

The role of the RCVS

1. The role of the RCVS is to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, in order to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare.

It is not the role of the RCVS to represent members of the profession individually or collectively, that is for other bodies. However, the RCVS does have a role in promoting high standards in the profession, particularly in relation to education and professional conduct.

The RCVS aims to ensure that it is respected both by the public and the profession as a credible and effective organisation. It must be seen to be objectively fair and open in the way it works. It should not be perceived by the public as run by the profession, for the profession. Nor should it be seen by the profession as biased in favour of the public or unduly influenced by consumer or media criticism. In effect, the RCVS manages the interface between the profession and the public.

2. The RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession. It is the only Royal College that is also a regulator, which puts us in a unique position in terms of not only setting and upholding standards, but also being able continually to advance them, for the benefit of animal health and welfare, the public and the profession. We:
 - a. undertake statutory responsibilities as set out in the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966 – to maintain a Register, and to regulate veterinary education and professional conduct.
 - b. exercise powers under the Royal Charter to award Fellowships, Diplomas and Certificates to veterinary surgeons, veterinary nurses and others. We also run the voluntary Practice Standards Scheme and regulate veterinary nurses.
 - c. support RCVS Knowledge, a separate charity: established to promote and advance the study and practice of the art and science of veterinary surgery and medicine, in particular evidence-based veterinary medicine.
3. In order to carry out its statutory duties, a Council of 42 members governs the RCVS and meets at least three times a year.
4. The breakdown of members is as follows:
 - a. 24 members: elected to Council by the profession itself
 - b. 14 members: two nominated to Council by each of the seven UK veterinary schools
 - c. 4 members: appointed by the Privy Council
5. Council is supported by an Operational Board, which has the main responsibility for running the RCVS and various committees. A delegation scheme sets out their responsibilities. Policy issues

are put forward by working parties or the secretariat, and, generally, decided by the Board or committees. Major policy decisions are reserved for Council.

6. The President, two Vice-Presidents and Treasurer are elected by Council from within its number, as well as the chairmen of the Standards and Education Committees. Together with the Chairman of the Veterinary Nurses Council, the CEO and the Registrar, these individuals form the Operational Board.
7. Further information is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us.

The role of Council members

8. Council members undertake the governance of the College, in accordance with the powers and obligations set out in the Charter and the Act.
9. Council meetings usually take place three times a year, at which Council members:
 - i. make Bye-Laws under the Charter and approve draft regulations for submission to the Privy Council, to be made under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966;
 - ii. agree the Strategic Plan; the five-year financial plan and the budget for the forthcoming year, including fees to be levied;
 - iii. ensure that income and expenditure are properly accounted for, investments prudently made and audited accounts presented to the membership in the Annual Report and at the AGM;
 - iv. receive reports from committees;
 - v. elect the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer;
 - vi. appoint the CEO & Secretary, and Registrar, and any Assistant Registrars.
10. Council members are also required to sit on working parties, boards and committees (which can act with delegated authority on certain matters and make recommendations to Council on the more important and strategic issues). NB the Preliminary Investigation and Disciplinary Committees are set up by statute and have autonomous powers. Following the introduction of the Legislative Reform Order in 2013, Council membership of these committees has now been phased out.
11. Council members may be asked to represent the College on outside organisations and at meetings, or to speak to the media on behalf of the College, as requested or agreed with one of the Officers.
12. All Council members are required to act in accordance with the public service principles set out in the Nolan Committee's First Report on Standards in Public Life, which include selflessness (acting solely in the public interest); integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and, leadership.

13. Council members are required to maintain up-to-date declaration of interests for publication on the website and to provide the College with biographical information and photographs for publication on the website and elsewhere.
14. Council members will be asked to participate in induction and training sessions.

For further details, please see the *Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members*, and, *Code of Conduct for Managing Conflicts of Interest*, which are available on request from Dawn Wiggins at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk.

NB Council Members are not elected or appointed to represent any constituency and all have a responsibility equivalent to trustees for the governance of the College.