

**Minutes of the Meeting of the General Dental Council
held at 10am on Friday 21 June 2024
in Open Session at 37 Wimpole Street, London**

Council Members present:

Lord Harris	Chair
Terry Babbs	
Ilona Blue	
Donald Burden	
Anne Heal	
Angie Heilmann MBE	
Serbjit Kaur MBE	
Sheila Kumar	
Mike Lewis	
Timea Milovecz	
Simon Morrow	
Laura Simons	

Executive Team Members in attendance:

Tom Whiting	Chief Executive and Registrar
Stefan Czerniawski	Executive Director, Strategy
Clare Paget	Interim Executive Director, Legal & Governance
Gurvinder Soomal	Chief Operating Officer
Theresa Thorp	Executive Director, Regulation

Staff and Others in attendance:

Lee Avery	Associate Director, People and Organisational Development
Richard Bloomfield	Senior Programme and Portfolio Manager
Manjula Das	Head of Education and Quality Assurance
Madeline Eastwood	Policy and Project Officer
Rachael Gilleard	Interim Deputy Head of Governance (Secretary)
Katherine McGirr	Policy Manager
Joanne Rewcastle	Associate Director, Communications & Engagement
Katie Spears	Interim Senior Counsel and Associate Director, Legal

Others in Attendance

Sir Ross Cranston	Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee
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Members of the public and GDC staff attended as observers.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including members of the public and staff who had joined to observe.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Tom Whiting, Chief Executive and Registrar, to his first Council meeting.
- 1.3 It was noted that Sir Ross Cranston would need to leave during the meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

- 2.1 The following declarations of interest were received:
 - a. Item 8 - Change Programme and Cultural Change Update - from all staff in relation to the Total Reward element of the report.
 - b. Item 9 - Revision of the Standards for Education Update - those registrant Council members that continue to work in dental education settings.
 - c. Item 10 - Specialist List Assessed Applications - update and approval to consult on changes to the regulations - all registrant members.
 - d. Item 11 - Chair of Finance and Performance Committee and Senior Independent Council Member Appointments - Ilona Blue and Simon Morrow.

3. Questions Submitted by Members of the Public

- 3.1 No questions had been received within the required timeframe before the meeting.
- 3.2 The Interim Senior Counsel and Associate Director, Legal confirmed that questions from the public can be sent directly into the GDC Governance mailbox or through the GDC website and are reviewed and directed for attention accordingly.

4. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

- 4.1 The full minutes of the public meeting and the abbreviated minutes of the closed meeting held on 5 April 2024 had been **approved via correspondence**.

5. Matters Arising and Rolling Actions List

- 5.1 The Council **agreed** that the action that was 'suggested complete' should be marked as completed.

6. Decisions Log

- 6.1 The Council **noted** that the following items had been approved via correspondence:
 - a. The Council approved the proposed response to the Department of Health and Social Care consultation on Provisional Registration on 16 May 2024.
 - b. The Council approved the recommendation of the Selection Panel for the appointment of the candidate to the Council, for onward submission to the Privy Council, on 5 June 2024.

7. Assurance Reports from the Committee Chairs

- 7.1 The Council heard from the Committee Chairs in respect of the assurance taken from work conducted in Committee since the last Council meeting.

Audit and Risk Committee

- 7.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting. The meeting agenda had been full, and the Committee had requested follow up work in some areas, including requesting consideration of success measures for the Change Programme.
- 7.3 It was currently hoped to lay the 2023 Annual Report and Accounts on the first day of new parliamentary business and timetables were in place that should support this.

Finance and Performance Committee

- 7.4 The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee (FPC) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting and had discussed organisational performance and the increased number of lost working days in Quarter 1 of 2024, which had been attributed to stress. This would be kept under review by the team, including ensuring that the organisation was fully utilising Occupational Health provision.
- 7.5 The Committee had received a broadly positive update from the Regulation Directorate, with improvement in performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in Fitness to Practise (FtP) and throughput of cases. In relation to Registration, the Dental Care Professionals (DCP) international route remained a major challenge, although performance was currently ahead of the target for clearing the backlog. The Executive Director, Regulation, clarified that the business case for DCP international registration referred to a target clearance date of mid-2025.
- 7.6 The Committee had reviewed the first version of the Costed Corporate Plan 2025 – 2027 (CCP) and budget, had asked for consideration of a more streamlined project portfolio and had identified areas for further opportunities in respect of digitisation. The Committee had also queried the approach to financial provision in respect of provisional registration, given the current political uncertainty as to if and when it might be implemented by the new Government.

Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee

- 7.7 The Chair of the Statutory Panellists Assurance Committee (SPC) informed the Council that the Committee had met once since the last Council meeting and had discussed the ongoing process to appoint a new Committee Member, witness support models, case management changes, disclosure and wasted costs and the training programme for panellists.
- 7.8 The Council **noted** the assurance reports.

The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development and the Senior Programme and Portfolio Manager joined the meeting.

8. Change Programme and Cultural Change - Update

- 8.1 The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development presented the paper, which provided an update on the progress of the Change Programme and the Organisational Cultural Change work, highlighting that a formal gateway review for the project would be undertaken in Quarter 3 of 2024.

8.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. In respect of workforce development, it was encouraging that a Learning Management System was operational. There was work to be done in respect of its offering and the optimal approach to organisational training being a mixture of in person and online training.
- b. In respect of Estates, it was confirmed that the question to be considered was whether the Wimpole Street premises remained appropriate for the GDC's long term needs, or whether an alternative London premises should be sought. The timing of this decision would follow a decision by the Registrar in respect of the organisation's approach to remote hearings.
- c. In respect of staff engagement, the Council noted that a new Head of Internal Communications was in post and a communications plan was being developed. The need to ensure a timely response to the staff survey was stressed. Some assurance was provided by the existence of Directorate Action Plans, but the Executive was encouraged to move at pace on an organisation-wide action plan. The Council asked that the Remuneration and Nomination Committee receive an update as to the content of the overall GDC action plan.

Action: The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development to provide an update on the GDC action plan arising from the employee survey at the next RemNom meeting.

- d. In respect of GDC Values, the Council noted that the paper mentioned testing these values both internally and externally and highlighted that it was important that the values were socialised effectively with the wider GDC Associates group as well.

Action: As part of the work to develop the GDC values, the Associate Director, People and Organisational Development to consider ways in which to share the GDC values with Associates and to explain what this means for them in their roles.

- e. In respect of cultural change, the Council queried whether the cultural change work had an overall objective, against which success could be measured. Equality, diversity and inclusion and improvements in performance in key operational areas had also been identified as an intrinsic part of the work and links between this and the cultural change programme should be clear.
- f. The Chief Executive's assessment was that there were scoping issues with the cultural change programme itself, which contained projects that were not directed at cultural change (some of which touched on productivity and efficiency), whereas other initiatives outside the programme did. A total set of relevant projects and a comprehensive set of success measures was required.
- g. It was observed that the gateway review provided an opportunity for review of the whole set of projects to bring the existing work together and determine the future plan.

8.3 The Council **noted** the report.

The Associate Director, People and Organisational Development and the Senior Programme and Portfolio Manager left the meeting.

The Head of Education and Quality Assurance joined the meeting.

9. Revision of Standards for Education

9.1 The Head of Education and Quality Assurance and the Policy Manager presented the report, which provided an update on the revision of the Standards for Education. In developing the revised standards, the team had reflected on the present standards, initial and further stakeholder discussions and feedback, and how this activity was aligned to the broader work of the GDC including the professionalism agenda. The draft revised standards and draft consultation document would be presented to the Council in September 2024.

9.2 The Council **discussed** the following:

- a. It was vital that the Standards were fit for purpose and accessible for each of the diverse registrant groups. It was important to reflect on the role and status of technology (including in dental nurse education) and the issue of digital poverty in some communities was also highlighted.
- b. In relation to the organisation's regulatory remit, the Council discussed its levers for affecting change in respect of inclusive admissions processes.
- c. Support regarding the well-being of trainees, trainers and providers was welcomed.
- d. The international registration dimension was highlighted, and it was noted that links had been made with the Association of Dental Education in Europe.
- e. The Council queried how the GDC is keeping in step with standards for specialty education and was informed that revision of the specialty curricular was completed last year, which was a valuable learning exercise. Review of the standards for specialty education was on a plan in the CCP, subject to resources and timing.
- f. The GDC was undertaking a thematic review of dental nurse training. A survey had been shared with awarding organisations, from which key themes had been identified and would be discussed with stakeholders.

9.3 The Council **noted** the update.

10. Specialist List Assessed Applications – update and approval to consult on changes to regulations

10.1 The Policy Manager and Policy and Project Officer explained that over the last 18 months changes had been implemented to the Specialist List Assessed Applications (SLAA) process which had brought the assessment of assessed applications under the GDC's direct operational control. This had resulted in the elimination of the backlog of applications. As the next step in the work to improve the process, it was proposed to consult on changes to the application routes which had been the cause of concern.

10.2 The first of the proposed amendments to the Regulations was to replace the current academic and research route with a more general assessment route for the 11 specialties over which the GDC had full control. The other two specialties were subject to EU-derived legislative requirements. This change was designed to address an identified issue that applicants struggled to demonstrate equivalence to the Certificate of Completion in Specialist Training (CCST) through research. The new route would be supported by guidance materials that would assist applicants in identifying suitable evidence to demonstrate equivalence.

- 10.3 Secondly, it was proposed to amend the Regulations to add an additional application route for those who had gained specialist training within the UK, but not through the CCST approach (which required NHS funding and was limited to a certain number of places). This was aimed at improving equality of access to the specialist lists.
- 10.4 Additionally, the opportunity had been taken to make provision for the recognition of specialist qualifications where the GDC was required to do so by the terms of trade agreements concluded between the UK and other countries. The GDC proposed to consult on this approach for 10 weeks, starting in July 2024.
- 10.5 The Council **discussed** the following:
- a. The Council noted the success of the relevant teams in clearing the backlog of applications and endorsed the proposed approach to consulting on changing the Regulations.
 - b. It was queried whether the use of the Intercollegiate Specialty Fellowship Examination had been considered, and it was noted that there was not sufficient capacity in the Royal Colleges to provide access to these exams and examination alone did not demonstrate competency in this sphere.
 - c. The unusual position in respect of oral and maxillofacial surgeons was discussed and the Council noted the previously issued guidance as to when dual registration was or was not required.
 - d. Overall, the proposals were welcomed as removing an anomaly and addressing a longstanding problem. Given that the proposals were for relatively minor enabling amendments, it was queried whether consultation was necessary. The Interim Executive Director, Legal and Governance confirmed that there was no statutory requirement to consult, but it was suggested to the Council that there were policy reasons why consultation was proposed in this case. The timing of the consultation period was discussed and agreed as ten weeks, as per the proposal.
 - e. The Council noted that there would be value in considering scenarios where the GDC must and should consult on changes, and where there was value in acting in a more expeditious fashion if there was no express requirement or policy imperative for consulting.
 - f. The Council **noted** the update and **approved** the consultation document for publication.

The Policy Manager and Policy and Project Officer left the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

- 11.1 The Executive Director, Regulation reported to the Council that there had been an error in the booking window opening for the Overseas Registration Exam which had resulted in 84 candidates booking on in error. Apologies had been made, refunds had been issued and the teams were working quickly to resolve the problem quickly.

12. Chair of FPC and Senior Independent Council Member (SICM) Appointments

Ilona Blue and Simon Morrow withdrew from the meeting.

- 12.1 The Chair of Council presented the paper recommending that the Council approved the appointments of Simon Morrow as the Senior Independent Council Member (SICM) and Ilona Blue as the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee.

12.2 It was commented that, where the paper referred to not pre-empting a Privy Council decision, this same point should apply to the Council in respect of recommending candidates for appointment.

12.3 The Council **approved** the recommendation. Accordingly:

- a. Ilona Blue was appointed to the Chair of FPC from 1 October 2024 to 31 March 2026.
- b. Simon Morrow was appointed to the Senior Independent Council Member post from 1 October 2024 to 30 September 2025.

13. Date of Next Meetings

13.1 The Council **noted** the date of the next meetings.

The meeting closed at 12.10pm.