

RCGP SCOTTISH COUNCIL VICE CHAIR (POLICY)

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 an Officer involves and what steps need to be taken when seeking election to become the new Vice Chair (Policy).

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1. The role of the Vice Chair (Policy)

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

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

The Vice Chair (Policy) works alongside the Chair of Scottish Council to provide strategic leadership in the development and delivery of the College's policy activity in Scotland. This role is central to shaping primary care policy, influencing decision-makers, and representing the voice of GPs.

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>. 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 strategic leadership, policy development, influencing stakeholders, and representing the profession at a national level.

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

Term of office

The Vice Chair (Policy) will serve a term of 3 years starting from the first Council meeting following the annual general meeting which this year will take place on Wednesday 25 November 2026. 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 2 sessions per week. Some 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 (Policy)

Introduction to the nomination and election processes

There are three stages to standing as the Vice Chair (Policy):

- 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 (Policy) 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 2026	<p>Applicants informed if they have been accepted as a candidate. Canvassing may then begin.</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 Vice Chair (Policy) 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

Full voting members of RCGP Scottish Council or RCGP Scottish Faculty Boards in good standing for a continuous period of five years may stand for the role of Vice Chair Policy. 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.

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 Declarations of Interest Policy is available at Appendix 4 of this document 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 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.

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 (Policy), RCGP Scottish Council Role Description

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:	Three years, subject to annual ratification at the AGM/November Council
Appointment criteria:	Member (i.e. not Observers, Co-opted Member) of RCGP Scottish Council or an RCGP Scottish Faculty Board and a full College member who has been in good standing and for a continuous period of five years. Nominated by two Scottish Council members.
Election arrangements:	By ballot of full RCGP Scottish Council members
Commitment:	2 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: 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. 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.

	<p>The allowance is paid until the term of office ends or the 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.</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>
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Purpose of the role

The Vice Chair (Policy) works in close collaboration with the RCGP Scottish Council Chair to lead the development and delivery of the College’s policy activity in Scotland, ensuring that Council priorities are effectively implemented.

The Vice Chair supports the Chair in engaging with government, policymakers, regulators, charities, and other health organisations to influence the adoption of RCGP policies for the GP profession.

When required, the Vice Chair also acts as a spokesperson for the College in Scotland, representing its views and promoting its position on key issues.

Main Responsibilities

- 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.
- Serve as a member of the Scottish Council Officer Team and as an ex-officio member of Scottish Council.
- Work closely with the Chair of Scottish Council and RCGP Scotland staff, particularly the Head of RCGP Scotland and the Policy and Public Affairs Team, to identify and develop key policy areas in primary care.
- Lead the development of policy documents and position papers for the College in Scotland in collaboration with the Chair.
- Prepare responses to requests for written comment, including government consultations.
- Stay informed on UK-wide policy developments within RCGP and update colleagues as necessary.
- Drive forward key actions and initiatives within the policy remit, ensuring Scottish Council and the Executive Committee are kept informed of progress and timescales.
- Foster collaborative and partnership working with internal and external stakeholders to identify opportunities for new initiatives.
- Act as a press and media spokesperson for RCGP Scotland alongside the Chair.

- Represent the College in Scotland on committees and steering groups relevant to policy objectives.
- Oversee the College's representation on external groups, ensuring relevance to priorities, providing briefs, and acting on feedback received.
- Review correspondence received by the College in Scotland and provide guidance to the staff at RCGP Scotland on how this might be best progressed.
- Provide support to the Chair and deputise as required, including at Scottish Council and Executive Committee meetings, in line with Council Rules.
- Attend Scottish Council and Executive Committee meetings, providing advice and input on all matters under discussion.
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Appendix 2 - 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 Collegeheld 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. 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 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.

Appendix 4 - 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 in 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?
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.

Royal College of General Practitioners (Scotland)
1st Floor, 38 Thistle Street, Edinburgh, EH2 1DN
Tel: 020 3188 7730 | infoscotland@rcgp.org.uk | rcgp.org.uk
Scottish Charity Number: SC040430 | Patron: His Majesty King Charles III