

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 15th Meeting of the Registration Committee
held on 13 September 2007**

Present: Dr G Harris (in the Chair)
Mrs M Alexander, Mr D Cameron,
Miss K Devlin, Dr P Kyle, Professor A Tomlinson,
Miss J Underwood, Mrs S Wild.

In Attendance: Mr P C Coe, Ms K Fielding, Mr P J Ireland
Mr S Heatherington

Apologies for absence

348. Apologies were received from Mr K Lewis.

Declaration of Interests

349. Members were reminded of the requirement to declare to the meeting any matter to which they had or may be perceived as having a personal interest. The Chairman of Council advised the Chair of her ongoing role as interim Chairman of the CHRE.

Confidentiality

350. Members were reminded that the proceedings of the Committee were confidential under Standing Orders 5.23 to 5.26 but that confidential items could be discloseable under a Freedom of Information request.

Minutes of the 14th Meeting held on 19 April 2007

351. The minutes of the 14th meeting of the Committee held on 19 April 2007 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

352. There were no matters arising.

White Paper - Trust, Assurance and Safety

Introduction

353. The Chairman reminded committee members that the responsibility and role of the Workstreams was to consider those matters which had to be addressed as part of the future regulatory changes. The existing statutory committees would continue to handle all current matters both now and throughout the period leading to such change.

354. The Chairman of the Registration Workstream updated members on progress on two strands of the group's work:

(a) definition of good character - the group had considered work already completed on this subject by others including CHRE. It was concerned it had concluded that the 'negative' definition of *'the absence of any indication of poor character'* had been its final position. The Workstream wanted to develop a more positive definition which would offer patients and public greater confidence and it continued to develop this definition.

(b) student registration - the Workstream was developing its report to Government which would highlight its unique experiences from having registered students since July 2005. It would seek to offer input on how the process has operated, the problems and how these had been overcome.

355. Members also noted progress of the other workstreams on Governance, Revalidation and Tackling Concerns. It was noted that:

- Governance: the draft of the first Section 60 Order intended that no lay member of any council could be a registrant of that regulatory body.
- Revalidation: while the GOC Workstream was making progress, there had been little progress on the National Working Group.
- Tackling Concerns: GOC Council Member Ian Hamer had been appointed to the National Working Group looking at tackling concerns locally, while the NWG looking at tackling concerns nationally had yet to be constituted.

356. In conclusion, the Chairman of the Committee stated that Council's Project Board had expressed satisfaction with progress made to date across each of the Workstreams. He also suggested that progress made in Council's Workstreams may need to be tempered by delays in the legislation required to implement the changes and consequently it remained essential that Council continued to carry out existing functions in an effective and efficient manner.

EU Directive on Recognition of Professional Qualifications

357. The Registrar outlined his concerns over the Directive and the limited information which could be legally requested from individuals seeking temporary or occasional registration in the UK.

358. Members wholeheartedly endorsed this concern. It was envisaged that there could be circumstances where an applicant seeking temporary registration might legally challenge the Registrar's decision to refuse temporary registration on the grounds that he was not satisfied he could maintain public protection.

359. It was agreed to prepare a communications strategy around Council's concerns with a clear audit trail for when/if a serious incident were to occur.

Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006

360. Members noted progress on the development of this new legislation and the likely timetable for implementation. The GOC had sought clarification on whether serious theft and fraud offences might constitute barring, since these offences are more likely to occur than those highlighted in the consultation document. A response was still awaited.

361. The GOC had also highlighted its concerns over monitoring of self employed practitioners, since the self employed were not covered by this legislation. Similar concerns had been expressed over those individuals employed in unregulated/unregistered activities.

Report to the Committee on the CET Scheme

362. It was agreed that a formal review of the management of the agreement with Vantage be carried out in 2008 and that this would be a full review.

363. The Committee requested that the Vantage report be prepared on a quarterly basis and reviewed by the Committee at each of its meetings.

364. Should there be operational issues which need to be considered by the Committee, then these would be circulated either at the meeting or separately in writing if more appropriate.

365. It was agreed to investigate some issues of overseas CET and whether some events could be pre-approved for UK registrants in the same way as UK based CET.

Requirement for Optical Teachers to be GOC Registered

366. The Committee considered this issue which had been referred to it from Education Committee. It concluded:

- that there should be no requirement for teachers in optics to be GOC registered if they taught non-clinical subjects.
- that teachers involved in any clinical practice should be GOC registered and that the definition of clinical should include any teacher when applying theory to clinical practice. It was felt that the teaching institution should have a minimum proportion of qualified and GOC registered staff and it deferred to the teaching lawbook for direction as to what that proportion should be.

367. A more detailed paper had recently been circulated from Education Committee on a number of wider issues related to student registration. It was agreed that this paper would be considered at the next meeting of the Committee, where a substantive paper would be prepared which highlighted each of the issues.

Draft Equality and Diversity Scheme

368. A discussion paper had been intended to be tabled at the meeting by the Head of Communications but, due to unforeseen circumstances, this had not been possible. It was agreed to circulate the paper to all Members, who were asked to feed comments back directly to her in order for an outline Scheme to go to November Council.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

369. The next meeting of the Committee had been set for **Thursday 17 January 2008 at 2.00 p.m.**