

Opportunity for technicians to join Society's Council arrives

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Registration for pharmacy technicians and the new charter of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society bring with them the opportunity for technicians to serve on the Society's Council. This article explains the role and responsibilities of a Council member and how pharmacy technicians can put their name forward for the vote

Opportunities for technicians to engage with their new regulation arrangements are presented by the 2005 election for the Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society. The Society's Council will, for the first time, include places for two pharmacy technician members, who will be elected by those technicians who are on the Society's voluntary register of pharmacy technicians at the time of the election.

The move to a new constitution means that all current members of the Council will stand down this year, although some may be re-elected or re-appointed. As well as the two pharmacy technician places, there will be vacancies for 17 elected pharmacists plus one pharmacist appointed by the universities awarding pharmacy degrees accredited by the Society and 10 lay members.

Responsibilities

What would being a member of the Council involve? The Council is the governing body of the Society and is accountable for

the discharge of all its functions as a professional and regulatory body, within the context of the public benefit.

The principal responsibilities of the Council are to:

- Lead strategic development and policy
- Monitor the implementation of policies, activities of committees and the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation, and policy evaluation
- Determine the overall organisational and management framework of the Society
- Set priorities for workload, expenditure and income generation
- Act as a trustee for the Society's trusts/funds
- Maintain good relations with registered technicians, pharmacists, the public and other professions
- Represent the Society's policies and views to government departments and decision-makers
- Ensure the proper exercise of regulatory and law enforcement duties

- Ensure adequate systems of appointment, appraisal, remuneration and discipline of staff
- Ensure high standards of corporate governance, including financial procedures and reporting, and personal behaviour

Members of the Council have their own code of conduct, reflecting the "Nolan" principles developed by the Parliamentary Committee on Standards in Public Life. Their responsibility is to the public and to the pharmacy and pharmacy technician professions as a whole, rather than to any particular sector. They have joint responsibility for the decisions and actions of the Council.

Currently, there are six formal Council meetings per year as well as a number of informal meetings at which strategic issues are discussed. Council members are also likely to serve on, and perhaps chair, committees or task groups. The new Council may well opt to change the current structures to meet future need and, to inform

this, the current Council is carrying out a fundamental review of the Society's supporting structures with a view to making recommendations to the new Council. It is likely that, whatever the future structure, members of the Council will be expected to devote at least two days a month to Council work, together with preparation in their own time. Attendance fees and expenses are provided, in line with Society policies.

Communication with and about pharmacists and pharmacy technicians is a key activity for members of the Council. They also have a vital role to play in communicating with other stakeholders: the government, patient and consumer groups and other professions. The Society also has prominent roles in a number of international organisations.

The job of a member of the Council is a demanding and responsible one. The decisions made by the Council will shape the future of the pharmacy profession and impact on the working lives of technicians for years to come. The role can be challenging but also exceptionally fulfilling and enjoyable. Members of the Council gain an immensely broad perspective on pharmacy and gain fascinating insights into how policy — professional and governmental — is developed and implemented. Most importantly, they have the chance to make a difference.

— Election procedure

So, if you have something to offer, if you fit the profile, if you enjoy taking a high level of responsibility, how do you go about getting yourself elected? Your first step should be to apply to join the Society's voluntary register of pharmacy technicians as soon as possible, because pharmacy technicians will need to be on this register in order to stand for election. You should also obtain a nomination form and guidance papers for candidates from Averil Ridgway (who can be contacted by telephone on 020 7572 2204 or e-mail at averil.ridgway@rpsgb.org). The guidance papers are also available on the Society's website (www.rpsgb.org). This year, pharmacy technicians may self-nominate and so do not need to get anyone else to sign their forms.

Because the election regulations have had to be re-gazetted under the Society's new charter, the call for nominations is being made on a conditional basis, as the election regulations will not be approved until February. The closing date for nominations, together with all the supporting material, including the candidate's photograph and election statement, will be noon on 25 February.

You should return your nomination form, signed by yourself, to Averil Ridgway. Two other documents from the bundle you receive with your nomination form will also



The Council chamber of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society

need signing. One is a declaration of adverse decisions, on which you should either state that you have not been the subject of any adverse decisions that might be relevant to membership of the Council, or provide details if you have. The other is a statement of undertaking that, if elected, you will support and seek to further the purpose, objects and responsibilities of the Society and comply with the code of conduct for Council members.

The returned nomination form should also be accompanied by biographical details, a declaration of positions or companies from which you benefit financially and a good quality colour photograph, taken within the last six months. The biographical details and the declaration of relevant interests should be presented in the standard formats specified in the Council election procedure.

— Election booklet

In addition, you should submit a statement of policy by noon on 25 February at the latest — if you do not meet this deadline it cannot be included in the election booklet. The biographical details, the declaration of relevant interests and the policy statement should together total no more than 630 words, which is the maximum that can be accommodated on a single page of the booklet. How you divide your words between biography, declaration of interests and policy statement is up to you.

The names of the candidates will be reported to the Society's Council in confidence at the beginning of March, and shortly afterwards voters should receive the voting papers and election booklet. *The Pharmaceutical Journal* of 12 March will include the candidates' biographical details, declarations of relevant interests and photographs, but not their statements of policy, which are sent only to voters.

Once the list of candidates is public, be prepared for approaches from editors of var-

ious publications, organisers of hustings events and the like. But do not contribute to any publication or event unless you are sure that the Council election procedure is being followed.

The closing date for voting this year is 11 April. A few days later, candidates should learn whether or not they have been elected.

Candidates successful in this year's election should be aware that the pharmacy technician elected with the highest number of votes will be elected for a three-year term. The pharmacy technician with the second highest vote will be elected for a two-year term (terms begin in May, when the reformed Council takes office). This is necessary in order to establish a rolling programme of retirement from the new Council. At subsequent elections (other than a by-election) elected members of the Council shall be elected for a three-year term.

While new members of the Council would usually take office (and outgoing members of Council leave office) from the date of publication of the election results in *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, this will not be the case this year, when the new Council will take office (and the current Council leave office) at 00.01hrs on 25 May, the day after the Society's annual general meeting.

“Focus on technicians” articles

This series exists to report on how pharmacy technicians are pushing forward their traditional boundaries and making a full contribution to the profession.

Advice on the publication process, before submitting an article, can be obtained by telephoning the *Hospital Pharmacist* editorial office on 020 7572 2425/2419.

Articles can be sent by post to *Hospital Pharmacist*, 1 Lambeth High Street, London, SE1 7JN, or submitted by e-mail to gareth.jones@pharmj.org.uk or rachel.graham@pharmj.org.uk