

RCGP SCOTTISH COUNCIL VICE CHAIR (MEMBERSHIP AND EDUCATION) Information for applicants 2025

We're pleased that you are interested in standing for election to an RCGP Scottish Council Officer role. This guide is designed to help applicants understand what being an Officer involves and what steps need to be taken when seeking election to become the new Vice Chair (Membership and Education).

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1. The role of the Vice Chair (Membership and Education)

The College's charitable object - it's mission - is:

to encourage, foster and maintain the highest possible standards in general medical practice.

The Vice Chair (Membership and Education) leads on the College's work in Scotland on member engagement, professional development, and representation across career stages. The Vice Chair will work closely with the Chair and Officer team to ensure that the College remains responsive, inclusive, and relevant to its members.

The role holder will be expected to be a leader and a role model for the mission, the values, and the aims of the College, and to enhance its reputation as a respected professional and academic body for GPs. Our values and our current strategy are available on the RCGP website:

<https://www.rcgp.org.uk/about>.

Further information regarding the main responsibilities and the person specification for this role is given below.

Term of office

The Vice Chair (Membership and Education) will serve a term of office starting from January 2026 until the Scottish Council AGM in November 2028. Thereafter the term of the Vice Chair will run in line with our Council year from November to November for 3 years. Vice Chair role holders can stand on a second occasion in an open election with other candidates but may only serve a maximum of two terms.

Time commitment

This role is available as 1.5 sessions per week.

Weekend and evening work may be required.

The role can be performed remotely but the post holder will be expected to attend some regular hybrid meetings. On occasion in person attendance will be required (usually at the Edinburgh office) including attending Executive Committee and stakeholder meetings.

Remuneration

Officers have two options for remuneration:

1. **Secondment from an Employer:** Officers can be seconded from their current employer (including partners or employees from GP partnerships) through a formal secondment agreement between RCGP and the employer. The employer will invoice the College for

the Officer's services, and the Officer will remain an employee of their home organisation/partnership.

2. **Direct Employment by RCGP:** Officers can choose to be directly employed by RCGP, receiving payment via PAYE with appropriate income tax and national insurance deductions. This option entitles Officers to statutory rights provided by the College, including RCGP pension, maternity leave, sick pay, and holiday pay.

The remuneration rate for both seconded and direct employees is currently £13,330 per session per annum. For secondees, the seconding employer can also include in the salary recharge the employer national insurance and employer pension contribution.

The allowance is paid until your term of office ends or your appointment is terminated by Scottish Council under Ordinance 12.

Engagement as self-employed or contractor status, or through 'backfill' payment, is no longer an option.

Expenses can be claimed in line with the Officer Remuneration and Appointment policy. A non pensionable standard annual allowance of £1887 is paid for out of pocket food and refreshment expenses incurred when working from RCGP workplaces to discharge their Officer responsibilities

Collective responsibility

Officers, as senior role holders who sit on a wide range of College boards and committees, are expected to adhere to the principles of collegiality and collective responsibility. The College is a diverse organisation that encourages debate and constructive challenge as a way to ensure a broad range of views are heard and ultimately to facilitate robust decision making.

The principle of collective responsibility requires that members of RCGP boards and committees should be able to express their views frankly in the expectation that they can argue freely in private while maintaining a united front when decisions have been reached. This in turn requires that the privacy of opinions expressed in boards and committees, including in correspondence, should be maintained. Decision reached by boards and committees are binding on all board or committee members.

The principle of collegiality is outlined in the [Members' Code of Conduct](#):

Collegiality

All Members must uphold the standing of the College and conduct themselves in a manner which does not risk bringing the College into disrepute. Legitimate disagreements with the College leadership, direction, policy and decision-making, should not be expressed in such a manner as to bring the College

into disrepute. Decisions taken by Groups of which the member is a part must be fully respected and the principle of “collective responsibility” observed.

Members' Code of Conduct and Behavioural Framework

Officers are expected to act as exemplars of good conduct to whom others can look to for guidance and advice. All College Members must agree to observe and uphold the Members' Code of Conduct. The RCGP Members' Code of Conduct is available [on the College website](#).

Collaboration with RCGP members and staff is a key part of working as an Officer. To facilitate this, Officers - along with all College members - are expected to adhere to the [Behavioural Framework](#) which sets out the principles for successful working relationships. Applicants should ensure they have read and understood the expectations set out in the framework before applying.

2. How to stand in the elections for the role of Vice Chair (Membership and Education)

Introduction to the nomination and election processes

There are three stages to standing as the Vice Chair (Membership and Education):

- i. **nominations** - where those interested in standing in the election apply to become a candidate, then
- ii. **assessment** - where applications are reviewed to check eligibility criteria, probity and declarations of interests
- iii. **elections** - where candidates are selected based on a ballot of all eligible voting members.

It is important that those interested in the role of Vice Chair (Membership and Education) read the following information carefully before beginning an application.

Nominations and elections are facilitated online and managed by an independent election agent. This ensures elections are carried out in a fair and independent way. The RCGP Scotland team will share the link to the online nominations form when nominations open Monday 24 November 2025. No applications or CVs sent directly will be accepted. At the voting stage eligible members will receive a link to vote from Civica electoral services.

Overview of the nomination and election process and timetable

Monday 24 November 2025	Nominations open Applicant completes: • Nomination form - including a proposer and a seconder who are Scottish Council members. • Probity declaration • Declaration of Interests Election agent sends an email verification to the proposer and seconder to confirm support for the applicant.
Noon Friday 19 December 2025	Nominations close
22 December 2025	Assessment of: • nomination forms for eligibility and completeness. • probity and declarations of interests. Any potential issues or concerns are addressed.
22 December 2025	Applicants informed if they have been accepted as a candidate. Canvassing may then begin.
Monday 5 January 20026	Voting opens • Elections are conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system. An explanation is available on the election site.
Noon Monday 12 January 2026	Voting closes
Tuesday 13 January 2026	Candidates will be contacted as soon as possible after the voting report has been received. The Scottish Council Governance Officer will contact the successful candidate to discuss contractual arrangements, start date and induction (subject to ratification of the result by Scottish Council).
Wednesday 14 January 2026	Formal announcement of the result
Tuesday 13 to Tuesday 20 January 2026	Scottish Council will be asked to ratify the result of the election via email.
As soon as reasonably practicable after ratification of the result.	The newly elected Vice Chair officially takes up their new role.

3. Nominations - completing the nomination form

The first step is to complete the online nominations form in full. The RCGP Scotland team will share the link to the online nomination form (which is managed by Civica Electoral Services) when nominations open on the 24 November. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all sections of the nomination form and any supporting documents are completed by the deadline. Incomplete applications will not be taken forward. Nomination forms cannot be submitted or amended after the deadline has passed.

Eligibility to stand

Full members (i.e. not Observers, Co-opted Members) of RCGP Scottish Council and RCGP Scottish Faculty Boards in good standing may stand for the role of Vice Chair (Membership and Education). In "good standing" means fully paid up in fees and subscriptions due to the College.

International Members and International Fellows, Honorary Fellows and Associates (including GP Registrars) are not able to stand, propose, second or vote in this election.

RCGP Scottish Council members vote for Scottish Council officer roles.

Proposers and seconders

In order to complete the nomination form applicants must have a "proposer" and a "seconder". **For Officer roles it is important to note that proposers and seconders must be currently serving RCGP Scottish Council members. The list of Scottish Council members will be published on the [website](#) from the 24 November 2025.**

The purpose of the proposer and seconder is to indicate endorsement and support for the applicant's nomination. The name of proposers and seconders appear on the ballot paper.

Applicants must obtain consent from their proposers and seconders before submitting their application. The nomination form will ask applicants to provide the following information regarding their proposer and seconder:

- Full Name
- Membership Number (RCGP ID)
- Email Address
- Relationship - how the applicant knows their proposer and seconder

There must be no conflicts of interest when proposing and seconding an applicant. For example, the proposer or seconder must not be related to or a business partner of an applicant.

Proposers and seconders must meet the following requirements:

- They must be a currently serving voting member of RCGP Scottish Council in good standing, meaning fully paid up in fees and subscriptions due to the College.
- A proposer or a seconder can nominate **only one applicant in any election**. Your proposer and seconder must not be proposing or seconding anyone else in the same election.
- An applicant cannot be a proposer or a seconder for another applicant standing in the same election.
- College Officers are prohibited from proposing or seconding any candidates, and candidates standing for election are prohibited from proposing or seconding another candidate for the same role in the same election. This prohibition does not however prevent these Officers / members from being nominated by other College members or standing for office themselves.

A verification email from the election agent will be sent to the proposer and seconder to confirm their support for the applicant. The College will carry out checks to ensure listed individuals meet the requirements to act as proposers and seconders and that there are no conflicts of interest between the applicant and their proposer and seconder.

If there is any doubt if an individual can act as a proposer or seconder applicants are urged to contact the [RCGP Scotland Governance Officer](#) well in advance of the deadline to discuss the matter as it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure their proposer and seconder meet the requirements.

Election statement

Applicants are required to provide an election statement of no more than 500 words as part of their nomination form. This is an opportunity to explain to the electorate how your ideas and experience can make a positive contribution to both the direction of the RCGP and to the day-to-day work of College members.

The election statement:

- must make reference to the College's Strategic Plan and how you will support the College to achieve its strategic objectives. The College's current strategy can be found here: <https://www.rcgp.org.uk/about#strategy>
- should recognise that the College's purpose is to promote general practice and not just one specific priority or clinical area
- cannot advocate for other applicants
- may include social media links (LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter) but these will count towards the word limit

Election statements are addressed to the electorate and are published on the voting site but should not be publicly shared by other candidates or College members unless they have the explicit permission of the statement's author.

Space is also provided for applicants to list any relevant qualifications, professional positions and offices held within College or faculties that highlights experience that qualifies you for this role. This will be included along with the election statement.

Election video

There will be no in-person hustings event, applicants should produce and submit a short video, addressed to the electorate, in support of your written election statement. The content of the video statement should meet the same requirements as the written statement.

Your video must:

- be no longer than two minutes in length
- be in MP4 format
- be clear and in focus
- be clearly audible
- be in colour
- contain no other people, words or special effects
- be taken against a plain light coloured background
- show your head, shoulders, and upper body

Submitted videos meeting these criteria will be posted to the voting site alongside the written statement. Video statements that do not meet these standards may be rejected.

Photograph

Applicants must provide a recent photograph with their nomination.

Please ensure that your photograph:

- is portrait orientated
- is in JPEG format
- is a minimum of 100 x 150 pixels
- is clear and in focus
- is in colour
- contains no other objects, words or people
- is taken against a plain light coloured background
- shows your head, shoulders, and upper body

If you experience any difficulties when uploading videos, photographs, or other materials please contact the election agent directly via the Help section of the site.

Probity declaration

When you fill out the nomination form you must complete and sign a probity declaration. This is to demonstrate to wider members that you're fit to hold office. This is an essential part of the form. Not disclosing relevant information when requested is likely to be deemed a breach of the Member Code of Conduct.

Declaration of Interests

As part of the nominations process you must complete a declaration of interests. This part of the nomination form asks a series of questions relating to any interests you may have, whether financial or if you have any loyalties to other organisations. Your declaration is an essential part of the application and failure to complete the form in full will mean an application cannot be taken forward.

All interests must be declared and if you are in any doubt over the relevance of an interest the advice is to err on the side of caution and declare. The Conflicts of Interest Policy is available [on the College website](#) and is essential reading to ensure all interests and conflicts are included in the declaration. Once submitted, declaration forms are reviewed by the Honorary Secretary and any potential issues that are identified will be discussed with applicants before the elections are held.

The forms will be part of the candidate's information that is made available to the electorate.

4. The Assessment stage

Once a nomination form has been submitted the election agent and the College will review the nomination to ensure:

- the applicant meets the eligibility criteria to stand
- the proposer and seconder support the applicant, meet the requirements for acting as proposers and seconders, and have no conflicts of interest with the applicant
- the applicant has completed all probity declarations
- the applicant has completed the Declaration of Interests form in full, and there are no potential or actual conflicts
- the applicant's photograph and video meet the necessary standards

Once assessment has been completed applicants will be informed whether their candidature has been accepted.

It should be noted that any formal withdrawal by an applicant invalidates their application and cannot be reversed.

5. Canvassing

The College recognises the importance of promoting and discussing ideas with College members. In order to ensure canvassing is conducted in a fair and consistent way, all those applying for elected RCGP roles must follow the Canvassing Code of Practice.

The Code of Practice states that individuals may not begin canvassing until they have been formally accepted as a candidate.

Candidates may be liable to disqualification from the election if found to be in breach of the terms of this Canvassing Code of Practice. The full Code of Practice is included in this information pack as [Appendix 2](#). Candidates should ensure they have fully read the document before beginning any canvassing activity.

6. Ballot and results

The ballot will open on Monday 5 January 2026 and will close on Monday 12 January 2026 at noon. Voting will be online only. Eligible members of Scottish Council will receive an email from Civica with a link to vote.

- The ballot is organised and overseen by the College's external election agent, Civica, who act on our behalf but remains independent
- The election is conducted using the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system. Candidates are encouraged to read and understand the guidance on how STV voting works which is available on the election site.
- To avoid bias, candidates' names are printed in random order (not in alphabetical order) surname first (e.g. SMITH, John)

The Returning Officer will aim to contact candidates as soon as is practicable after the results have been officially confirmed to share the outcome of the ballot.

Candidates will also receive the results of the ballot in writing along with a copy of the full report of voting.

Once the Returning Officer has advised all the candidates of the results, the results will be formally announced.

The RCGP Scotland team will then be in touch to discuss contracting, start date and induction.



SCOTLAND

7. Queries and the role of the Returning Officer

If you have any further questions the RCGP Scotland team are happy to advise and help. Please email us at ScottishC@rcgp.org.uk.

For technical advice relating to the nomination or voting please refer to the Help section on the site.

During the election stage all answers provided in response to questions from individual candidates will be shared with all candidates to ensure everyone is given the same information.

Candidates should note that in the case of any queries, disputes or challenges which might occur throughout the elections process the decision of the Returning Officer is final, as laid out in the [RCGP Byelaws](#).

Appendix 1 - Role description

Royal College of General Practitioners (Scotland)

Vice Chair -Membership & Education RCGP Scottish Council

Role Description and Person Specification

ROLE DETAILS	
Accountable to:	RCGP Scottish Council and Chair of RCGP Scottish Council Performance Review: annually and conducted by the Chair of RCGP Scottish Council
Term of office:	Until Scottish Council AGM in November 2028
Appointment criteria:	Full Membership of RCGP Scottish Council or an RCGP Scottish Faculty Board Member / Fellow of RCGP, in good standing Minimum of five years RCGP full membership
Election arrangements:	Full members (i.e. not Observers, Co-opted Members) of RCGP Scottish Council and RCGP Scottish Faculty Boards are eligible to be elected to this role. Nomination is by two members of Scottish Council.
Commitment:	1.5 sessions per week Weekend and evening work may be required The role can be performed remotely but the post holder will be expected to attend some regular hybrid meetings. On occasion in person attendance will be required (usually at the Edinburgh office) including attending Executive Committee and stakeholder meetings.
Funding:	Officers have two options for remuneration: 1. Secondment from an Employer or Partnership: Officers can be seconded from their current employer or GP partnership through a formal secondment agreement between RCGP and the employer or partnership. The employer or partnership will invoice the College for the Officer's services, and the Officer will remain an employee of their home organisation/partnership.

	2. Direct Employment by RCGP: Officers can choose to be directly employed by RCGP, receiving payment via PAYE with appropriate income tax and national insurance deductions. This option entitles Officers to statutory rights provided by the College, including RCGP pension (which can be opted out of), maternity leave, sick pay, and holiday pay. The remuneration rate for both seconded and direct employees is currently £13,330 per session per annum. For secondees, the seconding employer can also include in the salary recharge the employer national insurance and employer pension contribution. The allowance is paid until your term of office ends or your appointment is terminated by Scottish Council under Ordinance 12. Engagement as self-employed or contractor status, or through 'backfill' payment, is no longer an option. Expenses can be claimed in line with the Officer Remuneration and Appointment policy. A non pensionable standard annual allowance of £1887 is paid for out of pocket food and refreshment expenses incurred when working from RCGP workplaces to discharge their Officer responsibilities.
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OVERALL PURPOSE OF ROLE

- To take a lead, in collaboration with the Chair, in the work of the College in Scotland in relation to its member engagement and professional development activity.
- To be a member of the Scottish Council Officer Team.
- To be a College leader and a role model for the aims, objectives and values of the College and enhance its reputation as a respected professional and academic body for GPs.
- To be an ex-officio member of Scottish Council leading member engagement and professional development activity.
- To give support where needed to the Chair of Scottish Council, including deputising at designated meetings as deemed appropriate or necessary.
- Act as a spokesperson on behalf of the College in Scotland as required.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work closely with the Member Engagement team to develop a programme of continuing professional development for College Members, other GPs and primary care professionals in Scotland.
- Contribute to College strategic priorities on Faculty development and engagement ensuring the Scottish member voice is represented.
- Support RCGP Scotland's GP Registrar/First5 Committee, attending meetings and providing strategic advice where necessary.
- Chair up to two meetings of RCGP Scotland's GP Recruitment and Retention Advisory Group per annum, ensuring that the College's work in this area is prioritised and continued.
- Represent RCGP Scotland at various NHS Education for Scotland meetings.
- Represent RCGP Scotland on the RCGP Professional Standards Working Group.
- Officer Lead on workstreams designed to support career stage and other groups such as GP registrars, First5s, International Medical Graduates.
- Stakeholder engagement lead for issues pertaining to education and training including with the Scottish Government, NES and the Centre for Workforce Supply.
- To attend Scottish Council and Scottish Council Executive Committee meetings and provide advice in all matters under discussion and in particular those pertaining to membership and education.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

Entry level eligibility	Minimum of five years RCGP full membership.
College Experience / Leadership <i>Demonstrate college experience and leadership skills appropriate for role level</i>	Involvement at a senior national leadership level role in education/training within the College, academia (Professor level or above), or NHS is desirable.
Role specific knowledge and expertise <i>Demonstrate knowledge and experience in areas covered by the role</i>	• Significant experience as a GP educator or trainer. • Understanding of, and commitment to, the College's Member Value Proposition.
Professional and personal qualities <i>Demonstrate the professional personal qualities required to be in a college leadership role and be an ambassador of the college</i>	• Track record of leading and influencing others at national level is desirable. • Chairing multi stakeholder high-level meetings. • Working collaboratively with professional staff.

	• Proven commitment to EDI.
Clinical position <i>Demonstrate current or recent activity in general practice</i>	• In good standing with the RCGP and, if registered in good standing with the GMC. • Practicing in general practice (clinically or non-clinically) either currently or within last two years.

August 2025

Appendix 2 - Canvassing Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out the way in which all candidates for elected Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) roles are expected to conduct themselves. It supplements the RCGP Code of Conduct and Behavioural Framework, which apply to all RCGP members. Candidates should also familiarise themselves with the RCGP values and the Social Media Policy for Office Holders and Volunteers

To ensure a fair and transparent election process it is mandatory for all candidates to comply fully with the Code.

Individuals may not formally canvass until they are formally notified as having been accepted as a candidate in an election. A candidate is defined as an individual who has been confirmed as meeting the set requirements for election.

Once confirmed as a candidate, canvassing is permitted subject to compliance at all times with this Code of Practice and with the terms and spirit of the RCGP's Behavioural Framework, Members' Code of Conduct and [Social Media Policy](#). Candidates may conduct campaigning activity which speaks specifically to their qualifications, competencies and vision for the role

The RCGP reserves the right to amend its terms and conditions as it sees fit.

Use of social media

Canvassing using personal, non-RCGP affiliated or branded social media channels is allowed, subject to adherence to the [RCGP's Behavioural Framework](#), Members' Code of Conduct and [Social Media Policy](#).

Candidates are encouraged to promote their views and profiles but are reminded to avoid negative comments about individuals or the RCGP. Candidates are encouraged to use the College's official election weblinks when disseminating information on the election via social media. Candidates must not make reference to other candidates or their campaigns.

Use of Email

Canvassing by email is allowed with adherence to the General Data Protection Regulations. Candidates should ensure that they use personal data responsibly by holding data securely and not sharing data without recorded consent from the individual. While candidates can canvass by email, **they should not send unsolicited mailings to large groups or email too many times**. In most circumstances twice should be the limit (exceptions being, for example, that you are responding to questions).

Candidates standing for any of the Nationally elected roles (President and Nationally Elected Council Member) shall not have access to or use any member databases held by the College (including those held within local Faculties) for canvassing purposes. They may however use their personal databases or those of another body to which they have access to contact individual members, subject to the usual rules on data protection.

Candidates standing for Council Officer roles will be provided with a current Council mailing list of those Council members who have consented for their data to be used in this way.

Funding

The RCGP does not provide funding or expenses for candidates' campaigns.

Role of College and Council Officers

The Officers of the RCGP, which means the President, the Chair of Council, the Vice Chairs, and the Honorary Secretary, should remain impartial during the nomination and election period for all College elections. They are not permitted to act as proposers or seconders for candidates or participate in canvassing, directly or indirectly, by expressing support or disapproval of a particular candidate.

Role of Devolved Council Officers

Devolved Nation Council Officers should, in the same way as College and Council Officers, remain impartial during the nomination and election period for all College elections. They are not permitted to act as proposers or seconders for candidates or participate in canvassing, directly or indirectly, by expressing support or disapproval of a particular candidate.

Candidates currently holding Officer or other RCGP roles

Candidates already holding officer or other RCGP roles should continue to carry out their duties but should be mindful to not use their position to further their campaign. This means in practice that candidates should not mention their candidature at events at which they are attending as a representative of the RCGP, should not canvass during time allocated to carrying out their RCGP role, and should not use RCGP resources, support or information to further their campaign.

Restrictions

Candidates must not:

- a. Use any RCGP email address, RCGP social media accounts, branding, or stationery or any RCGP resources such as RCGP publications to conduct canvassing. This includes faculty and Devolved Council social media accounts and other faculty resources;

- b. Use any RCGP databases or mailing lists obtained through their work or involvement with the RCGP for any purpose connected with elections. This includes any historic email groups or databases gained through current or previous involvement with the College and any faculty or any Devolved Council contact databases. Candidates standing for Council Officer roles will be provided with a current Council mailing list of those Council members who have consented for their data to be used in this way. This is the only database which should be used;
- c. Conduct any canvassing through the national media or press. Candidates should not make any comments or responses about the election to journalists, the national media or press by candidates, including responding to the press through social media. Candidates must immediately refer any media enquiries they receive relating to their candidacy or the RCGP elections to the media team;
- d. Engage agents or other third parties to act for them in the conduct of their canvassing;
- e. Make any adverse comment about, or make reference to, another candidate's election statement, video, audio recordings, social media activity or any other aspect of a candidate's canvassing campaign or activity;
- f. Approach Officers of the RCGP, which means the President, the Chair of Council, the Vice Chairs, and the Honorary Secretary, or Devolved Nation Council Officers to seek endorsement;
- g. Approach any RCGP Trustee Board member to seek endorsement;
- h. Approach any RCGP Member or Fellow to seek engagement in any activity on their behalf that might contravene this Code of Practice. Any RCGP Member or Fellow that undertakes such activity on behalf of a candidate will be subject to investigation by the RCGP Returning Officer;
- i. Approach any member of staff to give access to RCGP media outlets, information, or to support a candidate's canvassing activities in any way. Candidates seeking any information about the RCGP should contact council@rcgp.org.uk.

Candidates must:

- a. ensure that any statements or claims made by them or their supporters are accurate, fair, reasonable and not misleading;
- b. at all times maintain the confidentiality, integrity and good standing of RCGP and its elections, and not bring the RCGP or its elections into disrepute.

Breaches of the Code

The RCGP Returning Officer reserves the right to determine whether or not a candidate is complying with this Code and to take appropriate steps.

The RCGP Returning Officer will investigate all alleged breaches of the Code and issue informal warnings, formal written warnings and cease and desist requests as deemed appropriate.

Candidates may be liable to disqualification from the election by the RCGP Returning Officer if found to be in breach of the terms of this Code. The decision of the RCGP Returning Officer on all matters relating to the Code shall be final and binding on all candidates.

Appendix 3 - Social Media Policy for Office Holders and Volunteers

Introduction

What is social media?

Social media is the term given to web-based tools and applications which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video), and network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media used by the RCGP include Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. We also run a Forum for members, hosted on the platform Discourse.

Why do we use social media?

Social media is essential to the success of communicating RCGP's work. Office holders and volunteers can play an important role by participating in social media to engage with our audiences, participate in relevant conversations and raise the profile of our work.

Why do we need a social media policy?

The difference between a personal and professional opinion can be blurred on social media, particularly if you're discussing issues relating to RCGP's work. While we encourage the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require all office holders and volunteers to observe. Publication and commentary on social media carry similar obligations to any other kind of publication or commentary in the public domain and expectations are set out in the [RCGP Behavioural Framework](#).

Before engaging in work-related social media activity, all office holders and volunteers must read this policy. All staff must read the staff social media policy.

1. Policy statement

1.1 RCGP is committed to making the best use of all available technology and innovation, including social media to improve the way it communicates, reaches out and interacts with the wider community.

1.2. This policy sets out guidelines on the use of social media by office holders and volunteers in both a professional and personal capacity. It sets out what you need to be aware of when interacting in these spaces and is intended to help protect the reputation of the RCGP, minimise the occurrence and severity of information security incidents and to help individuals avoid

potentially serious consequences which may arise from using social media inappropriately. The expectations set out in the [RCGP Behavioural Framework](#) must be observed at all times.

1.3 Volunteers include individuals who hold a paid or unpaid college post and includes roles such as trustees and committee members, Council members, members of Faculty Boards, College representatives, advisers and other roles making a contribution to RCGP. All volunteers have a staff point of contact who can advise on the application of this policy to volunteer roles.

1.4 There is a separate policy for staff.

1.5 Our Social Media Team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of RCGP's official, national social media channels. Currently the RCGP uses Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube at a national level and all are clearly identifiable as official College channels. We also run a Forum for members, hosted on the platform Discourse. No other staff member can post content on these channels without the permission of the Social Media Manager.

1.6 Devolved Nation and Faculties also use Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter) and some but not all use YouTube and Instagram. These are the responsibility of the Heads of Devolved Nation offices and the Head of English Faculties and from the date of this policy, only staff members should post on these channel - not office holders or volunteers. New log-in and administrator responsibilities will be put in place where required.

1.7 The responsibilities of staff with oversight of RCGP social media channels include moderating third-party content and deciding what comments to engage with. If you have specific questions, please speak to the Social Media Manager about the channels used at national level and the Head of Devolved Nation or English Faculties if this relates to their areas.

2. Basic principles

2.1 These principles apply to professional use of social media on behalf of RCGP as well as personal use.

2.2 Office holders and volunteers who are practising doctors should familiarise themselves, and comply at all times, with the General Medical Council's guidance on Good medical practice and its specific guidance GMC's Doctors' use of social media.

2.3 This policy is intended to be supplementary to the GMC guidance outlined above.

2.4 All office holders and volunteers must:

- **use common sense and good judgement.** Office holders and volunteers are accountable for their actions and their statements could have an impact on the reputation of RCGP.

Office holders and volunteers should also remember that what is posted or published may be in the public domain for a long time.

- **not post information that is false or taken out of context.** You must be confident about the veracity of information posted and not cut and paste selected facts that could change the context. Where a mistake is made, it should be corrected or clarified immediately.
- **always check facts.** Do not automatically assume that material is accurate and take reasonable steps where necessary to seek verification, for example, by checking data/statistics and being wary of photo manipulation.
- **be respectful.** Office holders and volunteers must always be fair and courteous to fellow colleagues, members, or people who work on behalf of the College even if they disagree with their opinion. Criticising staff on social media is not acceptable conduct.
- **be sensible.** When posting, avoid using statements, photos, video or audio that someone else would think is private or which reasonably could be viewed as malicious, obscene, threatening or intimidating, or that might constitute harassment or bullying. Examples of this type of conduct might include offensive posts meant to intentionally harm someone's reputation, are in breach of the Equality Act 2010 or creates disharmony in the workplace.
- **be transparent and disclose their relationship with RCGP.** Office holders and volunteers writing about RCGP should use their real name (not a pseudonym), identify that they volunteer for/work with the RCGP and be clear about their role.
- **not disclose, post or share confidential information or communications.** This may include financial data, systems and technology information, intellectual property and operating plans. If an office holder or volunteer is uncertain as to whether information is meant to be private or internal to the College, they should avoid commenting or posting on the matter.
- **be extra careful around politically sensitive issues.** This is especially true if your role with the College may have contact with the media or politicians. It is generally better to criticise policies rather than the politician themselves. RCGP is not a political organisation and does not hold a view on party politics or have any affiliation with or links to political parties. We have every right to express views on policy relating to our charitable purpose, including the policies of parties, but we can't tell people how to vote. When representing RCGP, volunteers are expected to hold RCGP's position of neutrality.
- **do not use RCGP logo or branding.** The RCGP logo is not appropriate for individuals to use in social media posts. Any use of the RCGP logo requires approval through a formal endorsement request made to the Honorary Secretary.
- refer all media and press enquiries to the Press Team if an official response is needed and copy in the Social Media Team. Office holders or volunteers should not speak about or on behalf of RCGP with the media or press without contacting an authorised official.

2.5 If office holders or volunteers post inappropriate content on social media, RCGP will act swiftly to minimise the impact on those affected and protect the reputation of the RCGP. This includes action to disown or condemn the post.

2.6 If you know that a topic is controversial then please ask for advice before posting. There's little room for nuance on social media and it's very easy to start a debate or argument when posting about certain topics.

3. Personal responsibility

3.1 Office holders and volunteers are personally responsible for their posts and comments, which will be published on the internet and may be viewed publicly. They can be hard to delete once published and may remain online for a long time. There are many high-profile examples of how an individual has used social media to say something in the heat of the moment that they have later had cause to regret, or to behave in a way at odds with their usual personal or professional standards. Office holders and volunteers are advised to reflect carefully on these guidelines before publishing content or commenting.

3.2 This policy also applies to posts made by office holders or volunteers on private groups, chats and forums (for example WhatsApp, closed Facebook groups and Reddit.) RCGP does not monitor these channels but if any posts made breach the policy, then the same principles apply.

3.3 If an office holder or volunteer has set up a social media account on which they post content which is partially or entirely related to the work of the College, they must make clear the nature of their affiliation with RCGP in their bio, and keep it up to date. Their profile and any content posted should be consistent with the professional image RCGP wishes them to present to members, external stakeholders and colleagues.

3.4 If an office holder or volunteer chooses to disclose an affiliation with RCGP on a personal profile or any social media postings, they must include the disclaimer "all views are my own" (or otherwise make clear that their views do not represent those of RCGP) in their bio or post.

3.5 Care must be taken to avoid threatening or damaging the reputation of RCGP. This can happen where RCGP is tagged or cited directly in a social media post, or the person posting is associated with the RCGP - perhaps because they hold or have previously held a paid or unpaid role with the organisation. Even with a disclaimer saying it represents a personal view, a social media post may be seen as being endorsed by the RCGP or as evidence of a disagreement within the organisation.

3.6 RCGP encourages office holders and volunteers to block, and if appropriate report, any users they feel are bullying, harassing or insulting them on their personal social media accounts. Anyone feeling bullied or harassed on an RCGP social media account, or by an RCGP member or employee should refer to the [RCGP Behavioural Framework](#) for further information on how to escalate concerns.

3.7 Those in senior management, and specialist roles where they are well known in their field of expertise, must take particular care as personal views published may be misunderstood as expressing RCGP's view.

3.8 When leaving Officer or volunteer roles, individuals may need to reference their former roles, e.g. when declaring an important declaration of interest or providing a biography as part of an interview or event published on social media. General use of a title, preceded by the word 'former', is discouraged.

3.9 In any circumstances where reference is made to former roles, individuals must take care not to give the impression they continue to speak for RCGP.

4. Oversight and controls

RCGP national social media channels

4.1 Our Social Media Team is responsible for the day-to-day publishing, monitoring and management of RCGP national social media channels. The Social Media Manager is responsible for reviewing content posted to these accounts and will decide if we need to delete content. Other teams who have access to the accounts include the Press team, Public Affairs and Marketing.

4.2 When the Social Media Team needs to ensure accuracy of information, they will share content with relevant teams before posting. Additional approval will be required from the Assistant Director of PR and Corporate Comms when there is the risk of reputational damage.

4.3 If there is a social media crisis or an external event which means it could be deemed insensitive to post (for example a significant global event) the Social Media Manager will suspend posting on social media, postpone scheduled posts and liaise with relevant teams and the Assistant Director of PR and Corporate Comms to agree any further action.

Other RCGP social media channels

4.4 Faculties and Devolved Nations also have social media accounts which they are responsible for. The accounts are run centrally by these teams and only RCGP staff are permitted access to post on these accounts.

4.5 Accounts which support core RCGP products and publications (such as BJGP Online, InnovAit, and RCGP Annual Conference) are approved by the Assistant Director of PR and Corporate Comms and are managed by staff.

4.6 Accounts relating to other RCGP specialised activities are established where there is a clear need. Requests are discussed with the Social Media Team to agree the purpose of the account and how the impact will be assessed. A staff member will be the account administrator responsible for posts. There is a reputational risk of not maintaining accounts and these should be closed when no longer required.

5. Breaches of this policy

5.1 All office holders and volunteers are required to adhere to this policy. If they violate this policy, RCGP may require them to correct, edit or remove a post or statement. Office holders and volunteers should be aware that use of social media in a way that may be deemed as deliberate or inadvertent misuse could be a breach and may lead to action being taken by RCGP.

5.2 Breaches will usually be picked up through the Social Media Team's monitoring of channels, or by Devolved Nation and Faculty managers. Anyone can email the relevant team to let them know if they think a breach has occurred.

5.3 The office holder or volunteer point of contact should consult the Social Media Team to help advise them as to how to respond to content which is problematic, and action required to avoid any reputational damage. They may ask an officer holder or volunteer to delete their post or issue an apology/updated post.

5.4 If the Office holder or volunteer fails to respond to any requests to take remedial action, the relevant manager will escalate the issue as a complaint to their Assistant Director to advise on appropriate action to protect RCGP's reputation. This may include RCGP action to disown the comments.

5.5 Serious breaches, for example incidents of bullying of colleagues or social media activity causing serious damage to RCGP, may result in a [Code of Conduct](#) investigation and appropriate sanction under the Code. All such cases will initially be sent to the Chief Executive Officer to initiate a response by the Honorary Secretary.

5.6 If the breach of policy is a post or comment made by an Officer, Trustee (and Trustee Committee members) or Council member, it will be referred to the Assistant Director of Governance who will consult with the Chief Executive Officer to decide if it needs to be escalated to the Trustee Board.

6. Public Interest Disclosure ('whistleblowing')

6.1 Legal protection for whistleblowers (under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 and the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013) is qualified. Where an office holder or volunteer releases information through social media that may be considered as whistle blowing, the RCGP Whistleblowing Policy must be initiated in the first instance before any further action is taken.



The Royal College of General Practitioners is a network of over 55,000 family doctors working to improve care for patients. We work to encourage and maintain the highest standards of general medical practice and act as the voice of GPs on education, training, research and clinical standards.

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