Royal College of Nursing

Terms of Reference: RCN UK Representatives Committees

1. Name of Committees

1.1 UK Stewards' Committee
UK Health and Safety Representatives' Committee
UK Learning Representatives' Committee

2. Purpose

2.1 The main purpose of the three committees is to enhance the voice, act as a communication conduit and input on relevant activity for RCN accredited representatives, respectively representing stewards, health and safety representatives or learning representatives and to report to the RCN Trade Union Committee to support the advancement of nursing in line with RCN strategy and policy.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 The role of each of the UK Representatives Committees is to:

Give RCN accredited representatives a voice

a) To advise and be consulted on activity relating to RCN accredited representatives, including for their recruitment, support and development
b) To liaise and communicate with RCN accredited representatives, and put forward their views, ideas and concerns
c) Through the Trade Union Committee ensure that issues specific to accredited representatives that may have UK-wide implications are raised with RCN Council and/or its committees
d) To promote the rep voice at RCN Congress including via submission of agenda items, sending voting members, as specified, and in the learning and wellbeing programme.

Ensure good communication

a) To advise the Trade Union Committee on matters relating to RCN accredited representatives
b) To act as a conduit for information exchanges between representatives and other activists, committees and RCN staff

Input into relevant work

a) To advise and be consulted on the development of RCN policy, strategy and planning relating to RCN accredited representatives
b) To work in partnership internally and externally in furtherance of the interests of accredited representatives
c) To shape and direct the development of the programmes for UK conferences for accredited representatives
d) To ensure that accredited representatives are embedded in the activities of the RCN at all levels: local, regional, national and international
e) To advise and be consulted on activity relating to RCN accredited representatives, including the recruitment of new accredited representatives into the RCN through the RCN Boards.

4. Reporting and accountability

4.1 The UK Representatives Committees are responsible and accountable to RCN Trade Union Committee.

4.2 The deliberations of the UK Representatives Committees shall be reported to RCN Trade Union Committee as well as details of any decisions taken.

4.3 Key messages from the UK Representatives Committees meetings will be disseminated via a report to country and regional Boards.

4.4 At the request of RCN Trade Union Committee, the Chairs of the UK Representatives Committees will attend a designated section of RCN Trade Union Committee meetings to deliver regular UK Representatives Committees updates.

4.5 The UK Representatives Committees may set up such sub-committees or other groups as it thinks fit to further its work, but these shall be approved by RCN Trade Union Committee.

5. Meetings and quorum

5.1 The UK Representatives Committees will each meet individually at least three times a year.

5.2 The UK Representatives Committees will meet collectively twice a year, usually co-ordinated with the UK Joint Representative Conferences.

5.3 The dates of the meetings shall be agreed by RCN Council, following consultation with the Committee Chairs, in the year preceding that in which the meetings are to be held.

5.4 Special ad hoc meetings may also be called if the business of the UK Representatives Committees is of such urgency that it cannot wait until the next meeting.

5.5 The quorum for decision-making in a meeting is half of the Committee.

5.4 The quorum for a decision made outside of a meeting via electronic means is at least half of the Committee who must put their agreement in writing for the decision to be approved.

5.5 The rules and procedures in the RCN Policy and Process for Running Meetings apply to the UK Representatives Committees.

6. Membership

6.1 There shall be 12 members of each of the three UK Representatives Committees as follows:

- One member from each of the twelve RCN UK countries and regions, to be elected by the respective accredited representatives (stewards, learning and health and safety representatives) in each country and region for each committee i.e. Stewards, Learning Representatives and Health and Safety Representatives Committees.

6.2 Members of each of the UK Representatives Committees must be accredited RCN representatives – either stewards, health and safety representatives or learning representatives as appropriate to the committee.

6.3 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 and the agreement of the relevant UK Representatives Committee.

7.2 Observers can speak and/or participate in the meeting only with the permission of, or at the request of, the Chair.

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

7.4 Observers will not usually attend private or confidential sessions of UK Representatives Committees.

8. Election/appointment to the UK Representatives Committees

8.1 Elections and appointments to the committees will be conducted in accordance with the RCN Elections and Appointments Policy and Processes, the RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations and the specific procedure for each election.

8.2 Half of each UK Representatives Committees 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 The RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations shall apply in respect of serving more than one term.

10. Mid-Term (casual) vacancies

10.1 A casual vacancy on one of the UK Representatives Committees shall be filled in accordance with the RCN Elections and Appointments Policy and Processes.

11. Chair and Vice-Chair

11.1 In accordance with Rule 2.2 in the RCN Royal Charter the UK Representatives Committees 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 Office Holder Eligibility Regulations 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 UK Representatives Committee reaching the end of their term of office on the UK Representatives Committee.

11.6 The process for the election of Chair and Vice-Chair will be conducted in accordance with the RCN Elections and Appointments Policy and Processes.

12. Staff support, advice and guidance

12.1 The lead Executive Director is the Director of Legal and Member Relations who will ensure support and advice to the UK Representatives Committees is provided 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 Framework.

12.3 In the unlikely event that key professional advice presented by staff is not accepted by the UK Representatives Committees, the advice and reasons for not accepting the professional advice will be fully documented in the minutes of the meeting. Should the responsible director/sponsor conclude this position poses a risk to the organisation and its members, the circumstances will be brought to the attention of the General Secretary and 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 RCN Council for a determination on the way forward.

12.4 The Executive Director of Governance will ensure that Secretariat support is provided by the Governance Directorate.

13. Removal from the UK Representatives Committees

13.1 A UK Representatives Committee member may be removed before the end of their term of office on the following 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 RCN Member Resolution and Disciplinary Policy.

These terms of reference will be reviewed every three years at joint meetings of the UK Representatives Committees but may be reviewed sooner if necessary. Any recommended changes will be subsequently approved by the Trade Union Committee.

They should be read in conjunction with the RCN Governance Operating Framework, the RCN Group Scheme of Delegation and other documents referred to above.

Version control:

Reviewed by the joint meeting of the UK Representative Committees on 12 October 2023.
Approved by the Trade Union Committee on 15 November 2023.
Reviewed and updated on 2 March 2026 in light of changes arising from the RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations, which came into effect on 1 January 2026, and to ensure the harmonisation of language and policy titles across all Committee and Board terms of reference.