

**MINUTES OF THE TENTH MEETING OF THE
GENERAL TEACHING COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
HELD ON FRIDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2004,
RADISSON 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	Dr Leslie Caul
Mr Eddie Ferguson (Chair)	Mr Malachy Doherty
Mr Alistair Orr	Ms Maria Graham
Mrs Thea Patton	Mr Dominic McElholm
Ms Teresa Graham	Mrs Sally McKee
Rev Dr Derek Poots	Mr Tony Lappin
Mr Paddy McAllister	Very Reverend John Walsh
Mr Philip Sheerin	Ms Aedín ní Ghadhra
Mr Richard Egan	

In Attendance:

- Mr Eddie McArdle (Registrar)
- Mr Gerard Devlin (Senior Education Officer)
- Ms Yvonne McCool (Corporate Services Manager)
- Mr Ron Armstrong (DE)
- Mr Paul Sloan (DE)
- Mr John Anderson (GTCS)
- Ms Geraldine Garnett-Frizelle (Minute Secretary)
- Ms Debbie Law (Minute Secretary)

Apologies:

- Mrs Mary Elizabeth Devine
- Mrs Grace Trimble
- Mrs La'Verne Montgomery
- Mr David Oldfield
- Mr Patrick Kinney
- Mr Gordon Topping
- Mr Alan Longman
- Mr Peter Scott
- Mr Barney Ball

1. Election Of New Chair

Following a postal ballot, Mr Eddie Ferguson was elected as the new Chairperson of the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland. The election had taken place in response to the resignation of Dr Robert Rodgers from the position of Chair in October 2004. Mr Ferguson, in his capacity as Chair praised the work Dr Rodgers had undertaken on behalf of the Council, and his commitment to the Council over the past two years. He proposed to write to Dr Rodgers on behalf of the Council, to express their gratitude and best wishes for the future. Members agreed with the proposal.

2. Apologies

Apologies were noted.

3. Council Minutes

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the last meeting, (proposed by Mr Tony Lappin and seconded by Mrs Teresa Graham).

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Chair's Business

There was no Chair's business.

6. Officers' Business

The Registrar informed members of the recent elections of Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs. The Registration Committee re-elected Mr Peter Scott as Chair and Ms Maria Graham as Vice-Chair. The General Purposes and Finance Committee elected Mr Paddy McAllister as Chair and Mr Alistair Orr as Vice-Chair. The nomination and voting process had taken place at the Committee meetings. As the Policy Committee had not been quorate at the last meeting; elections had not taken place as yet, but elections would be held at its next meeting.

7. Finance Paper – GTNCI Funding 2004/2005 (GTC10/04/P1)

The Corporate Services Manager presented this paper to members and took them through the chronological order of events. The paper illustrated, through a series of letters, e-mails and appendices, the actions which had taken place over the past year regarding the Council's bid to the Department of Education (DE) for funding. The Department had initially agreed that they would meet both the cost of the registration fee (£1,065,925) which would cover the running costs outlined in the Council's Business Plan, in addition to a subvention.

The Senior Management Team had been informed in mid-October 2004 that the Department's bid for the agreed funding had been unsuccessful and that the intended budget for GTCNI would be restricted to the aforementioned subvention. GTCNI were asked to revise the Estimates of Expenditure in light of the restrictions and the Estimates had been revised to a figure that would maintain the Council's core services. At the time of the Council meeting, Officers were waiting to hear if the Revised Estimates had been accepted.

Members expressed their concern over the lack of funding and discussed the possible implications of a restriction on the budget, including the fact that GTCNI was tasked in legislation to carry out certain functions, but would be unable to meet these legal obligations within the restricted budget. Mr Paul Sloan (DE) then took members through the events in

chronological order highlighting the efforts of DE officers in obtaining the funding from the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) and the processes that the bids for the GTCNI funding were subject to. He noted that the Revised Estimates of Expenditure, provided by Officers formed the 'contingency plan' if the budget was to be restricted. The bid had been resubmitted by DE to DFP in late November and a reply was expected early 2005.

Members asked for a meeting to be arranged, as soon as possible, with the Permanent Secretary and the Minister to raise the issue of funding. However, the Chair informed them that, as a meeting had already been arranged with the Department for 9th December to discuss all the issues, he would prefer, with Council's agreement, to wait until after that time to request a meeting with the Minister and the Permanent Secretary. The Council agreed.

The Chair thanked the Department of Education for their perseverance in attempting to secure the required funding for the GTCNI and asked that a representative from DE attend the next Council meeting to inform members of the decision on the Revised Estimates and the next steps to be taken.

8. Teacher Competences – Draft Report (GTC10/04/P2)

The Registrar presented this paper to members. As a backdrop, he informed them that, in addition to the Councils review of competence a report on Induction and EPD was being undertaken by the Education and Training Inspectorate and this was due to be published in March 2005. It was expected to indicate that, although Induction works well, EPD is more problematic. This finding mirrored the findings of a small, cohort study undertaken by the Council's Senior Education Officer, in which teachers reported that their experiences of EPD was very variable and depended on individual schools and the context in which they were working. Members expressed their concern about students' variable experience and the Registrar indicated that recommendation 6 of the report highlighted this issue.

He also informed members that he had just received a confidential copy of the report by CCEA on the potential impact of the review of curriculum and assessment on teacher education, which they had undertaken at the request of the Department of Education. The implications of this report were that, as the review of curriculum and assessment will have significant implications for the initial education of teachers, there will need to be some re-consideration of content and structure of both BEDs and PGCE courses.

Members went on to discuss the recommendations and felt that the resource implications of implementing them needed to be reiterated within the document, so that the Department of Education were clear about the need for adequate and consistent funding. The Registrar undertook to look at this.

9. Continuing Professional Development – Draft Report (GTC10/04/P3)

The Registrar presented this paper to members. Members discussed the recommendations and felt that perhaps a Vision section in the report would help to clarify GTCNI's position. They also felt that some further clarification was necessary regarding the resourcing of CPD. The Registrar undertook to attempt a clarification of the position. As with the previous paper, members felt that the resourcing implications needed to be clearly laid out in the document, in particular those relating to guaranteed time for teachers to undertake CPD and funding of courses.

The Registrar agreed to look at both reports again and bring them to the next meeting of the Policy Committee early in January, before the Council meeting of 17th January 2005. Members thanked officers for their work on these reports.

10. Response to Consultation on Proposal for Draft Order in Council – The Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (GTC10/04/P4)

Gerry Devlin, Senior Education Officer led members through the response to the consultation on the Higher Education (Northern Ireland) Order 2005. He informed them that he had based this document on the Council’s response to the DELNI consultation on “Proposals to Introduce Variable Deferred Fees” (June 2004). He said that, historically, students in Northern Ireland incurred significant debts because of a lack of funding and members added that other factors, including the fact that some courses took longer to complete in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK, contributed to this situation. Council noted that the response included a reference to the impact of student debt on student teachers’ completion of Induction and EPD. Members thanked officers for their work on this.

11. Committee Minutes

Registration Committee (RC/04/Min8)

In the absence of the Chair of this Committee, the minutes were presented to Council by Dr Poots as an accurate record of the meeting.

General Purposes and Finance Committee (GPFC/04/Min11)

The minutes were presented by the new Chair and approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

12. Any Other Business

Mr Ray McGuigan asked whether it would be possible for some meetings of both the Council and Committees to be scheduled for late afternoon to accommodate members who are occasionally unable to attend meetings due to work commitments. Members discussed various options and the point was made that changing the time to the afternoon could also cause problems for members with family commitments. Dr Murphy proposed that a decision regarding the starting time of meetings should be down to the discretion of each Committee and this was seconded by Ms Cummings. The Chair added that, as all members had entered the Council on a four-year term of office, the timing of the full Council Meeting would remain the same until the end of that term.

13. Venue, Date and Time for Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Council will take place on Thursday, 10th March 2005. However, an extraordinary meeting of the Council will take place on Monday 17th January 2005 at 10:00 am in the Radisson Roe Hotel, Limavady. This meeting has been scheduled to discuss the report on the Reviews of Continuing Professional Development and Teacher Competences.

Signature.....

Date.....