

Role Descriptor: President of the Royal College of Nursing

Title: President

Reporting To: Council

Basis: In accordance with RCN Standing Orders and the RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations, the President is elected for a two-year term of office from amongst the RCN membership. Any individual occupying the role of President shall be eligible for re-election for one further term only.

Time commitment (including meetings): The estimated time commitment for the President is two days per week. This includes formal planned and ad hoc meetings and attending events. The RCN Council meets at least 5 times per year in person at RCN HQ (Cavendish Square, London), hybrid or online. Ad hoc meetings of Council may be required between planned meetings for timely discussion and/or decision making. The President attends Congress and chairs any General Meetings. The President is the Chair of the International Committee and the Chair of the RCN Awards Committee.

Emoluments: This role is not a paid role. Compensation is paid to the employer of the President to the equivalent of two days per week of their salary. The amount will depend on the salary of the individual holding the role and whether the individual is employed. If the individual is self-employed or in business on their own account, compensation will not apply.

Eligibility: The President of the Royal College of Nursing must be a fully paid-up member of the Nurse membership category and must have been in membership for five consecutive years immediately prior to the close of nominations. They must also adhere to any other relevant eligibility requirements set out in the RCN Elections Policy and Processes document, the RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations and the election procedure.

Purpose of the role

The President of the Royal College of Nursing acts as an ambassador/figurehead to promote, support and represent the interests of the RCN and its members and the art and science of nursing. The purpose of the role is to ensure that:

- The RCN and the nursing profession is positively promoted, supported and represented by its members and the wider professional agenda across the UK and to nursing staff internationally.
- The RCN and the nursing profession is positively promoted, supported and advocated to external stakeholders and the public across the UK and internationally.

The President should not involve themselves in the day-to-day administration and operations of the RCN, but may, from time to time, work with RCN staff members to achieve results. When representing the RCN in a public space in their capacity as President and an ex-officio Council member, they should ensure that their actions do not bring the RCN and profession into disrepute, and they should take care not to take public positions contrary to those of the RCN.

Key responsibilities of the role include:

- Fostering and maintaining constructive working relationships with the Chair of Council, the RCN Vice-Chair of Council, the Deputy President, Council members, RCN General Secretary and Chief Executive and the RCN Executive Team to ensure effective leadership.
- Acting as an ambassador, establishing two-way communications with the membership, across the four nations and – in collaboration with the RCN Council and Executive Team – building relationships with key senior external stakeholders.
- Promoting membership of, and engagement with, the RCN in every arena.
- Acting in the best interests of the RCN to enhance its reputation as a respected trade union and professional body for nursing staff.
- Upholding the values, decisions and policies of the RCN and acting as a role model to members and to nursing more widely.
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and leading by example.
- Attending official functions on behalf of the RCN when invited or requested by the General Secretary and Chief Executive – including state, government, civic, social and ceremonial events in the UK and abroad.
- Hosting official RCN functions as appropriate to the President role.
- Attending relevant RCN meetings and events including conferences, awards ceremonies and visiting RCN members in their workplaces to gain insights and feedback.
- Attending relevant external meetings and conferences on behalf of, and approved by, the RCN in the UK and abroad.
- Delivering the President's speech and performing ceremonial duties at the RCN's annual Congress.
- Representing the RCN on matters affecting nursing in the wider media, in line with agreed media position statements.
- Chairing the RCN Annual General meeting, and any other General Meetings, in accordance with the RCN's Standing Orders.

- As an ex-officio RCN Council member, acting as a governor of the organisation and in accordance with the Council member role descriptor.
- Chairing and participating in committees and panels as necessary and chairing the RCN's Awards Committee and International Committee.
- Undertaking specific activity on behalf of the RCN as discussed and agreed with the Chair of Council and the General Secretary and Chief Executive.
- Reporting on activities as President to Council and to the membership as a whole. To include working productively with the Communications Team to ensure:
 - that the role of the President is well promoted through RCN channels.
 - that advice and guidance provided by the Communications Team is acted on with regards to the President promoting the role through their own channels.
 - that timely review, feedback and sign off on content is obtained.
 - attendance at regular meetings take places to achieve the above.

Person specification:

In addition to the requirements for a Council member, the President should be able to demonstrate:

1. A sound understanding of the priorities for the nursing profession and health issues across the UK and internationally.
2. An understanding of, and commitment to, the strategic priorities for the RCN and its members, its purpose and its work.
3. The ability to keep abreast of current issues affecting nursing both nationally and internationally, to listen to RCN members, advocate for them and demonstrate sound cultural and political sensitivity.
4. Objectivity, fairness, independence of mind, integrity, wisdom, discretion, good judgement, and the gravitas to be taken seriously at the highest levels UK-wide and internationally.
5. Integrity and commitment to act in the best interests of the RCN and its members without regard to personal interest or benefit.
6. Awareness of how the world is changing politically, economically and socially.
7. The ability to communicate clearly-, give honest and objective opinions and add value to decision making by offering different perspectives and constructive suggestions.
8. Skill and ability as a public speaker.

9. An ability to chair meetings.
10. A commitment to ensuring effective member engagement.
11. Strong interpersonal skills and the ability to influence.
12. The ability to drive through change.
13. Commitment to the role of President.
14. An active commitment to the:
 - RCN Respect Charter, and
 - promoting EDI and Nolan Principles.

Reviewed and updated in January 2026 in light of changes arising from the RCN Office Holder Eligibility Regulations, which came into effect on 1 January 2026.