

GDC Press Release

30 October 2006

GDC asks whether all Council Members should be appointed

The General Dental Council (GDC) is calling for views on the shape of its Council following the introduction of statutory registration for dental nurses, technicians and other dental care professionals (DCPs).

The constitution of the Council was last reformed in 2001 to make the Council more strategic, open, accountable and responsive. The Council currently has 29 members. 15 are dentists, four are dental hygienists and/or therapists and 10 are members of the public. Members hold office for five years and can apply for election (dental professional members) or appointment (lay members) as many times as they wish.

In March 2006 the GDC set up a review group to consider how the constitution of the Council should change. This would take account of significant changes, including the fact that dentists would no longer be the largest group of registrants.

The group has proposed an amended constitution for the Council and is now asking for the views of the public, dental professionals, Government, healthcare providers and others on three key areas.

- Should all Council members be appointed?

The dental professional members of the Council are currently elected by other registered dental professionals. The review group recommends that all members of Council should be appointed by the Appointments Commission. An appointments system for all categories of member will help ensure the Council has the best possible range of skills to carry out its business and will also help to clarify that the role of dental professional members in the Council is not to represent those who voted for them.

- Does the President of the GDC need to be a dentist?

Under the current constitution the President is elected by the Council but must be one of the dentist members. The review group recommends that in the future the Council can elect any of its members to be President.

- How should the composition of Council be made up in the future?

The Dentists Act requires the dentist members of Council to have a majority of one over the other members. Currently there are 15 dentist members, 10 lay members, and four DCPs. By 2008, when registration for all DCP groups will be compulsory, it is unlikely that dentists will still be the largest group of registrants. Therefore the group has asked several questions to try to ensure a fair way forward.

The review group recommends that as the GDC is a professionally-led organisation, the registrant members on Council should be in the majority.

GDC President Hew Mathewson said:

“The GDC is keen to ensure that the views of all dental professionals are taken into consideration when setting the strategic direction of the GDC and overseeing the planned work programme.

“I encourage all interested parties to visit our website for details of the consultation and to share their views, and any concerns, with us.”

The consultation document is available on the GDC website at <http://www.gdc-uk.org/News+publications+and+events/Consultations/A+consultation+paper+with+proposals+for+a+new+constitution.htm>

The closing date for responses is 18 January 2007.

Ends

For media enquiries, please contact Alexander Wells on 020 7009 2746.

Notes to Editors

1. The consultation document on ‘The shape of the General Dental Council following the registration of the new groups of Dental Care Professionals’ can be downloaded from the GDC website at <http://www.gdc-uk.org/News+publications+and+events/Consultations/A+consultation+paper+with+proposals+for+a+new+constitution.htm>
For a hard copy of the consultation document, or more information on the review please email mthomas@gdc-uk.org or telephone 020 7887 3846.

2. The Council has 29 members:
 - 15 dentists (elected by other dentists)
 - 11 are elected from the constituency of England, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands
 - 2 are elected from the constituency of Scotland
 - 1 is elected from the constituency of Wales
 - 1 is elected from the constituency of Northern Ireland
 - 4 dental hygienists and therapists (elected by other hygienists and therapists)
 - 10 members of the public (originally appointed by the Queen, but this role was delegated to the NHS Appointments Commission in 2005)

The four Chief Dental Officers for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are associate members, which means they do not have voting rights.

3. Registration for dental nurses and technicians will become compulsory on 31 July 2008. However, the GDC is encouraging dental nurses and technicians to

join the register during the two-year transition period, which will enable dental nurses and technicians who have been working in their role for a number of years to join the register on the basis of validated experience. Dental nurses and technicians joining the register after 30 July 2008 will need to have a GDC-recognised qualification.

4. Registration for two additional groups - clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists – is now compulsory. This is because these professions are being recognised for the first time in the UK. Professionals wishing to register within these groups will need to have undertaken a GDC-recognised training course.
5. In July 2006 the Department of Health in England produced two reports on the regulation of healthcare professionals. These reports are currently out for consultation on a UK-wide basis. The Council is considering the findings of the two reviews and will be responding to the consultation in due course.