

**GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL**

**Minutes of the 19th Meeting of the Registration Committee  
held on 5 February 2009**

**Present:** Miss K Devlin (in the Chair)  
**(by telephone)** Ms M Alexander, Dr G Harris, Mr K Lewis,  
Professor A Tomlinson, Miss J Underwood,  
Mrs S Wild.

**In attendance:** Dr P Kyle  
**(at GOC offices)** Mrs J D Taylor, Acting Registrar  
Ms K Fielding, Director of Communications & Information  
Mrs J Burrow, PA to Director of Communications &  
Information  
Miss L Hytti, Registration Supervisor  
Ms J Glover, CET Manager (for item 8 on CET)

**Apologies for absence**

458. Apologies for absence were received from Mr D Cameron

**Chairman's Opening Remarks**

459. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the 19th meeting of the committee. She explained that she was chairing the meeting as Geoff Harris had now been appointed as Chair of Council and therefore unable to be chair of the Committee. She confirmed that this meeting was being held by teleconference due to the extreme weather conditions and uncertainty of public transport.

**Declaration of Interests**

460. The Chairman reminded the Committee of the requirement for Members to declare any personal interest under paragraph 6(a) of the Council's Code of Conduct and no declarations were made.

**Confidentiality**

461. The Chairman also reminded the Committee of the requirement for Members and Advisers to adhere to the rules of confidentiality under Standing Orders 5.23 to 5.26.

**Minutes of the 18th Meeting**

462. The minutes of the 18th Meeting of the Committee were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting with the following typographical changes:

Minute 432: in the second paragraph 'best practise' should be changed to 'best practice,

Minute 448: in the penultimate line 'appraised' should be changed to 'apprised'

It was agreed that the minutes would be signed by the Chairman on her next visit to the GOC's offices.

## **Matters Arising**

463. (a) The Committee had wanted to send a response to the CHRE on its conclusions to the CHRE Report on Student Registration. Given that the GOC had already responded, there would be no opportunity to comment further and the points had already been made. It was agreed to monitor the situation and then make points.

(b) The Extending Professional Regulation Working Group report is expected at any time but has not yet been published. It was agreed that it would be emailed to the Committee when received and any points would be made by email between the members of the Committee.

## **Report from Registration Department**

464. The Director of Communications and Information thought that it was useful for the Committee to have a report on the situation half way through the retention process. It was noted that the retention process was on track.

465. There had been fewer complaints regarding the increase in fees than had been anticipated. Those complaints that had been received were mainly from dispensing opticians and there had been coverage of this issue in the optical press. The main argument is that part-timers should be charged a lower fee. This had been discussed in the past but it was agreed that it would be difficult to police and the logistics were insurmountable. Concern was expressed that this may affect the numbers of dispensing opticians renewing their registration. This will be monitored and the percentages will be reported at a later date.

466. The Chair of Council confirmed that he had been in contact with Barry Duncan and Tony Garrett, ABDO's President and General Secretary and had agreed that the possibility of differential fees and staged payments would be explored.

467. Student registration was being finalised for the new intake from last year. The retention forms for students would be sent out in March instead of April this year at the request of the educational establishments. This, and the imposition of late payment fees and restoration fees, may help with obtaining full registration of students.

468. It was noted that, at the last meeting of BUCO, which the Director of Communications and Information had attended, it had been suggested that a one-off student registration fee covering the training and pre-registration period would be more sensible. This would reduce the workload for both the GOC and the educational establishments. It was agreed that this possibility should be added to the legacy document which would be discussed later in the agenda.

469. It was reported that there were 77 students, who appeared on the class lists issued by the educational establishments, but remained unregistered. All the relevant universities and colleges had been informed but not all had replied. It was planned to contact these students directly. Most of the educational establishments refused to allow unregistered students to attend practical elements of their course or to sit exams. It was up to the students to prove to their university or college that they were GOC registered.

### **Revised declarations process**

470. The process for dealing with registrants' self declarations has been in place since 2005. Improvements had been made to the operational procedures for handling declarations. The written Protocol on the Handling of Criminal Convictions Disclosed by Registrants had also been reviewed in respect of timelines and in order to simplify the overall process.

471. It was felt that the changes proposed which removed paragraphs suggesting that the Registrar may seek guidance from members in making her decision, and may invite applicants to an informal meeting to explore the circumstances of the case, were appropriate. This would allow challenges to be dealt with via the more formal mechanism of the Registration Appeals Committee.

472. The point was raised that the Scottish legal system was different and it was agreed to review the references at points 2 and 3 in the protocol at **Annex 1 to Paper REG(02)09** to ensure these were relevant to all countries of the UK.

473. It was agreed that no. 5(c)(iii) in **Annex 1 to Paper REG(02)09** should be clarified and emailed to the Committee for approval.

### **Report on CET Scheme**

474. It was pointed out that this Paper was an update and should not have been marked as a draft.

475. It was noted that, in Table 2 Specialty Points, SP(AS) means 'additional supply points' and SP(SP) means 'supplementary prescribing points'

476. The question was raised as to the numbers of optometrists who had the additional and supplementary prescribing qualification and it was reported that the numbers were very low - approximately 50. It was expected that the numbers would grow with the introduction of the new courses for independent prescribing. Clarification was given as to how many CET points were required if a registrant had different therapeutic qualifications. The rules had been changed from 2008 and now required registrants to gain points only in respect of their 'highest' registered specialty.

477. It was noted that the NES had approved a grant of £180,000 to Glasgow Caledonian University for therapeutics prescribing training.

### **Vetting and Barring Scheme**

478. The Director of Communications and Information emphasised that this was a must do area for the GOC. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation for England, Wales and Northern Ireland comes into force on 12 October 2009 but for Scotland there is not yet a date but it will be in 2010.

479. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland there will be two phases: from 12 October 2009 to April 2010 new entrants to the workforce, new student entrants and anyone moving employer will have to register with the Vetting and Barring Scheme. From April 2010 all other eligible registrants can register up to October 2014. Cooperation will be needed to ensure that all relevant registrants are registered before the end date. It will be the GOC's responsibility to ask registrants for their scheme number and this will be entered on their records. A link will be set up with the Vetting and Barring Board for them to notify us barring decisions and information.

480. It was a policy decision at Council that membership of the Vetting and Barring Scheme should be a registration requirement. There would need to be a change to the GOC Rules to implement this and it was agreed that this should be included in the legacy document for the new Council. The policy would need to be agreed over the next few years ready for 2014.

481. It was noted that the scheme only applies to employees. It was queried whether locums would be required to register. The Director of Communications and Information stated that the Independent Safeguarding Authority had plans to communicate with employers to ensure that they were clear about the requirements.

482. It was suggested that following the introduction of Revalidation, a solution might be to require membership of the Vetting and Barring Scheme as part of the Licence to Practise.

483. It was not yet known how information on impaired fitness to practise would be shared and what processes would be in place to exchange information in a secure way. The GOC is continuing to work with the relevant authorities to be ready for the start date as well as liaising with key stakeholders to keep them up to date with plans.

484. It was noted that very little information appeared to have been disseminated in optics about the Scheme.

485. The Director of Communications and Information clarified that students starting their courses in September 2009 would not need to become members of the scheme in the first phase.

#### **Code of Conduct re Directive 2005/36/EC on professional recognition**

486. The GOC's response was noted.

#### **Consultation framework**

487. The principles were agreed in November 2007. The consultation framework aims to provide a public document to show our commitment to consultation. There is a checklist at the end which is intended as an internal document for the executive to use.

488. The document shows how the GOC will ensure that stakeholder views are taken into consideration and is a key tool in the stakeholder strategy.

489. It was noted that the points had been raised at Standards Committee about making participation in consultations manageable particularly for charities and not for profit organisations with few resources. Suggestions included carrying out telephone interviews or face to face consultations.

490. The Committee endorsed the document.

#### **Registration workplan 2009/10 and legacy document**

491. It was noted that in **Annex 2** under Vetting and Barring GOC 'membership' was mentioned and this should be changed to 'registration'.

492. It was noted that Registration Committee will be a statutory committee under the new Council and Companies Committee will be a standing committee. However, there will be no new legislation until 2010 so Companies will remain as a statutory committee for the time being.

493. It was noted that, although the statutory committees had been agreed by the present Council, this could be changed by the new Council. However, as stated before, there will be no new legislation until 2010 so the decision of the present Council will stand at least until then.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

494. The timing and also the membership of Registration Committee will be decided by the new Council. It is anticipated that the new Council will first meet on 2 April.

495. The Acting Registrar reminded Members that she had previously asked them all for their preferences for committee membership after April. When the membership of the new Council is known they will all be asked again. No Member of Council will be a member of any of the committees.

496. The Chairman stated that there was no current business of the Committee that could not wait until the autumn. The Committee had agreed the workplan and the executive will take it forward. If advice is needed they will refer to the Committee for that advice.

497. It was agreed by the Committee that the meeting had been very effective and that it had been managed very well by the Chairman.

498. It was unanimously agreed that the possibility of having alternate meetings by teleconference should be seriously considered. It was also agreed that this would result in a considerable cost saving for the GOC.

499. The Chairman thanked all concerned for the smooth running of the meeting and concluded it at 11.40.

*Deedh* 17.9.09  
*King* 17.9.09.