

Election arrangements 2026

RCP Council has approved the arrangements for the election cycle in 2026. These will apply to the following elections:

- senior censor/vice president for education and training (VPET) – 1 role
- vice president for Wales (VPW) – 1 role
- members of Council – 4 roles.

Please note that Council has recommended an uncontested presidential election in 2026. However, if challenge is received then these arrangements would also apply to a contested presidential election.

Key points

- The elections will run concurrently.
- The process of the elections, from nomination to distribution of ballot papers and voting, will be digital only.
- Ballot papers will be designed to enable a single transferable vote (STV) system where the electorate ranks their preferred candidates. Fellows (and collegiate members where relevant) may mark as many or as few preferences as they wish. Additional preferences play an important role in STVs, and candidates are often elected on the basis of a large number of second or even third preferences.
- The election count will be supported by [Civica Election Services \(CES\)](#).
- Fellows in good standing are encouraged to stand for the roles of VPET, VPW and councillors. Fellows will need to be nominated by three fellows. Please see the relevant nomination form and role descriptions for wider eligibility criteria. These include:
 - fellows who have held a role are not eligible for re-election to the same office
 - VPET nominees must have been a fellow for at least 5 years by close of nomination period
 - VPW nominees must be physicians (fellows) who work in Wales and must have been a fellow for at least 5 years by close of nomination period. The three nominating fellows must also work in Wales.
 - VPET and VPW candidates must submit a CV to Council who will make a decision on whether candidates have the necessary experience or knowledge as required by the role description
 - Council may choose not to include candidates who are judged to not be suitably qualified
 - Members of the RCP Board of Trustees and senior officers (as defined under Bye-law 9.1) must not nominate any candidate for election other than themselves, with the exception of members of Council acting collectively according to the bye-laws of the RCP
 - please note that honorary fellows are ineligible to stand, nominate or vote in RCP elections.
- Guidance is provided to candidates regarding the election, including positive opportunities for engagement, and appropriate canvassing – see the 'Candidate Code of Practice for RCP elections 2026'.
- A timetable of key dates is included at the end of this document.

Key changes from previous elections

Electorate

[Fellows have recently voted](#) to allow collegiate members* to vote in RCP vice president and councillor elections. Consequently, the electorate will be expanded beyond fellowship for these elections. It should be noted that only fellows and collegiate members who work in Wales are eligible to vote in the election of the vice president for Wales (VPW)

** Collegiate members are subscribing members who have passed the MRCP(UK) exam OR are working in an NHS substantive consultant post OR are resident doctors enrolled in JRCPTB higher specialty training programmes (ST3+).*

Candidate Code of Practice for RCP elections 2026

The updated Code of Practice 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 RCP website and the election web platform – hosted by CES. 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 encouraged to inform and engage the electorate. All canvassing activity should be in line with the Code of Practice and the following guidance:

- RCP Code of Conduct
- RCP social media policy
- Communications and marketing during the 2026 RCP elections period

Election material

Candidates should provide the following materials. This will be placed on the RCP website and the voting platform hosted by CES, as indicated:

- an election statement of 500 words and a photograph (RCP website, CES voting platform)
- a short CV, to a standardised format (CES voting platform only)
- a declaration of interests, to a standardised format (RCP website, CES voting platform)

In addition, a 50-word statement will be requested for use in RCP communications.

Canvassing period

Canvassing will only be possible within a defined 6-week period, which starts 2 weeks before voting opens and continues for the 4 weeks when voting is open. The RCP will announce the lists of candidates at the start of the 6-week period and release the election material, as indicated above, on our website. ***Candidates and their supporters are prohibited from beginning canvassing before this announcement is made. The public announcement of candidates by the RCP should be the first notification to the electorate of who is standing.***

Conduct

- Canvassing, including the use of personal social media, should conform to set standards of behaviour and be in line with RCP social media policy. 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.
- Canvassing by candidates and their supporters that breaches the criteria of acceptability will be challenged and candidates may be requested to amend, remove or clarify social media, webpage or other canvassing content.
- Candidates who fail to conduct themselves accordingly may receive a public warning or be disqualified from an election.
- Candidates may also be subject to the established disciplinary mechanisms of the RCP.

Elections timetable 2025/26

4 December 2025	Nominations open
6 January 2026	Nominations close
28 January 2026	Council to review nominations received and inform nominees of eligibility to stand.
6 February 2026	Deadline for submission of election material to the RCP by candidates.
16 February 2026 (provisional date)	Public announcement of candidates in all elections – including access to candidates' 500-word statement and photograph on the RCP website. Candidates and their supporters are prohibited from beginning canvassing before the announcement is made by the RCP.
2 March 2026	Voting opens, Civica Election Services (CES) to send voting invitation emails to all eligible voters. CES voting platform to include all candidate submitted election material.
30 March 2026 (College Day)	Online voting closes at midday in all elections.
30/31 March 2026	Public announcement of election results
ASAP after results	Successful vice president candidates to take up office with a tenure until 31 July 2029. Council has approved a short extension to the usual 3-year tenure for these roles to cover business need and return elections to the recognised annual timetable.
1 August 2026	Successful councillor candidates to take up office with a tenure until 31 July 2029.

November 2025

Due to be reviewed: annually