

2024

Veterinary Nurses

Council election

**Information pack for
prospective candidates**





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Introduction from the Registrar

Thank you for your interest in standing to become a candidate for the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council, the body within the College that is responsible for all matters concerning veterinary nurse training, post-qualification awards and the registration of qualified veterinary nurses.

As a self-regulating profession, veterinary nurses, elected and appointed, make up a majority of VN Council members, joining appointed veterinary surgeons and laypeople members in the mosaic of decision-makers on VN Council.

Every year we make significant efforts to ensure the veterinary nursing profession has its say as part of the democratic process of the VN Council election, including making sure that the whole of the veterinary nursing profession has the opportunity to find out about who is standing for VN Council, and vote accordingly.

In this information pack you will find out more about the candidate nomination and election processes, the role of VN Council and its members, and the wider RCVS committee structure. On the latter, much of the work on the policies that come to VN Council for decision is done by our broader network of standing committees and subcommittees, including ones with a particular veterinary nurse focus such as the VN Education Committee and VN Futures Project Board.

VN Council members may get an opportunity to serve on these other bodies, particularly ones that align with their strengths and interests and we often hear back from members of both RCVS Council and VN Council that this is the best part of the role.

As well as all the information you need about VN Council itself, at the end of this pack you will find your candidate nomination and candidate information forms, for you and your supporters to complete.

I do hope you find this useful but if you have any further questions about your candidacy, serving on VN Council or completing the forms, please contact Annette Amato, VN Council Secretary, at a.amato@rcvs.org.uk

Eleanor Ferguson
Registrar and Returning Officer



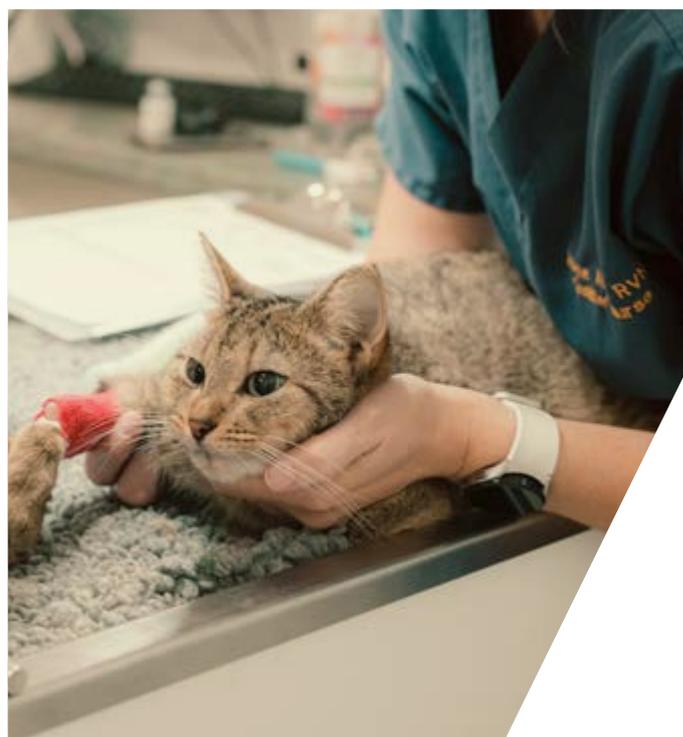


The role of the RCVS and VN Council

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.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. The RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession. It is the only remaining Royal College that is also a regulator, which puts it 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, our charity partner: 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.
5. Currently, in order to carry out its statutory duties, a Council of 24 members governs the RCVS and meets between six and eight times a year.
 6. Under current arrangements, RCVS Council is supported by an Officer Team (President, two Vice-Presidents, Treasurer, Chief Executive, and Registrar), as well as various committees, although all major policy decisions are reserved for RCVS Council. The Chair of VN Council is invited to attend meetings of the Officer Team as appropriate.
 7. Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council was established in 2002 as a committee of RCVS Council to ensure that decisions made about the veterinary nursing profession were done so by a body that had a majority of veterinary nurses.
 8. The composition of VN Council is as follows:
 - six elected veterinary nurses;
 - two appointed veterinary nurses;
 - two appointed veterinary surgeons; and,
 - four appointed lay members.
 9. The functions of VN Council are set out in the Supplemental Royal Charter 2015 and the RCVS delegation scheme 2023.

Further information is available at www.rcvs.org.uk/about-us





The role of VN Council members

1. VN Council meets four times a year, at which members may be asked to make decisions on the following issues:
 - a. Setting standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the Register of Veterinary Nurses;
 - b. Setting requirements in relation to the registration of veterinary nurses;
 - c. Setting standards for the conduct of veterinary nurses;
 - d. Maintaining the Register of Veterinary Nurses;
 - e. Recommending to the Finance and Resources Committee a budget and levels of fees to be charged;
 - f. Recommending to the Council amendments to the rules relating to the registration, conduct and discipline of veterinary nurses;
 - g. Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities relating to licence to practise qualifications in veterinary nursing;
 - h. Establishing and keeping under review schemes for post-qualification training and continuing professional development for veterinary nurses, and the outcomes to be achieved, with a view to recording an additional entry in the Register of Veterinary Nurses;
 - i. In exercising its functions, VN Council may delegate responsibility for matters related to veterinary nurse education, both licence to practise and post registration awards, to the Veterinary Nurse Education Committee; and,
 - j. VN Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.

2. VN Council members may also be 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 Veterinary Nurse Preliminary Investigation, and Veterinary Nurse Disciplinary Committees are set up by statute and have autonomous powers. Following the introduction of the (Disciplinary) Legislative Reform Order in 2013, VN Council membership of these committees has now been phased out.

3. VN 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.
4. All VN 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.
5. VN Council members are required to maintain up-to-date declarations of interests for publication on the website and to provide the College with biographical information and photographs for publication on the website and elsewhere.
6. VN 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 [RCVS Policy for Managing Conflicts of Interest](#).

NB VN 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 and the veterinary nursing profession.



How VN Council members work

7. In order to enable the RCVS to fulfil its vision, and to discharge its functions under its Royal Charter and the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, VN Council members are required to:
 - a. Abide by the Nolan Principles of Public Life;
 - b. Work in the best interests of the public, and of animal health and welfare and public health;
 - c. Respectfully listen to the voices of the professions, the public and other stakeholders, and reflect them in discussions where appropriate, ensuring they are put into context;
 - d. Neither be answerable to, nor represent, any group of individuals;
 - e. Support the College's vision and work towards the success of the College and its functions;
 - f. Live the College's values;
 - g. Act at all times in a constructive, supportive and compassionate manner;
 - h. Exercise a duty of care to the staff employed by the College, working through the CEO and Registrar;
 - i. Recognise the importance of a collegiate atmosphere where robust discussion is welcomed in the formation of policy and multiple points of view are listened to and respected;
 - j. Respect and support the decisions made by VN Council when communicating externally;
 - k. Communicate College activities and positions to relevant stakeholders;
 - l. Abide by the Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members.

Collective responsibility

8. VN Council members are collectively responsible for the decisions, even if they have voted against, abstained from voting or were absent when the decision was made, and are expected to respect and support the collective decision, when communicating externally.

Confidentiality

9. VN Council members must not disclose information that has been shared with them but designated by the RCVS as private or confidential. If members are in any way unsure if they can disclose information, then they should in the first instance seek advice from the President. If members disagree with a classification of private or confidential then members should raise with the relevant Committee Chair / President.



Meet VN Council member

Simon Williams RVN

elected to VN Council in 2023

Why did you decide to stand for VN Council?

The VN profession has discussed certain topics for some time and, while progress is evident, it is not readily apparent for every RVN. Furthermore, Military RVNs seem even further removed from general conversational undercurrents within our profession and hear little from within and from our governing body, other than via email updates. I was driven to offer my assistance with the work the VN Council is doing under the RCVS, to guide and regulate the profession and also act as a link back into my profession to exhibit that work and ensure that my colleagues are aware of the progress which is being made.

What have you enjoyed most about being a VN Council member?

I have enjoyed meeting so many more of my professional colleagues including students, RCVS employees and other RVNs within the profession. I have enjoyed meeting lay personnel from outside the profession who feed their experience in other sectors into our work. I am still very much learning the ropes within VN Council as newly elected member; however, I look forward to more Council meetings where I can truly begin to be of valuable service.

What advice would you give to someone looking to become a member of VN Council?

I would absolutely recommend running for Council to anyone with an interest. I feel that VN Council is a tremendously valuable part of the RCVS and governance of our profession. I would say that the focus of the RCVS Council is on our professions' impact on the general public as much as it is on enhancing our own professional capabilities, so prospective candidates should consider this when deciding how they wish to present their statement!



What else do I need to know about being on VN Council?

1. Each elected member serves a three-year term, although some VN Council members may decide to retire early for personal reasons.

There is a maximum limit of three consecutive terms on VN Council with a mandatory two-year break being required before a person may stand again.

Under the **Code of Conduct for Council and Committee Members** a mechanism is in place so that Council members may be investigated and potentially removed for issues relating to poor conduct/behaviour.

2. How much time a VN Council member spends on VN Council business during their term depends on the committees and working parties on which they are asked to sit. VN Council generally sits four times a year, as do most RCVS committees.

You may also be asked to join a working party on a particular issue, and there may be other College events and activities that you can attend on a voluntary basis.

On average, therefore, successful candidates might expect to spend around six-to-eight days a year on VN Council

business in terms of formal meetings during their first year on VN Council. Additional time will be required to keep on top of emails, read paperwork etc.

As your VN Council career develops, you may be required to take a more active role meaning that you may be expected to spend more than the average days a year on VN Council business, for example, if you become a Committee member or are asked to attend VN graduation ceremonies to lead newly-qualified veterinary nurses through their professional declarations.

3. The RCVS is currently in a transition period between temporary office space and its new headquarters, so we cannot guarantee at present where future meetings of VN Council will take place, although we are aiming to hold around 50% of these meetings virtually. However, more information about where the RCVS will be holding its committee and Council meetings will be published in due course.
4. In 2024, VN Council meetings are scheduled for February, May, September and November. VN Council members are also invited to attend the RCVS Annual General Meeting in July. VN Education Committee meets six times a year. Subcommittees and working parties meet on a more ad hoc basis.
5. The RCVS tries its utmost to be a family-friendly environment, both for staff and VN Council members. Council and committee meetings are planned at least a year in advance, although additional meetings may be added at shorter notice. Generally, there are fewer meetings during the holiday periods because we follow an academic calendar.
6. VN Council members are not paid directly for the work they do. However, we do have a Financial Loss Allowance which is intended to compensate for lost earnings as a result of attending to RCVS business. For Council and committee members attending in-person meetings, the claim rate takes into consideration commuting time where meetings are held in-person. Financial Loss Allowance rates are reviewed annually and updated on Royal College Day - our Annual General Meeting - every July.

Additional reading/administration time can be claimed at the end of the College year if the meetings have been attended:

- VN Council members – one day
- VN Education Committee members – one day
- Chairs of VN Council and VN Education Committee – two days
- other RCVS Council Committees (as VN Council representatives) – one day

7. Reasonable expenses are covered for VN Council and committee work, including an overnight stays if that is required.





Meet VN Council member

Jessica Beckett RVN

elected to VN Council in 2022

Why did you decide to stand for VN Council?

I wanted to stand for VN Council to help make a difference to our profession. I believe strongly that in order to make a change, you have to promote your beliefs, get involved and strive to demonstrate yourself as being the best you can be.

What have you enjoyed most about being a VN Council member?

I enjoy networking with fellow professionals within the VN Council – nurses come from all walks of life and have so many different experiences in their professional roles. This is why it is important to have these different people on each committee – to give a thorough and balanced view. I like to maintain relationships with people to learn from them and see how we can better understand new ways of working to benefit us all.

What advice would you give to someone looking to become a member of VN Council?

You don't have to be the most experienced or qualified nurse – you are the future of our profession and your opinion counts! You have nothing to lose by trying, but everything to gain if you succeed.



Guidance for prospective candidates

Election Scheme

1. The election process for VN Council follows the RCVS Council Election Scheme made by the Privy Council under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966.
A copy of the Scheme may be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/rcvs-council-election-scheme.
2. Every candidate for election to the VN Council must be a Registered Veterinary Nurse (RVN).
3. Two elected members of VN Council retire each year, with the election taking place to replace those members.

Timetable

4. The election is run on behalf of the RCVS by Civica Election Services (CES), which undertakes the ballot and election administration for a number of professional bodies and trade unions.
5. You are welcome to contact the Registrar, Eleanor Ferguson (e.ferguson@rcvs.org.uk), the CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) or the Chair of VN Council, Belinda Andrews-Jones (vnchair@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or VN Council members.

6. **The timetable* for the 2024 election is:**
Closing date for submission of nominations
 5pm, Wednesday, 31 January 2024
Posting of voting papers to members (approx.)
 Week commencing Monday, 11 March 2024
Closing date for receiving votes
 5pm, Friday, 26 April 2024
Candidates informed of results
 Monday, 29 April 2024
New Council Members join Council
 Friday, 5 July 2024 (RCVS AGM)
7. As soon as possible following the date when Civica Election Services sends the results of the VN Council election to the RCVS, the Executive Office will contact all candidates individually to pass on the results; candidates are therefore asked to let the office know where and how they can best be contacted on that day. Once all the candidates have been told the results they will be published.

Documentation

8. Those wishing to stand for election should return their completed **Nomination Form, by email**, to Annette Amato at a.amato@rcvs.org.uk, ensuring that it reaches the RCVS by the date/time stated above. Please note that we require electronic signatures from candidates and their two proposers upon submission of the form. These signatures can either be added to the nomination form itself or attached as electronic picture files (preferably Jpegs) to an email when you submit your nomination form. Further instructions on electronic signatures can be found in the FAQs for candidates.

NB forms received after the closing date/time will **not** be accepted.

9. The two proposers must be Registered Veterinary Nurses and include their **registered** address in the nomination form. Before filling in the nomination form, we recommend those standing and their proposers to contact our Registration Department on **020 7202 0707** to double check their registered address as this may be different from their correspondence or practice address. Proposers may not be members of VN Council. .

10. No proposer may nominate more than one candidate.

11. The nomination form may be accompanied by:
- the **Candidate Information Form**** containing:
 - full name, title and qualifications;
 - contact details, including any or all of: postal address, telephone number(s), email address, campaign website (for example, Facebook or X (formerly Twitter) account). **NB** Only the address listed in the *RCVS Register* will be included on the secure voting website; an alternative contact address may be included on the Candidate Information Form; and,
 - Candidate biography and statement for publication on the secure voting website (see '*Candidate biography and statement*' section).
 - a recent **colour photograph** in digital format (at highest resolution possible, i.e. minimum of 300dpi at 100%).

12. Forms and photographs must be submitted in electronic format and via email to Annette Amato, VN Council Secretary, at a.amato@rcvs.org.uk

13. All statements and photographs supplied will be published on the RCVS website prior to the start of the election period, to allow members of the profession to submit questions to candidates via our 'Quiz the Candidates' initiative. Candidate statements and photographs will also be included on the secure voting website so that voters can read them before casting their votes. Photographs and statements may also be made available for publication in the veterinary press.

14. All nominations will be acknowledged, and the RCVS will confirm that the names and addresses of the candidates and proposers conform to those in the *RCVS Register*.



*Guideline dates subject to change, with the exception of closing date for submissions, which will always be 31 January each year.

**Please note that this will be used as a web profile and all information will be publicly available on the RCVS website.

Candidate biography and statement

15. The biography should be no more than 200 words and the statement no more than 300 words (excluding name, qualifications and contact details). These will be published on both the RCVS website and the secure voting website.
16. The biography should contain information about a candidate's education and training, previous and current employment, relevant achievements, membership of other organisations, interests and hobbies etc., but it should not contain any testimonials. Candidates should also declare any relevant conflicts of interest in this section.
17. The statement is an opportunity for candidates to promote their suitability to serve on VN Council and set out what they could bring to the Council and the activities of the RCVS. Candidates may wish to address current issues facing the RCVS and the veterinary nursing profession generally, and/or those that might arise in the future. Candidates who are previous or existing VN Council Members may also, or instead, wish to highlight their RCVS-related activities and contributions to the work of the VN Council.
18. We recommend that the candidate statement should attempt to answer the following three questions:
 - Why are you standing for VN Council?*
 - What can you bring to VN Council in terms of your insights and skillsets?*
 - What relevant experience do you have?*
19. It is strongly recommended that candidates familiarise themselves with the role and function of the RCVS and that of VN Council Members so their manifestos can be as relevant as possible.
20. Candidate statements need to be legal, decent, honest and truthful. Candidates should therefore ensure that their election statements do not contain claims that are inconsistent with the legal position of the RCVS and should be aware that the Election Scheme gives the Registrar, as the Returning Officer, power to delete any material that s/he considers to be defamatory, or the publication of which would be unlawful or factually misleading.
21. Hyperlinks or web addresses are **not permitted** in either the candidate biography or candidate statement. Any such details included in either section will be removed. A single web address or hyperlink to a campaign website, such as a Facebook, LinkedIn or X (formerly Twitter) account, is permitted in the contact details.

22. Candidates who are currently involved in the investigation of a complaint against them which has been, or might be, referred to the Veterinary Nursing Disciplinary Committee, or the RCVS Conduct Panel (in the case of complaints made against a current Council or committee member under the **Code of Conduct for Council and Committee members**), or who are otherwise engaged in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession, are particularly asked to consider whether standing for election might be inappropriate and represent a conflict of interest until the matter is resolved.
23. Candidates wishing to submit statements should ensure they are received by the RCVS by **5pm on 31 January 2024**. **No late** submissions will be accepted and those exceeding the word count **will not** be included unless adjustments can be made before the closing date.

Canvassing

24. Candidates may canvass members either orally or in writing. The RCVS will supply a single set of names and postal addresses of all members in electronic format to any candidate upon request – please note, however, this information will not be available before the names of the members standing have been announced. It is expected that any communications to members will be legal, decent, honest, and truthful, and that election expenses will be kept to a reasonable level.
25. In recent years we have organised '**Quiz the Candidates**', which gives members of the profession the opportunity to pose a question to the candidates directly. We have then asked all candidates to produce written answers to two questions of their choice. It is anticipated this may be repeated in 2024. Whilst it is not compulsory to participate in **Quiz the Candidates**, we consider that it enables candidates to make their points in a way that will engage a broader range of voters than the candidate biographies and statements alone.



VN Council Election 2024

Nomination form

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RCVS Council Election Scheme 1967 (Paragraph 5)

Please type of print in BLOCK CAPITALS

We hereby nominate (name in full)

of (registered address)

as a candidate for election to the RCVS Veterinary Nurses Council.

Proposer details

Name, registered address (as recorded in the RCVS Register of Veterinary Nurses) and signature of two proposers

Proposer 1 (name in full)

Proposer 2 (name in full)

of (registered address)

of (registered address)

Signed

Signed

I hereby declare that I am the person nominated on this form, that I consent and am eligible to be so nominated and that I will accept office if I am duly elected.

I confirm that I will comply with codes of practice or guidance issued by Council governing the conduct of VN Council members and that I am prepared to serve on any RCVS Committee to which I may be appointed.

I confirm that I have not engaged in any activity or behaviour that would be likely to bring the profession into disrepute or undermine public confidence in the profession.

Signed

Dated

VN Council Election 2024 Candidate Information Form

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Candidate information (Please note this information will be publicly available)

Title

Forename

Surname

Qualifications

Address

Landline

Mobile

Email

Website

Proposer 1

Proposer 2

VN Council Election 2024

Candidate Information Form

page 2 of 2

Candidate biography and statement (Please note, hyperlinks and web addresses are not permitted in the biography or statement, testimonials are not accepted in the biography)

Candidate biography (up to 200 words maximum , please refer to guidance notes on the candidate biography)

Candidate statement (not more than 300 words – please refer to guidance notes on the candidate statement)

**Royal College of
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