

Terms of Reference: RCN Forum Steering Committees

1. Name of Committee

Forum Steering Committee

2. Purpose

Each forum delivers its work priorities, aims and objectives through its Steering Committee. Forum Chairs lead the work of the Steering Committee and report to the Professional Nursing Committee (PNC) through the Chair of the Forum Chairs Group.

3. Delegated responsibilities

3.1 The role of each Forum Steering Committee is:

- a) Championing the RCN and promoting the advancement of nursing itself.
- b) Acting as the voice of nursing in their specialist areas of interest.
- c) Proactively engaging with members and representing their views to ensure that the RCN's Royal College agenda reflects their priorities and needs.
- d) Leading the development of knowledge within specialist areas of interest.
- e) Holding events, meetings and other activities to enhance the skills of members by providing opportunities for members to participate in professional activities and promote excellence of practice, to network and to share best practice.
- f) Supporting nominations for elected roles in the RCN including President, Deputy President, RCN Council, Board members and Chair and Vice-Chair of Congress.
- g) To actively support and contribute to the agenda and events programme at RCN Congress.
- h) Ensuring the forum is represented and votes at RCN Congress.
- i) Ensuring that forum members attend and participate in the RCN's general meetings.

4. Reporting and accountability
 - 4.1 Each Forum Steering Committee is responsible and accountable to the Forums Co-ordinating Committee.
 - 4.2 The work of Forum Steering Committees is reported annually to the Forums Co-ordinating Committee.
5. Meetings and quorum
 - 5.1 Forum Steering Committees will meet at least four times per year.
 - 5.2 The quorum for decision-making in a meeting is half the Forum Steering Committee, rounded up if an odd number.
 - 5.3 The quorum for a decision made outside of a meeting via electronic means is at least half of the Forum Steering Committee (rounded up if an odd number) who must put their agreement in writing for the decision to be approved.
 - 5.4 The rules and procedures in the RCN Policy and Process for Running Meetings apply to Forum Steering Committees.
 - 5.5 All decisions require a majority of those voting to be passed. The Chair has the casting vote in instances where there is an equality of votes.
 - 5.6 Another member of the Committee may chair a meeting in the absence of the Forum Chair or Vice-Chair.
6. Membership
 - 6.1 There shall be a maximum of 7 members of each Forum Steering Committee.
 - 6.2 If it is not possible to appoint a minimum of 4 to the Steering Committee during the annual forum appointments process, the process will be reopened at a later date. If it is still not possible to appoint a minimum of 4 to the Committee, the Forums Co-ordinating Committee may ask the Professional Nursing Committee to consider dissolving the forum and creating a network.
 - 6.3 It is often necessary for Forum Steering Committees to invite member(s) of a forum with expertise in particular professional areas to assist with specific pieces of work, for example where the expertise required is not held within the membership of the Forum Steering Committee. The decision to invite member(s) in these circumstances shall be by agreement of at least half the members of the Forum Steering Committee.

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.

8. Appointment to Forum Steering Committees

- 8.1 Appointments to Forum Steering 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 forum appointments.

9. Terms of office

- 9.1 On the decision of the forum appointments panel, Forum Steering Committee members may be appointed for terms of two or 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 In accordance with the casual vacancy process, if a vacancy occurs mid-term and there is no-one on the reserve list to fill the position, it will be advertised and members invited to apply if the Forum Steering Committee membership falls below 4 members.
- 10.2 During the annual forum appointments process, if a Forum Steering Committee has more appointable candidates than vacancies, appointable candidates who were unsuccessful can be added to a reserve list. Candidates on the reserve list can then be appointed to fill mid-term casual vacancies that arise throughout that calendar year without a new appointment process being required.
- 10.3 The reserve list is only valid for the year in which the forum appointment relates. If the member on the reserve list is not required after this period and they are still interested in being on the Forum Steering Committee, they would need to re-apply once the appointments process opens again the following year.

11. Chair and Vice-Chair

- 11.1 In accordance with Rule 2.2 in the RCN Royal Charter each Forum Steering Committee shall have a Chair. A Vice-Chair may also be elected but this is not a mandatory requirement.
- 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 Forum Steering Committee including reaching the end of their term of office on the Steering 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 Chief Nursing Officer will be the lead member of the Executive Team who will ensure support and advice to Forum Steering Committees 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 Forum Steering Committees within the RCN governance operating structure.
13. Removal from Forum Steering Committees
- 13.1 A Forum Steering Committee member may be removed before the end of their term of office on the grounds that 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 a meeting of the Professional Nursing Committee but may be reviewed sooner if necessary.

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:

Approved by the Professional Nursing Committee on 19 November 2024. Amended on 3 March 2025 to reflect changes in the titles of the Forums Governance Group and Forums Chairs Committee to Forums Co-ordinating Committee and Forum Chairs Group.

Amended on 28 April 2025 to reflect changes to the terms of reference template agreed by RCN Council in April 2025.

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.

Appendix A: Principles for engagement with members outside of the Forum Steering Committee

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance sets out the principles for engagement with individual/individuals from the wider forum membership that may be required to support the Forum Steering Committee (FSC) in the delivery of forum related activity of the RCN and promote the breadth and advancement of nursing within the specialist area.
- 1.2 The Forum Steering Committee (FSC), who operate and are supported through the RCN governance framework, is the accountable group through which some of the professional work/activity of the forum is delivered. The terms of reference for the FSC indicate that access to the expertise from the wider membership on an 'as and when' basis is permitted to assist with specific pieces of work without the need for formal sub-groups of people.
- 1.3 Wider forum membership refers to those who are members of any of the RCN forums. An FSC requiring assistance may appeal to their immediate forum for expertise or, depending on the subject matter, may go out to the wider RCN membership.
- 1.4 It is also acknowledged that engaging with the wider membership may be a good way of increasing awareness of the forum committee functions and get involvement in the forum activities, and as such provide a basis/route for succession planning.

1.5 Assistance with specific pieces of work may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Contributing to the development of guidance/professional resources
- Inputting into consultations
- Attending subject-related events and feeding back to the FSC
- Attending FSC meetings to provide professional expertise or input on a specific topic/project

2. The Forum Steering Committee

2.1 A FSC may identify RCN individual(s) to engage with professional forum activity from within their own forum, from across other forums or more widely across the RCN membership. In all cases, it is important that:

- The consultative function is required to complement the existing clinical expertise/knowledge in the FSC
- There is agreement from at least half of the members of the FSC plus the Professional Lead
- The individual(s) are current members of the RCN
- The FSC will give the invitee with clear reasons for their involvement and an indication of the specific timeframe for engagement, which will align with the reason/need for the member/group involvement
- Accountability for any work or activity undertaken by the individual(s) rests with the FSC, who will be responsible for overseeing the work and ensuring it is completed, including meeting with the individual(s) as appropriate.
- At least one FSC member must be part of any project working group or initiative development in which the individual(s) are involved.
- All activities carried out by and identified individual(s) must feed into the work of, and align with the strategic plan of the RCN and FSC
- Individual(s) providing the expertise should not feature as part of the additional individual(s) to the FSC on the forum webpage
- The work being undertaken by the identified individual(s) should feature on the forum webpage so that it is transparent

2.2 On occasion, an FSC may require expertise from individual(s) belonging to an outside organisation, for example a charitable organisation. The same principles as listed above (and within this document as a whole) will apply except for the necessity for the individual to be an RCN member.

3. Individual(s) invited to work with the Forum Steering Committee

- 3.1 Where an identified individual(s) has been invited to assist the FSC in the manner described above, they must not:
- Call themselves a member of the Forum Steering Committee
 - Vote at FSC meeting or make decisions on behalf of the FSC
 - Speak on behalf of the RCN - Representation of the RCN should be undertaken only if directly requested to do so by the PL or via the FSC. In such instances members will be supported to take on this role and will be expected to report back to the FSC and provide written representation feedback report.
 - Commit the FSC to other work activities that lie outside of the scope of the work for which they have been asked to assist with
- 3.2 Where asked to lead on a specific piece of work or project, the identified individual(s) must:
- Only do so under the direction of the FSC – all work or activities undertaken must be reported to the FSC
 - Attend project meetings virtually via Teams in line with the project schedule (if the work is part of a project)
 - Comply with the RCN Respect Charter

4. RCN Staff Support

- 4.1 The Professional Lead and Project Coordinator work closely with the forum steering committee and provides a high level of support. If the FSC are unclear about decisions on wider member engagement or its appropriateness this should be discussed with the Professional Lead.

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