ARBITRATION
AND
MEDIATION CENTER

WIPO
WORLD
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY
ORGANIZATION

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors v. Elite International, Elite international
Case No. D2026-4164

1. The Parties

Complainant is The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, United Kingdom, represented by Dolleymores, United Kingdom.

Respondent is Elite International, Elite international, United Arab Emirates.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <ukrics.org> is registered with GoDaddy.com, LLC (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on September 16, 2026. On September 17, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On September 17, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent (Unknown) and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to Complainant on September 18, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. Complainant filed an amended Complaint on September 21, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint, together with the amended Complaint, satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Policy" or "UDRP"), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Supplemental Rules").

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on September 25, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was October 15, 2026. Respondent did not submit any response. Accordingly, the Center notified Respondent's default on October 23, 2026. The Center appointed Lorelei Ritchie as the sole panelist in this matter on October 28, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

Complainant is a United Kingdom company established by a Royal Charter issued by the British Crown. For decades prior to the registration of the disputed domain name, Complainant has offered property valuation, construction, and related services under the mark RICS, an acronym for Complainant's trade name, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Complainant owns trademark registrations for its RICS mark in jurisdictions globally. These include, among others, European Union Trade Mark No. 003033206 (registered January 13, 2006) and United States Registration No. 3122561 (registered August 1, 2006).

The disputed domain name was registered on August 9, 2025. Respondent has used the URL associated with the disputed domain name to resolve to a website that masquerades as an official website of Complainant, with prominent display of Complainant's RICS mark and a similar logo, and without any disclaimer of affiliation.

5. Parties' Contentions

A. Complainant

Complainant contends that (i) the disputed domain name is identical or confusingly similar to Complainant's trademarks; (ii) Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name; and (iii) Respondent registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith.

Specifically, Complainant contends that it owns rights to the RICS mark as the one of "the world's leading professional bodies within the field of surveying" and related services. Complainant contends that the disputed domain name incorporates-in-full Complainant's well-known and highly-regarded RICS mark, with only the addition of the geographic indicator, "UK" which is the location of Complainant's founding and principal place of business. Complainant further contends that Complainant has its own website located at the highly similar domain name <rics.org> (registered December 14, 1998), through which Complainant interacts with prospective consumers online.

Complainant asserts that Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interest in the disputed domain name. Complainant further contends that Respondent has registered and is using the disputed domain name in bad faith to mislead and to divert consumers into believing that they are interacting with Complainant via this look-alike website. Complainant contends that Respondent has set up this impersonation scheme presumably for Respondent's own commercial gain.

B. Respondent

Respondent did not reply to Complainant's contentions.

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions ("WIPO Overview 3.1"), section 1.7. Complainant has shown rights in respect of the RICS mark which is recognizable within the disputed domain name. Although the addition of other terms (here, "uk") may bear on assessment of the second and third elements, the Panel finds the addition of such term does not prevent a finding of confusing similarity between the disputed domain name and the mark for the purposes of the Policy. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 1.8.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.1.

Panels have categorically held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity (e.g., passing off, or other types of fraud) can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 2.13. Here, the disputed domain name resolves to a website that purports to offer services as Complainant, and does not appear to include a disclaimer of affiliation or endorsement by Complainant. Rather, it includes unauthorized display of Complainant's marks, along with language suggesting an affiliation with Complainant. Such intentionally misleading use does not support a finding of rights or legitimate interests. Moreover, Respondent has not put forward any claims or evidence that would suggest rights or legitimate interests for the purposes of the Policy.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

There are several ways that a complainant can demonstrate that a domain name was registered and used in bad faith. As noted in Section 4 of this Panel's decision, the record includes evidence that Respondent has used the URL associated with the disputed domain name to resolve to a website that purports to offer services impersonating Complainant, with prominent display of Complainant's RICS mark and a similar logo, and with no disclaimer of affiliation. The Panel thus finds sufficient evidence that Respondent was aware of Complainant's rights and Complainant's marks at the time of registering and using the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview 3.1, section 3.1.4.

The Panel finds the third element of the Policy has been established.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <ukrics.org> be transferred to Complainant.

/Lorelei Ritchie/
Lorelei Ritchie
Sole Panelist
Date: November 9, 2026