

**MINUTES OF THE EIGHTH MEETING OF THE  
GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2004, AT  
EUROPA HOTEL, BELFAST.**

**Present:**

Mr Ivan Arbuthnot	Ms Monica Cummings
Mr John Colgan	Mr Ray McGuigan
Mrs Jeannette Chapman (Vice-Chair)	Dr Marie Murphy
Mrs Frances Donnelly	Professor John Gardener
Mr David Oldfield	Mr Eddie Ferguson
Mr Alistair Orr	Ms Maria Graham
Mrs Thea Patton	Mr Dominic McElholm
Ms Teresa Graham	Mrs Sally McKee
Rev Dr Derek Poots	Mr Alan Longman
Mr Patrick Kinney	Mrs La'Verne Montgomery
Dr Robert Rodgers (Chair)	Mr Tony Lappin
Mr Peter Scott	Mr Paddy McAllister
Mrs Grace Trimble	Very Reverend John Walsh

**In Attendance:**

- Mr Eddie McArdle (Registrar)
- Mr Barney Ball (Policy & Registration Manager)
- Mr Gerard Devlin (Senior Education Officer)
- Ms Yvonne McCool (Corporate Services Manager)
- Dr Dean Robson (GTC Scotland)
- Mr Paul Sloan (DE)
- Ms Geraldine Garnett-Frizelle (Minute Secretary)
- Ms Debbie Law (Minute Secretary)

**Apologies:**

- Mrs Mary Elizabeth Devine
- Dr Desmond Hamilton
- Ms Aedín Ní Ghadhra
- Mr Richard Egan
- Mr Philip Sheerin
- Mr Gordon Topping
- Mr Ian McInnes
- Mr Ron Armstrong (DE)
- Mr Vivian McIver (DEL)

Apologies were noted.

The Chair welcomed Members to the eighth meeting of Council and introduced and welcomed to the meeting Dr Dean Robson, Research Fellow of the General Teaching Council for Scotland; Mr Paul Sloan, Department of Education and Mr Gerard Devlin, newly appointed Senior Education Officer of GTCNI.

## **2. Minutes of the Council Meeting 24<sup>th</sup> March 2004 (GTC/04/Min7)**

The minutes were approved by Council with the Chair asking for an amendment to be made to a typographical error on page 5.

## **3. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **4. Chair's Business**

- 4.1 The Chair reported that both he and the Registrar had been in attendance at the Ulster Teachers' Union conference which took place on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2003 in Newcastle.
- 4.2. The Chair also informed members that the DE/DEL Teacher Education Conference had taken place in the Wellington Park Hotel, Belfast on 6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> May, at which both he and the Vice-Chair presented reports on the GTCNI Working Groups to conference delegates. Mr Ferguson, who attended the conference, congratulated the Chair and Vice-Chair on their presentations, which had been well received by the audience. The Chair commented that he felt the conference had been beneficial and he had found the presentation by Professor Tim Brighouse, Commissioner for London Schools very useful. This examined the 5 elements of a change model (Vision: Skills: Incentive: Resources: Action Plan) which could be applied in educational circumstances.
- 4.3. It was noted that several members of Council, as well as the Registrar, Policy and Registration Manager and the Corporate Services Manager had attended a seminar on Teacher Professionalism, held in partnership with RTU on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004. There was a presentation by Dr Marilyn Cochran-Smith of Boston College, which had been both interesting and informative.
- 4.4. The Chair updated members regarding a meeting held at the Institute of Education in London with Professor Geoff Whitty regarding the work of the Review Groups. Both the Registrar and the Chair found the meeting to be very useful and looked forward to working with the Professor in the future.
- 4.5. Members were notified that the Chair would be representing the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland on a Strategic Advisory Board to the Costello Report.
- 4.6. The Chair informed Council of the resignation of two of their fellow members from the Council. Both Professor John Gardner and Dr Desmond Hamilton would be stepping down. The Registrar thanked Professor Gardner and Dr Hamilton for their contribution to the work of Council.

## **5. Officers' Business**

- 5.1 The Registrar informed members that he had attended the ATL conference since the last meeting of Council.

## **6. Consultation on Suspension & Expulsion (GTC8/04/P1)**

The Registrar introduced this paper and drew members attention to a number of issues, such as the absence of classroom practitioners on the drafting group for the original document and the implications of this in terms of perspective and understanding of the social dynamic pertaining within schools. He also noted the absence of a detailed philosophical backdrop to the proposals, the concerns regarding the reliability of the data and the absence of a “universal” scheme for Suspension and Expulsion.

The Council, in adopting the paper, expressed concerns regarding the need for effective training, the need to strike a balance between individual rights and group rights and the issue of funding. It was agreed that a preamble to the response should encapsulate the points raised.

## **7. Consultation on SEND Order 2004 (GTC8/04/P2)**

The Registrar outlined the main features of the Special Educational Needs Order and the proposed Council response. Whilst supporting many aspects of the new legislation, Council felt that the inherent difficulty of resourcing demand driven services, from finite financial budgets, had not been made clear enough, and the Registrar agreed to amend the preamble to reflect this. In addition, members felt that mention should be made of the sterling work carried out by Special Schools in Northern Ireland and the Registrar agreed to include this sentiment within the response. Following further discussion, the Registrar was also asked whether there might be a public interest aspect to the Order which had not been addressed. The Registrar said that he would look into this and amend the response document as necessary. The response was approved by Council members subject to the aforementioned changes being made.

## **8. Modus Operandi (GTC8/04/P3)**

The Registrar introduced Paper 3 to members and informed them that, following the last Council meeting, several members had asked that the Registrar produce a guidance paper on the issue of the delegation of decision-making to Committee level, as there is no specific guidance on this matter in Standing Orders. Two solutions were proposed – the first that Council, in common with many other public bodies, continue to operate within an agreed but unwritten protocol regarding delegation to Committees. Alternatively, the Chairs of the Committees could be empowered to decide, with the agreement of the Committee, which issues should go forward to Council. After some discussion members agreed that the Council should continue to operate on the basis of an agreed but unwritten protocol.

In addition, the Registrar indicated that an “extranet” was currently being developed for the Council’s website and this facility will enable all Council Members to access all Committee papers “online”. Members agreed that the introduction of an “extranet” for Council Members was a good idea and the Policy and Registration Manager informed members that it was hoped this service would be available from September 2004.

## **9. Registration Update (GTC8/04/P4)**

The Policy and Registration Manager presented this paper to members and expressed his thanks to all those who were involved with the initial establishment of the registration

database, in particular Michael Smyth of the Department of Education, for their help and support.

Members were provided with a printout of the main database screens which show the key input fields incorporated into the database. The Policy and Registration Manager continued by updating members on the progress of the database project and drew members attention to issues regarding the graduate upload and further data transfer and cleansing. An initial mailing to teachers, which included a letter from the Chairman, an article by the Registrar on the work of the Council and the Corporate Plan, had already been despatched. It was planned to send out a second mailing, containing teacher records with a request to amend the details if required, towards the end of August.

Paul Sloan (DENI) provided members with an update from the Department of Education on a number of issues:

- He notified members that due to continuing industrial action there would be a delay on the Department's part, with data verification and the graduate upload process. The graduate upload will be further delayed as new software still has to be developed to deal with this task.
- The draft regulations for fee deduction went to the Department of Education's solicitors on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2004 and a meeting has been arranged for them and representatives of DE on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2004. It is hoped that these new regulations will be in place towards the end of September/early October.
- Mr Sloan also informed members that DE had agreed to meet GTCNI's costs and was currently working on resolving the issue of getting funding to cover teachers' fees.

Members voiced concerns regarding the timing of the deduction of the fee; if the deduction does not run to schedule there is a danger of deducting two fees in one academic year and this could exacerbate a difficult situation.

## **10. Management of Professional Development (GTC8/04/P5)**

The Registrar notified members of the changes made to the paper since the last meeting of Council and informed them that a copy had been sent to the Minister.

Several members requested changes to Section 3.0 of the paper, providing more details on the roles of CASS, RTU and the ELBs. The Registrar noted their concerns and agreed to redraft this section of the paper to reflect their comments. Frances Donnelly (NIICE) offered to assist the Registrar with the section on integrated education.

The Registrar accepted the changes and agreed to inform the Minister's office and other involved parties of the changes. This was endorsed by Council.

## **11. Revised Code of Values and Professional Practice (GTC8/04/P6a) & Report on Code of Values and Professional Practice (GTC8/04/P6b)**

Paper GTC8/04/P6a was presented to members by the Registrar who guided them through the changes which had been made to the draft Code, which included changing the title to Code of Values and Professional Practice.

The Registrar continued that an invitation had been sent to the Minister to invite him to the launch of the Code at September's Council Meeting. However, the Department have informed him that the Minister is not available on this date and therefore the date for Council will have to be reviewed. The Registrar agreed that he would send a further selection of dates to the Minister's office and endeavour to rearrange the Council meeting and launch.

Paper GTC8/04/P6b - a summary report provided to members illustrated the evolution of the Code and the positive acceptance it has received from consultees. The Registrar explained that the revised Code encapsulates comments and suggestions made by respondents. He explained that it was planned for the launch of the Code to coincide with a call for a Charter for Education. The Registrar assured members that the Charter document would be placed before the Policy Committee and in any event would be generic in nature.

The Council approved and agreed the revised Code.

## **12. Consultation on Variable Fees (GTC8/04/P7)**

The Policy and Registration Manager introduced this draft consultation response to members. Members felt the final response should make it clear that the Council was concerned that the introduction of variable fees might have a negative impact on students undertaking Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes in Northern Ireland. The draft, incorporating the changes as advised to the Policy and Registration Manager, was agreed by Council.

## **13. Committee Minutes**

### **13.1 Audit Committee (AC/04/Min4)**

The Chair of Audit agreed the minutes were an accurate record and they were approved by Council.

### **13.2 General Purposes and Finance Committee (GP&FC/04/Min10)**

Following a short discussion on issues arising in the minutes regarding remuneration of Council members the minutes were approved.

### **13.3 Policy Committee (PC/04/Min10)**

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Policy Committee, Mr Ivan Arbuthnot, Policy Committee Member, agreed that the minutes were an accurate record and they were approved by Council.

13.4 Registration Committee (RC/03/Min6)

The Chair of Registration agreed the minutes were an accurate record and they were approved by Council.

**14. Any Other Business**

Mrs McKee asked for clarification of the procedure for replacing the members of Council who resigned their positions. The Registrar informed the Council that as they had been nominated members, replacements would be nominated by their respective bodies and their names would be put before Council.

**15. Venue, Date and Time for next meeting.**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> September 2004 at 10:00 am; however this will be subject to change depending on availability of the Minister. Members will be informed of the venue nearer the time.

**Signed.....**

**Date.....**