

Rules of RCN Congress

Quorum

1. 150 voting members must be present.

Conduct of meeting

2. The conduct of the meeting rests with the Chair.
3. Seating arrangements will be detailed in the Congress brochure, and members should ensure they are seated in the correct area.
4. Distribution of papers and publications in the debating hall is not permitted without the express permission of the Chair.

Order of business

5. The times of starting and adjourning each session will be set out in the order of business.
6. The order and timing of business can be varied at any time with the agreement of a majority of voting members.

Report of Last Congress

7. All members who register to attend Congress will receive a report of the last Congress.
8. Discussion on the report will be limited to matters of accuracy.

Report of Council

9. Congress will receive a report from Council, which will include information about action taken on items debated at the last Congress.
10. Members may ask questions on the report of Council, but a continuation of the previous year's debates will not be allowed. If Congress feels that an item from a previous year is of such importance that it requires further debate, then it should be submitted as a draft emergency agenda item for consideration by the Agenda Committee.

Agenda Committee Reports

11. The Agenda Committee will report regularly in the following ways:
 - (i) The First Report, covering all meetings of the Committee since the last Congress, will be printed in the Congress brochure.
 - (ii) The Second Report, arising from the Agenda Committee meeting immediately before Congress, will be presented following consideration of the first report.
 - (iii) Subsequent reports from meetings during Congress will be presented at appropriate times throughout the week.

Agenda Items

12. All agenda items are within the control of the meeting, and may only be withdrawn with the agreement of a majority of voting members.
13.
 - (i) Resolutions and matters for discussion must be proposed by a voting member from the submitting entity, and resolutions must be seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution.
 - (ii) In the case of Council and the RCN Boards, agenda items will normally be proposed by the Chair or Vice Chair, and resolutions will normally be seconded by another member of Council or the Board. Agenda items submitted by the General Secretary will normally be proposed by the General Secretary.
 - (iii) The proposer (and seconder) will set the scene for the ensuing debate, and may therefore present different facets of the arguments for and against the item.
 - (iv) Resolutions will require a majority of voting members to be carried; there will be no vote on matters for discussion.
 - (v) At the conclusion of debate on a resolution or matter for discussion the proposer will have the right of reply. The right of reply is to sum up and clarify points raised in the debate. New information must not be introduced.

Emergency agenda items

14. Emergency agenda items normally refer to an issue that has arisen since the closing date for the receipt of agenda items. They may be submitted to the Agenda Committee at any time after the closing date, either before or during the course of Congress. Congress receives from the Agenda Committee recommendations on emergency agenda items for inclusion on the agenda, and their position on the agenda.

15. (i) Emergency agenda items can be submitted by any submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution.

(ii) Emergency agenda items submitted from the floor will require to be seconded by a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution.

(iii) Emergency agenda items must be submitted and proposed by a voting member from the submitting entity, and resolutions must be seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution. In the case of Council and the RCN Boards, paragraph 13 (ii) relating to agenda items applies.

(iv) All emergency agenda items will require the agreement of a majority of voting members in order to be accepted onto the agenda.

Amendments to agenda items

16. An agenda item may be amended by a proposal which:
 - (a) removes words
 - (b) adds words
 - (c) replaces words
17. An amendment must not change an agenda item so that its original purpose is lost.
18. Amendments should, whenever possible, be submitted in writing to the Agenda Committee in advance of Congress or during the course of Congress. Amendments may also be proposed from the floor, using a Procedural Item card.
19. The Chair will decide whether the amendment is relevant and whether it should be put to the vote.
20. An amendment must be proposed by a voting member of a submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution, and seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution. To be accepted, an amendment will require the agreement of a majority of voting members.
21. Once an amendment has been proposed and seconded, no further amendments can be proposed until the vote on that amendment has been taken.
22. Once an amendment has been accepted, the agenda item is amended immediately and replaces the previous version.

Procedural Items

23. Procedural Item cards may only be used by voting members of submitting entities, as defined in the Congress Constitution. The Chair will recognise the procedural item card at an appropriate time, and will decide whether a procedural item is put to the vote. The Chair may ask the proposer of the procedural item to clarify the reasons for its introduction, and will take into consideration views from the floor.
24. A procedural item must be proposed by a voting member of a submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution, and seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution. To be passed, a procedural item will require the agreement of a majority of voting members.
25. Procedural items are:

(a) To proceed to next business;

Before a vote is taken, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the procedural item.

The vote on the procedural item is then taken.

If passed, the proposer has a right of reply to the agenda item. Discussion on the agenda item then ends immediately. No vote is taken on the agenda item.

If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.

(b) That the vote is taken;

Before a vote is taken, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the procedural item.

The vote on the procedural item is then taken.

If passed, the proposer has a right of reply to the agenda item. Discussion on the agenda item then ends immediately, and the vote on the agenda item is taken.

If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.

(c) To adjourn the debate;

Before a vote is taken, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the procedural item.

The vote on the procedural item is then taken.

If passed, the current debate is then adjourned, to be concluded at a later time during Congress.

If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.

(d) To refer the agenda item to Council for further consideration;

Before a vote is taken, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the procedural item.

The vote on the procedural item is then taken.

If passed, the proposer of the agenda item has a right of reply to the agenda item. Debate then stops and the agenda item is referred to Council for further consideration.

If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.

(e) To change the order of agenda items.

Before a vote is taken on the procedural item, the proposer of the procedural item must specify the new order of agenda items.

If passed, the new order of agenda items will take effect.

If lost, the order of agenda items remains unchanged.

Points Of Order

26. A point of order card is used to challenge the conduct of the meeting, or to seek clarification from the Chair. As soon as the Chair sees a point of order card, anyone speaking may be interrupted.
27. Point of order cards may be used by anyone who is registered and attending Congress.

Speaking

28. Speakers will first state their name and whether they are:
 - (a) Attending as a voting member of a submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution;or
 - (b) Attending as a non-voting member.
29. All speakers will address their remarks to the Chair.

Voting

30. Changes to the Congress Constitution and these Rules require a two-thirds majority. All other votes require a majority.

31. Votes will be cast and counted using an electronic system. In the event of a system failure, the Chair will determine an alternative method to be used.
32. In the case of an equality of votes, a second vote will immediately be taken. If there is still an equality of votes, the Chair will have a casting vote.

Time Limits

33. The time for debating an agenda item will be 25 minutes. Proposers of agenda items will be allocated 5 minutes. All subsequent speakers on an agenda item will be allocated 2 minutes. Persons invited by the Chair to provide supplementary information will be allocated 5 minutes. The proposer of any agenda item will be allocated 2 minutes for the right of reply.

Varying time limits

34. Voting members of submitting entities, as defined in the Congress Constitution, may propose a variation to time limits using a procedural item card. This must be seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution. To be passed, the variation to time limits will require the agreement of a majority of voting members.
35. The Chair may, exceptionally, grant an extension of time to a speaker.

Visitors

36. The Agenda Committee will approve and report to Congress the names of visitors attending the meeting.
37. Accredited members of the press/media will be admitted to the meeting.

Temporary Chair

38. In the absence of the Chair of Congress, the Vice-Chair may preside, or the Chair of Council and members of the Agenda Committee will recommend to Congress the appointment of a temporary Chair.

Suspension of these Rules

39. Voting members of submitting entities, as defined in the Congress Constitution, may propose the temporary suspension of any of these Rules using a procedural item card. This must be seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity, as defined by the Congress Constitution. The Agenda Committee may also recommend, in its reports to Congress, the temporary suspension of any of these

Rules. To be passed, the suspension of any Rule will require the agreement of a majority of voting members.

Amendment of these Rules

40. These Rules remain in force until they are amended by a proposal passed by a majority of two-thirds of members present and voting at Congress, and ratified by Council.
41. The following submitting entities have the right to propose or second amendments to the Rules:

Branches
National Forums
The Association of Nursing Students
The UK Stewards Committee
The UK Safety Representatives Committee
The UK Learning Representatives Committee
42. Voting members of the submitting entities listed at paragraph 41 above may propose amendment of the Rules using a procedural item card. This must be seconded by a voting member of a different submitting entity listed at paragraph 41 above.
43. Council may also propose an amendment to the Rules, and if passed by Congress it becomes immediately effective.

Glossary of Terms in Congress Constitution and Rules

Abstentions	The number of people abstaining from a vote is displayed on the screen after each vote, along with those voting for and against. However, when calculating the percentage votes for and the percentage votes against a resolution, any abstentions are not included in these percentages. This is because abstentions are not votes.
Agenda Items	Items formulated as either resolutions or matters for discussion are submitted to the Agenda Committee for consideration. The Agenda Committee decide which items to recommend for inclusion in the agenda, which is then submitted to Council for formal ratification.
Constitution	This is the key document that defines what Congress is, its purpose, what it can do, and who can take part. It also sets out the role of the Agenda Committee and the rules for electing the Chair and Vice Chair of Congress and the Agenda Committee.
Emergency Agenda Items	Emergency items normally refer to an issue that has arisen since the closing date for the receipt of agenda items. They may be submitted to the Agenda Committee at any time after the closing date, either before or during the course of Congress. The Agenda Committee will recommend which of these emergency items will be debated, and their position on the agenda during the week.
Matter for Discussion	This is an item worded just to raise an issue for discussion in the Congress arena - it seeks views rather than action.
Non-voting member	A member who may speak in debates and raise points of order, but who may not vote, nor propose or second any item (including amendments and procedural items).
Resolution	This is an item whose wording indicates that specific action should be taken - for example an item that 'urges Council' to take action on an issue.
Rules	The Congress Rules set out the rules for running the meeting. They are the rules that the Chair uses to make sure the meeting runs as smoothly as possible, for the benefit of all those at the meeting. All members attending the meeting should understand and follow these rules, so that everyone taking part gets as much as possible out of Congress.

Single
Transferable
Vote

This is the method now used by the RCN and most other comparable organisations to conduct elections. The method ensures that the successful candidates have the confidence of the majority, by letting members *number* the candidates in the order of their preference, instead of using X votes. If any candidate is the first choice of enough voters (a quota is calculated when the number of valid votes is known), she/he is elected. For subsequent places, or if no candidate achieves election on the basis of first preferences, each vote for the candidate with the fewest "1's" is transferred to whichever of the remaining candidates is marked as the next choice on each ballot paper - as if a second ballot were being held with the bottom candidate eliminated.

Voting

There are two types of majority:

Simple majority - means that to be passed, more than half (50%+) of the total number of voting members present must register a vote in favour.

Two-thirds majority - means that to be passed, at least two thirds (66.6%) of the total number of voting members present must register a vote in favour.

Voting member

A member attending with voting rights for a particular branch, forum or other entity.