

GENERAL OPTICAL COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 21st Meeting of the Registration Committee
held on 10 February 2010**

- Present:**
- Ms K Fielding, Director of Communications & Information
(in the Chair)
 - Mr G Ames
 - Miss K Devlin
 - Miss M Derbyshire
 - Ms S Elsmore
 - Mrs Bina Patel
 - Mrs J D Taylor, Registrar
 - Ms Laura Hytti, Registration Supervisor (until item 7 on
the Registration Department report)
 - Mr M Tait, Policy and Projects Officer – Registration
 - Ms E Susin, PA to Director of Communications &
Information
 - Ms C Millington, Communications Manager (for item 13
on public awareness)
 - Ms L Kennaugh, Head of Education (for item 15 on CET)

Apologies for absence

549. There was an apology from Miss Janice McCrudden.

Chairman's Opening Remarks

550. The Chair welcomed everyone to the 21st meeting of the committee.

Declaration of Interests

551. The Chair 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

552. The Chair 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.

Committee Induction

553. It was noted that the Committee induction papers included information on the role of the Committee and Registration Department projects, and that further papers were available on the intranet.

Minutes of the 20th Meeting

554. The minutes of the 20th Meeting of the Committee were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting with the following typographical changes.
The minutes were signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

555. The Committee received an update on:

(a) Assistance provided to educational institutions regarding their student lists, and registration information for distance learning establishments:

The Registration team is continuing current processes of working with the educational institutions to ensure all students are registered. A leaflet is being sent to distance learning establishments, and a conversation is ongoing with regarding presentations to distance learning students. There may be an opportunity to present to students on block release – this to be discussed with ABDO.

It was noted that tensions may arise between the rights of students and the GOC's duty to protect the public. A number of issues had recently arisen where students had made declarations which resulted in a delay to processing their applications. During this time students may not be able to study or perform some activities. There may be a need for more guidance from the GOC on how these situations should be handled by educational institutions. The issue of the timing of student registration is being considered in a project this year.

(b) Guidance statement regarding students with disabilities:

The draft guidance statement is on the agenda for Standards Committee. A date for the meeting of that committee has not yet been set. This issue will be discussed further at the next Registration Committee meeting.

Report from Registration Department

556. The GOC is current halfway through the 2010/11 retention cycle. The Committee noted that there have been a number of issues with the company hired to handle the printing, in relation to retention envelopes and forms. The company has reduced the invoice for the printing by 20%, however the GOC does not intend to use that company in the future.

557. The Committee noted that the Registration Department is slightly behind in receiving retention forms relative to 2009/10 retention. There are various reasons for this, including that the forms were sent later this year, however there appears to be a more steady flow of forms and payments this year and the GOC is processing forms more quickly this year.

558. The GOC does not accept post-dated cheques, and there was some discussion that this should be handled sensitively, since some people do complain that payment is taken straight away. The Committee recommended that the GOC include on the form a note that payment would be taken straight away for all cheques.

559. It was noted that the GOC currently receives a high proportion of payments by cheque – the majority of payments are made in this way, despite Direct Debit being the simplest way of making and processing payments. It was suggested that changes to the payment form, or various financial incentives, might encourage registrants to set up Direct Debits for their retention payment. It was noted that the online retention system when introduced will include a fee for paper retention including cheque processing.

560. It was noted that the Registration Department produces a monthly report, which has previously been provided to the Committee. This will be provided on the Committee members' intranet page in the future. Members can contact the Registration Supervisor Laura Hytti for further information (contact details will be circulated).

Online retention

561. The Committee noted the progress on the project so far and plans for work over the next year. Key progress included the scanning process and the updating of the registrants area, which is working towards full online retention. An incremental approach is being taken to further development, based on PRINCE2 principles, with additional functionality being developed, tested and rolled out in sequence rather than aiming for a single 'go-live' date.
562. The full project plan for the online retention project will be made available once it is ready. The plan, which will set out the specific timings and deliverables for the project, is being prepared for the Council meeting on 25 February. The risk register will also be updated and provided to the Committee.
563. There was some discussion of the suppliers for the project. It was noted there have been issues in the past around suppliers meeting timelines, and the incremental development approach to future development will help minimise risks in that area. The paper retention system will be retained alongside any online developments in the short term, while the online system beds in.

Letters of Good Standing

564. The Committee noted the proposed changes to the GOC's processes for issuing letters of good standing, and the introduction of a Certificate of Current Professional Status.
565. The Committee endorsed approach proposed in the paper regarding validation of declarations for health authorities, and the introduction of the proposed Certificate of Current Professional Status.
566. The Committee noted the further work planned in relation to European regulators. The Committee will receive updates on this work in the future as it progresses.

Equality and Diversity Monitoring Report

567. The Committee noted the results of the Registration Department's equality and diversity monitoring in 2009, and that the report will be provided to Council and CHRE for their information and published on the GOC website. The Committee was pleased by the response to the monitoring in 2009.
568. There was some discussion of whether equality and diversity monitoring forms could be made anonymous. The Committee noted that due to reporting requirements it was not possible for the forms to be anonymous, but the data is handled confidentially within the GOC and is not linked to individual registrants' registration records. It was noted that this may affect response rates, particularly as more potentially sensitive areas become subject to monitoring. This will be considered in the design of the monitoring form in the

future, and communications material will make sure to highlight the value of the scheme for registrants in providing a picture of the profession.

Register Content and Access

- 569. The Committee noted progress on the registers project, and agreed with the proposed next steps.
- 570. It was noted that the previous printed register provided a historical record of the full registrant population at any given point. It was suggested while the GOC does archive its register, it could consider making an annual capture of the register and make it available, for example on CD.
- 571. There was discussion about the need for the consultation to effectively include patient groups and members of the public, for example through LINKs and PCTs, and employers. This will be considered in planning for the project. The Committee will be consulted on the draft consultation plan and discussion document and will receive an update on progress on the project at its next meeting.

Registration work plan

- 572. The Committee noted the Registration workplan for 2010/11. The Committee was asked to consider any additional areas of interest that the GOC should look into in the future, particularly in the 2011/12 year.
- 573. It was noted that there are links between many of the projects in the workplan, and that it was important that the management of the projects took account of that.

Report on public awareness

- 574. The Committee noted that good progress had been made on the public awareness project. A key component of the project is the introduction this year of a 'GOC-registered' logo for registrants to promote their registered status, in promotional materials. Leaflets have also been developed for registrants to assist them in using the registration toolkit and also for patients. The toolkit will be available from mid-late March.
- 575. It was suggested that the patient leaflet should provide information on the roles of Dispensing Opticians and optical assistants, including that there are unregistered practitioners. It was considered that there may be a need for more information about what to expect during the 'patient journey'. The GOC should also work with PCTs in getting information out.

Vetting and barring scheme update

- 576. The Committee noted the contents of the update on the Vetting and Barring scheme.
- 577. It was noted that all currently practising GOC registrants will be considered to be carrying out regulated activity under the planned Vetting and Barring scheme. Long term, the GOC intends to make ISA registration a requirement of the license to practise..
- 578. It was noted that registration would be open from July 2010, and that it would become an offence for some categories of practitioners not to be registered with the Vetting and Barring scheme from November 2011.

579. There was discussion about the issue of the importance of guidelines around unregistered staff performing controlled activities in workplaces in relation to the scheme, and whether optical records are health records for the purpose of the scheme. It was noted that there is a tension here due to the administrative burden of the scheme, which is likely to be the subject of discussion within the profession in the future.

Report on CET scheme

580. The Committee noted progress on the CET scheme, at the end of the current three year cycle.
581. There was discussion of the nature of the CET points that have been awarded, in terms of modality and competencies, and the factors influencing take-up of CET in particular areas. For example, peer review and skills workshops currently make up a small proportion of CET points. Current take-up of competencies will be compared to risk profiling.
582. It was noted that there may be a need to consider changes to the CET scheme as it evolves into the revalidation scheme, to be more specific around the types of points that registrants have to get and/or the types of CET they should undertake. It was suggested that the GOC might work with the journals to focus content in particular areas of need. Consideration will also be given to requiring a number of points to be achieved each year rather than every three years.
583. It was noted that dispensing opticians do not get a grant for undertaking CET, unlike optometrists. If a revalidation scheme requires more training to be undertaken other than through journals, this will place a higher burden on DOs, and CLOs in particular, to get their CET/revalidation points (which can currently be got through ABDO membership). It was noted that the GOC has been supportive of DOs getting funding for undertaking training. The planned consultation would be investigating how these issues can be dealt with (including for example a scheme incorporating a level of risk/scope of practise consideration).
584. Committee members were invited to attend a CET stakeholder event on 25 March, and a questionnaire is being sent out to stakeholders on Monday 15 February.

Protected titles

585. The Committee noted the work underway to clarify the legal requirements concerning use of protected titles by optical businesses – for example by businesses such as partnerships and sole traders which are not legally corporate bodies.
586. The Committee noted that there was a need for further work looking at the basis of body corporate registration in terms of public protection. The Committee will receive an update following further work on an options appraisal and consultation draft.

Other Business

587. The Chair suggested that the Committee might wish to consider the membership of the Committee in terms of appointing advisors to provide

additional perspectives, for instance from an optometry training provider, employer, PCT, those dealing with student registration. The Committee members were asked to give consideration to this issue ahead of the next meeting.

Date of next meeting

588. The Committee agreed to consider the times of future meetings, on the basis of the dates suggested.
589. The Chairman thanked all concerned for the smooth running of the meeting and concluded it at 13.10.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'A' followed by a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.