184 Kennington Park Road
London SE11 4BU
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7582 0866
Fax: +44 (0)20 7820 9684
e-mail: lucinda.pilgrim@hpc–uk.org

MINUTES of the sixteenth meeting of the Registration Committee of the Health Professions Council held on Wednesday 10 March 2004 at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BU.

PRESENT :

Prof. R. Klem (Chairman)
Mr. P. Frowen
Miss P. Sabine
Mr G. Sutehall
Dr A. Van der Gaag

IN ATTENDANCE :

Miss L. Pilgrim, Secretary to the Committee
Miss R. Bacon, Project Assistant
Mr. R. Dunn, Director of Information
Miss C. Harkin, Manager, U.K Registration
Mr. M. Seale, Chief Executive and Registrar

ITEM 1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from :– Prof. N. Brook, Miss M. Crawford, Dr. R. Jones, Miss E.Thornton

ITEM 2 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

2.1 The Committee approved the Agenda.

ITEM 3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2004

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2004 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ITEM 4 MATTERS ARISING

Language Competence

4.1 The Secretary reported that an article had been drafted and would be placed in the HR Bulletin. The content of the letters to other bodies would be taken from this article.

ACTION: LP

English Language Competence

4.2 The Chief Executive reported that he had had a meeting with the Department of Health, England (DH). The DH had asked the Council to consider lowering the level of English Language competence required of international applicants seeking registration with the Council. The DH saw the Council's standard as a bar to recruiting health professionals.

4.2.1 The Chief Executive had asked the DH for concrete examples of cases where an applicant had applied and had been rejected as a result of the stipulated English language requirement. The DH had not been able to provide examples to date.

4.2.2 The Chief Executive felt that the Council faced two possible pressures; that of potential employers seeking to lower the standard of the English language requirement and that of professional bodies seeking to raise the standard.

4.2.3 The Committee felt that this issue should only be re-considered if concrete examples could be provided by the DH. The Committee had agreed and recommended the stipulated English language requirement after careful consideration of relevant information and after much debate. The primary issue was protection of the public and safe and effective practice depended on good communication.

4.2.4 It was agreed that the Chief Executive would write to the DH pointing out that this issue had been carefully considered and debated. However, the Council would be willing to review the matter if concrete examples could be provided by the DH.

ACTION: MS

Review of Registration Process

4.3 The Secretary confirmed that a statistical report was prepared for each Council meeting.

4.3.1 The Chief Executive reported that with respect to applications from international applicants, these were either rejected or sent out to assessors within twenty four hours of being received. Some assessors turned the applications around very quickly; the service level agreement stipulated a turnaround time of ten days.

4.3.2 The Chief Executive also reported that a much higher proportion of Grandparenting applications was being sent out to assessors than had initially been the case. Ms. Sabine queried the number of HPC assessors on a profession by profession basis. She also queried the frequency with which those appointed were used to assess applications and she queried the attrition rate of the assessors on a profession by profession basis. The Committee asked that this information be incorporated into the Registration report presented to the Committee.

4.3.3 In response to a query, the UK Registration Manager confirmed that International and Grandparenting applications were dealt with in a similar way.

4.3.4 The Committee considered that the previous report about the registration process had been a good one; the Committee acknowledged the hard work by the registration departments aimed at implementing procedures that would improve the process.

4.3.5 It was agreed that the report prepared for Council would be presented to the Committee. The Committee would consider issues in that report that were of specific and particular interest to it. It would consider what, if any, additional information it required.

4.3.6 The Committee requested that at a future date it could be provided with information about turnaround times; the Committee would then look at the next stage of the registration process.

ACTION: LP

Approved Qualifications Article 12 Health Professions Order

4.4 The Chief Executive felt that the following points had to be borne in mind:

4.4.1 (a) the executive would need guidance as to the number of graduates from a particular course that would be required in order to set a precedent;

4.4.2 (b) whether a decision to recognise a particular course as equivalent to a UK course would stand or whether it would be reviewed and if so at what intervals;

4.4.3 (c) an explanation of what was being done would need to be provided to the relevant professional bodies.

4.4.4 It was agreed that the International Registration Manager would present two overseas courses to the Committee at its next meeting, one from a Physiotherapy course and one from a Radiography course. The Committee would consider these courses to see if they could be recommended as equivalent to UK courses.

4.4.5 The Chairman pointed out that one relevant matter to consider was the information provided by universities. It was suggested that input from the Chairman, a radiographer, and from Miss Thornton, a physiotherapist, would be particularly helpful in considering the courses mentioned above.

ACTION: LP/SD

Registration Seminars

4.5 Mr Frowen reported that the seminar in Cardiff had been helpful and informative.

4.5.1 The Committee noted that the seminars had been well received.

ITEM 5 CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

5.1 The Chairman reported on a meeting with the College of Radiographers, Mrs. R. Mead from the Department of Health (DH), Mrs. Skivington from the SouthWest London Workforce Development Confederation, the Chief Executive and the Council's legal adviser.

5.1.1 The subject of the meeting was radiographers who called themselves sonographers; the latter were in the process of preparing their application for recommendation that they be regulated by the Health Professions Council (HPC).

5.1.2 Some Radiographers who called themselves sonographers appeared not to be registering with the HPC as radiographers because they considered that they may not meet the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs).

5.1.3 The DH would be issuing a letter advising that these health professionals had to register with the HPC. The DH would talk to representatives in the other three countries of the U.K.

ITEM 6 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

6.1 The Committee noted that following the meeting of Council on 2 March 2004 Mr. Sutehall's membership of the Committee had been approved. Professor Waller had decided not to be a member of the Committee.

6.1.1 It was noted that following the resignation of Mr Lea, a lay member would need to be appointed in his place.

6.1.2 It was agreed that the Secretary would confirm the necessary procedure to be followed for the appointment of a new lay member.

ACTION: LP

ITEM 7 RETURN TO PRACTICE

7.1 The Secretary had met with Mrs H. Wiseman, the allied health professions (AHP) lead for Recruitment, Retention and Returners at the Department of Health, England (DH). The Secretary provided the following report to the Committee.

7.1.1 Mrs. Wiseman had confirmed that the DH focus was exclusively on the NHS but might broaden to include Social Services departments.

7.1.2 The DH initiative was concerned only with England. There would be somebody in each of the other three countries of the UK dealing with recruitment, retention and returners; it would be helpful to contact her counterparts in these countries.

7.1.3 The DH had drafted a generic "returners" guide. Mrs Wiseman would forward a full set of relevant DH publications.

7.1.4 Mrs. Wiseman had confirmed that the numbers of returners were quantified by the DH; between April 2001 and September 2003 there were 1209 returners across all allied health professions. Mrs. Wiseman did point out that some returners arranged their return to practice by contacting their former place of work or former colleagues and obtained a placement that way; in such cases these figures would not be recorded by the DH.

7.1.5 Mrs. Wiseman said that the Workforce Development Confederations or Strategic Health Authorities had previously provided the funding. However, for the year 2004-2005 no money had been ring-fenced. Therefore, the money would need to come out of that allocated to the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs).

7.1.6 Those seeking to return to practice were entitled to £1000 and assistance with childcare costs, books, travel and course fees. Mrs. Wiseman said that returners to practice could obtain information about funding from a variety of sources: (a) the DH guidelines; (b) Professional bodies; (c) their local Workforce Development Confederation (WDC); (d) their local Primary Care Trust.

7.1.8 Mrs.Wiseman said that the professional bodies were best placed to advise returners of the nearest and most suitable place to get academic training.

7.1.9 Mrs. Wiseman confirmed that there was no financial assistance for returners seeking to return to private practice. However, the DH was funding a "Returners Campaign" which was being run by the South West London WDC.

7.2.0 The Secretary reported that she and Mrs. Wiseman had discussed the issue of returners finding a suitable placement where they could undertake their period of supervised practice. The Secretary had pointed out that guidance notes had been prepared for use by supervisors. These notes might have to be revised to incorporate issues raised and questions asked once the HPC introduced the return to practice requirements.

7.2.1 It was agreed that the Secretary would contact Mrs. Wiseman's counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in order to confirm what measures they had in place to deal with those seeking to return to practice.

7.2.2 The IT director discussed the impact of the return to practice requirements on the HPC's computer system; in particular how relevant information on additional study undertaken by returners could be captured on the system. It was agreed that the following would be the relevant categories:

(a) Private study
(b) Return to practice courses run by professional bodies
(c) Return to practice courses run by educational institutions
(d) Return to practice courses run by employers of registrants
(e) Return to practice courses run by independent providers
(f) Relevant modules or elements currently included in programmes run by educational institutions

7.2.3 After discussion the Committee agreed that the validity of the signed "Form of Satisfactory Completion of Supervised Practice" would not extend beyond the periods out of practice previously laid down by the Committee; so that, for example, in a case where a returner to practice had completed a period of supervised practice but following that had not returned to practice for more than two years, then the stipulated requirements for the relevant periods out of practice would still have to be met.

ACTION: LP

ITEM 8 HEALTH AND DISABILITY SEMINAR

8.1 The Committee noted that the seminar had provided a forum in which to raise a variety of issues. The Chief Executive confirmed that there would be much work to be done and the project would be a long-term one rather than one which would be finished in the next few months.

8.1.1 The executive had prepared a draft framework for use on the day; this would be revised in the light of discussions held on the day.

8.1.2 It was agreed that the Secretary would send copies of the initial draft document to Committee members. A copy of the revised document would also be provided for discussion and for the Committee to ascertain the issues for its attention.

ACTION: LP

ITEM 9 MINUTES OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2004

9.1 The Committee noted these.

ITEM 10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 There was no other business.

ITEM 11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

11.1 The next meeting would be held on Friday 14 May 2004 at 10 a.m.

11.1.1 Further meetings would be held on the following dates:

Tuesday 20 July 2004
Monday 13 September 2004
Thursday 4 November 2004

The Secretary agreed to confirm the date of the first meeting in 2005.

CHAIRMAN