

Terms of Reference: Professional Nursing Committee

1. Name of Committee

The Royal College of Nursing Professional Nursing Committee.

2. Purpose

The RCN Council has established the Professional Nursing Committee in accordance with Schedule Rule 2.1 of the *Royal Charter* to ensure delivery of the following Royal Charter objects:

- 3.1 promote the science and art of nursing and education and training in the profession of nursing;
- 3.2 promote the advance of nursing as a profession in all or any of its branches;
- 3.3 promote the professional standing and interests of members.

The functions defined as the professional nursing activities required to deliver these objects include education, research, standards in nursing practice and oversight of the work of the forums, public policy and associated political affairs and lobbying.

The main purpose of the Professional Nursing Committee is to carry out governance functions as aligned to the professional nursing activity of the RCN as delegated by Council.

3. Delegated responsibilities

- 3.1 The role of the Professional Nursing Committee is to support RCN Council to discharge its governance duties as delegated below:
 - a) to oversee the governance arrangements, including those of RCN forums and Fellows, underpinning the relevant aspects of the professional nursing activities that will deliver on the strategic priorities of the RCN Council.
 - b) to provide advice, make recommendations to RCN Council, and/or approve decisions on professional nursing matters in line with the delegated authority provided by Council, described within the overall scheme of delegation* and set out at paragraph 3.2 below. This includes recommendations on changes to agreed policy and positions as well as new policy and positions.

- c) to contribute the Committee's perspective to the development of RCN overall strategy and planning.
- d) to promote and lead active engagement with members across the UK on professional nursing matters and to ensure their views are fed into the RCN's professional nursing activity.
- e) through ex officio membership of their country or regional boards (or in the case of the Nursing Support Worker member and the student member through ex officio membership of their respective representative committees) Committee members will ensure the strategic priorities of the RCN Council are enacted in relation to professional nursing activities in those constituencies, and to feedback information from those constituencies to the Committee to inform priorities and decision-making.
- f) to ensure that the RCN works in partnership with external stakeholders in its professional nursing activity and in line with the decisions of RCN Council.
- g) to monitor and review the RCN's performance as a professional nursing body, and its associated activities to support members in respect of their status as a member of the nursing profession, against the key performance indicators, annual plan and budget agreed by the RCN Council.
- h) to review, monitor and report risk to the RCN Council in relation to the RCN's professional nursing activity.
- i) to work collaboratively with RCN staff and others engaged in the RCN's professional nursing activities, to include contributing to wider public health and social care matters impacting the whole RCN, and to constructively consider the professional advice provided by staff in order to ensure accountability in decision making.
- j) to champion and support the RCN in its role as a professional nursing body.
- k) to uphold and respect the decisions of RCN Council and to exercise corporate responsibility.
- l) to support and implement the priorities identified in the RCN's equity, diversity and inclusion strategy as appropriate, and ensure that principles of EDI are embedded within the Committee's work plan and the ways of working of the Committee.
- m) to review Congress progress reports on resolutions. When the report is to be presented to the members, the Committee will recommend to Council to approve.

- n) to develop and implement within the Committee a positive learning and evaluation culture undertaking regular Committee and individual member self-assessment reviews as well as relevant learning and development to ensure members are effective in their committee role, and to ensure they can provide relevant advice and expertise.
- o) to promote and role model behaviours in line with the RCN's *Code of Conduct, Respect Charter and Regulation on Fit and Proper Persons*.

3.2. Decision making routes for the Professional Nursing Committee are set out below:

a) Professional Nursing Committee is final decision maker for:

- Standards in nursing practice
- Education (Object 3.1 in RCN charter). This will include pre-registration, post-registration and education of the nursing support workforce
- RCN research strategy
- Policy related to work as a Royal College (where policy is specifically related to professional matters), for example in relation to safe staffing
- Member engagement on professional nursing matters
- Overall governance of RCN forums, including establishment and disestablishment of forums
- Approval of terms of reference for those representative committees reporting to PNC (*Forums Co-ordinating Committee, Forum Chairs Group and Fellows Co-ordinating Committee*)

b) The Committee will review and recommend all other decisions to RCN Council. For example, UK wide health and social care positions and policies.

4. Reporting and accountability

4.1 The RCN Professional Nursing Committee is responsible and accountable to RCN Council for all aspects of its governance responsibilities.

4.2 Formal minutes of meetings will be kept and approved at subsequent meetings of the Professional Nursing Committee

4.3 In accordance with Rule 2.3 in the *Royal Charter* the deliberations of the Committee shall be reported to Council and any resolution passed or decision taken shall be reported to Council.

- 4.4 Key messages from the Committee's meetings will be disseminated to country and regional boards, the Forum Chairs Group, Forums Co-ordinating Committee, Fellows Co-ordinating Committee, and to the wider membership via the RCN website and other communications channels as appropriate.
- 4.5 A summary report of meetings of the Committee will be included in Council papers for information. Associated papers will be available to Council in the RCN's electronic council and committee meetings repository (as at May 2024, the RCN uses ModGov).
- 4.6 The Chair of PNC, or in their absence, the Vice Chair of PNC, will attend Council meetings to present regular updates on the work of the Professional Nursing Committee and for any other item that the Council deems appropriate.
- 4.7 The following Committees shall report to and be accountable to the Professional Nursing Committee, who will review and approve their Terms of Reference (see 3.2):
- Forum Chairs Group
 - Forums Co-ordinating Committee
 - Fellows Co-ordinating Committee
- 4.8 The Committee is responsible for ensuring oversight and monitoring of the performance of the committees that report to it.
- 4.9 The Committee may set up such sub-committees or other groups as it thinks fit to further its work, but these shall be approved by Council.

5. Meetings and quorum

- 5.1 The RCN Professional Nursing Committee will meet at least 6 times a year. The dates of the meetings shall be agreed by RCN Council in the year preceding that in which the meetings are to be held.
- 5.2 Special ad hoc meetings may also be called if the business of the RCN Professional Nursing Committee is of such urgency that it cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting.
- 5.3 The quorum for decision-making is half the Committee.
- 5.4 The rules and procedures in the *RCN Meetings Policy and Process* apply to this Committee.

6. Membership

- 6.1 There shall be 14 members of the Committee as follows:

- One member in the Nurse category of membership from each of the RCN's twelve countries and regions.
- One member from the Nursing Support Worker category of RCN membership.
- One member from the Student category of RCN membership.

6.2 Further eligibility requirements are set out in the *RCN Elections Policy* and in the specific election procedure for each election which is held.

7. Observers

7.1 Observers may attend meetings at the discretion of the Chair. Observers can speak and/or participate in the meeting only with the permission of, or at the request of, the Chair.

7.2 Individuals attending in observer status will receive those papers relating to the areas relevant to their observer role.

7.3 Observers will not usually attend private or confidential sessions of the Professional Nursing Committee.

8. Election/appointment to the committee

8.1 Elections/appointments to the committee will be conducted in accordance with the *RCN's Elections and Appointments Policies* and with the specific procedure for each election/appointment.

8.2 Half the Committee will be elected every two years.

9. Terms of office

9.1 Terms of office will be for four years except for casual vacancies which will be to the end of the vacant term.

9.2 Members of the Committee are asked to commit to serving their full term once elected and not stand for another elected or appointed RCN role if that meant they would need to stand down from the Professional Nursing Committee mid-term.

9.3 The *RCN Regulation on Terms of Office* shall apply in respect of serving more than one term.

10. Mid-Term (casual) vacancies

10.1 A casual vacancy on the RCN Professional Nursing Committee shall be filled in accordance with the *RCN's Process for Filling Casual Vacancies*.

11. Chair and vice chair

- 11.1 In accordance with Rule 2.2 in the *Royal Charter* the RCN Professional Nursing Committee shall have a Chair. A Vice Chair shall also be elected.
- 11.2 The Chair and Vice Chair shall be elected every two years by the members of the Committee from amongst the members of the Committee.
- 11.3 The terms of office for the Chair and Vice Chair shall each be for two years.
- 11.4 The *RCN Regulation on Terms of Office* shall apply in respect of serving more than one term.
- 11.5 The Chair and Vice Chair must relinquish these roles at the end of the term of office for the role, or if, for whatever reason, they cease to be a member of the RCN Professional Nursing Committee including reaching the end of their term of office on the Committee.
- 11.6 The process for the election of Chair and Vice Chair will be conducted in accordance with the *RCN's Election Policy*.

12. Staff support, advice and guidance

- 12.1 The lead Executive Director will be the Chief Nursing Officer and Deputy Chief Executive who will ensure support and advice to the Committee as appropriate.
- 12.2 Committee members and staff will work together positively and constructively, in line with the RCN's Respect Charter, to deliver the purposes of the Committee and within the RCN governance operating structure.
- 12.3 In the unlikely situation where key professional advice presented by staff is not accepted by the Committee, the advice and reasons for not accepting the professional advice will be fully documented in the minutes of the meeting. Should the responsible executive 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. Should a resolved position not be reached the matter will be escalated to Council for a determination on the way forward.
- 12.4 The Executive Director of Governance will ensure Secretariat support from the Governance team.

13. Removal from the Committee

13.1 A Committee member may be removed before the end of their term of office on the grounds if they:

- a) have exceeded their powers in a way that is detrimental to the RCN
- b) have failed to discharge their duties
- c) have acted in breach of the RCN's Code of Conduct and/or Respect Charter
- d) have acted in a manner likely to bring the RCN into disrepute
- e) they have failed to attend three consecutive meetings (excluding special ad hoc meetings)
- f) have any active cautions from the NMC, or other regulator, against their name, are currently subject to any NMC, or other regulator's, sanction, and/or they are subject to any ongoing disciplinary proceedings with any of their employers or professional disciplinary proceedings before the NMC or another regulator.
- g) are subject to ongoing disciplinary proceedings in respect of any role they hold at the RCN and/or currently subject to any RCN disciplinary sanction.

13.2 The processes for such removal will be in accordance with the Member Resolution Policy.

Approved by RCN Council on 24 July 2024 (amended to reflect changes in the titles of the Forums Governance Group and Forums Chairs Committee to Forums Co-ordinating Committee and Forum Chairs Group on 3 April 2025)

Reviewed by the Professional Nursing Committee on 6 February 2025

The RCN documents referenced in these terms of reference, such as the RCN's Respect Charter, are available on the RCN website, [here](#).