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NOTES of the seventeenth meeting of the Registration Committee of the Health Professions Council held on Monday 14 May 2004 at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU.

PRESENT :

Professor R. Klem (Chairman)
Miss P. Sabine
Miss M. Crawford
Mr G. Sutehall

IN ATTENDANCE :

Miss L. Pilgrim, Secretary to the Committee
Mr M. Seale, Chief Executive and Registrar
Mrs S. Gillick, Acting UK Registration Manager
Miss S. Dawson, Grandparenting and International Registration Manager

ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Dr R. Jones, Mr I. Massey, Dr A. Van Der Gaag, Miss E. Thornton, Mr P. Frowen.

The Committee was not quorate but proceeded on the basis that any recommendations requiring agreement would be forwarded to the full Committee.

ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

- 2.1 The Committee approved the Agenda

ITEM 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 MARCH 2004

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting were agreed as a correct record save for the following addition:

Item 4 Review of Registration Process

4.3.2 Ms Sabine queried the number of HPC assessors and the attrition rate of the assessors on a profession by profession basis. She also queried the frequency with which those appointed were used to assess applications. The Committee asked that this information be incorporated into the Registration report presented to the Committee.

ITEM 4 MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Language Competence

- 4.1.1 The Secretary reported that the Communications department was reviewing the article prior to it being placed in the HR Bulletin. It was agreed that following that the text of the article and the list to whom it was being sent would be circulated to the Committee.

ACTION: CM

4.2 English Language Competence

- 4.2.1 The Committee noted that the Chief Executive had written to the Department of Health (DH) about the level of English Language Competence required of international applicants seeking registration with the Council. He had confirmed to the DH that the issue had been carefully considered and debated by the Committee. The Chief Executive confirmed that he, and the President, would be meeting with the DH on 21 June 2004.

Mr Sutehall suggested that an explanation of the term 'first language' should be provided. The Grandparenting and International Registration Manager said that there was a section on the HPC website which explained this but that she would review it.

ACTION: SD

4.3 Review of Registration Process

- 4.3.1 The Chief Executive explained the role of the Committee Secretary, namely that the Secretary was concerned with procedural matters affecting the Committee; points to be actioned following the Committee's discussions would be passed to the relevant director or manager to be actioned. Directors and Managers were also responsible for preparing and forwarding papers to the Committee Secretary by the deadline date. The Secretary would check the format of the papers to ensure that they met the stipulated criteria for papers presented to the Committee. The Chief Executive said that the Committee would receive a regular report at its meetings from the Registration departments so that it was kept updated.

4.3.2 The Committee queried whether the information contained in the Registration Report could be shared with professional bodies. The Chief Executive confirmed that it could be, as the Committee meeting was open to the public and the reports were in the public domain. There might be circumstances where a meeting had to be held in private; in such cases reasons would be given as to why it was necessary to have a private meeting.

4.4 Chairman's Report

4.4.1 The Committee noted the situation where radiographers called themselves sonographers and that the DH would be writing a letter advising that health professionals had to register with the HPC. The Chief Executive confirmed that the DH had written a letter but it had been legally incorrect and would have to be redrafted. The Chief Executive confirmed that he would shortly be meeting representatives of the DH and would report back to the Committee.

4.4.2 Miss Crawford raised the issue of health professionals employed in posts where, in order to apply for the post, they had to be from a specific health profession, for example, occupational therapists, but the job title was, for example, "outreach worker" or "care manager". She queried whether such a person would need to be on the HPC register.

4.4.3 The Chief Executive said that this was not within HPC's remit but the Council was concerned about the situation. He pointed out that HPC could extend the range of protected titles and could recommend registration of a group of health professionals even if they did not seek registration. The Chief Executive said that the HPC's recent advertising campaign encouraged patients to ask if their health professional was registered and also emphasised the benefits of registration.

4.4.4 The Chief Executive suggested that (a) the HPC meet with the Allied Health Professions Federation to discuss this matter and (b) that it be raised at regular meetings that HPC had with the DH. He asked Miss Crawford to send examples of the posts referred to in 4.4.2 above. The Committee felt that even in the absence of such examples the issues should still be raised with the DH.

4.5 Return to Practice

4.5.1 The acting UK registration manager confirmed that the department had received some calls from those seeking to return to practice but that to date no major issues had materialised.

4.6 Health and Disability Seminar

4.6.1 Ms Tripp confirmed that, following the Health Committee meeting on 14 May 2004, the draft framework document had been amended. She referred the Committee to the final page of the document which set out issues that would need to be dealt with by the Committee. The Committee would consider creating guidance to registrants about (a) the Council's expectations of all registrants, (b) professional self-regulation and (c) the steps that registrants should take themselves if they were concerned about a health issue that could impair their ability to practice.

- 4.6.2 It was agreed that Ms Tripp would produce draft guidance for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

ACTION: RT

ITEM 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Chairman had no specific matters to report.

ITEM 6 ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- 6.1 The Chief Executive referred to his letter dated 29 March 2004 to Council members and alternates. He asked members to consider the Committees, bodies and working groups with which they were involved and identify for the ETC any projects or initiatives that were pertinent to education and training issues. The Committee was reminded of the need to respond and identify relevant projects generally and also those of specific relevance to the Registration Committee.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive emphasised that the Committee would have to (a) determine which initiatives were relevant ones and (b) decide if the HPC and its Committees should be engaged with these initiatives.

ITEM 7 REVIEW OF THE REGISTRATION PROCESS

- 7.1 The International and Grandparenting Registration Manager said that there was a significant focus on clearing outstanding applications. The department had recruited additional staff and a team leader had been appointed; the team leader would deal with day to day matters and would offer support to the Registration officers.
- 7.2 The Acting UK Registration Manager reported that a team leader had been appointed for the UK Registration department; in fact it was the Acting UK Registration Manager who had been appointed as team leader. She would be combining both roles until the return of the UK Registration Manager from maternity leave.
- 7.3 The Acting UK Registration Manager reported that at the time eight professions had completed the registration renewal process. She reported that the UK Registration department was approaching the year-end for the physiotherapy profession which meant that the majority of the physiotherapists on the HPC Register, approximately 37,000, had completed the registration renewal process.
- 7.4 The Automatic Caller Distribution (ACD) system had been in operation for 12 months; the answer rate at present was 72 per cent. The department had agreed that over the coming weeks more teams would be available to answer the phones and working hours would be extended. The Acting UK Registration Manager confirmed that the answer rate at present in the UK department was 74.1 %

- 7.5 The International and Grandparenting Registration Manager confirmed that on receipt of an application minimum information, name, address, date of birth, was put on the system within 24 hours. This ensured that if an applicant called following submission of their application the department could confirm that the application had been received. She reported that the department worked to EU guidelines; this meant that (a) within one month a decision had to be made about whether the application was acceptable and (b) the department had three months to give the applicant a decision as to whether or not they could be registered. The department had been able to do both (a) and (b) above in shorter time periods than those laid down in the guidelines. The Acting UK Registration Manager reported that applications which were properly completed and submitted could be approved for registration within 5-7 working days of receipt.
- 7.6 Assessors were obliged to review applications and send decisions back within 10 days. When an applicant called to check on the progress of their application and the assessors had not yet responded, the department e-mailed the assessor for an update. It was recommended that when potential assessors were being interviewed they should be questioned about their commitment to the role and their ability to deal with applications within the stipulated 10 day period.
- 7.7 The International and Grandparenting Registration manager explained what was meant when reference was made to an application that had been 'withdrawn'. This term was used in two contexts: (a) an application that had been withdrawn from the old application process and (b) an application that had not been fully completed or had been incorrectly completed. An approved application was one that had been accepted for registration. The Committee felt that it would be helpful to have a glossary of terms. The International and Grandparenting Registration Manager agreed to include this in the next report to the Committee.
- 7.8 The International and Grandparenting Registration Manager confirmed that the categories of rejection included:
- I. insufficient funds
 - II. rejection of a Grandparenting application
 - III. rejection on Education and Training grounds
- 7.9 It was noted that there appeared to be some inaccuracies in the report put to the Committee. It was recommended that if there were inaccuracies these should be notified to all Council members as the latter might be using these documents for the purpose of reporting to their professional bodies; further the documents were in the public domain and should be accurate. The International and Grandparenting Registration Manager would check the position with the IT department. The reports were run directly from the Registration system and it might be a technical issue which would have to be investigated by the IT department.
- 7.10 The Chief Executive suggested that the International and Grandparenting Registration Manager should organise a meeting with representatives from each professional body in order to explain the new registration system and to keep them informed and up to date. These meetings could take place on the same day as the Registration Committee meetings. This would enable the registration departments to deal with issues that arose from the meetings. The Committee confirmed that they would be willing to assist in whatever way they could.

- 7.11 The Chairman noted that, as only 72 % of calls in the International Registration department and 74 % of calls in the UK Registration department were being answered, this meant that 28 and 26 % respectively went unanswered. The Acting UK Registration Manager and the International and Grandparenting Registration manager both acknowledged that it was an issue and the departments were considering ways in which to improve the percentage of calls answered. The Committee noted that the Executive would be taking steps to try and resolve the situation.
- 7.12 The Committee raised the issue of the period of time for which a referee was required to know an applicant before they could sign a reference. The International and Grandparenting Registration manager said that she had taken advice from the Council's legal adviser who had confirmed that the stipulated time of 3 years laid down in the Health Professions Order could be met where the referee had known an applicant for 3 academic years. This would apply primarily in cases where there was nobody else whom the applicant could get to sign the reference and the proposed referee was willing to sign the reference under these circumstances.
- 7.13 The Committee queried if this had been communicated to the relevant bodies and to education providers. It was recommended that the International and Grandparenting Registration Manager clarify the issue with the Council's legal adviser and that he prepare a paper for the next Committee meeting. The outcome should be communicated to the relevant bodies and educational providers.

ACTION: SD

ITEM 8 APPROVED QUALIFICATIONS - ARTICLE 12

- 8.1 The Committee considered the paper prepared by the International and Grandparenting Registration manager. The paper identified the 6 countries from which most international applications were received. After discussion the Committee felt that 2 physiotherapy programmes, one from Australia and one from South Africa and 1 Radiography programme from Australia should be considered. This would enable the Committee to identify the criteria in selecting overseas programmes which would be considered as equivalent to a UK programme and accepted on that basis. The Chairman felt that it would be helpful to know the outcome history of the applications received from these programmes (namely had they all been accepted, rejected etc). This would enable the Committee to consider the consistency of the decisions.

- 8.2 The Committee was of the view that the relevant information for consideration should be obtained on the basis of (a) country (b) institution (c) numbers approved (d) year of graduation (e) details of allegations made against applicants from relevant programmes.
- 8.3 The International and Grandparenting Registration manager would obtain the relevant information from the IT Department.
- 8.4 The Chairman pointed out that the Committee would have to recommend to the ETC the process by which it arrived at any conclusions and provide relevant examples. At its next meeting the Committee would be considering the process to be used in determining the criteria by which programmes would be accepted as equivalent to UK programmes.

ACTION: SD

ITEM 9 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2004

- 9.1 The Committee noted that the ETC had requested a statement detailing the criteria on which the Committee had based its approval of the tests to be used in determining an applicant's English Language Competence.
- 9.2 The Secretary would prepare this.

ACTION: LP

ITEM 10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 10.1 The Committee queried who was responsible for providing advice to applicants who informed the Council that they had a disability. The Council should identify the Department and the information should be placed on the website.
- 10.2 The Secretary would investigate the situation

ACTION: LP

ITEM 11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 11.1 The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 20 July 2004 at 10 a.m.
- 11.2 Further meetings will be held on the following dates
- I. Monday 13 September 2004
 - II. Thursday 4 November 2004
 - III. Tuesday 18 January 2005

CHAIRMAN