



RCGP SCOTTISH COUNCIL CHAIR

Information for applicants 2026

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 the Chair of Scottish Council involves and what steps need to be taken when seeking election to become the next Chair.

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1. The role of the RCGP Scottish Council Chair

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

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

The role of the RCGP Scottish Council Chair is the most senior Scottish Council Officer and the public face of the RCGP in Scotland. As the College's profession-lead, they work with stakeholders and appear in the media to champion general practice.

The Chair is the lead Officer in engagement with government, policy makers, regulators, charities and other health organisations promoting the adoption of RCGP policies for the GP profession.

The role holder will be expected to be a senior leader and an exemplar of 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>. A good understanding of Scottish and UK-wide government health policies will be essential.

To be effective in this role applicants may want to consider their experience of senior leadership and participation in national, local and international debates. Effective chairing will be an essential skill in successfully undertaking this role, as will political awareness and sensitivity and the ability to network and communicate the College's position and the attributes of good general practice.

The workload of the Chair of Scottish Council is demanding, and the role is both public and member-facing. The role holder will be involved in a number of internal and external boards and committees including chairing Scottish Council. The post holder will also be required to attend a number of regular internal meetings such as the Officer and Executive Group, Scottish Council preparatory meetings and meetings with staff members.

A role description is included in this guidance at Appendix 1.

Term of office

The Chair of Scottish Council serves a single three-year term of office starting from the first Council meeting following the annual general meeting which this year will take place on Wednesday 25 November 2026.

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

Four sessions per week for 46 weeks per year and additional ad hoc work /meetings representing RCGP Scotland.

Additional weekend and evening work is likely to be required.

Additional requirement to chair Scottish Council meetings 4 x per annum, up to 4 meetings of the Executive Committee of Scottish Council and to attend UK Council 4 x per annum. Attendance required at RCGP Annual Conference plus additional speaker events including the annual New Members and Fellows Ceremony, as appropriate.

This role can be performed remotely but Officers generally need to be available for hybrid meetings on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Officers are also often required to attend evening and external commitments so some flexibility of working pattern will be required. Frequent, but not weekly, travel to the office in Edinburgh will be required based on business need as well as some travel across the UK. Reasonable business expenses will be paid in accordance with the RCGP travel and expenses policy.

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 in Appendix 5 of this document.

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 RCGP Scottish Council Chair

Introduction to the nomination and election processes

There are three stages to standing as the Scottish Council Chair:

- 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 Scottish Council Chair 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 on Tuesday 5 May 2026. No applications or CVs sent directly will be accepted. At the voting stage eligible members will receive a link to vote.

Overview of the nomination and election process and timetable

Tuesday 5 May 2026	<p>Nominations open</p> <p>Applicant completes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination form - including a proposer and a seconder who are Scottish Council members. • Probity declaration • Declaration of Interests <p>Election agent sends an email verification to the proposer and seconder to confirm support for the applicant.</p>
Noon Tuesday 2 June 2026	<p>Nominations close</p>
Wednesday 3 June 2026	<p>Assessment of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nomination forms for eligibility and completeness. • probity and declarations of interests. Any potential issues or concerns are addressed.
Wednesday 3 June	<p>Applicants informed if they have been accepted as a candidate. Canvassing may then begin.</p>
Thursday 18 June 2026	<p>Online hustings: Candidates will be required to attend (online) the Scottish Council meeting on the evening of the 18 June for a hustings event led by an independent facilitator.</p>
Monday 22 June 2026	<p>Voting opens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections are conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system. An explanation is available on the election site.
Noon Monday 29 June 2026	<p>Voting closes</p>
Tuesday 30 June 2026	<p>Candidates will be contacted as soon as possible after the voting report has been received.</p> <p>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).</p>
Tuesday 30 June 2026	<p>Formal announcement of the result.</p>
Saturday 12 September 2026	<p>Scottish Council will be asked to ratify the result of the election at the September Scottish Council meeting.</p>
Wednesday 4 November 2026	<p>Start as Scottish Council Chair elect.</p>
Wednesday 25 November 2026	<p>Term of office begins.</p>

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 5 May 2026. 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

Members and Fellows of RCGP, in good standing for a continuous period of five years, who are full, voting Members of RCGP Scottish Council, are eligible to be nominated for election as RCGP Scottish Council Chair. 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 "seconders". **For Officer roles it is important to note that proposers and seconders must be currently serving [RCGP Scottish Council members](#).**

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.

Role sharing

If you would like to apply for an Officer role as a role share partnership both candidates will need to jointly complete the role sharing business case template. This is available along with detailed guidance on role sharing at the RCGP at Appendix 2. **The business case must be uploaded to the nominations form as part of your application.** The form is also available for download at the election microsite.

Each application for a role share partnership is considered on a case by case basis by the RCGP Nominations Committee to ensure it is robust and workable. Applications for a role share partnership will only be considered if a business case is submitted jointly by both individuals. The College will not seek a role share partner on behalf of a candidate. If one partner in a role sharing candidature withdraws from an election at any stage the other partner may not stand as a single candidate.

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 (for example, LinkedIn, Facebook) 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

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 Vice Chair - Member Standards 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 3**. Candidates should ensure they have fully read the document before beginning any canvassing activity.

6. Hustings

A 'hustings' will be held on Thursday 18 June, before the meeting of RCGP Scottish Council.. Further details of the format of the session will be circulated once candidates have been confirmed.

7. Ballot and results

The ballot will open on Monday 22 June 2026 and will close on Monday 29 June 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.

8. 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) Chair of RCGP Scottish Council Role Remit and Person Specification

Accountable to:	RCGP Scottish Council Performance Review: Annually and conducted by the Chair of RCGP or a fellow Devolved Council Chair
Term of office:	Three years, subject to annual ratification at the AGM/November Council
Appointment criteria:	Full Membership of RCGP Scottish Council Member / Fellow of RCGP, in good standing for a continuous period of five years Minimum of five years in general practice
Election arrangements:	Full members of RCGP Scottish Council are the electorate following a ballot of Scottish Council members Nomination by two members of electorate Candidates will be required to take part in oral hustings at the June Scottish Council meeting
Time Commitment:	Four sessions per week for 46 weeks per year and additional ad hoc work /meetings representing RCGP Scotland. Additional weekend and evening work is likely to be required. Additional requirement to chair Scottish Council meetings 4 x per annum, up to 4 meetings of the Executive Committee of Scottish Council and attend UK Council 4 x per annum. Attendance required at RCGP Annual Conference plus additional speaker events including the annual New Members' and Fellows' Ceremony, as appropriate. Whilst some remote working is possible, the post holder will spend a proportion of time in the Edinburgh office. Some travel across the UK will be required.

	<p>Applications for job share will be considered on a case-by-case basis in line with the Job Share Policy.</p> <p>Potential candidates for Job Share should submit a Business Case with their nomination outlining sufficient evidence that consideration has been given to the practical application of the job-share (i.e. what days/hours is each job-sharer anticipates working) and robust evidence that consideration of how work responsibilities and decision making will be shared.</p>
<p>Funding:</p>	<p>Officers have two options for remuneration:</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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 the term of office ends or the appointment is terminated by Scottish Council under Ordinance 12.</p> <p>Engagement as self-employed or contractor status, or through 'backfill' payment, is no longer an option.</p> <p>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.</p>

Purpose of the role

The Chair provides strategic leadership for the College in Scotland, offering oversight on political, academic, governance, and leadership matters. They direct the work of the

RCGP Scottish Council, lead the Officer team, and act as the key interface between the College in Scotland and the wider RCGP.

The Chair leads on shaping the College's position on issues affecting general practitioners in Scotland and ensures these messages are communicated effectively.

Main Responsibilities

- Be an ambassador for the RCGP and the profession of general practice.
- Be 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.
- Lead the RCGP Scottish Council Officer team, providing guidance, delegating responsibilities, and conducting annual performance appraisals for the Vice Chairs.
- Provide guidance and support to the appointed Clinical Leads, ensuring any initiatives that are developed align with the College's objectives and values, are of benefit to members and the wider profession.
- Represent RCGP Scotland in media, parliamentary, and public forums, influencing opinion and promoting the College's charitable and policy objectives.
- Engage with government, policymakers, regulators, charities, and health organisations to advance RCGP policies for general practice.
- Set clear strategic direction for Scottish Council policies, activities, and campaigns.
- Oversee responses to consultations, inquiries, and campaigns affecting general practice.
- Maintain strong relationships with key organisations, including the Scottish General Practitioners Committee, NHS Education for Scotland, GMC Scotland, the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and Faculties in Scotland, NHS Scotland, and other primary care bodies.
- Promote the College's position on key academic issues in Scotland and maintain relationships with academic institutions and organisations involved in medical education and research.
- Ensure compliance with the College's constitution and objectives, working closely with the Head of RCGP Scotland.
- Approve agendas and chair four Scottish Council meetings and up to four Executive Committee meetings annually.
- Attend four UK RCGP Council meetings and participate in Leadership Team meetings to align Scottish and UK priorities.
- Ensure timely implementation of Council decisions and communicate outcomes to members.

Appendix 2 - Role sharing guidance

Role Sharing Guidance

Background

Role sharing is a powerful way to strengthen the College's work and create a more inclusive, resilient leadership culture. It opens opportunities for talented people who may not be able to commit to a full role alone, bringing in wider perspectives, fresh ideas and greater diversity of experience.

Shared roles also support wellbeing by allowing individuals to balance responsibilities more sustainably, reducing pressure and helping people perform at their best. When two people collaborate, they often bring complementary strengths, improving continuity, problem-solving and overall effectiveness.

To make role sharing work well for everyone, the College has produced the below guidance that sets out how arrangements are managed. This ensures fairness, transparency and good use of resources, while giving role sharers and colleagues confidence about expectations

Introduction

This guidance applies to the roles of:

- Provost
- Non-Trustee Council Officer roles¹
- Chair and Vice Chairs of Devolved Councils
- Chair and Vice Chairs of Community Networks

The following roles are not eligible to apply for on a role sharing basis.

- Chair of Trustees
- Member Trustees
- Council Officers who are ex officio Trustees²
- National Elected Council Members
- Faculty Representatives on Council³

¹ Currently Vice Chair Policy, and Vice Chair Professional Standards and Training

² Currently Chair of Council, Vice Chair Finance and Member Value, and Vice Chair Member Standards

³ Faculties appoint a representative to attend Council, as well as deputy representative who can attend in their absence; for this reason, these roles are not eligible for role-sharing.

Trustee status cannot be role shared because of the statutory responsibilities of a trustee and requirement for trustee remuneration to be approved by the Charity Commission.

This guidance sets out how the arrangements for a role when filled by a role-share partnership are different to when it is held by one individual. It is essential that everyone is clear about the arrangements which are applied.

Given the majority of roles are less than full time, role sharing arrangements are likely to be exceptional and from candidates who are unable to commit to the number of sessions attached to the role. Applications which support College's aims to attract a wider pool of talent and support the aims of the College's equality, diversity and inclusion objectives are encouraged.

Role-sharing applications bring with them an inevitable electoral gain – two personal networks as opposed to one - and it is therefore important applications explain why the role share applicants would not be able to commit to the role as an individual candidate.

Individuals role-sharing involves two individuals sharing the duties of a role which has one voice and one vote at all times. This means only one role-share partner may speak and vote in meetings or other representation activities. Details on meeting attendance can be found below.

Applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Governance Committee. Role-sharing partners are required to submit a business case using the form at the end of this guidance explaining how the arrangements meet the criteria set out in this guidance note.

Individual responsibilities for a role-sharing

Individuals considering standing on a role-sharing platform must weigh up the pros and cons of sharing a role before applying. Accountability in role share arrangements can bring added complexity, and the ability to compromise is essential:

Individuals standing on a role-sharing basis are accountable as a partnership to the electorate, not as two individual role-holders.

The partnership must not result in double attendance or an amplified voice for the role in meetings or College activities. This ensures that the role does not gain disproportionate influence compared with when it is held by a single individual. Role-share partners should therefore avoid attending the same meetings and must agree in advance which partner will represent the role on each occasion.

Attendance at Council

Role sharing should result in the role's responsibilities being divided between the partners; not each partner doubling up on doing all the roles. It is the responsibility of the applicants to clearly set out who would do each aspect of the role, avoiding duplication. This requires a high degree

of trust between role sharing partners, and there is a collective responsibility to support each other's decisions in public and keep debate and challenge private.

Role-sharing partners need to agree in advance who will speak on a Council agenda item and who will cast the vote for the role if this is required. This needs to be notified in advance to the Chair of Council and Assistant Director Governance.

Resignation or removal from role

A fresh election will be required if one individual cannot or no longer wishes to continue with the role duties. The role will not automatically default to the remaining person because the individuals have been elected on a role-sharing platform.

Benefits to College

Applications for role share should explain how College will benefit from the arrangements.

Examples include:

- The two individuals may have different sets of experience that can enhance how they carry out the duties of the role.
- Bringing new and diverse experience to College leadership – e.g. recently qualified/working parents that may not be able to commit to the time requirements of the role.
- A track record of sharing work commitments and/or being jointly accountable for delivering results
- How, if at all, the role share partners can provide cover for unexpected and expected short term absences.

Addressing potential risks to the College

The Governance Committee will assess the role sharing application to ensure the proposed arrangements are reasonable, workable in practice and sustainable.

Areas of potential risk which should be addressed in the business case made on the form at the end of this guidance include the following:

Working arrangements – provide evidence which demonstrates there is a clear role- share partnership agreement in place and include the proposed allocation of all role duties and how the duties of the role will be prioritised in the event of new and emerging issues, e.g. at times when one role-holder duties are under pressure.

Accountability arrangements – provide an explanation of how role sharers will manage the requirement to speak with one voice and who is expected to cast the vote permitted for the role when needed. It must be clear to the Committee how the partnership will manage differences of

opinion e.g. on a policy position, professional advice expected from the role or how to prioritise work.

Durability of the partnership – provide evidence that demonstrates the strength of the working relationship. This could include examples of how partners have previously collaborated on work and share sufficient common ground for there to be confidence in the strength of the role share. Clear agreement between the role-share partners on how they have avoided public disagreement is helpful.

Impact on members and College stakeholders - provide persuasive evidence of how the arrangements will not dilute the intended impact of the role in developing strong member and/or stakeholder engagement.

Impact on college resources – role sharers are expected to divide the session time allocated to the role between them and to keep themselves briefed on each other's work. For example, one role-share partner should attend meetings such as the Officer and Executive Group and the weekly officer team meeting. The business case at the end of this guidance will need to set out how the role share partnership will remain within the allocated session time.

The above should be covered in the business case to be assessed by the Governance Committee as part of the application made for a role to be filled on a role-sharing basis. The form at the end of the guidance provides a structure for this business case.

Applications

Applications should be made in the usual way for a role and in addition the role-share partnership will need to provide a business case using the form at the end of this guidance. This will form part of the nomination process for the role and both role share partners should be signatories.

The Governance Committee will consider the business case and may need to interview the role-sharers to test the strength of the proposed working arrangements.

Appointment arrangements if elected

If the candidates standing for election on a role-share basis are successful, the role share partners need to formalise the working arrangements on which they have been elected. This will be documented and the agreement shared with Council and staff and include:

- How the role duties will be split.
- How allocated session time for the role will be split.
- How role duties will be covered by the other if required, e.g. during absences, times of pressure.
- How decisions expected of this role holder will be made and sign-off without delays.

- How role-share partners will communicate and update each other about their work in the allocated session time.
- Which meetings will be attended by the role share-partners, including those where they will alternate attendance (the latter should include how they will communicate this to the meeting chair)
- How role-sharers partners will decide which of them will speak and, if required, cast the vote for the role in Council.
- How the role share partners will manage difference of opinion and avoid public disagreement and conflicting statements.
- Agreement that the role-share arrangements will end where differences of opinion cannot be managed.

Session time and costs

Role-sharing arrangements must be within allocated session time for the role. Only one role-share partner is expected to attend any meeting with the exception of Council, where both will be entitled to attend. Expenses will usually only reimbursed for one role-share partner to attend in person.

Role-share partners of a Devolved Council role will both be entitled to attend the Devolved Council meeting. The speaking and voting arrangements are set out in the protocol below. Only one role-share partner should attend Council (if applicable).

Speaking and voting at Council (and other meetings where both role share partners representation is approved)

Only one role-share partner can speak on a Council (or Devolved Council) agenda item and if it is required, cast the vote for the role on the matter under debate.

The Chair of Council (or Vice Chair Member Standards if the role-share is the Chair of Council) and Assistant Director Governance must be informed prior to Council of the role-share lead on each item. Only one role-share partner is entitled to speak and if required, cast a vote (including any casting vote) on the matter being discussed.

Devolved Council Chairs should make clear to Devolved Council members and the Head of Devolved Nation office how they will agree to lead on agenda items and where required cast a vote, including and casting votes. If a Devolved Council Chair role is held by a role-share partnership, only one partner will attend Council and advise the Chair of Council and Assistant Director Governance accordingly.

Managing disagreements

If role-share partners are unable to agree on a course of action, they should, in the first instance seek the advice of the Chair of Council. This includes where the partnership is unclear which should attend a meeting other than Council. If this fails to resolve the situation, the Chair of Council will discuss with other Officers to agree a proposed way forward.

If the role-share partners are unable to accept the advice of the Officer team and cannot reach a consensus view, the continued viability of the role-share will be referred for consideration by the Chair of the Trustee Board and Chief Executive Officer. If the disagreement cannot be resolved, the agreement made by the role-share partners will be deemed to have broken down.

Council will be asked to terminate the appointment under Ordinance 41 (Or byelaw 50 in the case of a Devolved Chair role-share partnership) and agree interim arrangements for covering the duties of the role pending elections.

Resignation of a role share partner or change of circumstances

If either partner resigns, or one can no longer fully commit to the original terms of the role-share agreement, a fresh election will be required for the role. This is because the individuals were elected on a role-share platform and the role cannot default to an individual. Where the role-share cannot continue on the basis on which it was elected, it is treated in the same way as an individual role holder resignation.

Council (or appropriate Devolved Council in the case of a Devolved Council Chair) will be asked to approve arrangements for an election.

Further advice

The Assistant Director Governance [governance@rcgp.org.uk] can provide further advice on this guidance note to candidates thinking about standing for a role on a role share basis.

Application for a role share

Officer role	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Name and current position of role-sharers	Click or tap here to enter text.	Click or tap here to enter text.
Reason for applying on a role share basis (Explain why you are not seeking office on an individual basis)	Click or tap here to enter text.	
How long have you known each other and can give examples or evidence to provide assurance that the role-sharing arrangements will work?	Click or tap here to enter text.	
Explain the proposed working arrangement, including allocation of the role duties and how these will be covered at times of pressure?	Click or tap here to enter text.	
How will you ensure each other is briefed on each other's duties and how will you manage differences of opinion in the partnership?	Click or tap here to enter text.	
How will you manage work within the resources allocated to the role and avoid duplication of travel costs, overnight stays, EA support?	Click or tap here to enter text.	
If this role is an ex-officio trustee, which role share partner will become the trustee?	Click or tap here to enter text.	

Appendix 3 - Canvassing Code of Practice

This Code of Practice sets out the high standards of conduct expected from all candidates for elected Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) roles. It complements the RCGP Code of Conduct and Behavioural Framework, which support every member in contributing positively to the College community. Candidates are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the RCGP values and the [Social Media Policy](#) for Office Holders and Volunteers.

To support a fair and transparent election process, all candidates are required to follow this Code in full.

Individuals may begin canvassing once they have been formally notified that they meet the requirements to stand as a candidate.

From that point, candidates are welcome to engage in campaigning that highlights their qualifications, competencies and vision for the role, provided they do so in line with this Code of Practice and the spirit of the RCGP's Behavioural Framework, Members' Code of Conduct and Social Media Policy.

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 welcome to share their views and personal profiles and are encouraged to do so in a constructive and positive way. They should avoid making negative remarks about any other candidate or member of College staff. When using social media to share information about the election, candidates are encouraged to use the College's official election weblinks. Candidates must not refer to other candidates or their campaigns in any way.

Use of Email

Canvassing by email is welcomed, provided it follows General Data Protection Regulations. Candidates are encouraged to use personal data responsibly by keeping

information secure and ensuring it is only shared with recorded consent. While email canvassing is permitted, candidates should avoid sending unsolicited messages to large groups or contacting individuals excessively; in most cases, two emails will be sufficient, unless responding to specific questions.

Candidates standing for Nationally elected roles (President and Nationally Elected Council Member) will not access or use any College held member databases for canvassing. They may, however, use their own personal databases or those of another organisation to which they have access, provided they follow standard data- protection- requirements.

Candidates for Council Officer roles will receive a current Council mailing list. All serving Council members' names and email addresses will be shared with candidates under GDPR Legitimate Interests (Article 6(1)(f)) and/or Contractual/role necessity (Article 6(1)(b)).

Funding

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

Role of College and Council Officers

The President and the Council Officers (Chair of Council and the Vice Chairs, 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. The Devolved Nation Chairs 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 Faculty Board Chairs and Officers

Faculty Board Chairs and Officers, like College and Council Officers, are expected to remain impartial throughout the nomination and election period for all College elections. To support a fair and balanced process, Faculty Board Chairs may not act as proposers or seconders for candidates, nor take part in canvassing—directly or indirectly—by expressing support for, or disapproval of, any candidate.

Candidates currently holding Officer or other RCGP roles

Candidates who already hold officer or other RCGP roles are encouraged to continue fulfilling their responsibilities, while taking care not to use their position to advance their campaign. In practice, this means avoiding any mention of their candidacy at events where they are representing the RCGP, not canvassing during time allocated to their RCGP duties, and not using RCGP resources, support or information for campaign purposes.

Restrictions

Candidates must not:

- a. Use any RCGP email address, social media account, branding, stationery or other RCGP resources, including faculty and Devolved Council accounts or publications, for canvassing.
- b. Use any RCGP databases or mailing lists gained through their work or involvement with the College for any election related purpose. This includes historic groups or databases from previous roles. Candidates for Council Officer roles will receive the current Council mailing list of members who have consented to its use; this is the only permitted- database.
- c. Canvass through national media or press. Candidates should not make comments to journalists or respond publicly, including via social media. Any media enquiries about their candidacy or the elections must be referred immediately to the media team.
- d. Employ agents or private third parties to canvass on their behalf.
- e. Make adverse comments about another candidate's statement, video, social media activity or any other aspect of their campaign.

- f. Approach the President, Chair, Vice Chairs of Council, Devolved Nation Council Officers of Faculty Board Chairs for endorsement.
- g. Approach any RCGP Trustee Board member for endorsement.
- h. Ask any RCGP Member or Fellow to undertake activity on their behalf that would breach this Code. Any Member or Fellow who does so will be subject to investigation by the Returning Officer.
- i. Ask any member of staff for access to RCGP media channels, information or support for canvassing. Candidates seeking information should contact council@rcgp.org.uk.

Candidates must:

- a. Ensure that any statements or claims they make or endorse are accurate, fair, reasonable and not misleading.
- b. Maintain the confidentiality, integrity and good standing of the RCGP and its elections at all times, and avoid any action that could bring them into disrepute.

Breaches of the Code

The RCGP Returning Officer has the responsibility for ensuring that all candidates follow this Code and may take any steps necessary to support that aim.

The Returning Officer will look into all reported concerns and, where appropriate, issue informal warnings, formal written warnings or cease-and-desist requests.

If a candidate is found to have breached the Code, the Returning Officer may disqualify them from the election. The Returning Officer's decisions on all matters relating to the Code are final and binding for all candidates.

Appendix 4 - 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.

Appendix 5 - Declarations of Interests Policy



Royal College of
General Practitioners

Declarations of Interests Policy

Declarations of Interest Policy	
Version No	4
Authors	Previously named Conflicts of Interests policy. Updated January 2025 by the Governance Team
Reviewed by	Officer and Executive Group Governance Committee
Approved by	Trustee Board – 24/04/2025
Date	June 2025
Review date	November 2028

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1. Introduction and purpose

The purpose of the policy is to ensure transparency, and the open and proportionate management of any actual or perceived conflict of interest to protect both the College and individuals from any appearance of impropriety.

The policy sets out to:

- explain the principles of declarations of interests and conflicts of interest
- explain who and how individuals at the RCGP should make declarations of interests
- explain how conflicts of interest, whether actual or perceived, can be identified and managed and who is responsible for doing what.

The policy covers two different types of declarations of interests:

- Declarations made by decision-makers at the RCGP, and
- Declarations made by those who are not decision-makers at the RCGP.

The underlying principles of this policy are those of the [Nolan Seven Principles of standards in public life](#).

2. Who needs to make declarations of interest?

The policy applies to all decision-makers at the RCGP, including:

- Trustees and all other RCGP Board and Committee members, including any working groups
- College and Council Officers
- Devolved Council Chairs, Vice-Chairs and Devolved Council members
- Council members and Council Committee members, including any working groups
- Faculty board members
- The Executive Management Team and applicants for Executive Management Team positions
- Medical Directors, Clinical Leads and College Representatives and applicants for these positions
- Candidates in RCGP College Officer and Council elections

The policy also applies to:

- Speakers at RCGP events, conferences, educational sessions and contributors to publications
- Individuals recommended for RCGP awards
- RCGP examiners

3. What is a conflict of interest?

A conflict of interest is defined as:

A situation by which a reasonable person would consider that an individual's ability to apply judgement or act, in the context of acting on behalf of the College and fulfilling the College's charitable object is, or could be, impaired or influenced by another interest they hold.

Everyone who is a **decision-maker** at the RCGP has a duty to act in the best interests of the College's charitable object, which is:

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

Conflicts of interests may arise where an individual's personal interests and loyalties are, or are perceived to be, in competition with those of the College.

The College welcomes the diverse range of careers, expertise and outside interests our members bring to roles of responsibility at the RCGP. These different perspectives and expertise bring invaluable breadth to College debates, ensuring that the diversity of our membership is well represented and that decisions are taken robustly.

Whilst the College encourages members to draw on the knowledge and expertise they have gained in their work and outside activities it is important that all decision-makers are transparent about other commitments, roles and activities. This serves to prevent any interference, or perceived interference, with their ability to make judgments impartially and without undue influence from other interests.

When thinking about declarations, it is useful to consider that conflicts of interests can be:

- Potential - there is a possibility that a conflict will arise in the future, or a future interest may be perceived to be a conflict.
- Actual - there is a conflict between one or more of an individual's interests.
- Financial - where an individual may get direct financial benefit, meaning gain or avoidance of loss, from the consequences of a decision they are involved in taking.

- Non-financial professional or personal - where an individual may benefit professionally or personally, such as promoting their professional career or reputation.
- Indirect - where an individual closely associated with the person involved in decision-making may gain financial or non-financial professional or personal benefit from the decision being taken. A closely associated person is defined as a close family member, relative, close friend, associate or business partner. **Senior decision makers including Trustees, are required to make declarations of those defined as related parties.**
- Loyalty interests - where, for example, a senior role in another institution, or membership of a particular organisation, might influence – or might be seen to influence – a member’s judgment or actions in a discussion or decision.

4. When and how to make declarations of interests

Taking into consideration the potential areas of conflicts of interests, all those within scope of the policy should declare their interests on the RCGP Declarations of Interest form:

- As part of the election or recruitment processes for decision-making RCGP roles
- On appointment to any role within scope (as defined in section 2)
- As soon as circumstances change or new interests arise
- In a meeting where an interest is relevant to a particular item on the agenda
- Prior to acting as a speaker at an RCGP event, conference or educational session
- On recommendation to an RCGP award

The responsibility lies with those in the roles within scope of the policy to declare all relevant interests and to ensure declarations are complete and kept up to date. For **decision makers**, declarations of interests should be updated at least once in a calendar year.

The test of relevance for **decision makers** is whether or not an interest might reasonably be seen as influencing a person’s ability to apply independent, unbiased judgement in the context of acting and taking decisions in the best interests of the College’s charitable object.

For declarations by **speakers** the focus is on transparency so that members will be aware of any interests which might influence what an individual says or does.

For declarations by **individuals recommended for RCGP awards** the aim is to manage risk to the RCGP.

Declarable interests are usually current but may on occasion include future interests where there is a clear prospect that a conflict may arise soon. Past interests may exceptionally be declarable if, for example, they are comparatively recently held and might be thought to continue to influence the member.

In the spirit of transparency, when in doubt, the advice is to declare any relevant interest that might reasonably be perceived by others as a conflict.

5. Managing conflicts of interests for decision makers

The Assistant Director Governance has overall responsibility for the implementation and application of the policy.

The Honorary Secretary and Chairs of boards and committees are responsible for managing actual and perceived conflicts within the context of meetings.

The responsible Executive Director will take the lead in managing the declarations of interests for clinical roles, RCGP events, conferences, educational sessions and contributors to publications.

Conflicts can usually be managed with transparency and effective mitigations. These mitigations are often called a **management plan**. All assessments, considerations, and agreed-upon actions will be documented to maintain a clear audit trail.

In summary, the RCGP addresses potential and actual conflicts of interest by:

1. Identifying the conflict of interest
2. Preventing the conflict of interest from affecting decisions
3. Recording the conflict of interest and steps taken in its management

Decisions on how to manage conflicts of interest are taken on a case-by-case basis, considering the specific discussion, decision being taken, or context.

In deciding how to manage conflicts of interest, factors that should be considered include:

1. the extent and nature of any benefit and the degree to which this would set the individual apart from what would be ordinarily expected for a person in their position,

2. whether the person and the meeting or event is advisory or decision-making in nature, and if the latter, the type of the decision being taken,
3. the degree of direct agency or proximity the RCGP has in the matter, and
4. the importance of welcoming diversity of expertise and experience in the RCGPs discussions, as part of ensuring a representative voice and strengthening the quality of the RCGPs discussion and decision making.

In decision making, actions that may be taken to manage conflicts of interest are:

- No action - agreement that there is no conflict or perceived conflict of interest, or that the transparency of declarations of interests is sufficient to manage any risk.

- Monitoring and additional disclosures - where it is uncertain if a conflict is present.

- Exclusion from voting - where the outcome of a discussion or decision being made will or might bring benefit but an individual should be allowed to speak on the subject on order to bring expertise and diversity of opinion to a discussion.

- However, the conflict of interest is such that an individual should not be given a vote in the decision-making process.

- Exclusion from the debate and voting - where it is concluded that the outcome of a discussion or decision being made will or might bring benefit it may be necessary for the individual concerned to leave during a debate and vote to avoid the conflict of interest.

6. Roles and responsibilities

Individuals within scope of the policy must make their declarations on the RCGP Declarations of Interests form.

Declarations will be reviewed, monitored, managed, and published or held:

Who	How will declarations be reviewed, monitored and managed?	Where will declarations be kept?
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Trustees, College and Council Officers and Devolved Council officers	By Governance team and Honorary Secretary. Declarations made in meeting will be assessed by the meeting Chair	RCGP website, available publicly
Chief Executive Officer and Executive Directors	By Governance team and Honorary Secretary	RCGP website, available publicly
Council members and Devolved Council members	By Governance team and Honorary Secretary. Declarations made in meeting will be assessed by the meeting Chair	RCGP members' website, available to all members
Faculty board members	By designated Faculty board member with advice from the Governance team and Honorary Secretary. Declarations made in meeting will be assessed by the meeting Chair	Internally
Medical Directors, Clinical Leads and College Representatives	Relevant Executive Director with advice from the Governance team and Honorary Secretary	Internally
Speakers at RCGP events, conferences, educational sessions and contributors to publications	Relevant Executive Director with advice from the Governance team and Honorary Secretary	RCGP website, available publicly and included in conference literature
On recommendation to an RCGP award	By Governance team and Honorary Secretary	Internally
RCGP examiners	Relevant Executive Director with advice from the Governance team and Honorary Secretary	Internally

Declarations of interests are held in line with the RCGP's retention policy.

7. Compliance and breaches

Situations may arise where interests have not been identified or declared appropriately and effectively. This may happen innocently, or because of deliberate action. These situations are referred to as breaches.

Anyone who is aware of a breach of this policy or who is concerned that there has been or may have been a breach should report these concerns to the Assistant Director Governance and Honorary Secretary.

The RCGP will investigate each reported breach according to its own specific facts and merits and give relevant parties the opportunity to explain and clarify any relevant circumstances. The investigation will be undertaken in line with the procedures set out in the RCGP Code of Conduct.

8. Representing the RCGP at external meetings

When representing the RCGP at external meetings at a senior level representatives should ensure they are prepared to make both personal and College declarations of interests. The RCGP prepares a quarterly report covering areas such as sponsors, income streams and partnerships which representatives can use to identify any declarations which might be necessary.

9. Related policies

- Whistleblowing policy
- Sponsorship policy
- Gifts and hospitality policy
- Member Code of Conduct
- Code of Business Conduct policy
- Donations policy



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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