



## **Candidate Guidelines for use of Social Media and other forums**

Promoting your election campaign via social media, online forums, blogs and other social networking sites can be a good way to reach and engage with voters. Healthy and robust debate is to be expected and encouraged, particularly during the election period, however, all members have a responsibility under the terms and conditions of RPS membership to adhere to the Society's Code of Conduct. The Code specifically includes that every RPS member must:

- conduct themselves in a manner that upholds and enhances the reputation of the Society
- maintain the dignity and welfare of the Society and the profession
- never engage in any activity that will impair the dignity, reputation or welfare of the Society, fellow members or the profession
- not implicate the Society, through direct reference or use of membership status, in any statement that may be construed as defamatory, discriminatory, libellous, offensive, slanderous, subversive or otherwise damaging to the Society

In addition, the following guidelines provide candidates with standards for campaigning responsibly and sensibly, via social and other media forums, in a way that will maintain the reputation of the Society and the profession and not deter participation in the election process.

- You have a right to speak freely and express your views but always think carefully about everything you say, particularly your use and tone of language. Remember you are personally accountable for everything you post on social media.
- Never forget that you are on show, as a member of the RPS and as a professional, not just to your followers but to anyone else who sees what you post. Inappropriate use of social media can pose a risk to the Society's and your own individual reputation.
- Your posts will be visible for anyone to read including patients, your colleagues and employer, wider pharmacy stakeholders, potential and existing members of the RPS and the press.
- Use your common sense and think about the impact your posts/comments might have on others before you publish them. Avoid posting anything that could be offensive or could be misconstrued in a way that could damage your own or the Society's reputation.
- Do not defame or disparage the RPS, its members, other candidates or staff
- Never make comments that could be perceived as racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise prejudiced - harassment, ethnic slurs, personal insults, racial or religious intolerance and any other form of inappropriate behaviour is unacceptable. You may also be committing a criminal offence.
- Always treat others with consideration, politeness and respect.



- Do not engage in any form of negative campaigning – do not criticise your fellow candidates or members. You should be respectful of other people's opinions whether those opinions are in accordance with your own or not.
- Exercise caution when engaging with others who have made negative comments, always remain professional. Do not get drawn into slanging matches or trolling exchanges. Remain polite and considerate, even if they have been rude or unpleasant.
- Do not publically share something about other candidates or members that might be confidential. Do not post anything that is libellous or untrue - on-line posts are subject to the same copyright and defamation laws as written or verbal communications.
- Always show due consideration when discussing controversial topics or issues that may provoke a charged, emotional response.
- Do not join in with others who may be attacking another individual - cyber bullying or trolling of any kind is unacceptable.

In addition to the general Code of Conduct, an additional level of professional responsibility and behaviour is required from all members of the RPS's governing bodies, including National Pharmacy Board members, which reflects their status as leaders of the Society and the pharmacy profession in general. Existing Board members standing for re-election and new candidates are therefore reminded that, on taking office, they are required to sign an additional agreement binding them to uphold the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Members of Governance Bodies.

All members and candidates are encouraged to report any breach of these guidelines, the Code of Conduct or misuse of social media in general to the RPS. Any instances of suspected breach of the election guidelines, and/or of the Society's Code of Conduct will be investigated under the relevant Conduct Scheme and may result in a formal Conduct Hearing. Any member who is subsequently found to be in breach of the Code may have sanctions imposed on them, including removal from office and/or the elections process, and may ultimately be removed from membership of the Society.

Members may also be requested to remove individual comments/postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of either these guidelines or the Code - failure to comply with such a request may result in a formal Conduct Hearing.

**Paul Bennett  
Chief Executive  
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