

RCN Congress - policy and process document

1. Definition and purpose of Congress

1.1 Congress is the annual representative meeting of members which focusses on influencing the policy and future direction of the College (RCN Royal Charter)

1.2 Its purpose is to:

- promote the objects of the RCN as laid down in the Royal Charter
- promote the profession of nursing
- express views and opinions on matters of importance to nurses and the nursing profession
- express views and opinions, and influence the health and social care services the nursing profession provides to the people of the United Kingdom
- express views and opinions, and influence health care policy for the people of the United Kingdom
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5. Who can vote?

5.1 Only members of the following representative bodies can vote at Congress, as follows:

- Branches are represented on the basis of one vote for every 1000 members or part thereof.
- Forums are represented on the basis of one vote for every 1000 members or part thereof.
- Nursing Support Workers have seven votes.
- Learning Representatives have seven votes.
- Safety Representatives have seven votes.
- Stewards have seven votes.
- Students have seven votes

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6. Allocation of voting places and funding to attend Congress

- 6.1 The process for allocating voting places and the associated funding arrangements are set out in a separate policy and process document.

7. The role of Council and Officers of the meeting

- 7.1 Council hosts Congress and remains in session throughout the week. Council makes the key decisions on Congress including the dates and location of Congress.
- 7.2 Council also agrees the agenda and programme, on the recommendation of the Agenda Committee.
- 7.3 Congress is presided over by the Chair and Vice Chair of Congress. The Chair of Congress is a non-voting member of RCN Council – this is because he/she is elected by the representative bodies rather than being directly elected by the membership as required for a trade union executive voting member under the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.
- 7.4 The role and remit of the Chair and Vice Chair of Congress are set out in role descriptors.
- 7.5 The Agenda Committee is elected by the representative bodies at Congress. Its role and purposes is set out in its terms of reference.
- 7.6 The rules for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair and the Agenda Committee are set out in election procedures for these roles which are agreed by RCN Council in advance of an election year.
- 7.7 Should a mid-term vacancy arise for any of these roles the RCN's process for filling casual vacancies applies.
- 7.8 Terms of office are of two years duration and the RCN's regulation (agreed by Council in July 2014) on terms of office applies to these roles.
- ## **8. Management and rules of the meeting**
- 8.1 The Chair of Congress is responsible for the conduct of the meeting. If s/he is absent the Vice Chair will assume his/her role. If both are absent the Agenda

Committee may elect one from amongst themselves to assume the role of Chair.

9. Quorum

9.1 One hundred and fifty voting members must be present for the meeting to be quorate.

10. Order of business

10.1 The times of starting and adjourning each session will be set out in the order of business. Once the programme has been published the order and timing of business can only be varied by agreement of the Agenda Committee.

11. Auditorium arrangements

11.1 Seating arrangements will be detailed in the Congress brochure, and members should ensure they are seated in the correct area. Distribution of papers and publications in the debating hall is not permitted without the permission of the Chair.

12. Agenda Items proposing and seconding

12.1 Once the agenda has been published items can only be withdrawn with the agreement of a majority of voting members.

12.2 Resolutions and matters for discussion should be proposed by a voting member from the body which submitted it. In addition, resolutions should be seconded by a voting member from a different body, as defined in paragraph section 4 above.

12.3 In the absence of a proposer from the body which submitted the item, a voting member from another-body may propose it instead.

12.4 Agenda items put forward by Council, the Professional Nursing Committee, Trade Union committee, and country and regional boards would normally be proposed by the Chair of those entities or by another member from those entities.

12.5 Members of Council, the Professional Nursing Committee, Trade Union committee, and country and regional boards may also propose or second items put forward by any other submitting entity if required (for example in the absence of a proposer from the body which submitted it).

12.6 Agenda items submitted by the Chief Executive & General Secretary would normally be proposed by themselves and, if a resolution, seconded by either a voting member from the entities listed in paragraph 5 or a member of Council, Trade Union Committee, Professional Nursing Committee or country/regional board.

12.7 The proposer (and seconder) will set the scene for the ensuing debate, and may therefore present different facets of the arguments for and against the item.

13. Agenda items voting and summing up

13.1 Resolutions will require a majority of voting members to be carried; there will be no vote on matters for discussion.

13.2 At the conclusion of debate on a resolution or matter for discussion the proposer will have the right of reply. The right of reply is to sum up and clarify points raised in the debate. New information must not be introduced.

13.3 Agenda items the difference between resolutions and matters for discussion

Resolutions require a vote on an issue, and often include a call for action; matters for discussion highlight issues of importance but do not require a vote.

13.4 Agenda items emergency items

Emergency agenda items refer to an issue that has arisen since the closing date for the receipt of agenda items. They may be submitted to the Agenda Committee at any time after the closing date for agenda items - either before or during the course of Congress. The Agenda Committee considers each submission during their meetings at Congress and decide whether to recommend that they are included on the agenda. The voting members present at the next session of Congress must vote in favour of an item being accepted on to the agenda.

13.5 Emergency agenda items can only be submitted by those bodies defined in section 4 above and the rules in Section 12 apply to proposing and seconding emergency items.

13.6 Emergency items may also be submitted from the floor of Congress during the meeting itself.

13.7 All emergency agenda items will require the agreement of a majority of voting members in order to be accepted onto the agenda.

14. Agenda items amendments

14.1 An agenda item may be amended by a proposal which removes, adds or replaces words. An amendment must not change an agenda item so that its original purpose is lost and should only be made to aid clarity.

14.2 Amendments should, whenever possible, be submitted in writing to the Agenda Committee in advance of Congress or during the course of Congress. Amendments may also be proposed from the floor, using a Procedural Item card.

14.3 The Chair will decide whether the amendment is relevant and whether it should be put to the vote.

14.4 An amendment must be proposed by a voting member, and seconded by a voting member from a different body. To be accepted, an amendment w C1 12 Tf1 0 0 1 1E(

- **Adjourning the debate** - before a vote is taken to adjourn the debate, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the item. The vote on the procedural item is then taken. If passed, the current debate is then adjourned, to be concluded at a later time during Congress. If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.
- **Referring the agenda item to Council for further consideration** - before a vote is taken, the proposer of the agenda item has a right to speak on the item. The vote on the procedural item is then taken. If passed, the proposer of the agenda item has a right of reply to the agenda item. Debate then stops and the agenda item is referred to Council for further consideration. If lost, debate on the agenda item resumes.
- **Changing the order of agenda items** - before a vote is taken on the procedural item, the proposer of the procedural item must specify the new order of agenda items. If passed, the new order of agenda items will take effect. If lost, the order of agenda items remains unchanged.

18. Points Of Order

18.1 A point of order card is used to challenge the conduct of the meeting, or to seek clarification from the Chair. As soon as the Chair sees a point of order card, anyone speaking may be interrupted.

18.2 Point of order cards may be used by anyone who is registered and attending Congress.

19. Speaking

19.1 Speakers will first state their name and whether they are attending that session as a voting member, or as a non-voting member. If they are attending as a voting member they should say which body they are from.

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19.4 All speakers will address their remarks to the Chair. The Chair may ask speakers who come up to the microphone repeatedly or are not making a contribution to give priority to first time speakers.

20. Reporting from Congress

20.1 All members who register to attend Congress will receive:

- a report on action taken on items debated the previous year. If the item was defeated the report will state so and explain that no action was taken. A report on matters for discussion will only be included if there is ongoing RCN work on that particular issue – where this isn't the case the report will say so.

20.2 Members may ask questions on the report of Council, but a continuation of the previous year's debates will not be allowed. If Congress feels that an item from a previous year is of such importance that it requires further debate, then it should be submitted as a draft emergency agenda item for consideration by the Agenda Committee.

20.3 Members are reminded that the AGM is an opportunity to ask questions about the running of the organisation – from 2014 the AGM is held during Congress week.

21. Agenda Committee Reports

21.1 The Agenda Committee will report regularly in the following ways:

- The First Report, covering all meetings of the Committee since the last Congress, will be disseminated ahead of Congress.
- The Second Report, arising from the Agenda Committee meeting immediately before Congress, will be presented