

2026

Veterinary Nurses Council election

Information pack for
prospective candidates





Contents

- | | | | |
|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| 04 | Introduction from the CEO | 13 | Meet VN Council member:
Kirsty Young RVN |
| 05 | Introduction from the Returning Officer | 14 | Guidance for prospective
candidates |
| 06 | The role of the RCVS and
VN Council | 18 | VN Council Election 2026:
Nomination Form |
| 08 | The role of VN Council members | 19 | VN Council Election 2026:
Candidate Information Form |
| 10 | Meet VN Council member:
Simon Williams RVN | | |
| 11 | What else do I need to know about being
on VN Council? | | |

Introduction from the CEO

If you're reading this, thank you for your interest in becoming a candidate for Veterinary Nurses (VN) Council, a body within the RCVS that plays a critical role in all matters concerning veterinary nurse training, post-qualification awards and the registration of qualified veterinary nurses.

As a self-regulating profession, veterinary nurses make up a majority of VN Council members, all of whom bring their insights and skillsets as veterinary nursing professionals to help us fulfil our core mission to improve animal health and welfare, and public health by setting, upholding and advancing the educational, ethical and clinical standards of the professions.

It is important to note – and you will read this a lot in this document – that our VN Council members do not sit on the council and its committees as representatives of either the veterinary nursing profession at large or a particular group within the profession. The role of VN Council members is to govern in the public interest and for the sake of animal health and welfare.

This does not, however, mean that, as a VN Council member, you have no positive impact on your peers in the professions – whether that's on VN Council itself or via one of its subcommittees or working groups.

Ask any of our VN Council members and they will likely tell you of a project they've worked on – or are working on – that has tangible and consequential results. For example: via VN Vision, an ongoing project that aims to ensure that veterinary nursing is a vibrant, rewarding and sustainable profession through careers materials, publications and regular events; or through helping to develop and enhance the standards by which we assess veterinary nursing education and training via regular reviews and audits.

If you want to find out more, we are always very happy to put you in touch with our Council members, or for you to attend one of our public meetings of VN Council. Please contact Annette Amato, VN Council Secretary, at a.amato@rcvs.org.uk.

Lizzie Lockett
RCVS CEO



Introduction from the Registrar

Following my appointment as the new Registrar and Director of Legal Services, I am delighted to take over from Simon Wiklund as Returning Officer for the 2026 RCVS Council election.

I joined the College earlier this year, bringing experience from my time working with regulatory bodies in healthcare and finance. I'm looking forward to supporting this election process, and working with the team during such a busy time at the RCVS.

I would like to remind prospective candidates and voters that what you may have read about RCVS governance changes and the end of elections to Council is just currently at proposal stage. Although this is the direction of travel on which we have recently consulted – and our full reasoning is set out in the governance proposals – we will be continuing to hold elections until any change is brought about through legislative reform. Therefore, your candidacies and votes are as important as ever.

Before completing and signing the nomination form at the end of this document, please make sure you read and understand the information contained within, particularly around the role and remit of the RCVS, VN Council and VN Council members. Best of luck with your candidacy.

Clare Paget

RCVS Returning Officer
Registrar/Director of Legal Services





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, and public health.
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, nor be perceived to be, run by the profession for the benefit of 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 and do so in a way that is fair, credible and objective and is seen to be those things.

4. The RCVS was established in 1844 by Royal Charter to be the governing body of the veterinary profession. As a Royal College that regulates, the RCVS is unique in terms of not only setting and upholding standards, but also being able to continually 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 the professional conduct of veterinary professionals;
 - 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: which sits at the heart of the veterinary professions with a mission to advance the quality of care for the benefit of animals, the public and society.
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, VN Council is supported by an Officer Team (President, two Vice-Presidents, Treasurer), as well as various committees, although all major policy decisions are reserved for VN Council. The Chair of VN Council is invited to attend meetings of the Officer Team as appropriate.
7. 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 the majority of whose members are 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, as set out in the Supplemental Royal Charter 2015 and the RCVS delegation scheme 2025, are as follows:
 - To set standards for the training and education of persons wishing to be entered in the Register of Veterinary Nurses;
 - To set requirements in relation to the registration of veterinary nurses;
 - To set standards for the conduct of veterinary nurses;
 - To maintain the Register of Veterinary Nurses;
 - To recommend to the Finance and Resources Committee a budget and levels of fees to be charged;
 - To recommend to the Council amendments to the rules relating to the registration, conduct and discipline of veterinary nurses;
 - To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant regulatory authorities relating to licence to practise qualifications in veterinary nursing;
 - To establish and keep 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;
 - In exercising its functions, the Veterinary Nurses 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;
 - The Veterinary Nurses Council shall ensure that the welfare of animals and good veterinary practice are central to its work.

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 related to the registration, pre-registration education, post-qualification education, continuing professional development and professional conduct of veterinary nurses.
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 download 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 or be answerable to any constituency or particular group of individuals and all have a responsibility equivalent to trustees for the governance of the College and the veterinary nursing profession. This means their actions and words should be consistent and in-line with the role and remit of the RCVS, and seek to further our mission to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare.

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. While VN Council members can engage in robust discussion and debate on matters for decision, once a decision has been made, there is a collective responsibility to respect and support the decision when communicating externally. Collective responsibility remains the case even if the VN Council member voted against the decision, abstained from voting on it, or was absent when the decision was made. The aim of collective responsibility is to ensure that there is no confusion amongst the profession as to the decision that was made.

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.

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 VN 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 eight-to-ten 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. In 2026, 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.
4. 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.
5. 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. 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
6. Reasonable expenses are covered for VN Council and committee work, including an overnight stays if that is required.





Meet VN Council member

Kirsty Young RVN

elected to VN Council in 2024

Why did you decide to stand for VN Council?

The continuing development of our profession, and recognition for veterinary nurses is very important to me. There is real opportunity to drive improvements for RVNs through a potential revision of the Veterinary Surgeons Act, and via activities such as the VN Vision work, better understanding and strengthening the veterinary nurse role. These are key topics discussed at RCVS VN Council, and I wished to support and influence the direction the profession. This can only really be achieved via appropriate education and regulation – key functions of RCVS. I also hoped to bring the variety of experience I have to contribute to VN Council's aims in supporting the diversity, strength and well-being of the profession, enabling RVNs to have fulfilling and healthy careers.

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

Working with similarly enthusiastic, knowledgeable and engaged members to achieve positive change is an absolute joy! Whether it be fellow RVNs, lay members, our veterinary surgeon colleagues or RCVS staff, everyone brings a variety of experience and viewpoints to discussions to help shape projects, outputs and consultations. Interacting with a wider group of colleagues through various subcommittees, focusing on specific RCVS functions, is also very interesting. My proudest moment so far has been the successful development and publication of the new Reasonable Adjustments Guidance for VN educators, approved by VN Council and published earlier this year. I hope this will empower veterinary teams to support each other and remove barriers individuals may face.

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

Have confidence that your experience and viewpoints matter, and that they will benefit VN Council and the wider profession. Everyone can bring something to the discussion – your voice counts! If you are interested in engaging in activities which bring meaningful change, meeting interesting, and interested, people, and learning new skills along the way, then go for it! It can feel ominous putting yourself forward for election, but the experience is well worth it.



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 new version of which was approved last year.

A copy of the Scheme may be downloaded from www.rcvs.org.uk/document-library/rcvs-council-election-scheme-1967-as-amended-in-2024.

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 Returning Officer, Clare Paget (c.paget@rcvs.org.uk), the CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) or the Chair of VN Council, Belinda Andrews-Jones (vncchair@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or VN Council members.

While no VN Council meetings will be taking place during the candidate nomination period, RCVS Council will also be holding a meeting on Thursday, 22 January 2026, prior to the closure date for candidates. Prospective VN Council candidates are welcome to attend the RCVS Council meeting as an observer. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk if you wish to attend.

6. **The timetable* for the 2026 election is:**

Closing date for submission of nominations

5pm, Saturday, 31 January 2026

Posting of voting papers to members (approx.)

Week commencing Monday, 9 March 2026

Closing date for receiving votes

5pm, Friday, 24 April 2026

Candidates informed of results

Monday, 27 April 2026

New members join VN Council

Friday, 3 July 2026 (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 VN Council Secretary 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. (Please note, the registered address for both proposers and candidates will not be published externally but will be used for identification purposes.) 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:

a. the **Candidate Information Form** containing:

- full name, title and qualifications;
 - at least one set of contact details of the candidate's choice **which will be published externally**. These contact details could include a postal address, an email address, a telephone number, a website URL and/or a social media handle. Please note, unless the candidate indicates otherwise, the registered address will not be published; and,
 - candidate biography and answers to the three questions in the candidate statement section of the information form. Please note, all three questions must be answered and candidates' answers will be published on both the RCVS website and the voting site.
- b. 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. 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.

Candidate biography and statement

15. The biography should be no more than 200 words and the answer to the three questions in the candidate statement section should be no more than 200 words each. Please note - there is an additional section where candidates can add any further information that they do not feel was covered by the biography or the three questions. These will be published on both the RCVS website and the secure voting website. Standard Microsoft Word formatting is acceptable, but please avoid underlining, as the system will reject it.

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 candidate statement section consists of three questions - each of which must be answered. These are:

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?

The aim of these questions is to give the candidates the opportunity to clearly set out how they think they will contribute in enabling the College to fulfil its mission and for VN Council to carry out its core functions in respect of the regulation of veterinary nurses.

18. We expect all candidates to have both read and understood the information we provide on the role and function of the RCVS, VN Council and VN Council members and the candidate information form will ask for your signature to confirm this. Accordingly, we expect candidate statement answers to be reflective of the remit of the RCVS and VN Council and to stay within the confines of the role of VN Council member.

19. 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 Returning Officer power to delete any material that she considers to be defamatory or, the publication of which, would be unlawful or factually misleading.

20. 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 web address or hyperlink to a campaign website, such as a Facebook, LinkedIn or X (formerly Twitter) account, is permitted in the contact details.

21. Candidates who are currently involved in the investigation of a complaint against them which has been, or might be, referred to the Charter Case Committee, 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.

22. Candidates wishing to submit statements should ensure they are received by the RCVS by **5pm on 31 January 2026**. **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

23. Candidates may canvass members as part of their election campaign. 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.



VN Council Election 2026

Nomination form

page 1 of 1

RCVS Council Election Scheme 1967 (Paragraph 5)

Please type of print in BLOCK CAPITALS

We hereby nominate (name in full)

of registered address (NB – this will not be published)

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 (NB – this will not be published)

of registered address (NB – this will not be published)

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 2026

Candidate Information Form

page 1 of 3

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

Title* **Forename*** **Surname***

Qualifications*

Postal Address

Landline **Mobile**

Email

Website

* These sections must be completed

VN Council Election 2026

Candidate Information Form

page 2 of 3

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)

In signing this box I confirm that I have read and understood the information in this document regarding the role and remit of the RCVS, VN Council, and VN Council members, and that my answers to the following questions accurately and realistically reflect this information.

Signed

Dated

Candidate biography

Candidate biography* (up to 200 words maximum, please refer to guidance notes)

Candidate statement

Why do you want to stand to be a member of VN Council?* (up to 200 words maximum, please refer to guidance notes)

* These sections must be completed

VN Council Election 2026

Candidate Information Form

page 3 of 3

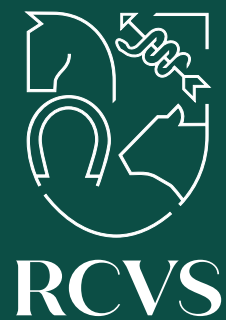
Candidate biography and statement continued (Please note hyperlinks and web addresses are not permitted in the biography or statement, testimonials are not accepted in the biography)

What do you think you can bring to VN Council?* (up to 200 words maximum, please refer to guidance notes)

What relevant experience do you have?* (up to 200 words maximum, please refer to guidance notes)

Is there anything else you would like to add in support of your candidacy? (up to 200 words maximum)

*** These sections must be completed**



**Royal College of
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