

Council members' information

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Council members' information

About this document

This document has been put together for new and existing Council members. It contains information about being a Council member for the Health Professions Council, and advice on how to tackle common issues.

The information in this document is guidance that will help a Council member to carry out their role effectively. This document should be read in conjunction with the Council members' code of conduct.

Becoming a Council member

Council members' appointment / election

Lay members of the Council are appointed by the Privy Council. When new lay members of Council are needed, the Privy Council will advertise for these positions.

Registrant members of Council are elected by the registrants from their profession. The method by which registrant Council members are elected is set out in detail in the Council Election scheme. (The exception to this is the original registrant Council members, who were appointed by the Privy Council, as provided for in the Health Professions Order, Schedule 2, Paragraph 3 (4))

No Council member may serve for more than three consecutive terms.

Induction programme

The HPC provides an induction programme to all Council members, where they can spend time (usually two days) at Park House. During this induction, Council members will normally visit each department, and learn how policy decisions are implemented and how the day-to-day administration of HPC is co-ordinated.

New members are encouraged to participate as soon as they are elected or appointed to the Council. The Secretariat department has a performance target that all Council members should have completed their induction within six months of their appointment.

Any Council member who has not registered for this induction should contact the Secretariat to arrange convenient dates

Council and committee meeting information

Council and committee meetings

There are normally six Council meetings per year, including one two-day meeting which is held outside London.

Other committees will normally hold 4 meetings per year.

Council members will normally be sent their papers seven days before the meeting is due to take place. If any Council member wishes to receive their papers in an alternative format (Braille, or large print, for example), they should contact the

Secretariat, who will arrange this and pass on the Council member's request to the rest of the organisation.

Working with alternate Council members

Registrant Council members should aim to keep in touch with their alternate member, in particular giving them as much notice as possible if they cannot attend a meeting. Registrant members may also find it helpful to keep in contact with their alternate, informing them of issues that have arisen during Council meetings. Alternates will likewise find it helpful to their role if they keep up to date with decisions that are taken at the Council meetings they do not attend.

Raising an item at a meeting

If a Council member wishes to raise an issue at a Council or committee meeting, they should contact the Secretary to the relevant committee. Depending on the nature of the issue, the Executive will need to respond by preparing a paper for discussion.

Extremely urgent items which have arisen after the papers deadline and which cannot be dealt with at the next meeting, can be raised in 'Any other business'. As good practice, and as an aid to accountability and informed discussion, items should generally form part of the main agenda.

Special meetings

A special session of the Council may be convened by the Secretary if it is requested in writing by the President, the Chairman of a Statutory committee, or any eight members of the Council.

Council / committee papers

Council members should read all relevant paperwork carefully, in order to save time during the meeting. Papers will always come from a named member of the Executive, and the contact details of all employees are on the HPC website.

Should Council members have any queries which would not usefully form part of discussion at the meeting, they can contact the member of staff who has written the paper for more information.

Confidential papers or information

Council members should keep their Council papers and other information related to their role safely and securely.

Confidential papers should be shredded before disposal. Council members who do not have access to a shredder should return documents to the Executive for secure disposal.

Working as part of the HPC

If a Council member wishes to instigate a new area of work, or tackle an issue which is new for the Council, they should in the first instance contact the Chief Executive, to discuss their idea informally. This will provide an opportunity for discussion, and also reduce the chance of duplicating existing work.

If appropriate, they should arrange with the Chief Executive for a member of the Executive to produce a paper for discussion / decision at the relevant committee.

Items for discussion

In general, Council members should not raise issues which have already been considered and decided by another committee.

If any Council member wishes to have further information regarding a decision taken by another committee, they should raise the matter with the Secretary to that committee. The decision can then be discussed with the President or chairman as appropriate.

Council members will normally be expected only to raise previous decisions again if since the decision there have been significant new developments that were not apparent during the original discussion, which may seriously affect the decision.

Other events

Other HPC events

Other events will be organised which Council members may be asked to attend. These may include listening events or a consultation event where a panel is required, or conferences or events where help is needed to staff an exhibition stand, or to answer queries.

Council members should endeavour to attend such events, particularly when a large consultation is taking place and a large amount of support from Council members is needed. In particular, Council members' attendance may be particularly useful at those events which are local to them or which are particularly relevant to their profession or their interests.

External events

Many Council members will attend a variety of external meetings or conferences where they are representing HPC, or may be seen to represent HPC. At these meetings, Council members should still be mindful of the Council members' Code of Conduct.

Before an external meeting

Before attending any external event in their HPC role, Council members should get this authorised, regardless of whether or not they claim expenses. This form should be authorised in advance of any meeting, and before any arrangements or bookings (eg travel) which incur expenses have been made.

If they are attending an event hosted by another organisation, Council members should submit details of this event (hosting organisation, name of event, date, venue, etc.) to the Events Manager in order that the information can be posted on the events section of the website.

At an external meeting

Council members must ensure that they communicate the decisions that have been made by the Council, and the reasons for those decisions, as accurately as possible.

This means in practice that at events where Council members are representing, or are seen to be representing, the HPC, Council members may therefore have to communicate and explain decisions that they personally spoke against at a Council meeting.

After an external meeting

After an external meeting, Council members are asked to complete a 'feedback' form, and send this back to the Secretariat.

Other information

Travel arrangements

Council members should normally make travel arrangements through the HPC's travel agent, details of which can be found in the Council members' information pack, or on the Council members' section of the website.

Staying in contact

All Council members should give full contact details (work, home, telephone, fax and email) to the Secretary to the Council. These will be made available to HPC employees, but will not be shared externally.

Email is the quickest and most convenient method by which the Executive can stay in touch with Council members. Council members should make reasonable efforts to check their email regularly, in order to remain fully aware of Council and committee business, and in order to participate fully in the work of the HPC.

Council members should inform the Secretary to the Council if they plan to be away for a period of more than a few days, and if they will be out of email contact.

Correspondence

Council members may receive correspondence at Park House, which will be forwarded on to them by the Secretariat. Likewise, if an individual wishes to contact a Council member, their details will be taken and passed on to the Council member.

The Secretariat will endeavour to pass on correspondence in a timely manner, but unfortunately cannot guarantee that urgent information sent to Park House will reach Council members as quickly as it would if it was sent directly to their home or work address.

Dealing with the media

Any Council member may, as part of their work, be approached by the media (which may include professional journals, or consumer or national press) for a statement, interview, article or other input about their work or the work of HPC.

All Council members will be offered media training, and there may be scope for some Council members to be further briefed and trained, as 'spokespersons' for the HPC.

The Communications department should be fully informed in advance of any contact with the media, in order that activity can be monitored in accordance with the Communications Strategy.

Any statement given to the media should normally be sent to the Communications department first for comment and/or approval. The Communications department can offer help to Council members in preparing for interviews, drafting responses, or with any other support that a Council member may need before giving information to the media.

Leaving the Council

Council members who no longer wish to be a member of the Council must submit their resignation in writing to the Registrar, as provided for in the Health Professions Order, Schedule 1, paragraph 10.

At the last meeting they attend, Council members should ensure that any confidential information they still have in their possession is given in to the Secretary in order that it can be safely disposed of or securely filed.

Council members who have also been appointed as partners may be able to continue to take part in the Health Professions Council's work as a partner, if this is unaffected by the reason for their resignation.

Other sources of information

Council members should as far as possible make use of the resources available to them. In particular Council members are expected to be familiar with the Health Professions Order, and to have a working knowledge of the standards published by the Council.

Other resources that may be useful for Council members in discharging their duties include:

- Health Professions Council website (including the Council members' section);
- Health Professions Council rules;
- Health Professions Council standing orders;
- Health Professions Council Members terms and conditions of appointment;
- The role of Council Members (paper produced by Jonathan Bracken for the Council, July 2002);
- HPC brochures and leaflets;
- Council members' expenses policy;
- Register of Interests; and
- Council members' information pack.