

Meeting report for RPS Science and Research Committee

Thursday 5th March 2026 at 11.00am – 1.00pm

Held via MS Teams

Attending

Christine Bond (Chair), Hend Abdelhakim (HA), Mar Estupiñán Fernández de Mesa (ME), Gillian Hawksworth (GH), Oisín Kavanagh (OK), Barrie Kellam (BK), Jayne Lawrence (JL), Olaolu Oloyede (OO), Rachel Palmer (RP), Ka-Wai Wan (KWW).

In attendance:

Louise Dunsmure (Chair of AMEAG), Sunayana Shah (Chair of IPEAG)

Claire Anderson (RPS President), Paul Bennett (RPS CEO), Rebecca Braybrooks (notes), Amira Guirguis (Chief Scientist), Jegak Seo (Science & Research Manager).

1: Introduction

Title	Item 1. Introductions, apologies, declarations of interest and Developments (Chair)	Time of item: 11:00
Description	Introduction to the meeting and matters arising/developments since the last meeting	
Purpose	To review significant developments since the last meeting Welcome to all members Apologies Agree minutes/ notes from the previous meeting Declarations of interests (Dols)	
Outcomes	Members were welcomed to the meeting. Apologies received from: Louise Goldring (RPS Director of Education) and Andy Fox. Previous meeting report was reviewed and agreed Declarations of Interest to be completed; members reminded to declare any conflicts and return completed forms to RB as soon as possible.	

2: Relevance

Title	Item 2. SRC matters	Time of item: 11:15
Description	SRC to hear an update on all SRC matters	
Purpose	To hear updates on: Thank you and goodbye to Delyth and Cathy Recruitment of new SRC members (closing date is 08/03/2026, currently at 20 applications, long listing to happen next week)	
Outcomes	Committee formally thanked Delyth and Cathy for their significant contributions. Recruitment remains open until 8 March 2026; Members encouraged to share widely to increase reach. Website work progressing; members to send updated biography and photo for inclusion- two still missing.	

Title	Item 3. Royal College of Pharmacy update	Time of item: 11:30
Description	An update from RPS CEO	
Purpose	To relay any further update on The Royal College of Pharmacy (PB) and strategy development	
Outcomes	RCPPharm launch remains on track for mid-April (15TH?), pending final approval from Privy Council. Decision expected in March or early April. Current RPS governance structures valid until 30 June. Branding, website development, financial changes and staff processes (including PhP TUPE arrangements) continue as planned. Elections underway; results expected Friday 13 March. Structural updates: - CA to step aside as President and join the English Pharmacy Advisory Council - Trustee Board Chair appointed : Joe Irvin - Over 50 applicants for trustee positions. - New Councils (one per country), Senate and Board of Trustees will operate from 15/4/26 - New President elected from Council members - Chairs of Councils are vice Presidents - Board of Trustees will agree new strategy to deliver on five pledges agreed with UKPPLAB High engagement across the profession reported. AGM scheduled for 7 April. Strategy events due to launch on 15 April with ongoing collaboration across UKPPLAB and specialist groups. No final dates will be publicly communicated until approvals are secured.	

Title	Item 4. Science & Research Update (SRT)	Time of item: 11:45
Description	An update from the Science and Research Team (SRT)	
Purpose	- New Chief Scientist vision and the role of SRT To relay an update on the: — Annual Conference Scientific Content, Abstracts, Posters and Harrison Medal (2026) (paper added below)	
Outcomes	Chief Scientist outlined new vision for aligning SRT work with clearer objectives and maximising RPS/RC strengths (including collaboration with pharmaceutical science, assessment and credentialing, research, and external partners). ACTION - Requests made for slides to support meeting notes. Discussion emphasised: - Opportunities to promote scientific work more widely (e.g., Molly Stevens' work). Some pharmaceutical science is world leading and needs to be promoted. - Potential for future Science and Research summit and links with APAG - Strengthening visibility of pharmaceutical sciences, including through a monthly Chief Scientist blog in the PJ. - Encouraging members to share relevant contacts and networks.	

	• Reinforcing science within pharmacy practice and influencing future funding and healthcare provider education (DHSC discussions) . GPhc Collaboration on new standards • Importance of national alignment (research, governance, professional leadership). • The volume of media requests about prescribing • Recognition of strong pharmacy research base and need for Board/Senate alignment with science priorities. PB emphasised that the RC will recognise the importance of science and continue to recognise great pharmaceutical scientists. There is a need to make sure the future Councils, Senate and Board hear the message Annual Conference timeline confirmed, including abstract submission periods and critical deadlines. Revised abstract submission policy supported: • Mandatory structured template • One abstract per presenting author (exceptions process to be defined) • Clear eligibility and quality threshold criteria Discussions held on: • AI-assisted screening safeguards • Reviewer capacity • Category structures • Strengthening early screening and moderation processes ACTION - Members invited to review documentation (attached) and provide feedback. GH volunteered to support conference-day poster allocations CA queried potential use of Oxford Abstracts. JS thanked for his work producing these detailed documents
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Title	Item 5. SRC Update from Working Groups (Chairs)	Time of item: 12:00
Description	SRC to hear from working group Chairs and ratify decisions	
Purpose	To hear an update from the working groups – General • New Medicines and Emerging Technologies WG (Rachel Palmer 10 min) • Research across the Profession WG, PRAG and Incubator (Christine Bond 10 min) • Safer Medicines and Safer Medicines Usage WG (a new Chair is needed)	
Outcomes	New Medicines & Emerging Technologies WG (RP) • Draft article on mRNA technology being finalised; awaiting MHRA guidance. • Publication expected in Spring. • NMBBUM update paused pending recruitment of new committee members. Research Across the Profession WG & PRAG (CB) • Update from RAP group: positive meeting on 9 December with Joseph Oakley regarding credentialing support.	

	• Identified need for stronger support structures around research and leadership domains in credentialling frameworks. • Recognition of progress in devolved nations (Wales and Scotland more advanced than England in achieving consultant pathways). • Growing RPS presence at the Great North Research Conference. • PRAG work receiving strong feedback; pharmacy technicians now recognised in strategy. • Framework for embedding research in job descriptions progressing. • Incubator group actively engaging senior pharmacy leaders to integrate research into everyday practice; increased partnership with PRUK. Safer Medicines & Safer Medicines Usage WG • New Chair required. • Group to strengthen collaboration with RPS safety team.
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Title	Item 6. Media updates (Chair)	Time of item: 12:30
Description	SRC to hear from the Chair and update of the SRC on media enquiries and response to consultations since the last meeting	
Purpose	To hear an update– General Media enquiries 1. Syson, D. The Telegraph. Six reasons why you shouldn't be taking supplements, according to experts. 19 Nov 2025 here. 2. Shaw, I. The Sun. Cabinet killer. Codeine. 29 Oct 2025. Available here. 3. Chan, S. How safe are GLP-1s? <i>The Pharmaceutical Journal</i>, PJ November 2025, Vol 316, No 8003;316(8003)::DOI:10.1211/PJ.2025.1.384730. Available here. 4. Burns, C. Participation in commercial clinical trials falls for fourth year in a row, finds ABPI. <i>The Pharmaceutical Journal</i>, PJ 03 December 2025, Vol 317, No 8004;317(8004)::DOI:10.1211/PJ.2025.1.388853. Available here. 5. Parkinson, C. Beyond fentanyl: how ultra-potent nitazenes are redrawing the opioid map. Published on 07 Dec 2025. Available here. 6. Ives, L. Why IV vitamin drips are a waste of money - and could even be harmful. Which? Published on 13 Dec 2025. Available here. 7. Ceurstemont, S. We're finally learning the true side-effects of weight-loss drugs. BBC ScienceFocus. Published on 27 Jan 2026 here. 8. Moses, L. Finasteride. ITV GMB. 31 Jan 2026 9. Davis, N. Peptides being sold online. The Guardian. 31 Jan 2026 10. Burt, C. over-the-counter products you can become 'addicted' to/dependent on and how overuse can make symptoms worse. the Daily Mail's Good Health section. 04 Feb 2026. 11. Zak, R. Consumer Features Specialist. Comment for MoneySavingExpert. Over the counter medications. 12 Feb 2026. Response to consultations 1. DHSC open call for evidence: Tobacco and vapes: evidence to support legislation 03 Dec 2025. 2. GPhC consultation on draft standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians. 24 Dec 2025. 3. Drug use in LGBT+ communities and chemsex: call for evidence. 30 Jan 2026 4. Consultation on considering future options for the NHS Wales bursary scheme. 23/01/2026 5. Expanding access to naloxone: supply and emergency use. 09 Mar 2026 – Just submitted 6. Smoke-free, heated tobacco-free and vape-free places in England. 08 May 2026 – in -progress. Need to review e-cig policy.	
Outcomes	Chair briefed the committee on recent media enquiries and expert commentary provided across major outlets (Telegraph, Sun, Guardian, BBC Science Focus, Which?, ITV GMB, Daily Mail, MoneySavingExpert, and others).	

	Updates were provided on all consultation responses submitted since the last meeting, including DHSC, GPhC, chemsex evidence call, NHS Wales bursary review, Naloxone access, and the ongoing Smoke-free/Vape-free spaces consultation. Committee thanked contributors for high-quality expert input. Encouraging engagement levels noted.
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3: Any Other Business

Title	Item 7. AOB, Chair	Time of item: 12:45
Description	Any other business beyond the agenda for wider discussion	
Purpose	To hear any other business items	
Outcomes	Discussion held on: • Areas where SRC could provide further support; actions to be brought back to the next meeting for consideration. • Linking with Universities could interns be used to provide additional resource OK updated group on a meeting he had attended in London on pharmacokinetics of cancer drugs renally filtered. Research call will go out in September 2026. Pharmacists being encouraged to apply.	

Ways of Working and Delivery Framework

SRC Oversight — Annual Conference Scientific Content, Abstracts, Posters and Harrison Medal (2026)

Conference Day: Friday 6 November 2026

1) Purpose

This document sets out a clear and consistent overview for SRC in relation to the scientific and research content for the 2026 Annual Conference. It includes:

- Abstract submission, review and selection process
- Poster presentations
- Production of the abstract supplement (IJPP and OUP)
- The Harrison Medal

2) What SRC is being asked to do today

2.1 For information (SRC meeting)

SRC is asked to note the proposed approach, key dates, dependencies and governance considerations for delivery of the Annual Conference science and research content workstream. SRC members are invited to highlight any strategic concerns or risks. No detailed operational decisions are requested from SRC at this meeting.

2.2 How detailed operational agreement will be completed (outside the SRC meeting)

Detailed operational points will be reviewed and agreed via the RAP / Abstract Assessment Working Group outside of the SRC meeting, by an agreed deadline. SRT will implement the agreed approach and provide SRC with a brief confirmation update once agreed, or earlier if any material risks or changes arise.

- Finalisation of the 2026 milestone plan and any mitigation actions required to maintain delivery dates (Section 3; Appendix A).
- Finalisation of the abstract submission policy, including the mandatory template, one-abstract-per-author rule and any exceptions process (Section 4).
- Finalisation of the assessment approach, including the quality threshold, scoring and moderation principles, and AI-assisted screening safeguards (Section 5; Appendix B).
- Finalisation of poster format approach, including the use of digital boards and whether IPE posters are included in 2026, subject to Events capacity (Section 6).
- Finalisation of the abstract supplement approach, including publication-ready standards, submission deadline and publication timing approach (Section 7).
- Finalisation of the Harrison Medal delivery approach, including post-selection winner integration activities and timelines (Section 8).

2.3 Optional discussion (time permitting)

- How acceptance thresholds and any reserve list will operate if the volume of abstracts received exceeds available capacity.
- Whether any exceptions to the one-abstract-per-author rule should be permitted and, if so, how these would be governed.
- How borderline or disputed cases will be escalated for moderation.

2.4 Context and constraints (for information)

- Dependency on the RPS to RCP transition, including website and brand go-live (15 April 2026), with a possible content freeze in February or March (dates to be confirmed).
- IJPP and OUP production requirements, including an estimated two-month lead time from receipt of the final publication-ready submission.
- Event delivery constraints that determine poster capacity and submission deadlines for the conference platform/app.

3) Milestones and key dates

Full milestone table is in Appendix A.

- **15 April 2026:** Website and brand transition go-live.
- **29 April 2026:** Call for Annual Conference abstracts opens.
- **29 May 2026 (5pm):** Call for Abstracts closes (optional extension into early June only if needed).
- **6 September 2026:** Publication-ready abstract supplement submission (IJPP and OUP).
- **28 August to 11 September 2026:** Harrison Medal winner integration window (post-selection).
- **16 October 2026:** Conference platform/app integration minimum deadline (Events may set an earlier deadline).
- **6 November 2026:** Conference Day.

4) Abstract submission policy

- **Mandatory template:** All submissions must use the structured template to ensure publication-ready formatting.
- **One abstract per author:** This limit is intended to manage reviewer capacity and maintain overall quality. Any exceptions would be governed through the agreed route.
- **Proposed categories:** Original Research; Quality Improvement; Service Evaluation or Implementation; Education, Workforce or Training.
- **Eligibility clarity:** Guidance will include clear inclusion and exclusion rules and common errors to minimise avoidable fails at the quality threshold.

5) Assessment and moderation

Detailed criteria are in Appendix B.

- **Quality threshold:** Pass or fail. Any fail criterion renders the abstract ineligible for acceptance (corrections only if explicitly approved and feasible).
- **Scoring:** Eligible abstracts are competitively scored (0 to 25) to support ranking and identification of oral or award candidates, subject to programme capacity.
- **Moderation:** Criteria-led and documented, with clear conflict-of-interest management and escalation procedures for borderline and disputed cases.
- **AI-assisted screening:** Used solely to support reviewers, with safeguards including standardised prompts, human override, bias awareness and data minimisation.

6) Posters and digital boards

- Events has confirmed that digital boards can be used to optimise space management.
- Allocation principles will be applied consistently across physical posters and digital boards, subject to final capacity confirmation from Events.
- Whether IPE posters will be included in 2026 will be confirmed via the agreed route. If included, the guidance will specify whether inclusion is limited to posters or also allows oral presentations, subject to capacity and clear criteria.

7) Abstract supplement (IJPP and OUP)

- **Publication-ready standard:** One consolidated running-order Word document, publication-ready, to be submitted by **6 September 2026**.
- **Publication timing:** Publish after Conference Day if conference-day publication is not feasible due to tight timescales, while ensuring quality and compliance.

8) Harrison Medal

- Run as a separate call to action from the abstracts process, to avoid overlap and align with Comms capacity.
- **Winner integration window (post-selection; 28 August to 11 September 2026):** notifying the selected winner and completing conference integration activities required for the programme/app, including attendance confirmation, biography/headshot collection, session/AV requirements and coordination of announcement timing with Comms and Events.
- **Earlier steps (timing to be confirmed with Comms):** set-up and approvals (April), nominations open (May or June), and review/selection (close + 4 to 6 weeks), with final selection completed in time to enable the integration window above.

9) Responsibilities for the conference

9.1 SRC

- Receive and review updates on the annual conference science and research programme, identifying and raising any strategic, governance, or risk-related concerns, including matters requiring escalation.
- Provide high-level governance assurance on fairness, integrity and defensibility of the overall approach, and flag any concerns for RAP/SRT to address through the agreed route.
- Note confirmed outcomes once agreed via RAP/working group, including any material changes affecting timeline, capacity, quality or risk.

9.2 SRT

- Maintain the master timeline for the Annual Conference science and research content workstream, and report exceptions and risks that could impact the milestones.
- Provide decision-ready papers for the agreed route that clearly state what is confirmed and what is proposed, and whether each item is for information, for discussion, or for agreement/confirmation.
- Finalise and operationalise Call for Abstracts materials in time for launch on 29 April 2026 and manage the submission period to 5pm on 29 May 2026.
- Implement the agreed assessment workflow after close, prepare moderation packs, and maintain a clear decision record that links outcomes to the agreed judging criteria.
- Deliver the publication-ready abstract supplement submission by 6 September 2026 and provide verified metadata for Events platform/app integration by 16 October 2026, or earlier if Events confirms an earlier operational deadline.
- Deliver the Harrison Medal process end-to-end (set-up, nominations, review and selection) and complete winner integration (post-selection) during 28 August to 11 September 2026.

Appendix A: Full milestone table (detailed)

Milestone	Date / timing	Notes
Website and brand transition go-live	15 April 2026	Launches planned after go-live to reduce migration risk; content freeze may occur in February or March (dates not confirmed).
Call for Abstracts opens	29 April 2026	Comms-recommended launch window post-transition.
Call for Abstracts closes	29 May 2026 (5pm)	Optional extension into early June only if needed.
Review and scoring window	Early June to mid-July	Target five to six weeks; adjust to submission volume and reviewer capacity.
Moderation and final decisions	Mid July	Borderline and disputed cases resolved through moderation with recorded reasons.
Publication-ready compilation and quality control	July to August	Single consolidated Word document in running order; names, affiliations, abbreviations, and formatting checked and resolved before submission.
Publication-ready submission to IJPP and OUP	6 September 2026	Approximately two months before Conference Day to support production timelines.
Harrison Medal winner integration window (post-selection)	28 August to 11 September 2026	Winner notification and conference integration activities to meet programme/app deadlines.
Platform/app integration (minimum)	16 October 2026	Minimum three weeks before Conference Day; Events may set an earlier operational deadline.
Conference Day	6 November 2026	Final programme delivery including posters, oral presentations, awards, and Harrison Medal recognition.

Appendix B: Detailed assessment criteria

B1) Quality threshold (pass or fail)

Gate criterion	Pass standard	Fail triggers (examples)
Aim and relevance	Clear aim or question and explicit relevance to pharmacy practice or the profession.	No clear aim; unclear fit to the conference audience.
Methods transparency	States who, where, and when; includes data source, outcomes or measures, and analysis approach.	Methods too vague to interpret or trust, such as missing denominator or timeframe.
Results present	Key findings included with denominators where appropriate or clear qualitative themes aligned to the aim.	No interpretable results; conclusions without data; results not linked to the stated aim.
Governance or ethics	States ethics approval or governance route for quality improvement or service evaluation and includes confidentiality safeguards.	No governance or ethics route stated for patient or service data; clear ethical concern.
Credible conclusions	Conclusions reflect data and acknowledge limitations or uncertainty where relevant.	Overclaiming such as causal inference without supporting design, or implausible conclusions.
Non-promotional tone	Neutral academic tone and appropriate disclosure of funding or conflicts of interest.	Marketing language or missing disclosures where sponsorship appears likely.

B2) Competitive scoring (0 to 25)

Domain (0–5)	What “5” looks like	What lowers the score
Impact and significance	High-priority problem and clear benefit to patients, safety, efficiency, equity, or professional practice.	Unclear value, weak link to outcomes, or limited relevance beyond local context.
Methodological strength	Design matches the aim with robust measures and appropriate analysis and acknowledges key limitations.	Design mismatch, unclear analysis, validity concerns, or weak measurement.
Results quality	Clear, appropriately quantified results or well evidenced themes with denominators and timeframes where relevant.	Vague results, missing denominators, selective reporting, or unclear timeframe.
Transferability	Sufficient context and delivery detail for replication or adaptation and describes barriers and enablers.	Insufficient detail to replicate, missing context, or unclear implementation pathway.
Clarity and structure	Exceptionally clear, template compliant, and suitable for publication-ready production with minimal admin burden.	Hard to follow, inconsistent formatting, or unclear writing.