

Education Committee

7 February 2008

Members Present

	Paul Cook
Edward Attenborough	David Herbert
Lesley Kant	Michael Martin
Mabel Slater	Denis Toppin

Minutes

Apologies for absence

1. Barry Cockcroft and Hew Mathewson sent their apologies.

Minutes of previous meeting

Minute 2: minutes of previous meeting

2. There was discussion about the style of minutes for Committee meetings. Some members felt that a more detailed record of discussion, decision-making and follow-up actions was required in the minutes. The minute of the Sheffield CDT item was cited as a good example of this approach. Other members favoured a concise minuting style. It had been the intention that a new system of minute writing would be put in place, supported by staff training, but this had not yet been taken forward. On balance, it was agreed that until the new system is put in place minutes should follow the Sheffield example.

Minute 13: Review of new Belfast Dental Hygiene Curriculum

3. The new curriculum had been assessed by an expert assessor. The Committee approved the curriculum. Follow-up correspondence with the School would seek reassurance on staffing levels, team teaching and the embedding of core values such as communication skills throughout all modules.

Minute 15: Report from Dundee Dental School on paediatric patients

4. A letter from the Principal of Dundee University and extracts from the GDC inspection report and university observations were tabled. The Committee was generally satisfied by the response received in connection with paediatric patient access. However further confirmation would be sought that resuscitation training for

both children and adults will take place in each year of the programme, as stipulated in paragraph 48 of *Developing the Dental Team*. After a vote it was decided not to re-inspect the school.

Minute 35: Annual monitoring of dental schools – update

5. Additional information which had been requested from QMUL, Belfast, Leeds, Newcastle and Sheffield on the teaching and assessment of competence in dental instrument sterilisation and decontamination would be reviewed by Michael Martin. One school had failed to respond and a chasing letter sent.

Minute 36: Future of Dentist and DCP Education Groups

6. Amanda Little outlined the views received from Committee, Dentist Education Group and DCP Education Group members as to whether these two Groups should continue to meet. Both of the Education Groups felt dialogue between them and the GDC should continue in some form. However, different methods may be appropriate for the two Groups.
7. The Committee agreed that the Dentist Education Group should be dissolved, as other more productive discussion fora exist. Regular meetings with key stakeholders such as COPDEND or JCSTD were thought to be a better mode of engagement. With regards to the DCP Education Group, members agreed that the Group should continue to meet for the time being, although the structure and focus of the Group would need review to ensure that meetings were productive.
8. It was agreed that the Chair and the DCP member of the Committee would attend future DCP Education Group meetings, other members were welcome to attend but it was at their discretion. Frances Garratt, Mabel Slater, Edward Attenborough and Amanda Little would take forward the reframing of the Group.

Items for action

Strategy and Corporate Plan

9. The draft Strategy and Corporate Plan was being circulated to all GDC Committees. The Committee was invited to comment.
10. The Committee was satisfied by the overall thrust and broad aims of the plan, but felt that greater clarity was required, particularly in relation to the scope of the GDC's responsibility for standards setting.
11. Members provided suggestions for changes to the wording of several statements in the Plan and debated whether the quotation of percentage figures in it was apposite, given that these were intended to be objectives rather than measures of success against objectives.

Edinburgh Dental Technology HNC – provisional approval sought for new curriculum

12. Denis Toppin declared an interest in this item, as an employee of NES.
13. The Committee considered Edinburgh Telford College's submission for the new specification of the HNC in dental technology, the expert assessor's comments on the submission and supporting information on the National Certificate in dental technology, which was the feeder course to the HNC.
14. The Committee unanimously felt that the HNC submission fell substantially short of the requirements of *Developing the Dental Team*, and in particular with regard to the length of the programme (one year), which was insufficient to provide the

coverage of topics and fulfilment of learning outcomes described in that document. The assessor had identified gaps in curriculum coverage of certain key dental technology topics. The Committee was clear that the qualification in its present format should no longer be accepted as a route to GDC registration.

15. As the National Certificate is a stand-alone non-registrable qualification it could not be considered in discussion of the HNC. It was noted that the work placement component of the National Certificate could not legally proceed after 30 July 2008 if the recommendations in the current Scope of Practice consultation were implemented, as students could not be classified as 'in training' if the programme did not lead to GDC registration.
16. A letter advising that the HNC in dental technology would no longer be acceptable for registration purposes would be sent to the College as a matter of urgency. The assessor's comments on the HNC would also be fed back.

ORE for DCPs update

17. Mabel Slater and Amanda Little had met with representatives from all DCP groups to discuss how best to assess overseas DCPs' suitability for registration.
18. Initial legal advice had been that the Dentists' Act suggests that the route to registration for overseas DCPs must be through 'individual assessment' (looking at paper documentation to assess qualifications and skills). Mabel Slater and Denis Toppin described the various practical difficulties in operating this process, and its lack of reliability in comparison with other methods of assessment. An amendment to the Act to allow the GDC greater flexibility would be sought, but an interim solution would need to be found in the meantime.

Student fitness to practise update

19. Following Council's decision not to pursue registration for dental and DCP students, the GDC had written to the government in line with the requirement to do so in the government white paper *Trust, Assurance and Safety*.
20. The production of guidance on expected standards of behaviour for UK dental and DCP students, and guidance to HE and FE training providers on how to deal with student fitness to practise issues, was being taken forward by the QA team with Peter Butler leading.
21. Discussion touched upon the circumstances in which a disability might impact upon a student's entitlement to join the register upon graduation. Duncan Rudkin suggested that a paper covering the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for dental and DCP students should be brought to Committee for discussion.

Interim improvements to inspection processes

22. Paul Feeney presented a paper describing interim measures to improve the inspection procedures for primary qualifications.
23. There was discussion as to whether information on an institution's funding was relevant to inspections. Although funding streams were not the business of the regulator, some members reflected that funding did impact upon on the quality of education in several ways.
24. Curriculum mapping against the relevant GDC guidance document was considered to be critical, and it was agreed that one inspector should be assigned to do this in advance of the inspection. This mapping exercise would dictate the inspection timetable.

25. Also discussed were the merits of meeting senior institutional personnel. It was agreed that it was not necessary to meet with personnel not directly involved in delivery of programmes. The importance of meeting as broad a cross-section of the students as possible was emphasised. More rigorous training of inspectors prior to participation in inspections was identified as a key area for development. Overall, the need for a more consistent and systematic approach to the inspection process, was stressed.

Clinical Dental Technicians – quality assurance issues

26. Paul Feeney presented a paper which argued that the 90-week duration for a CDT training programme quoted in *Developing the Dental Team* should be viewed as guidance rather than a requirement. If this argument was accepted, it could pave the way for Committee to agree to consider programme submissions that were shorter than 90 weeks, and determine whether or not the learning outcomes required had been met.
27. The Committee accepted that dental technology elements incorporated within the CDT curriculum requirements could in principle be covered through accredited prior learning; hence the 90 week requirement need not stand.
28. A proposal for a CDT programme of less than 90 weeks had been submitted for provisional approval to the GDC and would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.
29. The Committee discussed briefly whether there should be any differentiation between technicians who had been grand-parented onto the register and those who had gained a qualification in the discipline, in respect of entering a CDT programme of study. The Committee agreed that this was for educational providers to determine.
30. The Committee concluded in discussion that the requirement for clinical dental technicians to be registered dental technicians first was not justifiable and should be removed. Frances Garratt thought that this would require a decision of Council, and that the Standards Committee's view should also be sought, given its responsibility for Scope of Practice. Frances would take this forward with Janet Collins.

Strategic Review update

31. Frances Garratt informed Committee that the Strategic Review Group would meet in February to carry out an options appraisal of pre-qualification quality assurance options, as requested by the Committee. At its 20 March meeting the Group would agree the text of its final report, which would be discussed at the April 24 meeting of Committee.
32. Frances was asked if the Specialist Dental Education Board had gone outwith its remit by recommending creation of a specialist list in implantology. Frances explained that the SDEB had not made such a recommendation (although its remit included advising the Committee on matters concerning the specialist lists, and so it would be within its remit to do so). The recommendation came from the Strategic Review Group and had not yet been made (it would be included in the Strategic Review Group final report). It was open to the Strategic Review Group to make any recommendations it felt were key to the Council's public protection strategy in relation to education, and the Education Committee was entitled to accept or reject such recommendations as it saw fit, in the light of the Strategic Review Group's findings.

Draft consultation on additional qualifications policy

33. A draft version of a consultation document seeking views on how additional skills and qualifications were of benefit to dental patients was presented for discussion. The Committee approved the document for consultation.
34. Frances Garratt explained that she had received one formal and one informal proposal to quality assure additional qualifications on behalf of the GDC. It would be inappropriate to consider these while the issue was out for public consultation and any such proposals should be made as part of the consultation and not separate to it, or the legality of the consultation would be called into question.
35. Frances suggested holding a workshop of key stakeholders after the consultation period had ended, and once the Education Committee had considered the Strategic Review Group recommendations, in order to consider implementation of the Strategic Review findings. The Education Committee felt it could not agree to the timing of a workshop at this stage, until it had discussed the Strategic Review findings and agreed a way forward. It was agreed that additional qualifications was not a standalone issue and needed to be considered alongside the wider context of the Strategic Review.
36. The Committee expressed some concern that work did not seem to have progressed on development and implementation of a Council-wide patient and public involvement strategy and that patient and public responses were critical to this issue. The Committee asked that Frances pass on its concern that progress must be made on this and ways found to obtain patient opinion to feed into the consultation.
37. The Committee was shown a draft of the Standards Committee's consultation on the recommendations of the Scope of Practice Working Group. Several members expressed unease that Botox treatments and dermal fillers were listed in the draft as additional skills which a dentist could acquire. This listing was thought to give a green light to dentists performing these procedures¹. It was suggested that the Standards Committee might find feedback from the Education Committee helpful. It was agreed that decisions taken by the Standards Committee arising from this consultation would overrule any prior decision on these issues taken by the Education Committee.

Interim policy statement on implantology

38. The Committee agreed to endorse the document *Training Standards in Implant Dentistry for General Dental Practitioners* on behalf of the GDC. The GDC had commissioned, and was represented on, the Group which had drafted the document and which was currently reviewing it. The Implant Group had expressed concern that the lack of GDC endorsement of the document when it was first published (2005) had sent mixed signals to the profession. Members of the Committee supported that view. A press release or article in the Gazette that the GDC was fully supportive of the document was timely and necessary. An interim policy statement was attached to the paper.
39. There was agreement that the term 'general dental practitioner' in the 2005 document should read 'dentist' in the updated document. A press release and a feature in the *Gazette* would express the GDC's support for the document.

Specialist Dental Education Board update

40. Ewen Macleod updated the Committee on a recent meeting of the SDEB with Specialist Advisory Committee Chairs, at which the redrafting of specialist training

¹ The Standards Committee in fact removed reference to these tasks at its meeting on 29 January, which post-dated circulation of the draft to the Education Committee.

curricula was discussed. The Council had agreed to help provide lay input into the curriculum development process.

41. At its June meeting, Council would be asked to amend the Distinctive Branches of Dentistry Regulations to enable the opening of transitional arrangements for entry to the list for the new specialty of Special Care Dentistry. The Committee would be asked to approve the Special Care Dentistry curriculum at its next meeting.
42. The SDEB had considered a request from the British Society for Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology that the dental specialty 'Oral Pathology' be renamed 'Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology' as the latter name more correctly described the range and extent of the specialty and reflected the increasing use of that term within dental specialties around the world. The Royal College of Pathologists were happy to accept this terminology for the specialty. The Committee agreed to recommend this change to Council.

Any other business

Aberdeen Dental School

43. Michael Martin noted that an advertisement for academic posts at the new dental school to be based in Aberdeen had appeared in the BDJ. The Committee was informed that the proposal, which was recently submitted to the GDC, and the expert assessors' comments on it would be tabled at the April meeting of Committee.
44. Paul Cook questioned whether the recent Home Office move to end the eligibility of non-EEA doctors for UK training posts through the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme would impact upon dentists coming from overseas. Staff in the QA team were considering the consultation document.

Date of next meeting

45. The next meetings of Committee will be held on Monday 21 April at 10:30 am and Thursday 24 April at 10:30 am. The venue for each meeting will be confirmed in due course. The first of these meetings will be to deal with usual business; the second will be dedicated to a consideration of the Strategic Review Group final report.