |
| System governance | s.3.2 | An appropriateness assessment, a register of your material AI systems, and a Responsible AI Use Policy setting roles, human oversight and training. |
| Risk management | s.3.3 | An AI risk register covering bias, erroneous output, limited information about the system, and use of inputted data - reviewed at least quarterly. |
| Procurement and due diligence | s.4.1 | Written due diligence on seven areas before buying a material AI tool; gaps recorded as risks. |
| Outputs and reliance | s.4.2 | A written reliability decision on every material AI output, signed by a named, qualified surveyor who accepts responsibility; dip-sampling for automated output. |
| Terms of engagement | s.4.3 | AI use disclosed in writing, before use, covering six points including PI cover, how to contest, redress and opt-out. |
| Explainability | s.4.4 | A written explanation of how AI was used, available to a client on request. |
| Materiality and conflicts | s.1.2 | A recorded judgement on whether each AI use is material; conflicts with local law recorded and reported to RICS. |
| Development (if you build AI) | s.5 | Extra records on data, permissions, sustainability and testing - only if your firm develops its own AI. |

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What this means in practice

Read as a list it looks like a lot. Read as a system it is straightforward.

A handful of policies that set your position and a set of living records that prove you are following them. Firms have to make conscious, strategic decisions about how AI is used in the business - and those decisions can become a real asset and a catalyst for adoption.

The records are the part the Standard cares about most. An insurer, a client or RICS can ask to see them, and “we are careful” is not an answer.

The single most useful thing a firm can put in place is one living record that holds it all: your AI systems, your risks, your reliability decisions, your supplier checks, your training and your client disclosures, in one place and kept current.

Existing risk and control frameworks are a good place to start - your corporate risk register already has categories and much of the key information to capture.

Where we can help

- **Get the map.** Use our free checklist, [RICS AI Standard readiness checklist for surveying firms](#), to see exactly what good looks like.
- **Set up your record.** Our ready-to-use AI Governance Register is built for the RICS AI Standard. It is the one living record above, with the checklist built in and a readiness dashboard for a one-off price of £149. Less than the cost of building it yourself.
- **Advise on strategy and where AI can help.** We work with firms to find where AI adds the most value, the options available and the plan to get there - turning RICS compliance into business opportunity. Contact us to discuss the right advisory options for you.

Visit axiomaiinsights.co.uk

A NOTE ON WHAT THIS DOES AND DOES NOT DO

This guide is educational. It helps a RICS-regulated firm understand the Standard and organise its response. It is not legal advice and does not certify, guarantee or confirm compliance, and it is not RICS-approved. Responsibility for compliance rests with the firm and its named accountable surveyors. Firms should take their own professional and legal advice.

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