



Election Code of Conduct

The Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh ("The College") supports there being competitive elections for Council, Dental Council and for the roles of President and the Vice-Presidents among others.

This Code of Conduct ("the Election Code") for elections supplements the College's Code of Conduct ([Code of Conduct | RCSEd](#)) and sets out the ways that candidates and their supporters in College elections are expected to conduct themselves to maintain propriety and professional relationships throughout, from the moment the election is announced to the conclusion of the voting with the announcement of the results by the Returning Officer. The Election Code is issued to ensure no candidates are disadvantaged and to protect the reputation of the College.

Council Elections - Open to Fellows and Members of the College.

To set a standard which applies to all, Council agreed that from the 2025 election, the nomination process shall move online, and the nomination form shall be focussed on:

1. A word-limited election statement (350 words) from the candidate outlining why they wish to stand for Council and their aspirations for the future of the College;
2. A word-limited statement (250 words) from the candidate reflecting on their contribution to College activities to-date; and
3. A photograph of the candidate.

Vice President Elections - Open to past and present elected members of Council

1. Council agreed that from the 2025 election, candidates shall provide a word-limited statement (350-words) on why they wish to stand for the office of Vice-President and their aspirations for the future.

President Elections - Open to past and present elected members of Council

1. Word limited personal statement (500 words)
2. Hustings to take place in front of the current Council and Office-Bearers (as the voting members)

The Election Code is issued to all candidates at their time of candidature (for a signature of agreement) and for Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections to all voting members to ensure a disciplined election.

The Council agreed from January 2025 that the canvassing of votes is prohibited. It is acknowledged that for Presidential elections a Hustings event is offered. See Section 11.

This Election Code stipulates that the following conditions must be followed:

1. Elections must be carried out in the spirit of mutual respect.
2. By replacing the previous free-text questions with a word-limited statement, it is intended that all candidates have an equal opportunity to present to the electorate and the voting body shall learn of the candidates' views in an ethical, fair and balanced manner, which is an essential part of a healthy democratic process.
3. The decision to nominate a candidate or act as their proposer or seconder must be performed responsibly and with integrity.
4. For Council elections, the College's election services provider (CES Elections) will create an election micro-site (CES Online) to promote and administer the election. This site will include the information provided by candidates about themselves alongside information from the College on the election process and the timetable.
5. The College shall, during the Council nomination and voting period, promote and link to CES Online through its own communication channels, such as the College's centrally managed social media accounts, the College website and in printed materials. The frequency of the promotion of the election shall be agreed by the Returning Officer.
6. Candidates and their supporters must not use their own communication channels or College branding (including the College Logo) to promote their candidacy. This includes using the communication channels of their Specialty Association, the press or their own social media.
7. Candidates must ensure that all statements or claims made by them, or their supporters, are accurate, fair, reasonable and not misleading.
8. Candidates and their supporters must comply with the election process as set out in the College Laws and amplified within the College Regulations.
9. The College must not be brought into disrepute by a candidate, supporter or other voter misrepresenting or offering misleading information about a candidate's abilities, position, qualifications and experience.
10. Candidates must declare any actual or presumed conflicts of interest and be realistic in their promised mandate to the electorate.

Presidential Hustings

11. At presidential elections, and any other elections that include formal presentations, each candidate will be able to present themselves and their platform for election to the voting constituency. In such circumstances, in order to encourage a fair and honest debate and in conducting these presentations:
 - a) Candidates other than the one presenting must be asked to leave the room during the presentations of other candidates.
 - b) Candidates must not neither speak negatively of other candidates during their presentation nor misrepresent their own skills, experience and abilities.
 - c) Members of the audience may address questions to the candidates but should do so respectfully.
12. The act of voting is regarded as secret, and no voter is under any obligation to divulge their voting intentions or vote cast to others.

Use of External Organisations, Databases or Mailing Lists

13. For the avoidance of doubt, it is expressly forbidden to use external organisations or third parties, including agents to canvass or campaign on behalf of a candidate. This includes Specialty Associations promoting an individual's candidacy or issuing canvassing or promotional emails on their behalf. If a candidate becomes aware that they are the subject of endorsement or encouragement from an external or third-party organisation, they should inform the Vice President Membership immediately, as depending on the circumstances, such action may be deemed by the Returning Officer to be a breach of this code by the candidate.
14. Candidates are not permitted to use any personal data¹ obtained through any existing role or association with the College, to contact the subject of that data about the election or canvas for votes.
15. The College will not provide access, for any reason, to databases or mailing lists held by the College.
16. Unless prescribed for this Election Code, College meetings, events, social media accounts, email addresses, or mailing lists must not be used, whether directly or indirectly, in connection with any candidate's campaign.

Involvement of College staff or other volunteers

17. Staff must remain neutral in the election process so candidates must not ask staff of the College to get involved in the election process in any way and must not ask staff or other volunteers to obtain email/ mailing lists or send out communication related to the election on their behalf.
18. If a candidate would like information about the election or the election process, they must contact the Vice President Membership¹ and not request such information from members of staff.

Supporters

19. Candidates must not use their or their supporter's role within the College's hierarchy to influence voters' opinions nor offer any inducement that could be interpreted as bribery.
20. It is prohibited to make any adverse personal comments about other candidates in line with the College's Code of Conduct.
21. It is preferable that candidates do not ask Office-Bearers to act as their supporters, but it is at the discretion of the candidate and the Office-Bearer if they wish to ask or accept. Should they choose to do so, it is in their personal capacity as a Fellow of the College and is not in any way an endorsement of a particular candidate by the College.
22. This code does not prohibit Office-Bearers, Council members, members of the Board of Trustees or other College post holders from directly encouraging nominees whom they believe to be suitably qualified for the role to stand in the election, but they are not permitted to canvas on their behalf.

¹ [What is personal data? | ICO](#)

Breaches of the Code

Candidates and their supporters must ensure that this Code is observed in accordance with the spirit of a fair and proper election process. The College has the right to consider disciplinary action or disqualification from the election process if anyone is found to be in breach of the terms of this Code.

The Returning Officer is responsible for the conduct of the election. The Returning Officer, in consultation with the CEO, reserves the right to determine whether a candidate has breached the Election Code.

A determination by the Returning Officer and the CEO (and where, in cases they deem necessary, the Office-Bearers) that there has been a failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct may result in a warning to cease an activity. In the event the Returning Officer and the CEO determine that there has been a serious breach, the candidate may be withdrawn from the election.

In addition, should the conduct be categorised as amounting to a breach of the College's Code of Conduct, then further action may be taken in line the College's disciplinary process.

The decision by the College on all matters relating to this Election Code is final and binding on all candidates.

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The College may amend the Election Code with the agreement of Council and candidates shall be informed of any such changes.