

The CANVASSING CODE

Relating to any election activities as part of the three-yearly elections to the post of the RCPsych President and five-yearly elections to the posts of RCPsych Registrar, Dean and Treasurer

Canvassing means trying to persuade an elector to vote for or against a particular candidate or party, as defined by the Electoral Commission in the UK

The official campaigning period shall take place between the College's announcement of candidates running in the election, usually within one week of the closing date for nominations, and the end of the voting period. This is when we expect the majority of canvassing to take place. However, we understand that candidates may wish to discuss their campaigns with members before this date. Therefore, this code applies to all election activities undertaken by candidates at any point in the process.

1. The Canvassing Code sets out the manner in which all candidates for the posts of RCPsych President, Registrar, Dean and Treasurer are required to conduct canvassing, during the elections that take place on either a three-yearly cycle (for the President) or five-yearly cycle (for the other Honorary Officers).
2. The RCPsych supports canvassing and indeed encourages it, but it is essential that, in the interests of clarity and to provide a fair process for all candidates, while also encouraging informed participation, the Code is fully complied with.
3. Canvassing by candidates is therefore allowed, subject to compliance at all times with the terms and conditions of this Code and with the terms and spirit of the RCPsych's [Joint Code of Conduct](#), the RCPsych's [Values and Behaviours](#) and the RCPsych's [Social Media Policy](#).
4. All candidates are required to prepare personal election addresses, limited to a maximum of 500 words, which will be uploaded to the RCPsych website and linked to the RCPsych's centrally managed social media accounts.
5. All candidates are required to produce a 50-word summary election address statement for use on College communication channels. Presidential candidates are also required to produce an edited version of their personal election address, limited to a maximum 250 words, which will be published in the College's membership magazine, RCPsych Insight.
6. Presidential candidates will be required to record a three-minute election video, recorded as live, for which the RCPsych will provide assistance, and which will be used on College communication channels.
7. All candidates will be required to take part in a hustings event that will take place in the last week of the campaign period before voting commences. During the hustings event, candidates will be required to make a statement, after which there will be a live "Q&A" session, to be officiated by the current President or a senior member chosen by the President.

8. The RCPsych may facilitate an online "Q&A" to be hosted for a period of time to start in the first week of the campaign. It will be managed by the RCPsych on the RCPsych website.
9. Candidates may address College meetings or events during the campaign period. If a committee or College group (including Faculties, Devolved Councils, Divisions, SIGs and others) invites one candidate to address or meet its members at a meeting or event, they must make all reasonable efforts to invite all of the other candidates standing for the same office to address its members at the same meeting or event, provided that this does not become a hustings.
10. Committees or College groups should provide a briefing to all candidates on the topics they need to cover in advance of the event or meeting.
11. College committees and groups cannot hold their own full scale hustings events.
12. College committees and groups must treat all candidates fairly and equally including how they may organise their travel to and from the event.
13. All invitations to candidates from College committees and groups to speak or meet members in an election-related capacity, must be signed off in advance by the Chief Executive. This includes invitations from Faculties, SIGs, Devolved Councils, Divisions, and other College groups.
14. During the campaign and election period, candidates may continue to attend College events or meetings in their usual capacity (e.g. as committee members, chairs, expert speakers or representatives), provided this is part of their normal business and their participation is not related to the election. Candidates are not permitted to speak about their candidacy or the election during these routine meetings or events.
15. Candidates should not attend any other events during the election period, such as those hosted by Trusts, hospitals or external organisations for campaigning purposes unless other candidates are invited to those events.
16. Canvassing by candidates and their supporters on their personal social media is allowed, but this must comply with the College Values, in particular the value of respect and comply at all times with this Code and those codes referred to in Section 3.
17. Use of RCPsych social media, email accounts or mailing lists for canvassing purposes, including those of RCPsych committees, is prohibited.
18. Candidates must not approach any member of College staff for assistance in their canvassing for election.
19. Members of the RCPsych Board of Trustees must not endorse nominations for any individual candidate, nor should they campaign for any candidate (unless campaigning for their own election to a particular office). Other RCPsych office or post holders are allowed to openly support individual candidates but must do so in their personal capacity, not as an office or post holder of the RCPsych and not through any RCPsych channels or using RCPsych resources including contact details of members.

20. Canvassing by personal email and phone is allowed.
21. In their personal election address, candidates may include links to their own social media accounts and/or a URL to a personal website. Candidates may also make available for download from their social media accounts and personal websites, any live recordings made, as referred to in this Code, and the podcasts from the hustings.
22. Information about candidates standing in the elections for Honorary Officer roles may be made known by Chairs of College committees or groups to members, but such information must include the names of all the candidates and must not advocate support for any one particular candidate.
23. Social media accounts of RCPsych committees and groups must not advocate support for any candidate in an election, neither can they be critical of any particular candidate.
24. The RCPsych does not provide funding for candidates' campaigns.
25. Candidates can spend their own money on permissible activities such as, travel and accommodation. If in doubt, please contact the Chief Executive.
26. Money spent on elections by candidates is **NOT** to be used for media, political or web advice, or any form of marketing or advertising.
27. The following restrictions apply to canvassing by candidates:
 - (a) Candidates and their supporters must not use, or attempt to access, any databases or other records held by the RCPsych, including any of its committees or groups, and nor can they use their own personal databases for any purpose connected to the elections to the extent that those databases include contact information for members held by the RCPsych; other than the list of Faculty Chairs, Division Chairs and Devolved Nation Chairs, that the Chief Executive will circulate to all candidates once expression of interest has been received;
 - (b) All candidates will be required to attend a briefing meeting arranged the Chief Executive, once nominations are formalised;
 - (c) candidates and their supporters must not use any RCPsych email address, RCPsych social media accounts, branding or stationery or any RCPsych resources to conduct canvassing;
 - (d) candidates must not conduct any canvassing through the national media or press, and nor should any comments or responses be made to journalists, the national media or press by candidates, including through social media. Any enquiries received must be referred immediately to the Strategic Communications department at the RCPsych;
 - (e) candidates must not engage paid-for agents, external organisations, or any non-RCPsych members to act for them in the conduct of their canvassing; Candidates must not accept endorsement from external organisations.

External organisations must not encourage their members or affiliates to vote for any specific candidate. If candidates become aware of endorsement or encouragement from an external organisation, they should inform the Chief Executive immediately.

- (f) candidates must ensure that any statements or claims made by them or their supporters are accurate, fair, reasonable and not misleading;
 - (g) candidates and their supporters must not make any adverse comment about, or make reference to, another candidate's personal election address, or any live recording or podcast made pursuant to this Code, nor to another candidate's canvassing campaign generally and must not make any comments that are not in line with the RCPsych's [Values](#);
 - (h) candidates must at all times maintain the confidentiality, integrity and good standing of the election and its process and the RCPsych, and not bring the election or the RCPsych itself into disrepute; and
 - (i) RCPsych staff members must remain neutral and candidates must not request support from members of staff. If candidates would like College information, they should request this from the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer or Head of Membership and Governance.
 - (j) Candidates should not be canvassing during the festive period in December (from 23 December to 4 January) to enable all candidates to have a restful festive period.
28. Where 'RCPsych communication channels' have been referred to, this includes those of Civica Election Services.
29. The RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer and Scrutineers reserve the right to determine whether or not a candidate is complying with this Code, and to take appropriate steps.
30. Candidates may be liable to disqualification from the election by the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer and Scrutineers if found to be in breach of the spirit and terms of this Code.
31. The Code is mandatory for all candidates, and the RCPsych reserves the right to amend its terms and conditions as it sees fit.
32. The decision of the RCPsych Chief Executive Officer/Returning Officer and Scrutineers on all matters relating to the Code shall be final and binding on all candidates.