



Royal College of Nursing Policies

<p>Document Name:</p> <p>Policy and process for running meetings of RCN Council, Boards, Committees, and their sub-committees or groups</p>
<p>Purpose of Document:</p> <p>To provide RCN office holders and staff with clear rules and processes for meetings</p>
<p>Committees, Groups, Meetings to which this policy applies:</p> <p>RCN Council and its standing committees, Professional Nursing Committee, Trade Union Committee, country/regional boards and any other committee set up by Council under the provisions of its Royal Charter.</p>
<p>Author/Authors: RCN Governance Support Team</p>
<p>Description of Policy</p> <p>The policy covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The calling of and notices of meetingsScheduled and definitions of special meetings and briefings/workshopsMeeting papers, reports and minutesChairing, quorum and adjournmentOrder of businessMembers' itemsClosure of meetings and votingAttendance and decision-makingConfidentiality and private meetingsAdvice provided by staff and external advisersObserversMeeting etiquetteMinutes of General MeetingsReporting out (current arrangements)Minute writing guidance
<p>Cross Reference:</p> <p>Royal Charter and Standing Orders Respect Charter</p>
<p>Circulated to:</p> <p>Executive Team</p>

Governance Support Committee
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Department responsible for Review: RCN Governance Support Team

POLICY SUMMARY:

As an RCN office holder or staff member you should:	As an organisation we will:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarise yourself with this policy and follow it. • Refer to any guidance or legal positions as referenced in the policy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that this policy and supporting information and processes are clear and accessible • Identify a team or individual responsible for keeping this policy under review and in line with any relevant updated guidance. • Review and/or audit this policy and associated processes and procedures at least every 3 years . • NOT interpret this policy in a way that stifles collaboration and innovation on behalf of the RCN and its members. • Take appropriate action if this policy is breached.

Policy and process for running in person, online or hybrid meetings of RCN Council, Boards, Committees, and their sub-committees or groups

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This policy sets out the rules and standards expected for RCN meetings of Council, country and regional boards, committees and any associated sub-committees or groups.
- 1.2 The express provisions of the Royal Charter, Rules, Standing Orders and Regulations always take precedence in any decisions relating to the policy and process for running meetings.
- 1.3 It is a fundamental principle that reasonable adjustments are made in respect of all RCN meetings to ensure equity of access and the inclusion of all members who attend.

2. DATES OF MEETINGS

- 2.1 The expected frequency of ordinary meetings of Council, boards and the key committees is determined by Council annually for the following year.
- 2.2 The Chair may for good reason alter a date of a meeting of the Council, board or committee which has been scheduled or schedule an additional meeting. They should give as much notice as is practicable of the alteration in date or cancellation.

3. SPECIAL MEETINGS AND BRIEFINGS OR WORKSHOPS

- 3.1 A special meeting is one which has been called in addition to the previously agreed calendar of meetings.
- 3.2 A special meeting may be called by the Chair, the Vice Chair (if the Chair is not available), half of the members of the Council, Board or Committee, or its secretary by giving notice in writing to the members of the Council, board or committee.

- 3.3 As much notice as is practicable shall be given of the date of a special meeting. However, the notice period should not be less than 48 hours unless the business is so urgent that it cannot wait.
- 3.4 Pursuant to Standing Order 19.1 which states that there should be at least three clear days' notice of a meeting of the Council it is recognised that this is not always practicable in the case of very urgent business. Consequently, any decision made by the Council at such meeting must be formally ratified at the next scheduled meeting of the Council.
- 3.5 The business of a special meeting shall be as specified by the person or persons calling it and no other business shall be taken at the meeting. The business must be within the remit of the Council, Board or Committee.
- 3.6 A briefing is a meeting which is called by staff for the purposes of updating the Council, board or committee on a specific issue or issues. Workshops may also be called to explore matters in greater depth and/or for learning and development purposes. Quorum and notice requirements do not apply and notes of the briefing/workshop may or may not be made depending on the circumstances. Formal decisions cannot be taken at such briefings or workshops.

4. MEETING PAPERS, SUMMARY REPORTS AND MINUTES

- 4.1 The person acting as secretary to the meeting will issue the agenda and supporting papers for any meeting at least seven days before the meeting, but later publication of the papers will not invalidate the proceedings of the meeting.
- 4.2 Subject to regular review all agendas, papers and minutes will be issued using the electronic committee management system.
- 4.3 Audio or video recordings of meetings may be made in order to aid the writing of minutes and to provide absolute clarity in the case of dispute. Any audio or video recording must be made in accordance with the latest RCN guidance and policy on cyber security.
- 4.4 Draft minutes of a meeting will normally be circulated to members within 21 days of the meeting.

- 4.5 The secretariat, chairs and staff leads who sign off minutes should work together to achieve these timelines.
- 4.6 Minutes will be treated as draft until signed off at the following meeting.
- 4.7 Minutes (except for those of confidential business – see section 16) of Council, board and committee meetings which are listed on the Governance page of the website will be published on the RCN website following once they have been approved at the following meeting.
- 4.8 Minutes will be held on the RCN website for a period of 12 months following which they will be available on request via the Governance Team or Board Administrators.
- 4.9 A table setting out the current agreed arrangements for the publication of minutes and reports for Council, the boards and each committee is appended to the policy and process document and will be reviewed annually.
- 4.10 Guidance on the writing of minutes is set out at Appendix B
- 4.11 Papers will, as far as reasonably be practicable, provided in alternative formats to support those with disabilities.

5. CHAIRING OF MEETINGS

- 5.1 Meetings will be chaired by the Chair or in their absence by the Vice Chair.
- 5.2 If both are absent the members present will choose one of their number to chair the meeting.
- 5.3 If the Vice Chair is absent the members present will choose one of their number to act as Vice Chair for the meeting.

6. QUORUM

- 6.1 The quorum of meetings shall normally be half of the members (rounded up if an odd number) unless expressly provided for in the terms of reference for a particular body.

7. ADJOURNMENT

- 7.1 The Chair may adjourn a meeting to later the same day or to a future fixed day and time and shall do so if directed by the meeting. The Chair shall also decide whether it is appropriate to adjourn the meeting if a quorum is not present.
- 7.2 No business shall be transacted at an adjourned meeting other than business left unfinished at the meeting which was adjourned.
- 7.3 If a meeting is adjourned for less than seven days, no notice need be given of the adjourned meeting or of the business to be transacted at the adjourned meeting.
- 7.4 If a meeting is adjourned for seven days or more, seven days' notice of the adjourned meeting and of the business to be transacted at the adjourned meeting shall be given to the members.

8. ORDER OF BUSINESS AT MEETINGS

- 8.1 The order of business shall be as directed by the Chair.
- 8.2 At the start of each meeting the Chair should remind everyone of the importance of adhering to the RCN Respect Charter.
- 8.3 The minutes of the preceding meeting shall be taken as read and subject to any correction, confirmed.
- 8.4 Any conflicts of interest in items on the agenda must be declared at the beginning of the meeting and recorded in the minutes. Appropriate action must be taken in respect of any conflicts declared – for example, a member might be recused from a specific item on the agenda.
- 8.5 Items of other business should normally be declared at the start of the meeting and taken where appropriate on the agenda in the opinion of the Chair.
- 8.6 Where new items of business arise from discussions during the meeting, these should be raised at the earliest opportunity with the Chair.

9. Agenda items at Council meetings

Items proposed by Members of the College

- 9.1 Members of the College may, subject to this policy, submit proposals for items to be considered at such Council meetings as the Council shall specify in advance.
- 9.2 Unless otherwise specified, those meetings will be the two-day Council meetings held in each quarter of the year, during sections of such meetings with are “open sessions”.
- 9.3 In order to submit items for consideration, a Member must notify the Governance Team at such address as the Council shall make available to Members from time to time, in such format as the Governance Team may specify from time to time.

Such notice must:

- 9.3.1 Be received not less than 30 days before the date of the meeting;
 - 9.3.2 State the issue to be considered, brief background to the issue and, if applicable, the decision the Member wishes the Council to make;
 - 9.3.3 Not include any material which is frivolous, vexatious, or defamatory of any person.
- 9.4 Notices received which comply with this paragraph 9 shall be placed on the agenda for the relevant Council meeting. The Chair shall have the discretion as to where the item shall sit on the agenda for the meeting, and the time allotted to such item. The Council shall deal with the item in a way they decide is in the best interests of the College and the member/s submitting the item shall have the right to present the item to the Council during the meeting.
 - 9.5 Following the conclusion of the meeting, if the member/s was not present, the Governance Team shall notify them of the Council’s decision in relation to their item.

Items proposed by Members of the Council

- 9.6 Members of the Council may propose agenda items at any time before notice of the meeting is sent out by contacting the Governance Team. Items received after that date may be

considered for inclusion on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.

10. MEMBERS' ITEMS AT MEETINGS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

- 10.1 Agenda Items may be proposed by the Chair and individual members of the Board or committee.
- 10.2 An item proposed by such member will be included on the agenda for the meeting if notice of the item has been received by the secretary to the committee and agreed by the Chair before the agenda for the meeting has been circulated.
- 10.3 An item received after the agenda for the meeting has been circulated will only be taken in the case of urgency as determined by the Chair.
- 10.4 Items proposed by other members will be considered for inclusion on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.

11. CLOSURE OF DEBATES

- 11.1 Any member of the Council, board or committee can propose that either the matter be put to a vote or that the meeting should proceed to the next business.
- 11.2 If agreed that there should be a vote the Chair will ask the presenter of the paper to speak before the vote is taken.

12. VOTING

- 12.1 The Chair of a meeting will seek to reach a consensus and if satisfied that such consensus exists may, unless a vote is called, treat the matter as agreed.
- 12.2 The Chair or any member of the Council, board or committee may call for a vote on any question.
- 12.3 A vote will be decided by a majority of the members present and voting unless the Charter and Standing Orders provides otherwise.

- 12.4 Voting shall be by a show of hands unless the members agree that there should be a secret ballot.
- 12.5 In the event of an equality of voting the Chair shall have a second or casting vote.
- 12.6 The outcome of the vote will be recorded in the minutes.
- 12.7 After a decision is made the members of the Council, board or committee has a corporate and collective responsibility to uphold that position.

13. TELEPHONE AND VIDEO ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS.

- 13.1 Any member who participates in a meeting by telephone or video link shall for all purposes be treated as present at the meeting during such time as they are in such telephone or video contact.
- 13.2 Members not physically able to attend in-person meetings will always be offered the option to attend virtually.

14. DECISIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

- 14.1 The Chair will decide when an item is taken outside a meeting. These decisions shall be actioned as if they had been made at a meeting provided that:
 - Reasonable notice is given of the matter to be decided
 - Notice of the decision to be taken is contained in a written document and a written document is returned in response. An email sent by a member shall be treated as a written document.
 - The decision must be agreed by a simple majority of all the members on Council Board or Committee unless the Charter and Standing Orders provide otherwise.
 - The decision must be recorded in the decision log for Council, Board or Committee and in the minutes of the next Council, Board or Committee meeting.

15. DELEGATION

- 15.1 Under Charter Rule 2.1 the Council can delegate any of its powers to another committee.
- 15.2 The delegated committee (which includes Boards) has the power to make decisions on behalf of the Council in accordance with their terms of reference and the Scheme of Delegation. Anything else must be decided by the Council.
- 15.3 Meetings of committees and Boards therefore must only address matters which have been delegated to them.

16. TRANSPARENCY OF DECISION MAKING

- 16.1 Transparent decisions that are clearly explained are more likely to be understood. Decisions can be better understood by members and other stakeholders, if it is clear:
- who made the decision,
 - when it was made,
 - what was the context in which it was made
 - what were the options considered
 - why a particular decision was chosen
- 16.2 The minutes of the meeting should aim to capture all the above points in respect of recording decisions.

17. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

- 17.1 It is a fundamental principle that RCN Council, Boards and Committees will be as open as possible to members in their proceedings.
- 17.2 Agendas, papers and minutes of meetings are available to members on the RCN website in order that governance decision making is as transparent as possible.
- 17.3 However there will be situations when information discussed at meetings will be confidential. This will include:
- matters of a management, planning, strategy or forecasting nature
 - matters which relate personally to staff, individually or collectively, or to individual members or groups of members, or personally to any other individuals
 - sensitive financial or commercial information which is provided to the RCN in confidence
 - information which could be of advantage to a competitor

- a complaint
- legal advice or matters covered by legal professional privilege
- those when disclosure could jeopardise the outcome
- information which could expose the RCN to risk

17.4 All confidential papers will clearly state which of the above reasons make it confidential and will be clearly marked as confidential.

17.5 Papers marked confidential papers, and the information within them, will be sent securely to members and should not be copied, forwarded or disclosed to any other person (except in the proper course of a Council, committee or board members' duties, or as authorised or required by law or as authorised by Council)

17.6 Council, committee and board members are responsible for protecting the confidentiality of the confidential Information and shall:

- Use their best endeavours to prevent the use or communication of any confidential Information by any person, company or organisation (except in the proper course of their duties, as required by law or as authorised by Council); and
- inform the Chair of Council and General Secretary & Chief Executive immediately on becoming aware, or suspecting, that any such person, company or organisation knows or has used any confidential Information.

18. PRIVATE MEETINGS

18.1 On occasion the Council, Board or Committee may wish to meet in private session.

18.2 In the light of the findings of the review by Bruce Carr KC into culture at the RCN (2022) any decisions at such meetings should be formally ratified before execution at a meeting at which staff, and if relevant external advisers, with appropriate expertise are present and can advise on the decision accordingly (see section 18).

19. ADVICE PROVIDED BY STAFF AND/OR EXTERNAL ADVISERS TO THE COUNCIL, COMMITTEE OR BOARD

19.1 Staff and/or external advisers with appropriate expertise should always have the opportunity to present their opinion before any decision of the Council, committee or board is taken.

- 19.2 In a situation where such advice is not accepted the advice, and reasons for not accepting that advice, will be fully documented in the minutes of the meeting.
- 19.3 Should the responsible director conclude this position poses a risk to the organisation and its members, the circumstances will be brought to the attention of the General Secretary & Chief Executive who will assess the seriousness of the position and advise the Chair of Council accordingly.
- 19.4 Should a resolved position not be reached in the case of a committee or board the matter will be escalated to Council for a determination on the way forward.

20. ADMISSION TO MEETINGS AND OBSERVERS

- 20.1 Meetings are normally only attended by members of the Council, Board or Committee and the staff supporting that group. However, the Chair can agree that other members or staff may attend as observers. This may be on a regular or an occasional basis.
- 20.2 Observers may attend confidential and/or open sessions of meetings at the discretion of the Chair. Examples of “observers” could include Board members attending Council, new staff members attending Council or a country/regional board meeting, members of a Reps Committee attending Council.
- 20.3 At the meetings observers may speak only if invited to do so by the Chair. They cannot vote.
- 20.4 Papers for confidential meetings are provided to observers at the discretion of the Chair.
- 20.5 The annual calendar of meetings is published on the RCN website and members who wish to attend as observers should email governance.support@rcn.org.uk at least two weeks before the meeting takes place.

21. ACCESS TO PAPERS

- 21.1 Members of Council, Boards and Committees shall receive:
- meeting papers for the time they are a member of Council Boards or Committee or, on request, prior to the time they became a member of that body

- papers circulated to or produced by any sub-committee of that body.
- 21.2 In the case of Council members they are entitled to be sent papers circulated to or produced by any Board or Committee delegated by them under Charter Rule 2.1
22. RECORDING ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS
- 22.1 Attendance at meetings is recorded in the minutes of each meeting.
- 22.2 A summary of members' attendance at each meeting shall be published annually on the RCN website for Council, boards and committees.
- 22.3 Regular and continued absence at meetings by a member will count as a failure to discharge their duties and may result in them being removed from the committee or board
23. MEETING MANAGEMENT, BREAKS AND ETIQUETTE
- 23.1 Agendas should include approximate timings of agenda items.
- 23.2 Chairs should be provided with a brief/chair's agenda containing notes to assist them with chairing the meeting.
- 23.3 Chairs should make conscious efforts to ensure all participants are included and participate equally. If it is a hybrid meeting the Chair should ensure online and in-person attendees are enabled to participate equally.
- 23.4 The law says employers must plan work so there are breaks or changes of activity for employees who are display screen equipment (DSE) users. Therefore, for all meetings where employees are using DSE (whether online or in person) breaks must be scheduled in.
- 23.5 Chairs and staff leads must ensure that breaks are taken in line with HSE guidance and that specific times are allocated and adhered to within the agenda. (Note - HSE Guidance states that short more frequent breaks are better than longer less frequent breaks).
- 23.6 Catering offered at meetings should respect specific dietary needs including avoidance of allergens and reflecting cultural and religious requirements.

23.7 Etiquette refers to codes of behaviour an individual ought to follow while attending meetings and discussions at the workplace.

23.8 Our Respect Charter outlines how all RCN stakeholders, including staff, members and customers, must approach working with each other at all times. and this includes attendance at meetings.

23.9 The RCN defines unacceptable behaviour as: Behaviour directed towards a person that in any way attempts to belittle, threaten or intimidate, including verbal, written and physical abuse, and harassment.

23.10 The following bullet points are designed to assist constructive meeting participation:

- State views and ask genuine questions. This enables participants to shift from monologues and arguments to a conversation in which participants can understand everyone's point of view and be curious about the differences in their views.
- Share all relevant information. This enables the participants to develop a comprehensive, common set of information with which to solve problems and make decisions.
- Use specific examples and agree on what important words mean. This ensures that all participants are using the same words to mean the same thing.
- Explain reasoning and intent. This enables participants to understand how others reached their conclusions and see where members' reasoning differs.
- Focus on interests, not positions. By moving from arguing about solutions to identifying needs that must be met in order to solve a problem, you reduce unproductive conflict and increase your ability to develop solutions that all are committed to.
- Test assumptions and inferences. This ensures participants are making decisions with valid information rather than with participants' private stories about what others believe and what their motives are.

24. MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETINGS

24.1 The rules for meetings of members in general meetings (the Annual General meeting or Extraordinary General meetings) are set out in the Standing Orders except for the approval of minutes whereby the provision below applies.

24.2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting are approved by members at the following year's Annual General Meeting. They will be published in draft form on the RCN website as soon as possible and not more than 3 months after the date of the meeting.

24.3 Minutes of an Extraordinary General Meeting will be published in draft form on the RCN website as soon as possible and not more than 3 months after the date of the meeting. At the same time a mechanism for members to feedback comments and corrections to the draft minutes will be published on the website. Comments and corrections will be invited for a period of two months after which Council will receive a report of comments and corrections submitted together with a final draft of the minutes to approve at their next meeting.

First approved by RCN Council 17 July 2019: revised and approved by RCN Council on 27 July 2023.

Appendix A – Meeting documents and publications, as at June 2023

RCN Governance Body	Agenda, Papers and Minutes	Documents circulated and social media usage
Council	Agendas, papers and minutes and recordings of open meetings published on website	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary report circulated to Country and Regional Boards and bodies which report to Council 2. Summary report, including report of confidential business, published on the RCN website
Professional Nursing Committee	Meeting agendas published on the website	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary Report produced for Council and circulated to Country and Regional Boards and bodies which report to the Committee 2. Summary report published on the website 3. Key messages Tweeted
Trade Union Committee	Due to the confidential nature of discussions, meeting agendas are not published on the website	Summary Report produced for Council and circulated to Country and Regional Boards and bodies which report to the Committee
Audit Committee	Due to the confidential nature of discussions, meeting agendas are not published on the website	Summary report produced for Council

Finance & Investment Committee	Due to the confidential nature of discussions, meeting agendas are not published on the website	Summary report produced for Council
Governance Support Committee	Due to the confidential nature of discussions, meeting agendas are not published on the website	Summary report produced for Council
Remuneration Committee	Due to the confidential nature of discussions, meeting agendas are not published on the website	Summary report produced for Council
International Committee		Summary report produced for Council
Fellows Co-ordinating Committee		Summary reports are not published at present
Students Committee	Meeting agendas published on the website	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary Report produced for Council and circulated to Country and Regional Boards. 2. Summary report published on the website 3. Committee members tweet key messages
Nursing Support Workers Committee		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summary Report produced for Council and circulated to Country and Regional Boards 2. Summary report published on the website 3. Key messages Tweeted and committee

		members post key messages on social media
UK Reps Committees (Learning Reps, Safety Reps and Stewards)		Summary Report produced for Trade Union Committee and circulated to Country and Regional Boards
Forums Governance Group and Forum Chairs Committee		Verbal updates to Professional Nursing Committee which are then reported to Council through the PNC Summary reports

Guidance for minute taking at RCN meetings

1. The following is a short guide on key points for minute takers at the RCN to ensure consistency. It is based on best practice recommended by the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators.
2. Minutes should be written in the past tense and in reported speech format. Reported speech is speech which tells you what someone said but does not use the person's actual words. Use the conditional tense for future action. For example, write "*The Chair said that she would go to the meeting*" not "*The Chair says she will go to the meeting*".
3. They should be written in plain English. However, in minute-writing use of the passive voice is often preferred as it provides a more objective and less emotional tone. It also enables you to say what happened without referring to specific individuals. For example: *It was highlighted that membership numbers are still rising* (passive) rather than *Jane highlighted that membership numbers are still rising* (active). Nonetheless, minutes should be easy for the reader to follow and understand the points being raised.
4. Minutes should not be a verbatim record but should summarise key points of the discussion and focus on the decision. In other words it is not necessary to report everything that everyone said as that is time consuming to both write and to read.
5. With regard to the decision it is important to focus on the reason for the decision and include sufficient background information for future reference.
6. Recommended practice for structure of a minute is as follows:
 - introduction
 - summary
 - record of decisions made / conclusion / actions required
7. Enough context and information should be included to withstand scrutiny and facilitate understanding in the future. So, if you are referring to a project or campaign make sure it is referenced in full. For example, don't just say *Safe staffing was the main subject of*

discussion when you mean The RCN's Staffing for Safe and Effective Care campaign was the main subject of discussion.

8. Use of abbreviations should be limited and always spelt out in full the first time.
9. Minutes should always include a list of who attended the meeting and who sent apologies.
10. Only name individuals in the body of the minutes when:
 - they are the person presenting the item
 - have declared a potential or actual conflict of interest
 - are the subject of discussion
 - ask for a particular point, or their dissent, to be noted in their name
 - it is relevant in the context of the discussion; in which case it is best just to use the person's role title – for example, *The Director of Communications highlighted the media risks* or *The Honorary Treasurer confirmed there were sufficient funds.*
11. Gender based titles (Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss etc) are not recommended good practice as the use of these is very much a personal choice and incorrect use may cause offence. However, Queen's Honours and professional titles (such as Dame, Sir, Professor, Dr) can be used. It is best practice not to use honorary titles (such as Professor for an honorary Professorship) as this could be misleading.
12. Minutes should allocate actions as they provide evidence of discharging duties, ensure accountability and that agreed actions are not overlooked. Relevant action logs should be updated after meetings to ensure actions are followed up on
13. Confidential information and legally privileged advice may be discussed at meetings but the minutes should clearly separate these discussion from the rest of the minutes and marked as private and confidential.
14. It may be helpful to record any breaks or interruptions in the minutes and for the Chair to draw attention to any pre-meeting comments received from members who were unable to attend.
15. Additionally, the RCN has a style guide which is a set of standards for the writing, formatting, and design of RCN related documents. The style guide can be found on the RCN intranet.