



**BVNA**  
British Veterinary  
Nursing Association

## **BVNA ELECTIONS (2): GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES**

Containing guidance for candidates, members and participants in the annual Elections of the BVNA

**Updated:** March 2019

**By:** RM

### **OVERVIEW**

This is one of three documents covering the annual elections of the BVNA. It contains guidance and FAQs for anyone interested in the election and is also available on the website ([www.bvna.org.uk](http://www.bvna.org.uk))

1. Guidance for Candidates
2. Timeline
3. FAQs
4. Complaints and Challenges
5. Governance and BVNA Elections

A separate document contains extracts from the BVNA's Constitution and Rules.

### **BVNA ELECTION (1): RULES & CONSTITUTION**

A third document contains Standard Operating Procedures for staff:

### **BVNA ELECTION (3): STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS**

## BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

### 1. GUIDANCE FOR CANDIDATES

Updated: March 2019

Reading time: 20 minutes

*This document is intended as an introduction for anyone interested in learning more about the Council of the BVNA, its elections and the work of Council Members. It was refreshed in March 2019 after a review following the 2019 Council elections.*

For more information please contact the BVNA Office on [bvna@bvna.co.uk](mailto:bvna@bvna.co.uk) or 01279 408644 during normal office hours.

#### **Who is the BVNA?**

The British Veterinary Nursing Association is the voice of veterinary nursing in the UK. We were formed in 1965 and more than half a century later, represent almost 6500 members. We have three main areas of activity: our Membership, Learning & Development and our annual Congress.

We work with government (who set the regulatory framework for veterinary nurses), the government's appointed regulator (the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons) and other key representative bodies, such as the British Veterinary Association.

We provide these partners with the perspective of veterinary nurses on legislation, good practice and the challenges and opportunities that arise within the veterinary sector from time to time.

For more information see [www.bvna.org.uk](http://www.bvna.org.uk)

#### **Why do we hold elections?**

The BVNA is independent of commercial or other interests. We are by members for members. We promote excellence in veterinary nursing, the development of our profession and the interests our members.

Elections are held so that members can choose directly who represents them in this work. The successful candidates are elected on to the Council of the BVNA.

Elections are a very important part of the overall governance of the BVNA. They consume a considerable amount of time and effort by the BVNA staff team. There are important **rules** and **guidelines** for anyone considering taking part in the elections.

This document provides guidance on BVNA elections.

### **What is the Council?**

The Council is the formal decision making body of the BVNA and is made up of about fifteen members. The Council makes all the critical decisions about the direction, priorities and responses of the BVNA to other key bodies on matters of legislation, practice and policy.

The Council also has two main Committees for Membership and Learning & Development. These committees provide recommendations to the full Council and guidance to BVNA staff on their subject areas.

A third Officer Committee is made up of the Officers of the BVNA and has oversight of Congress and corporate matters (HR, IT etc.) This has additional decision-making powers.

### **How often are elections held?**

Elections to the BVNA Council are held every year. The number of seats available is advertised at each election.

Following an extensive internal review in 2018, new guidance and documentation has been developed. In addition, a new, simpler system of election will be considered at the 2019 AGM for introduction in the 2020 elections.

### **How long is a Council Member elected for?**

Normally a Council Member will hold their seat for a period of three years. This may be extended if a Council Member is chosen to be an Officer of the Association. A simplification of this system will be considered for introduction in 2020.

### **How do I become a Council Member?**

The BVNA encourages a diversity of candidates for election to its Council, representing the diversity of its members.

There are essentially three steps to joining BVNA Council:

1. Become a Member (or Student Member) of the BVNA
2. Become a valid candidate in the annual elections
3. Win a seat on the Council through the election

Candidates must be:

- A current, full member of the BVNA, OR

- A Student Member (there are three Council Member roles reserved for students studying to become a veterinary nurse)

For the avoidance of doubt a candidate does not have to be working in practice.

### **How do I become a Candidate and receive a nomination?**

Candidates must be nominated to stand in the election. To become a candidate, a Member must:

1. Be nominated by two members of the BVNA.
2. Stand with their given or common name
3. Consent to the nomination.
4. Sign a Code of Conduct for Candidates.

Nominations happen after the election is announced and before the polls open. The **Nomination form** requires the signatures of two Members who are nominating the potential candidate. Please note that a Member may only nominate ONE candidate.

Please note the completed nomination form is considered a public document and so is available for any Member to see. In effect, the two people who are nominating the potential candidate are vouching for the suitability of the potential candidate.

A person cannot be nominated without their consent so it is important they confirm they are giving their consent to be nominated. The Code is to inform conduct during the election period.

Candidates will receive a **receipt of their nomination** being submitted including notification of whether their nomination is confirmed as valid (on time and satisfying the criteria).

See the timeline for more information on important dates.

### **What if there are less valid candidates than vacant seats on Council?**

If the number of valid candidates is the same or less than the number of vacant seats on Council, then the election is deemed uncontested and the valid candidates will be appointed to the Council.

### **Can I promote myself in an election campaign?**

The election campaign is considered to be the period from the publishing of the **List Of Valid Candidates** to the close of polls.

Valid candidates are listed on the **ballot** in alphabetical order (by last name). See the timeline for when this is published.

Valid candidates are invited to provide the BVNA with a single, signed, head-and-shoulders photograph and a statement of no more than 300 words. These will be published free of charge by the BVNA on their website and within the pages of the VNJ. Statements exceeding 300 words will not be edited but will be returned to candidates.

Note: a typical statement may say something about the candidate and why they are seeking election. The BVNA is NOT responsible for the content of these statements. As the publisher of the statements the BVNA does reserve the right to challenge contents in accordance with the Code of Conduct before and after publication.

A deadline for the submission of the statements and photograph to the BVNA will be provided to candidates. The photographs and statements will be published by the BVNA on their website and in the June/July edition of the VNJ.

Candidates may conduct their own additional promotion and campaigning in addition to this but are reminded to observe the guidance offered by the Code of Conduct.

#### **What happens when the polls close?**

The polls close at noon on the Friday before the second Saturday in July. No voting is allowed after the polls close.

The count takes place immediately after the close of polls.

All candidates are given a two-hour window immediately after the count, in which they will be contacted by BVNA staff or can call in to receive the informal result of the election.

The informal result is presented to Council the next day and the **Statement of Result** published the following Monday at 0900hrs at which point they are formal and final.

Successful candidates are then asked to sign an **Acceptance of Office**. If they do not, for example if they withdrew too late from the election, a vacancy is created on Council.

## BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

### 2. TIMELINE

Updated: March 2019

Reading time: 5 minutes

The key dates for the election are set out in the table below.

These are for guidance only and exact dates may vary by a few days in any given calendar year. Please refer to notices on the BVNA website.

No later than 31 <sup>st</sup> January	<b>Notice of Election</b>	Notice of the BVNA's intent to hold an election.
Mid February	<b>Nominations open</b>	Nominations for election candidates open. Candidates will receive acknowledgement of successful nomination.
30 <sup>th</sup> April	<b>Nominations close</b>	No further nominations may be submitted after this date.
7 <sup>th</sup> May	<b>Publication of Candidates</b>	Candidates for the poll are published. Candidates may not withdraw after this date. If the election is uncontested then a statement will be made to reflect this.
1 <sup>st</sup> June	<b>Polls open</b>	Voting starts.
1200hrs Friday before second Saturday in July	<b>Polls close</b>	Voting stops.
0900hrs Monday after second Saturday in July	<b>Statement of Result</b>	Results are published online.

Further key dates for successful candidates are below.

Second Saturday in September	<b>Observation</b>	New Council members are invited to observe Council and Committee meetings.
October	<b>Ratification of new</b>	New Council members are ratified in

	<b>Council Members</b>	the AGM at BVNA Congress.
Second Saturday in November		Induction Weekend for new Council Members.

## BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

### 3. FAQs

Updated: March 2019

Reading time: 10 minutes

#### **Who can vote?**

Any full or student member may vote.

#### **What does a Council Member do?**

Council Members (CMs) have responsibility in law for the conduct and operation of the BVNA. This is organized through the BVNA office after the elections.

Council Members (CMs) are expected to join in one of two main sub-committees of the Council.

CMs are expected to:

- Abide by the **Code of Conduct**. This is the same as candidates are asked to sign at the start of the election process.
- Attend Council and relevant Committee meetings at the BVNA's offices in Harlow. Meetings are published on line but held six times a year on the second Saturday of every other month, starting in January.
- CMs are encouraged to be involved in various topical, clinical or relationship based roles. These roles often involve external bodies and are important for the BVNA to do its job of representation effectively. They will need to be available for online discussions, conference calls and very occasional meetings to fulfill these responsibilities.
- Engage with the issues of Council, seeking out and representing the interests of all members.

CMs are further expected to engage in their own personal development in this role. The Council can present a very different environment from day to day work and so full training is provided to deliver the role of CM effectively.

To assist in this, CMs are expected to:

- Attend an Induction Day on the Sunday after the November Council meeting. This provides essential training in how the BVNA works and how CMs can be effective in their role
- Attend a Business Planning Day on the Sunday after the March Council meeting. This is a key day for the whole of Council to set its direction and priorities over the following twelve months.
- Apply themselves to learning and opportunities to develop through their time on Council

Some Council Members may be asked by Council to take up one of the Officer roles. These are President, Junior Vice President, Senior Vice President, Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Secretary. These roles have specific responsibilities for the Association. They are not directly elected and they are described elsewhere.

Note that CMs can reclaim costs for travel to the Council and Committee meetings. Accommodation and food is provided. More information is available through the BVNA's expenses policy. Note that candidates may not incur expenses related to an election.

### **How can I withdraw from the election?**

Standing for election represents a commitment of at least three years of service to professional colleagues on the Council of the BVNA. Candidates will have given this careful thought before consenting to a nomination. However, in exceptional circumstances, there can be reasons for valid candidates to withdraw from the election.

A withdrawal is accomplished by submitting a simple statement in writing with separate proof of identity. This may be by letter or email, with proof of identity (for example a copy of a utility bill). Text messages, public statements on social media and similar are not considered sufficient. A **receipt of withdrawal** will be provided when a valid withdrawal statement is received.

Candidates can withdraw at any point up to the point the BVNA publish the **Valid List of Candidates**. Please note this may be an internal print deadline around the middle of April. To avoid any uncertainty valid candidates wishing to withdraw should do so at the earliest opportunity and preferably before the Close of Nominations. The names of candidates who withdraw will not be included on the list of valid candidates.

Candidates who withdraw after this point will still be included on the **ballot**. A candidate who has withdrawn but is still included on the ballot may choose to advertise their withdrawal from the election and does not have to accept their election if they are still voted in (see below).

A withdrawal cannot be reversed within the same election, for example by the submission of a new nomination.

### **Is there anything that will stop me from being a candidate?**

The BVNA does not qualify or approve candidates. We can only require certain minimum standards are met and upheld.

First, your membership must be current. If it has lapsed or there is any other outstanding debt then you may not stand until that is paid.

Second, all candidates agree to uphold a **Code of Conduct** for the duration of the campaign and election period. Breach of this may lead to disqualification. This **Code of Conduct** is the same as the **Code of Conduct** that Council Members agree to abide by on taking office.

## BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

### 4. COMPLAINTS & CHALLENGES

Updated: March 2019

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#### **What if I have a complaint or concern?**

If you have a complaint please contact the BVNA office on the number/email provided during normal office hours and direct your enquiry to the Strategic Director explaining it is regarding the election.

Complaints are taken very seriously and treated entirely confidentially. The BVNA staff handles all aspects of the elections process.

You will be asked for details of the complaint and any supporting evidence you may have. Complaints should be focused on:

1. Process (including the count, the conduct of BVNA staff etc.)
2. Voting (including eligibility of voters, number of votes etc.)
3. Candidates (either eligibility or a Breach of Code of Conduct)

You will also be asked for your own name and contact details. You do not have to provide these and they will be kept confidential to BVNA staff but it will help the process and allow us to inform you of progress with your complaint or to contact you with further questions if required.

#### **What if I want to challenge the result?**

Only Candidates may challenge the result. Any challenge must be received by the Election Officer before 1600hrs on the second Friday of July. A challenge may be verbal but must be confirmed in writing.

A challenge must be based on one or more of the following criteria:

1. Process (including legality, the conduct of BVNA staff etc.)
2. Votes (including eligibility of voters, number of votes etc.)
3. Candidates (either eligibility or a Breach of Code of Conduct)

Where possible evidence should be provided in support of any challenge.

Challenges will be reviewed against various points including:

- Qualification against the criteria listed above (process, voting or candidates)
- Is it vexatious, frivolous or repetitive (e.g. has it been dealt with previously as a complaint or via another mechanism?)
- Does it change the result?

All candidates will be notified of all challenges, the decision made and any actions taken.

**What if I want a recount?**

A recount is a challenge to the result under Criteria 2 (votes). However in order to be legitimate, for practical reasons, a recount will not normally be considered unless the difference between two totals is less than 1% of the total number of votes cast.

For the avoidance of doubt, this would be a difference of less than 10 votes, on a total vote polled of 1000 votes.

No recount may be requested or required after 1600hrs on the Friday before the second Saturday in July.

**What if a vote is tied?**

In the event a vote is tied, a recount will automatically be triggered. In the event that a vote remains tied after a recount, the winner will be determined by the drawing of lots or similar.

## **BRITISH VETERINARY NURSING ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS**

### **5. GOVERNANCE AND BVNA ELECTIONS**

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The BVNA conducts its own elections.

The key tenets of the elections are set in the Constitution of the BVNA. This may only be amended at the AGM or another mechanism provided for within the Constitution.

These tenets are supplemented by provisions within the Rules of the BVNA. These may be amended by mechanisms provided for within the Constitution of the BVNA.

Guidance in various forms is provided based on these Rules and Constitutional statements. The Guidance may be amended and refreshed from time to time.

Elections are operated entirely by the staff of the BVNA.

- The Election Officer is accountable to the Council and responsible for the oversight of the elections process.
- The Election Officer is supported by BVNA staff in the administration of the elections process.
- Council Members have no part in the elections process or administration of the elections.