



Canvassing Code of Practice

Introduction

At the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, our mission is rooted in the values of *improvement*, *integrity*, *innovation*, and *inclusion*. These principles guide everything we do, including how we engage with the public during election periods. As a charity, it is essential that our activities remain non-partisan, transparent, and respectful, while also empowering the members we serve to make informed decisions.

This Canvassing Code of Practice outlines our approach to election engagement, ensuring that all staff, volunteers, and candidates uphold the highest ethical standards. It sets clear expectations for how we conduct ourselves when communicating with members, gathering feedback, or raising awareness about issues that matter to our mission.

By adhering to this code, we strive to foster trust, amplify underrepresented voices, and contribute to a fair and inclusive democratic process.

General

1. This Code of Practice sets out the rules for all candidates for College elections if they wish to engage in canvassing during the elections period. The Code is mandatory for all candidates, and the College reserves the right to amend its terms and conditions as it sees fit
2. Canvassing is defined as trying to persuade an elector to vote for a particular candidate
3. The elections period is defined as the date from which the Responsible Officer is appointed to oversee the election to the date the results are announced
4. These rules are overseen by the Responsible Officer appointed by the College Trustees. The Responsible Officer will adjudicate any complaints and have the final decision on any disputes
5. The RCOphth will provide equal opportunity for candidates to convey their messages to our members (e.g. via the voting platform) but does not fund any canvassing activities for individual candidates nor do we provide member details to candidates to comply with data governance
6. RCOphth staff must remain neutral.

Rules

The following rules set out clear guidance for how canvassing must be conducted in line with our charity's values of *improvement*, *integrity*, *innovation*, and *inclusion*. They are designed to ensure that all engagement during election periods is respectful, lawful, non-partisan, and aligned with our charitable purpose. By following them, we maintain transparency, foster respectful communication, and uphold our commitment to serving our members with fairness and accountability.

Candidates MUST

- Remain a member in good standing, adhere to the [Code of Conduct](#) of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and not bring the election or the College into disrepute
- Respect the confidentiality of the information that was shared in RCOphth Council or one of the RCOphth committees, if a candidate is already part of those groups
- Ensure that any statements or claims made by them or their supporters are accurate, fair and not misleading
- Refer any media enquiries about their nomination or the election to the RCOphth press office
- Retain details of all expenditure related to their candidacy (see below) as the Responsible Office may require these to be disclosed.

Candidates MUST NOT:

- Spend their own money on campaigning activities other than: -
 - Reasonable costs normally associated with their personal e-mail account (no campaign microsites, hotlines, or similar, are permitted)
 - Reasonable costs normally associated with their personal landline and mobile telephone accounts
 - Reasonable travel expenses, at College rates, associated with travelling to address individuals or groups of members for the purpose of canvassing
- Engage paid-for agents or any non-RCOphth members to act for them in the conduct of their canvassing
- Raise or accept commercial or other sponsorship to fund their campaign, including expenditure by their supporters/third parties, nor accept gifts/services in lieu, in support of their candidacy, with a monetary value exceeding £5
- Act as a spokesperson for the College in the media on any matter during the election period
- Use College events, study days or conferences to canvass
- Request support from members of staff. Any requests from candidates for information must be directed to the Responsible Officer
- Use, or attempt to access, any databases or other records held by the College, including any of its committees
- Use College descriptors/acronyms, a College email address, College-supported social media account, branding, images, or stationery, or College resources to conduct canvassing nor imply that personal messaging enjoys any form of College support for their candidacy. Candidates may, however, factually describe their College membership level and role on any College committee or working group
- Make any adverse comments about another candidate's election statement or canvassing campaign
- Conduct any canvassing activity via the press
- Put College members under pressure or unduly influence through financial or other incentives to vote in their favour. Candidates need to pay special attention to discussions with those over whom they have managerial, training, or other career progression responsibilities.
- Include any photographs in election materials other than a head and shoulder photo, featuring the candidate only, with a neutral background.

Candidates ARE ALLOWED TO:

- Proactively approach their personal contacts within the College by phone, email or in conversation for the purpose of canvassing
- Promote their candidacy on their personal social media accounts in line with our [Code of Conduct](#)

Approved by Responsible Officer – Stephen Jones, Lay Trustee, July 2025

Review date: June 2028