



## **RCP constitutional review (elections and voting)**

### **For Council agreement: Survey results and next steps**

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**June 2025**

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## 1.1 Summary

- Following agreement from council, a membership consultation ran from 17 April to 18 May 2025 on matters relating to RCP elections and voting.
- Survey was sent to 36,957 members and fellows.
  - > 1,732 responses were received that were identified as completed (ie reached the end of the survey and the submit survey button was clicked)
- After validating the data there were 1,636 responses in the final survey results dataset.
- Validated responses represent 4.4% of the total membership [fellows and members]]. Responses from only fellows represented 6.5% of the total fellowship.
- Although all members were surveyed (except for honorary and emeritus categories), it is only fellows who can vote on any proposed changes, and so fellows have been separated in the tables below to help in giving Council a fuller picture of the results.
- Council is requested to consider the results of the consultation, discuss and agree any proposals for change. These will then be considered by fellows at the AGM in September 2025. Detailed proposals would be worked up for consideration and sign-off at Council in July 2025.
- Data on the age profile of responders will be presented at council on 4<sup>th</sup> June.

### Summary of responses to survey questions

**Question 1:** Do you support widening the vote for the president beyond the fellowship?

|                             | Yes   |       | Unsure |      | No    |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|--------|------|-------|-------|
|                             | Count | %     | Count  | %    | Count | %     |
| Fellow                      | 427   | 38.5% | 100    | 9.0% | 581   | 52.4% |
| Other membership categories | 423   | 80.1% | 46     | 8.7% | 59    | 11.2% |
| Grand Total                 | 850   | 52.0% | 146    | 8.9% | 640   | 39.1% |

**Question 1a:** If you do support widening the vote, which membership groups would you want this to be extended to? (tick all that apply).

| Membership groups to extend to | Count | %     |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Collegiate members             | 808   | 95.1% |
| Associate members              | 236   | 27.5% |
| Foundation doctor members      | 139   | 16.4% |
| Medical student members        | 51    | 6.0%  |

**Question 2:** Would you support removing the requirement of the annual presidential election?

|                             | <b>Yes</b> |       | <b>Unsure</b> |       | <b>No</b> |       |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------|-------|
|                             | Count      | %     | Count         | %     | Count     | %     |
| Fellow                      | 657        | 61.1% | 86            | 8.0%  | 332       | 30.9% |
| Other membership categories | 290        | 56.2% | 69            | 13.4% | 157       | 30.4% |
| Grand Total                 | 947        | 59.5% | 155           | 9.7%  | 489       | 30.7% |

**Question 3:** How long should a president be in office for?

|                             | <b>2 years</b> |       | <b>3 years</b> |       | <b>4 years</b> |       | <b>5 years</b> |      |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|-------|----------------|------|
|                             | Count          | %     | Count          | %     | Count          | %     | Count          | %    |
| Fellow                      | 205            | 19.3% | 401            | 37.7% | 408            | 38.4% | 49             | 4.6% |
| Other membership categories | 140            | 27.8% | 183            | 36.4% | 157            | 31.2% | 23             | 4.6% |
| Grand Total                 | 345            | 22.0% | 584            | 37.3% | 565            | 36.1% | 72             | 4.6% |

**Question 4:** Do you support widening the voting for RCP vice presidents and councillors beyond the fellowship?

|                             | <b>Yes</b> |       | <b>Unsure</b> |      | <b>No</b> |       |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------|---------------|------|-----------|-------|
|                             | Count      | %     | Count         | %    | Count     | %     |
| Fellow                      | 504        | 47.0% | 90            | 8.4% | 479       | 44.6% |
| Other membership categories | 408        | 79.4% | 38            | 7.4% | 68        | 13.2% |
| Grand Total                 | 912        | 57.5% | 128           | 8.1% | 547       | 34.5% |

**Question 4a:** If you do support widening the vote, which membership groups would you want this to be extended to? (tick all that apply).

| Membership groups to extend to | Count | %     |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Collegiate members             | 872   | 95.6% |
| Associate members              | 266   | 29.2% |
| Foundation doctor members      | 154   | 16.9% |
| Medical student members        | 59    | 6.5%  |

**Question 5:** Do you agree with this change to remove the requirement in bye-law 5.3 that Council consider vice presidential candidates' curriculum vitae?

|                             | <b>Yes</b> |       | <b>Unsure</b> |       | <b>No</b> |       |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------|---------------|-------|-----------|-------|
|                             | Count      | %     | Count         | %     | Count     | %     |
| Fellow                      | 582        | 54.5% | 105           | 9.8%  | 381       | 35.7% |
| Other membership categories | 319        | 63.4% | 61            | 12.1% | 123       | 24.5% |
| Grand Total                 | 901        | 57.4% | 166           | 10.6% | 504       | 32.1% |

## 1.2 Background

In January 2025, Council approved the recommendations of the Constitutional and Governance Review Group (CGRG). Following this, a consultation was undertaken to seek feedback on matters relating to RCP elections and voting. The consultation exercise included an online survey, for all members except honorary and emeritus categories, live Q&A sessions and feedback from committees. This was supported by a dedicated web page to provide information and context.

## 1.3 Next steps – for discussion and agreement

Based on the feedback from the survey does Council wish to propose changes in some or all identified areas to the fellows at AGM 2025?

### Possible options:

1. Propose to the fellowship with proposals to expand voting in all elections
2. Propose to fellowship with a proposal to expand voting in vice president and councillor elections only
3. Propose to fellowship with a proposal to expand voting for presidential elections only
4. Do not expand voting rights for other membership categories at this stage
5. Propose to the fellowship to remove the requirement for council to assess CVs on vice-presidential candidates (bye-law 5.3)

If council wishes to expand voting rights in any form, a decision is needed on which membership categories to expand to (i.e. collegiate, associate, foundation and medical student).

Council will need to explore whether it may be sensible/necessary to have a ballot on these issues immediately before or after the AGM. Bye-law 1.1 stipulates that 'The Bye-Laws of the College and any alteration or repeal of the same shall be approved by a majority vote of those Fellows who have voted. Such vote shall be conducted at a general meeting unless the Council at any time before the vote is taken determine that the vote be conducted by a ballot after that meeting, using such method of voting that has been agreed by the Council. Due notice must be given in writing of any proposal to so enact, alter, or repeal a Bye-Law.'

Where supported, detailed proposals will be drafted (with legal input) for consideration and sign-off at Council in July 2025. For example, these might include:

- Suitable wording for a (non-binding) vote of fellows on whether to pursue amendment to the Medical Act 1860. This would allow identified areas for change to the presidential election to be proposed to Parliament. The AGM vote result would be returned to Council and the Board of Trustees for further consideration.

- Proposed amendments to existing bye-laws for (binding) votes of fellows. If fellows agree to change this would allow the widening of voting in vice president and Councillor elections and

Any proposals would include detailed background, rationale and survey results.

It is important to note that the widening of voting is currently only being considered with relation to elections of the president, vice presidents and Councillors. Wider discussion on voting at general meetings will take place at a later stage within the constitutional review. Any proposals would include detailed background, rationale and survey results.

## 1.4 Survey consultation with fellows and members

- Full results available in separate paper – *Summary of constitutional survey results for council*
- The [online survey](#) ran between 17 April – 18 May 2025. (questions asked – see **Appendix 1**)
- Survey was sent to subscribing members and fellows, including retired fellows (subscribing) [36,957 surveys sent].
- Emeritus fellows, honorary fellows, and honorary members were ineligible to take part.
- Consultation and feedback/comments were requested from membership committees and groups.
- Online Q&A briefing sessions were set up for members and fellows to join and discuss in-depth. These took place in May.
- Data validation
  - Compare the mandatory questions against RCP code, GMC number and email address with CRM
  - 29 responses did not match due to not matching on fields (18), incomplete information (6) or test responses (5).
  - Excluded 1 response from an advanced care practitioner.
  - Questions 1 to 5 weren't mandatory; decision made to only include those people who completed Question 1 (highest number of responses).
- 1732 members completed surveys (i.e. they reached the end of the survey and submitted) - note that questions 1 to 5 were not mandatory.
- After validating the data there were 1636 responses in the final survey results dataset.
- Validated responses represent 4.4% of the total membership [fellows and members]). Responses from fellows only represented 6.5% of the total fellowship.

## 1.5 Communication & promotion of constitutional review and survey

- Registrar's blog [Charting a new course: navigating constitutional and governance reform at the RCP](#)
- Dedicated web section for the [RCP constitutional review](#) created and published live on 17 April 2025.
- Direct emails sent to eligible members and fellows during launch. Further reminders sent in May.
- Highlighted in registrar's newsletter, *Commentary*, RCP leadership and global newsletters.
- Promoted on social media platforms for increased engagement.
- Direct letters sent to key RCP committees and groups.

## 1.6 Appendix 1 – Constitutional review survey questions

### RCP constitutional review – membership survey on elections and voting

This survey is to gather feedback on potential constitutional review relating to RCP elections and voting. The consultation is open to all RCP fellows and members.

The key constitutional area we are consulting on is whether the election voting rights for the president and other senior college roles should be extended to the wider membership. Currently only fellows have the right to vote.

Please note that this survey is consultative. However, your feedback will guide RCP Council in making any recommendations for change to be considered by fellows at the AGM in September 2025 and beyond.

#### Election of the RCP president

##### Part 1

The royal charter, Medical Act 1860 and bye-laws stipulate that the RCP must hold an annual presidential election on a set day, and that only fellows are eligible to vote for the president.

RCP Council is exploring widening voting rights across the membership (currently restricted to fellows).

Please note that changing arrangements for the presidential election is likely to require a change in the parliamentary legislation (Medical Act) and royal charter. Council would like to highlight the potential challenges and resource implications of such change. Any move to amend the relevant act of parliament/charter would require ongoing consideration by the Board of Trustees and Council.

Council is seeking the views of fellows and members on the following question to inform ongoing constitutional review.

**Question 1:** Do you support widening the vote for the president beyond the fellowship?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Comment

**Question 1a:** If you do support widening the vote, which membership groups would you want this to be extended to? (tick all that apply). Subscribing members are those who pay a membership fee.

☐ **Collegiate members** – (these are subscribing members who have passed the MRCP(UK) exam OR are working in an NHS substantive consultant post OR are resident doctors enrolled in JRCPTB higher specialty training programmes (ST3+))

☐ **Associate members** – (these are subscribing members who have not passed the MRCP(UK) exam: resident doctors undertaking internal medicine training, locally employed doctors, SAS doctors)

☐ **Foundation doctor members** – (these are subscribing members who are in foundation training programme)

☐ **Medical student members** – (these are non-subscribing members undertaking an undergraduate medical degree)

Comment

## Part 2

We have a Council-recommended 4-year term of office for the president; however, the Medical Act 1860 and our royal charter require us to hold a presidential election annually on a specific day.

RCP Council is exploring removing the requirement of the annual presidential election. Any change in this area would be coupled with robust safeguards and performance management processes to allow Council and the membership to manage any instance of under-performance.

Council is seeking the views of fellows and members on the following question to inform ongoing constitutional review.

**Question 2:** Would you support removing the requirement of the annual presidential election?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Comment

**Question 3:** How long should a president be in office for?

2 years

3 years

4 years

5 years

Comment

## Election of RCP vice presidents and councillors

**Part 3**

The bye-laws state that only fellows are eligible to vote in the elections of the vice-presidents (academic, clinical, education and training, and Wales) and councillors.

RCP Council is exploring widening voting rights across the membership.

Council is seeking the views of fellows and members on the following question to inform ongoing constitutional review.

**Question 4:** Do you support widening the voting for RCP vice presidents and councillors beyond the fellowship?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Comment

**Question 4a:** If you do support widening the vote, which membership groups would you want this to be extended to? (tick all that apply).

☐ **Collegiate members** – (these are subscribing members who have passed the MRCP(UK) exam OR are working in an NHS substantive consultant post OR are resident doctors enrolled in JRCPTB higher specialty training programmes (ST3+))

☐ **Associate members** – (these are subscribing members who have not passed the MRCP(UK) exam: resident doctors undertaking internal medicine training, locally employed doctors, SAS doctors)

☐ **Foundation doctor members** – (these are subscribing members who are in foundation training programme)

☐ **Medical student members** – (these are non-subscribing members undertaking an undergraduate medical degree)

Comment

**RCP Council recommendation****Part 4**



Bye-law 5.3 states that Council shall consider the nominations received for elected vice president roles together with the candidates' curriculum vitae to ensure that the candidates have the necessary experience and knowledge as required by the role description.

It is proposed to remove this responsibility from Council to avoid any bias and allow the electorate to determine the suitability of candidates. All candidates for election will continue to be subject to checks to ensure good standing.

**Question 5:** Do you agree with this change?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Comment

## 1.7 Appendix 2 – information on election voting by other royal colleges

This is information on how other royal colleges vote.

|  | <b>Electorate for president (or equivalent)</b>   | <b>Electorate for vice presidents (or equivalent)</b>   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Royal College of Radiologists</b>                     | UK fellows  | UK fellows  |
| <b>Royal College of Psychiatrists</b>                    | Fellows, Members and Specialist Associates of the College. Lower grades of membership, such as Affiliate and Foundation Doctor Associate do not carry voting rights.  | Fellows, Members and Specialist Associates of the College. Lower grades of membership, such as Affiliate and Foundation Doctor Associate do not carry voting rights.                        |
| <b>Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists</b> | The President shall be elected by Fellows and Members who hold or have held in the UK or the Republic of Ireland their main or principal university or hospital appointment or, in default of holding any such appointment, practise as a medical practitioner in the UK or the Republic of Ireland in obstetrics and/or gynaecology or (if they have retired) reside in the UK or the Republic of Ireland; and are not in arrears with their subscriptions to the College. | The Officers of the College (except the President) shall be elected by members of Council who are Fellows and Members by ballot at a Council meeting designated by the Council.             |
| <b>Royal College of Surgeons of England</b>              | <p>Just received approval from the Privy Council to change Ordinances – which now allows members to vote for President and VP.</p> <p>Presidential election 2026. That will be the first time members have elected a new President.</p> <p>Previously offices were elected by Council.</p>  | <p>Just received approval from the Privy Council to change Ordinances – which now allows members to vote for President and VP.</p> <p>Previously these offices were elected by Council.</p> |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Royal College of Nursing</b>                 | All members (retired, nursing support workers, nurses, students etc).   |   |
| <b>Royal College of General Practitioners</b>   | Only council members (70 people) can vote for the chair and the vice chairs.  | Only council members (70 people) can vote for the chair and the vice chairs.  |
| <b>Royal College of Occupational Therapists</b> | All members have voting rights to elect to the governing body/ Council. However, there are some restrictions on some roles - e.g. Council members for England, Wales, Scotland, NI can only be voted be people residing in those countries. | All members have voting rights to elect to the governing body/ Council. However, there are some restrictions on some roles - e.g. Council members for England, Wales, Scotland, NI can only be voted be people residing in those countries. |

## 1.8 Appendix 3 – membership categories

| Category          | Eligibility  | Subscription    |
|-------------------|--|-----------------|
| Fellow            | Elected to the fellowship. Includes retired subscribers but not honorary or emeritus fellows (who are non-subscribers)   | Subscribing     |
| Collegiate        | members who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>passed the MRCP(UK) exam OR</li> <li>working in an NHS substantive consultant post OR</li> <li>resident doctors enrolled in JRCPTB higher specialty training programmes (ST3+)</li> </ul>                   | Subscribing     |
| Associate         | members who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not passed the MRCP(UK) exam</li> <li>resident doctors undertaking internal medicine training</li> <li>locally employed doctors (not passed MRCP(UK))</li> <li>SAS doctors (not passed MRCP(UK))</li> </ul> | Subscribing     |
| Foundation doctor | members who are in foundation training programme   | Subscribing     |
| Medical student   | members undertaking an undergraduate medical degree  | Non-subscribing |