

Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)

Faculty future – a consultation

Introduction

1. Since October 2009 the Faculty Board have been considering options relating to the future organisation of the Faculty. The October 2009 edition of *First-Hand* described this work.
2. This was prompted by a request from John Black, the College President, for the Faculty to consider its organisational relationship with the Royal College of Surgeons of England (the College). The Faculty has been semi autonomous within the College and has its own organisational structure. For example, the Faculty has its own dedicated departments looking after functions such as education, examinations, membership, finance, research and publications.

Background

3. The College as a whole wishes to ensure that it is operating in the most efficient way possible. As a part of the College, one organisational model could be for Faculty services to be delivered from within their College counterparts, rather than maintaining the Faculty's separate departments.
4. Against this, the Board has had to consider whether this could lead to some loss of autonomy, or dilution of the existing organisational focus on primary dental care.
5. The alternative to confirming the Faculty's status as a part of the College would be for the Faculty to state its intent to become an independent charity within 5 years. In this set of circumstances the Faculty would retain its own organisational structure
6. The purpose of this short paper is to seek the views of members on the provisional view of the Board, reached on the basis of the work of a number of sub groups as described in the October 2009 edition of *First-Hand*.

Discussion

7. The key issues identified by the Board are:

Governance and independence

8. Although there may be a concern about loss of independence if supporting departments are merged with College counterparts, the Faculty would retain its existing elected Faculty Board. There would therefore be no change to the existing governance arrangements. The Board would continue to agree strategy and policy with accountability to College Council as now

The Faculty's position within the College would likely to be enhanced with full membership of College Council, which is not the case at present.

Organisational autonomy

9. The question of loss of independence relates to organisational autonomy. The Faculty would be guided by the College on how staffing is organised so as to deliver services. The case for the merger of departments would be tested. If economies of scale could be achieved mergers would go ahead and these would benefit both the Faculty and the College. If there were no demonstrable economies of scale then it is likely that the merger of departments would not be pursued.

10. In some ways this may be an academic question for Faculty members. As long as services are provided efficiently that may be the primary concern.

11. The fear would be that the Faculty's work might not receive the same priority when competing for time alongside wider College services. Clear agreements would need to be put in place to ensure that this was not the case.

The possibility of an independent charity

12. The alternative to becoming more integrated with the College would be for the Faculty to become an independent charity within a five year time frame. This would in all probability still involve a base for the Faculty at the College, although on a more commercial rent than at present.

13. The creation of an independent charity would enable the Faculty to retain its own organisational autonomy.

14. The disadvantages to this course of action that have been uppermost in the thinking of the Board have been:

a. College brand

If the Faculty were to become an independent charity the Faculty would lose the right to use the Royal College of Surgeons of England brand.

The judgement of the Board is that the College brand is important to our members and also important in the marketing of courses, training and Diplomas.

b. Finance and membership

The Faculty Board are mindful of the achievements of the Faculty since its inception. They are also aware that it has some way to go in terms of securing a greater number of general dental practitioners and dental care professionals as members. Membership numbers are growing but

they are not a large enough proportion to be representative of all general dental practice.

The Board would also like to see a greater financial surplus being generated each year. At present overall reserves stand at £1m. For the financial year 2009/10 the Faculty generated a surplus of 147,000, around 3.4% of turnover.

In view of finances that are healthy but not as robust as the Board would wish, the Board sees advantages of staying within the security of a larger organisation

c. College of Dentistry

The Faculty has as one of its strategic objectives the creation of a College of Dentistry. Acknowledging that this may be unlikely in the short term, the Board feel that the Faculty may be better positioned to build on existing collaborative projects such as the MJDF examination whilst being a part of the Royal College of Surgeons rather than being separate from it.

Conclusion

15. Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of closer integration of the College, the Board in a provisional discussion in October 2010 indicated a preference for confirming status as part of the College rather than becoming an independent charity. This would therefore entail the loss of some organisational autonomy whilst retaining the governance structure of the Faculty. This would not bind the Faculty for forever, but would likely stretch for a period of up to 10 years whilst the Faculty continues to grow its resources and membership.

Process

16. The National Faculty Board as the elected governing body for the Faculty will be giving final consideration to the way forward at their meeting on 4 March 2011. Please take this opportunity to make your divisional representative on the Board aware of how you weigh the issues outlined in this paper. A reminder of divisional representation on the Board is included below along with a form to provide your views.

17. Divisional representatives on the Board will receive all comments from their divisions, and a summary of comments received will be produced for the Board discussion.

18. Comments should be received by Wednesday 23 February 2011

Russ Ladwa
Dean
17 January 2011

Ian Pocock
Registrar

Divisional Board Representatives

Vernon Holt	East Anglia division
Ario Santini	East of Scotland division
Promodh Datta	North East Thames division
Peter Knops	Northern division
Pearce Stinson	Northern Ireland division
Crawford Gray	North of Scotland division
Nikolaus Palmer	Mersey division
Raj Majithia	North West Thames division
Peter Wilkins	Oxford division
Lawrence Mudford	South East Thames division
Simon Quentin Jones	South Wales division
Richard Snoad	South West Thames division
Christopher James	South Western division
Andrew Toy	Trent division
Hannah Jones	West Midlands division
Michael Thomas	Wessex division
Charles Ormond	West of Scotland division
Stephen Byfield	Yorkshire division
Trevor Ferguson	North Wales division
Ian Wood	North Western division
Vacancy	Central London division (comments from Central London division will be drawn to the attention of the Dean)