



# Communications and marketing during the RCP 2025 elections period

## Guidance for staff and those in voluntary roles

As we enter the 2025 election period for the RCP, we would like to make staff within the Communications, Policy and Research (CP&R) directorate and the wider organisation fully aware of the rules surrounding RCP elections, and what to consider when carrying out communication, events and marketing activities. The 2025 elections cover the president, clinical vice president (CVP) and councillor roles.

The [elections guidance for 2025](#) has been approved by RCP Council and is aimed at creating a level playing field for all candidates.

The elections timetable runs from when nominations opened (7 November 2024) to results day (College Day, 14 April 2025).

We want staff to feel confident when communicating about the election and able to identify any conflicts or concerns they may have. This is particularly important for staff who may already be working closely with fellows who run for office.

### 1. Elections arrangements and candidate code 2025

In 2023, canvassing rules were reviewed and a new approach agreed by Council. The current guidance states:

#### Guidance to candidates on canvassing and positive opportunities for engagement

*The Candidate Code of Practice for RCP elections, recently approved by Council, is designed to allow a level playing field in which the RCP encourages a fair promotion of candidates' views and profiles, giving each of them equity of access to resources and to the whole electorate using the election web platform.*

*This provides a clear framework to candidates standing for election and a clear explanation to the electorate on the current rules regarding elections.*

*Positive opportunities for engagement/ campaigning are also open to candidates to inform the electorate. The use of social media by candidates regarding the election is permissible, once the list of candidates is made public.*

Staff are encouraged to read:

[Elections arrangements 2025](#)

[Candidate Code 2025](#)

[Social media principles](#)

## 2. RCP and staff responsibilities

The RCP is responsible for promoting candidates and giving each of them equity of access to resources and to the whole electorate. It is important that staff work together to ensure that the election process is fair. The list of candidates will be announced in early February 2025, after review by Council at its meeting in the new year.

During the elections, the organisation will continue to run as usual. Once the list of candidates is published, any candidates currently in RCP roles, for example officers, will continue in role and work to deliver their usual associated tasks. This may include work they lead on being communicated via RCP communications channels, eg promoting a session at a conference via an email newsletter.

**However, candidates currently in RCP roles should not receive extra opportunities that go beyond the remit of their usual role. Communications from the RCP must never promote one candidate over another.**

Staff should not give additional support or advice to individual candidates where their candidacy may benefit from that campaigning, communication, marketing or policy expertise. Serving officers who are standing for election are not prohibited from using RCP communications channels during elections where the content is relevant to ongoing RCP activity, but that activity should not link to the election.

Similarly, RCP staff may follow candidates' own social media accounts. Before you engage with (eg share, 'like' or comment on) a post by a candidate, please consider whether it could give them an advantage or is strictly necessary at that time.

If you feel concerned about any promotion you see relating to a candidate or activity by colleagues that you believe is outside this guidance, please flag with your line manager.

## 3. Campaigning and the use of social media

The use of social media is permissible by candidates, once the list of candidates is made public. The candidate code states:

*Candidates may conduct campaigning activity which speaks specifically to their qualifications, competencies and vision for the role unless expressly prohibited by this code.*

**There are some restrictions, including candidates not requesting support from RCP staff in relation to their election campaign:**

**Funding** – *The RCP does not provide funding for candidates’ canvassing campaigns. In the course of their canvassing, candidates must not make any financial outlay that they would not have made if they were not standing as a candidate.*

**The media** – *Candidates must not themselves conduct any canvassing activity via the press. Candidates must immediately refer any media enquiries they receive, relating to their candidacy or the RCP elections, to the RCP media team via [media@rcp.ac.uk](mailto:media@rcp.ac.uk).*

**Branding** – *In conducting their canvassing, candidates must not:*

- a) use or attempt to use RCP social media accounts, RCP email accounts or RCP mailing lists*
- b) use RCP branding [logo]*
- c) pay anyone to act for them*
- d) enlist anyone who is not a member of the RCP to act for them*
- e) make any adverse personal comments about other candidates in line with the RCP Code of Conduct and RCP social media principles.*
- f) request support from any member of RCP staff*
- g) request information from RCP staff other than the chief executive and those identified to them as providing information to candidates.*

**Staff are reminded that any text that goes out about candidates via central RCP channels must be approved by Membership Support and Global Engagement (MSGE) and CP&R.**

In relation to social media, Council has emphasised the following to candidates:

- > The use of social media should conform to set standards of behaviour and be in line with RCP social media usage guidelines. In effect, candidates for office should act as if they were already elected and in post.
- > There is a requirement to avoid negative comments about individuals or the RCP, in keeping with the RCP Code of Conduct for members and fellows.
- > Social media posts that breach the criteria of acceptability will be challenged and removed.
- > Candidates who fail to conduct themselves accordingly will be subject to the established disciplinary mechanisms of the RCP.

#### 4. Considerations for day-to-day campaigns, communications, events, marketing and policy work during elections

##### Conferences and events

- > Candidates can be chairs/speakers at events such as Medicine 2025 and the Update in medicine series of events; however, the focus will remain on the clinical content, not the person. The person will not be promoted individually, but it is appropriate to include when promoting a full session. This rule of thumb is applicable to online events presence too.
- > Candidates can be abstract judges at Medicine 2025; however, the focus will remain on the clinical work. No promotion is required for judges.
- > When mentioning candidates in social media posts, this should be related to the event, not the election. Candidates should be mentioned whether they have an account or not.

##### Media

- > Candidates who already hold positions of office at the RCP (eg special advisers or vice presidents) can provide quotes to media or be interviewed by the media if asked to do so by the RCP's press office, but this should only be in their capacity as an RCP spokesperson and under no circumstances should it be in relation to the RCP election.
- > The above also applies to blog posts and podcasts hosted on the RCP website.
- > Non-election-related media activity, such as press statements, blog posts and podcasts, involving spokespersons who are also candidates can be published via the RCP social media channels; however, the elections or their candidacy should not be mentioned in these posts.

##### Membership and committee communications

- > *Commentary* magazine/editorial features featuring candidates – no re-promotion of any previous features in past editions that prominently platform candidates. No special features, news articles or columns by individual candidates in the standard February and April editions. Elections and candidates can be discussed in governance or specific election news.
- > Bespoke emails – candidates cannot send emails specifically about the elections.
- > Email writers cannot endorse a candidate.
- > Email writers cannot mention who is standing for election other than in official elections communications and promotion.
- > General emails – projects or any business as usual work being carried out by candidates can be mentioned or promoted.

**Where candidates are listed in election-related communications, via any medium, staff must ensure that each name listed is given equal prominence and that individuals are listed alphabetically by surname.**

## 5. Elections timeline

It is worth staff making themselves aware of the key dates in the elections timetable:

- > 7 November 2024, nominations open
- > 16 December 2024, nominations close
- > 29 January 2025, Council to review nominations received
- > Early February 2025, deadline for submission of election material to the RCP by candidates
- > Early February 2025, public announcement of candidates in all elections
- > Early February 2025, candidates may begin campaigning in line with guidance
- > February/March 2025 (date to be set), hustings for president to take place (format to be agreed)
- > 17 March 2025, voting opens; Civica Election Services to send voting invitation emails to all eligible voters
- > 14 April 2025 (College Day), online voting closes at midday in all elections; presidential election result announced (successful candidate to take up post as soon as possible thereafter)
- > Late April 2025, public announcement of results in CVP and councillor elections
- > 1 August 2025, successful CVP and councillor candidates take up office

## 6. Who to contact for advice

This guidance is not exhaustive and staff may encounter a situation that the guidance doesn't cover. For further support or information, please contact:

- > Executive director and deputy director, CP&R, Claire Burroughs and Lowri Jackson
- > Head of professional governance, Simon Land
- > Registrar (who has the role of elections returning officer), Dr Omar Mustafa

CP&R, December 2024