

2025

RCVS

Council election

Information pack for
prospective candidates





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Introduction from the CEO

If you're reading this, thank you for your interest in becoming a candidate for RCVS Council, the governing body for the College whose members are responsible for making major decisions on the regulation of the veterinary profession, including in terms of registration, professional conduct and standards, and veterinary education.

As a self-regulating profession, elected veterinary surgeons make up a majority of RCVS Council members, all of whom bring their insights and skillsets as veterinary 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 profession.

It is important to note – and you will read this a lot in this document – that our Council members do not sit on the governing body and its committees as representatives of either the profession at large or a particular group within the profession. The role of 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 Council member, you have no positive impact on your peers in the professions – whether that's on Council itself or via one of its standing committees, subcommittees or working groups.

Ask any of our 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: the *Veterinary Clinical Careers Pathway* project, which is building expanded learning and development options for general practitioners; the *Mind Matters Initiative*, which funds pioneering veterinary mental health research and provides hundreds of hours of mental health training each year for the professions; and the *Standards Committee*, which does the crucial work of helping veterinary professionals navigate their professional responsibilities by answering questions and providing clear advice and guidance.

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 RCVS Council. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, on d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk.

Lizzie Lockett
RCVS CEO



Introduction from the Returning Officer

Following the retirement of RCVS Registrar Eleanor Ferguson earlier this year, I am delighted to be able to take over the reins as Returning Officer for the 2025 RCVS Council election.

Astute observers may notice that there are a few changes that we're making to the candidate nomination process this year, thanks to a change in the RCVS Election Scheme, giving us greater flexibility around the information we expect our candidates to provide to us in this and future elections.

This means that, rather than asking candidates to provide a broad statement as to why they want to be elected to Council, they will now have to answer specific questions as to what they will bring to Council in terms of their skillset and experiences. The aim of these changes is to make candidate statements more closely reflect the role and remit of the RCVS – for example, rather than promising to change things it is not within our gift to change – and being more positively focused on bringing something to the table.

This is an important moment to also 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](#) – for this year, we will be continuing to hold elections. 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, RCVS Council and RCVS Council members. Best of luck with your candidacy.

Simon Wiklund

RCVS Returning Officer and
Head of Legal Services / Assistant Registrar





The role of the RCVS

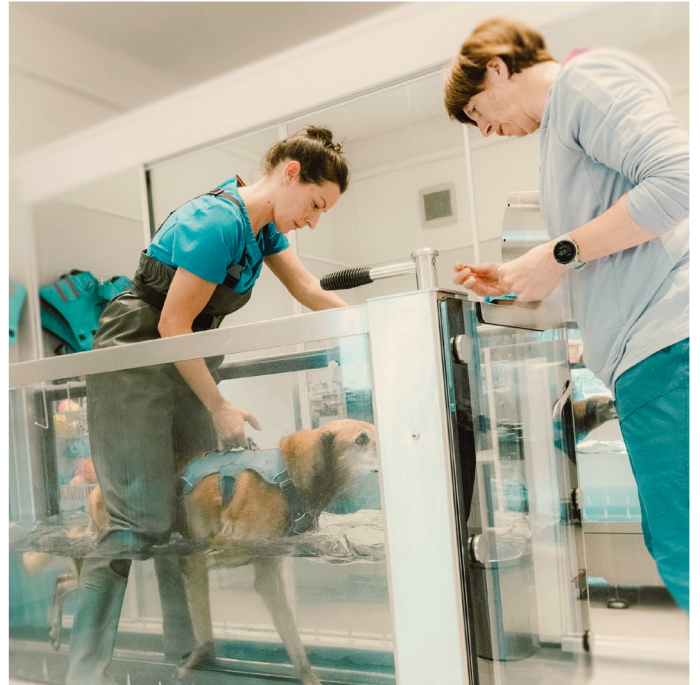
1. Thank you for your interest in standing for election for RCVS Council, the governing body for the College responsible for making major decisions on matters relating to the registration, professional regulation and education of veterinary surgeons in the UK.
2. The role of the RCVS is to set, uphold and advance veterinary standards, in order to enhance society through improved animal health and welfare, and public health.
3. 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.
4. 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 and do so in a way that is fair, credible and objective and is seen to be those things.
5. 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, in particular evidence-based veterinary medicine.
6. 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.
- The breakdown of members is as follows:
- a. 13 members: elected to Council by the profession itself;
 - b. three veterinary surgeon members: appointed by the Veterinary Schools Council to collectively represent the eight UK veterinary schools with an RCVS-accredited degree;
 - c. two members: appointed by the Veterinary Nurses Council;
 - d. six members: appointed lay persons.
7. Three or four elected members of Council (depending on the rotation) retire each year, and elections are held to fill those elected positions.
8. Under the governance arrangements for RCVS Council, the Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) for the United Kingdom is entitled to attend meetings of Council as an Observer and receives the Council papers. The CVO is not, however, a voting member of the Council.
9. Under current governance arrangements, Council is supported by an Officer Team (President, two Vice-Presidents, Treasurer). There is also a structure of committees, subcommittees and working groups, to which Council agrees to delegate some of its work and decisions.

10. The President, two Vice-Presidents and Treasurer are elected by Council from within its number, as are the chairs of the Advancement of the Professions, Education, and Standards Committees.

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





The role of Council members

1. Council members undertake the governance of the College, in accordance with the powers and obligations set out in the Charter and the Act.
2. Council meetings usually take place between six and eight times a year, at which Council members:
 - a. 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;
 - b. agree the Strategic Plan; the five-year financial plan; and the budget for the forthcoming year, including fees to be levied;
 - c. 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;
- d. receive reports from committees and make decisions on matters escalated from committees to Council or which the Council has decided to retain under the delegation scheme;
- e. elect the President, Vice-Presidents and Treasurer;
- f. appoint the CEO & Secretary, and Registrar, and any Assistant Registrars.
3. 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. No Council member may sit on either of these committees.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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 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. 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 Council members work

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, RCVS 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 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

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.

While 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 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

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 RCVS Council member

Dr Louise Allum MRCVS

Chair of the Public Advisory Group, first elected to RCVS Council in 2021

Why did you decide to stand for Council?

It was something on my 'to do' list when I was retired and getting a bit bored at home. But a friend who was on Council at the time tapped me on the shoulder and said that I should consider it now. With a full time job, two other volunteer roles and three kids, I did wonder if this was the right time. However, I am glad I went for it and am super grateful that people made the time to vote for me. It has been something that is achievable with a full-time job with a little bit of planning.

What have you enjoyed most about being a Council member?

Meeting different vets, vet nurses and other professionals from varied backgrounds and finding out about aspects of the profession I would never have seen in my day job. Each member of Council serves on several different committees which are selected for you to start with. From my time spent on the Standards Committee I have been involved with topics such as exporting bees to the huge challenge of the 'under care' guidance. I have been involved in further committees this year such as Mind Matters and have heard about the amazing work this group is doing to support the profession. I have also started chairing my first group via

the brand new Public Advisory Group.

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

Don't wait until the perfect time. If you want to have a voice in this profession and want to get involved why not do it now? I would say don't apply if you have an issue/soapbox that you want to promote. You need to have an enquiring mind and be able to deal with a whole range of issues and not be focussed on one area.



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

1. The term of an elected member is four years. Most serve a full term but, on occasion, some may retire early.

There is a maximum limit of three consecutive terms on Council, with a mandatory two-year break 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 Council member spends on Council business during their term depends on the committees and working parties on which they are asked to sit. Most RCVS committees generally sit four times a year, though some may meet more frequently depending on the nature and urgency of the business they are to discuss.

RCVS Council meets more frequently (usually six, but up to eight, times per year) allowing it to make decisions in a more timely fashion.

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 15 to 18 days a year on Council business in terms of formal meetings during their first year on Council. Additional time will be required to keep on top of emails, read paperwork etc.

As your 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 Council business, for example, if you become a Committee Chair or member of the Officer Team.

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 RCVS Council will take place. However, more information about where the RCVS will be holding its committee and Council meetings will be published in due course.
4. In 2025, Council meetings are scheduled in January, March, June, July (RCVS Day), September and November. Most committee meetings are four times per 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 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. 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 had been attended:

RCVS Council – two days

RCVS Council committee members – one day per committee

Chairs of RCVS Council committees – two days per committee

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





Meet RCVS Council member

Dr Tshidi Gardiner MRCVS

RCVS Treasurer, first elected to RCVS Council in 2021

Why did you decide to stand for Council?

I wanted to understand the conversations that were being had surrounding well-being, diversity, and inclusion within the RCVS Council. Acknowledging my limited understanding of its operations, my objective was to actively participate in decision-making, specifically addressing the impact of mental health challenges on the overall well-being of the veterinary profession. I aimed to position myself strategically to improve diversity and inclusion and contribute meaningfully to discussions that positively influence the profession as a whole.

What have you enjoyed most about being a Council member?

I've found immense joy in engaging with diverse perspectives from – vets, nurses, lay members, and College staff – across various backgrounds.

Delving into challenging discussions and hearing a range of opinions has been particularly rewarding. Additionally, the pleasure of traveling to different vet schools for meetings and experiencing warm welcomes has been a highlight, enhancing my overall enjoyment of the Council experience.

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

As a Council member, you operate akin to a board member, being representative of the wider veterinary profession. Your responsibilities include contributing to the regulation of the profession without advocating for any specific group whilst on the Council. The role is both challenging and fulfilling, requiring a commitment of time for effective execution.



Guidance for prospective candidates

Election Scheme

1. The election of members to RCVS Council is conducted in accordance with the Election Scheme made by the Privy Council under the Veterinary Surgeons Act 1966, a new version of which was approved this year. The new Election Scheme allows greater flexibility within the election process, including the ability to hold online-only elections on a permanent basis and to change the information we ask for from candidates.

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 Council must be a member who resides outside the Republic of Ireland or a member who resides in the Republic of Ireland and to whom the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 do not pertain or who has retained their right to vote under that Order.

Timetable

3. 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.

4. You are welcome to contact the Returning Officer, Simon Wiklund (s.wiklund@rcvs.org.uk), the CEO, Lizzie Lockett (l.lockett@rcvs.org.uk) or the President, Linda Belton (president@rcvs.org.uk) for more information about the role of the College and/or RCVS Council members. RCVS Council will also be holding a meeting on Thursday, 16 January 2025, prior to the closure date for Council candidates. Prospective candidates are welcome to attend the Council meeting as an observer. Please contact Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk if you wish to attend.

5. **The timetable* for the 2025 election is:**

Closing date for submission of nominations

5pm, Friday, 31 January 2025

Posting of voting papers to members (approx.)

Week commencing Monday, 10 March 2025

Closing date for receiving votes

5pm, Friday, 25 April 2025

Candidates informed of results

Monday, 28 April 2025

New Council members join Council

Friday, 4 July 2025 (RCVS AGM)

6. As soon as possible following the date when Civica Election Services sends the results 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

7. Those wishing to stand for election should return their completed **Nomination Form, by email**, to Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@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.

8. The two proposers must be members of the RCVS 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 contacting our Registration Department on **020 7202 0707** to double check your registered address as this may be different from your correspondence or practice address. Proposers may not be members of RCVS Council, but must be a member who resides outside the Republic of Ireland or a member who resides in the Republic of Ireland and to whom the provisions of the Veterinary Surgeons (Agreement with the Republic of Ireland) Order 1988 do not pertain or who has retained their right to vote under that Order.

9. No proposer may nominate more than one candidate.

10. The nomination form may be accompanied by:

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

- i. full name, title, and qualifications;
- ii. 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,
- iii. 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 on the secure voting website (see 'Candidate biography and statement' paragraph).

b. a recent colour photograph in digital format (at highest resolution possible, i.e. minimum of 300dpi at 100%).

11. Forms and photographs must be submitted in electronic format and via email to Dawn Wiggins, RCVS Council Secretary, at d.wiggins@rcvs.org.uk

12. All statements and photographs supplied will be published on the RCVS website prior to the start of the election period. We may also run our '**Quiz the Candidates**' initiative (see paragraph 23) to allow members of the profession to submit questions to candidates in advance. 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.

13. 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

14. 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.

15. 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 paragraph.

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

Why are you standing for Council?

What can you bring to 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 carry out its core functions.

17. We expect all candidates to have both read and understood the information we provide on the role and function of the RCVS and 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 to stay within the confines of the role of RCVS Council Member.

18. 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 he considers to be defamatory or, the publication of which, would be unlawful or factually misleading.

19. Hyperlinks or web addresses are **not permitted** in either the candidate biography or candidate statement. Any such details included in either paragraph 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.

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

Committee, or the RCVS Conduct Panel (in the case of complaints made against a current Council or committee member under the Council Code of Conduct), 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.

21. Candidates wishing to submit statements should ensure they are received by the RCVS by **5pm on 31 January 2025**. 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

22. 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.

23. 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 2025. 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.





RCVS Council Election 2025

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 Council of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

Proposer details

Name, registered address (the address as recorded in the RCVS Register of Members) 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 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

RCVS Council Election 2025 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

RCVS Council Election 2025 Candidate Information Form

page 2 of 3

Candidate biography and statement (Please note this information will be publicly available)

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, RCVS Council, and RCVS 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)

Candidate statement

Why do you want to stand to be a member of RCVS Council?* (up to 200 words maximum)

* These sections must be completed

RCVS Council Election 2025 Candidate Information Form

page 3 of 3

Candidate biography and statement continued (Please note this information will be publicly available)

What do you think you can bring to RCVS Council?* (up to 200 words maximum)

What relevant experience do you have?* (up to 200 words maximum)

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

* These sections must be completed

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