

**MINUTES OF THE OPEN MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BOARD**  
Held on Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup> at the British Acupuncture Council  
63 Jeddo Road, London, W12 9HQ

**GB Directors present:**

Philip Rose-Neil (PRN) – Chair  
Anthony Lock (AL) – Lay  
Cathy Chapman (CC)  
Joanna Brown (JB) – Lay  
Pia Huber (PH)  
Rosey Grandage (RG)  
Naresh Rao (NR) – Lay

**In attendance:**

Teresa Williamson (TW) – COO  
Richard Costella (RC) – Lay Treasurer  
Jane Debois (JD) – Head of Professional Standards  
Harriet Lansdown – BAAB Lead Accreditation Officer  
Anna de Oliveira (AdO) – Leadership Support Manager (minute taker)

**Apologies:**

Rob Strange OBE (RS) – CEO  
Mike Watson (MW) - Registrar

**1. Introductions and apologies**

All attendees introduced themselves and apologies were made on behalf of Rob Strange OBE, the CEO, and Michael Watson, the Registrar.

It was noted that Professor Mary Lovegrove OBE has resigned from the Governing Board to follow other interests. PRN gave sincere thanks for the time she served on the Board.

All participants agreed the agenda.

**2. Open minutes and matters arising**

Accuracy corrections to the open minutes of 6 December 2018 (seven pages) were noted as follows:

- on pages 2 and 7 changing the initials NP to NR;

- on page 3 correcting that the College of Naturopathic Medicine (CNM) is now linked to the Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ATCM) rather than the Acupuncture Society; and
- on page 6 removing the note that Richard Costella is a chartered tax advisor.

CC requested that going forward, a separate document of action points be created, which lists all the action points and their corresponding status.

The open minutes were approved unanimously.

**Action point 1: AdO to create a record of action points document alongside the minutes for future Board meetings.**

### **3. Finance Risk and Audit Committee report**

RC presented the treasurer's report, the income and expenditure as at 31 December 2018 (Q4), and the Finance Risk and Audit Committee (FRAC) minutes.

RC reported that the first meeting of FRAC went well. He noted that the BAcC is coming in slightly better than budget and that cash flow looks good at a first glance, but FRAC would need to investigate cash flow more fully once the accounts were back from the auditors in April.

RC suggested that a more formal policy on reserves was needed, and that to do this, FRAC would set up a risk register. This would be done by first asking the chairs of committees and the Senior Management Team (SMT), in conjunction with their teams, to list their top three risks. RC reported that FRAC discussed some of its concerns around the website and database improvement projects and that TW assured FRAC that she was aware of those concerns and would be keeping FRAC fully informed as the two projects progressed.

The proposed new reduced fees for semi-retiring members' policy was also discussed by FRAC and it was agreed that this item would be discussed more fully under agenda item 5 the Membership and Services Committee (MSC) report. RC highlighted that a work plan with targets for the next three FRAC meetings was established as was the need to review and set up a number of finance-related policies. RC reminded the Board he would be reporting back to them on a quarterly basis and asked if the Board had any questions.

AL expressed surprise that a risk register was not already in place. AL stated that he understood a reserves policy had been agreed previously, which specified that reserves should be at least equivalent to six months of current expenditure, and that this amount would progressively increase. AL then said that given the BAcC reserves stood at £400k, representing about 15 weeks' of current expenditure, that this was insufficient as it would not see the BAcC through potential difficulties. TW agreed to check if the BAcC had a reserves policy.

There was some discussion around creating a central repository for policies that could be available to members, and would include Board level policies. It was suggested that these could be added to the Governance Handbook, and that this would increase overall transparency.

RG asked if there was a timescale for getting the risks assessed to ensure the issue was not rolled over. RC replied that the chairs of committees and SMT would be asked for their top three risks to be submitted before the next FRAC meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2019.

The Board then discussed budgeting for the conference, printing, postage and stationery and the budgeting process in general.

RG requested that the I&E report be circulated as a spread sheet or a word document, not as a PDF, so that the data could be worked with and figures adjusted. A point was made about version control. It was agreed the BAcC would accommodate RG's request.

RC noted that the BAcC clearly needs to look at the budgeting process, but again reiterated that this Board did approve the 2019 budget at the last meeting. RC also reminded the Board that last year, the BAcC came in very close to budget. RG noted that that was helped by the fact that many projects did not happen and that therefore the situation presented a false sense of security.

NR noted that the reputational risk of this continuing was considerable. PRN requested that a forensic analysis of what has gone on take place, and that this is reported to FRAC and to the Board before the next Board meeting. RC agreed to investigate and to report back on a reasonable timeframe upon which to do this. AL advised that whilst analysis of the past would be good, more urgent attention was needed on getting the 2019 budget right in terms of this year's expectations. RG commented that whilst the Board has agreed a budget, it was agreed without full knowledge and the figures will need readjusting. RC suggested that FRAC ensures the process is better next year, and that FRAC does not revise the 2019 budget given it has already been approved, but that they do an accurate forecast. It was therefore requested that FRAC reports to the Board on the status of the current budget and that it communicates to the Board timescales for when this will be done. It was also requested that an analysis of the budgeting of the last conference take place, with recommendations for putting processes in place to reduce the risk of variances. This request was noted as not as urgent as the forecasting in relation to the 2019 budget.

RC thanked the Board for the useful discussion and PRN thanked RC for taking on the role of Lay Treasurer.

**Action point 2: TW to check if a reserves policy has been written.**

**Action point 3: RC as Chair of FRAC to report to the Board on the status of the current budget (i.e. to provide a forecast)**

**Action point 4: RC to investigate and report back on the budgeting of last year's conference, with recommendations for putting processes in place for reducing the risk of variances.**

**Action point 5: TW to speak to Juliana Zipperlin, Head of Finance, about issuing the I&E report as a spread sheet or word document rather than a PDF.**

#### **4. Professional Standards and Regulatory Committee Report**

CC as chair of the Professional Standards and Regulatory Committee (PSRC) gave a verbal update on the outcome of the first meeting, which she heralded as very successful, and which was attended by 17 participants. CC noted there was a very large remit for the committee with much work to be done, so a focus on what would be possible to achieve within the year was needed. CC stated that all of the policies need reviewing and that a holding statement to the membership

would be advisable given it would not be possible to review all the policies within the year. CC expressed how positive it was to have Jasmine Uddin and Di Shimmel co-opted onto the committee and that overall there was tremendous positivity at the meeting.

CC noted that the main piece of work achieved was looking at the CPD policy. CC shared that the BAcC was not in line with its current policy on non-compliance and this was an issue for the PSA. There was a positive discussion about the auditing process of CPD returns, which is currently not in place. The PSRC agreed that from 2020, the BAcC would audit one per cent of the membership and that this would include those who had not submitted their CPD returns. CC confirmed that the BAcC would be moving away from an extremely punitive process, whilst at the same time respecting the BAcC's stance that CPD is mandatory. CC further confirmed that the process for submitting CPD returns would be streamlined, and that the CPD form would be much simpler with a self-declaration stating one had completed 30 hours plus of CPD. JD circulated examples of the proposed CPD form, noting that the online form would be kept open throughout the year and would allow members to upload images and express their learning in unique ways. The end of March deadline would be maintained as would the on-going education in enews and Acu about what constitutes CPD.

CC shared the PSRC's decision that the BAcC would be implementing the mandatory part of CPD in a supportive way, and outlined the process as follows:

- within the four week period after the deadline for submission, staff would contact members offering support and stating they have six weeks to submit their CPD;
- after that six week period, if a member still has not submitted their CPD, they will be given a letter stating they have a further four weeks to submit;
- if not submitted within the further four weeks, they will be referred to the investigation panel and notified that for the next year, they will be referred into the audit policy and will have to give evidence of their CPD.

CC noted that the additional work required to implement these proposed changes would need to be looked at as a matter of priority as the BAcC no longer had recourse to the PDLs to manage this process.

PH asked what the current figures were for those who had not yet submitted their CPD. JD confirmed that the figure stood at 394 members, which was about 10 per cent of the membership. JD noted that this was a marked improvement from the 40 per cent for this time last year. JD also shared that she will be taking a more understanding approach when contacting those members who have not submitted their CPD returns.

CC shared that JD has experienced a level of abuse from some members, as have other staff members, and that the BAcC should consider making a statement on minimal level of courtesy expected from members when addressing staff. RG asked if the BAcC has a policy in place for reporting members for verbal abuse. JD noted that a complaint could be made against a member using the Code of Professional Conduct but that this would be unlikely to happen given the potential repercussion to membership figures. JB asked if, within the staff policy, measures were in place to protect staff as the BAcC has a duty of care towards its staff. TW confirmed that the BAcC has started drafting a policy, but that it has not yet been approved, and is therefore not in the staff handbook. A number of suggestions were made, with the Board agreeing that a statement from the BAcC should be issued to members stating that abusive behaviour will not be

tolerated and will be dealt with seriously by the Board and CEO. It was also agreed that a log where staff can report abusive behaviour should be put in place, and a policy drafted to protect staff from being mistreated.

A discussion took place concerning membership disquiet and negativity surrounding a former CEO's tenure and how best to move forward from the on-going residual feelings within the membership. It was agreed that the Board would issue and sign a joint statement, which would go out on all platforms, and which would set out a clear timeline of the measures the BAcC have taken to move forward since the CEO's departure. The Board also voted, with six in favour and one abstention, that they would make themselves available for a Board to Membership meeting on the day of the AGM where members could air their grievances. The specific arrangements for this meeting would be decided in AOB at the end of the meeting.

HL shared the BAAB position on the Title of Awards. Currently, courses with a university validation offer a bachelor of science in acupuncture (BSc), and the independent accredited courses offer a Lic.Ac award or diploma of acupuncture (Dip.Ac). The latter two do not have legal standing. HL shared that the independent non-validated programmes wish to continue to use the Lic.Ac or Dip.Ac awards and have asked that the BAAB makes it clearer what that means and what its standing is so that prospective students also understand what it means. BAAB has therefore issued a new statement on its website and in its handbook making it clear that all BAAB accredited course providers offer a final award at Level 6 which represents 360 credits and which typically equates to a bachelor's degree with honours. Individual course providers may call their award a licentiate (Lic.Ac), diploma (Dip.Ac) or degree according to their circumstances. CC welcomed this very important clarification and emphasised that this was the right approach to take as all acupuncture students on BAAB accredited courses are trained to the same level, regardless of what their qualification is.

HL then discussed the efforts taking place for mutual recognition of acupuncture qualifications in the UK and the USA. HL shared that, under the auspices of Jasmine Uddin and the various acupuncture conferences and international meetings taking place in Europe, there has been a move to try to come together over education qualifications and mutual professional membership of one another's organisations. Whilst noting that this move would appear problematic in Europe given that legislation and educational standards are considerably different from country to country, there would appear to be more scope for mutual understanding for the UK with the US and Australia. HL shared that the BAAB took part in a teleconference with US representatives to explore the comparability of the competency outcomes of accredited US and UK programmes. HL concluded that once the BAAB has reached a certain point with the gap analysis, the project would be handed over to the BAcC to explore mutual understanding of professional membership. HL agreed to share the report with the Board once it was complete in six months' time. The Board expressed its appreciation for this initiative and congratulated Harriet and the BAAB for their efforts.

HL then shared with the Board the challenges resulting from the BAAB's suspension of a teaching institution following a very long process of trying to get it to meet the standards, noting that this was the first time ever in the BAAB's history that an institution had been suspended. The institution in question had the choice of asking for more time to work towards the standards, appealing against the BAAB's decision or withdrawing from the process, and it chose the latter. The result was that their acupuncture students were suddenly in an unaccredited college without the opportunity for direct membership to the BAcC upon graduation. HL expressed how the situation was compounded because the students of this institution had been encouraged to pay

all of their fees in advance, in order to receive a discount, and that the fees were not recoverable under any circumstances. This meant that it was nearly impossible for them to transfer to a BAAB accredited course. HL shared how the BAAB has made every effort to support the 50 or so students affected, and that together with TW, Natalie Johnson, and the Registrar, have developed a process and secured a bespoke fast-track route for the third year students graduating in 2019 to join the BAcC. HL further shared that the first and second year students would have to go through the full independent process for admission into the BAcC, and that the BAAB has contacted and received legal opinion from a contract lawyer with experience in education. HL expressed that the BAAB feels very uncomfortable writing to the students to share the legal opinion and has asked if the BAcC could do so on its behalf. Discussion ensued with TW noting that she would feel uncomfortable disclosing this legal opinion to the students without permission from the Board, because there are reputational issues, for example, the BAcC being potentially blamed for the suspension and/or blamed if the legal opinion was disclosed and later transpired to be inaccurate. The Board took a vote on whether the BAcC would take the BAAB's information and disclose it to the students. The motion was not carried with five votes against and two abstentions.

The Board acknowledged that this issue has constituted an enormous amount of work for HL, TW and Natalie Johnson and wanted to minute their thanks for handling a difficult situation well and getting the priorities right in terms of supporting the students in question.

PRN thanked HL for the BAAB update and wished to minute thanks to Rita Lewis who will be stepping down from chair of the BAAB later this year.

CC requested confirmation from the Board that it was happy with the draft CPD and audit policies and with the proposed CPD form, noting that there would be flexibility going forward to accommodate the strategy, if necessary. The Board commended the PSRC for their work and had no further questions.

**Action point 6: BAcC to communicate with members that the use of abusive language will be treated seriously and may lead to sanctions by the CEO and the Governing Board.**

**Action point 7: A log to be put in place in the office so BAcC staff can report abusive behaviour from members.**

**Action point 8: A policy to be drafted to protect staff from being mistreated.**

**Action point 9: The Board to issue and sign a joint statement, to go out on all platforms, which would set out a clear timeline of all the measures the BAcC have taken to move forward in the last 12 months.**

**Action point 10: To agree the particulars of the Board to Membership meeting on the day of the AGM.**

**Action point 11: HL to share her gap analysis report between UK and US education qualifications with the Board once it is completed.**

## **5. Membership Services Committee Report**

JB relayed to the Board that the Membership Services Committee (MSC) had a successful first meeting and that much like the PSRC, it felt very positive. On the formalities, the committee approved the terms of reference. JB shared that the major focus of the meeting was on the recruitment and retention of members, and that committee members felt there was not enough current understanding of what the demographics of the BAcC membership were. The committee has therefore requested a demographics analysis, based on what the current database can produce, to enable it to plan a strategy. The committee expressed interest in the membership renewals process, noting its eagerness to better understand what type of information is received, to gauge if these communications could be improved. The committee also expressed interest in how the BAcC follows-up members who decide to leave and in knowing if there was any current analysis of that process.

JB talked about the committee's interest in student services and wanting to better understand how the BAcC liaises with the colleges. The MSC has asked Natalie Johnson, the admissions and student membership manager, to attend the next meeting to give some insight into that process. Similarly, the committee has asked if Carol Clifford, the regional group co-ordinator, can share how active the regional groups are, what the levels of attendance at meetings are, and how the BAcC supports the regional groups and the volunteers who run them. Without treading on the toes of the PSRC, the MSC is also keen to better understand how CPD is facilitated and how the BAcC support s members in their CPD. To that end, it has asked Jane Debois, head of professional standards, to speak to the MSC at the next meeting. JB further noted that a number of practitioner members on the committee shared how helpful the BAcC was to them during difficult times in their careers and that they are keen to publicise this kind of help as part of the membership retention strategy. The members in question agreed to write articles for Acu, which will hopefully be printed.

In terms of international strategy, JB remarked that the MSC did not have time to look into this and carried that matter forward to the next meeting. PRN has been asked to write a position paper for the committee to consider and discuss.

JB commented that three recommendations for the Governing Body were put forward. The first concerned political lobbying, led by Robert Pettigrew, a lay member of the MSC, and a lobbyist and consultant. The MSC felt it would be a good idea to have a parliamentary event in the autumn, tied to World Acupuncture Day, and that a mapping exercise would be carried out to assess who the allies in Parliament were. JB asked the Board if, given the current financial situation, it supported such an initiative to raise awareness and build a better understanding of acupuncture at the Parliamentary level.

AL noted that similar initiatives had been discussed at previous Board meetings. It had been decided that there was not the appetite in the parliamentary agenda for such an event and that given Brexit, this was truer now than ever. RG shared that the BAcC would need to be very clear about what its position was as an organisation based on the strategy and what it would gain from such an exercise before proceeding any further. RG suggested that perhaps attention should be focused on other stakeholders such as private health companies, insurance companies and the



NHS. CC stated that consolidation was her preference, and that the BAcC should keep the focus inward-facing and getting its house in order and that next year would be a better time to focus on political lobbying. PRN suggested a level of caution around stepping away completely from any political engagement. The Board agreed that the MSC should keep a watching brief on the political scene and offer recommendations to the Board as and when required.

JB then talked about ACMAC, the association which represents the interests of acupuncturists seeking to treat patients at the same time in multi-bed clinics. JB shared that ACMAC had asked the BAcC for funding in return for some benefits for members and that the MSC decided to recommend to the Board not to make any further financial contribution to ACMAC. This was because not all ACMAC members are BAcC members and because it was felt that ACMAC would be getting more out of this arrangement than the BAcC. JB then asked the Board if the BAcC might consider bringing ACMAC into the organisation, if multi-bed clinics were important, and given the difficulties ACMAC was facing. The Board agreed that the BAcC would not make any further financial contributions to ACMAC and that as it was a totally separate organisation, it was not within the BAcC's remit to support it. It was agreed that in RS's absence, TW would talk to ACMAC about the Board's decision, and suggest to ACMAC that as the BAcC's strategic development progresses, there may be special interest groups created as well as other avenues for collaboration.

JB then shared with the Board the main aspects of TW's proposal paper to the MSC on reviewing the current semi-retiring members' fee reduction policy. The current policy gives the membership manager discretion to give certain semi-retired members a fee reduction if the membership manager believes that the member might otherwise leave the BAcC and seek insurance elsewhere while they work towards retirement if four conditions are satisfied. JB shared that currently only six members have applied for this scheme and that this is partly because the policy is not advertised. JB noted that TW presented the financial implications of the three proposals in her paper, and that the MSC agreed on proposal three. In proposal three, the reduction is changed to a flat rate reduction of fifty per cent of the non-insurance element of the fee, and there is no longer a period after which you can no longer claim the reduction. The eligibility criteria are:

- 15 years' full membership;
- seeing fewer than six patients a week; and
- the member is expected to give something back to the profession, perhaps in the form of being a mentor or by taking student observers.

JB asked the Board if the MSC could proceed with proposal three as a proper endorsed policy.

RC stated that the FRAC committee had also discussed the policy and agreed that proposal three was the best option as, broadly-speaking, it would be cost neutral in terms of its financial implications.

After some discussion, the Board agreed to endorse proposal three as policy, with a few slight revisions as set out below.

- There will no longer be any requirement in relation to length of membership.
- The age criterion is set at 70 years.
- The number of patients seen per week is on average a maximum of six patients per week.



- It was also decided that the element of giving back to the profession would not be mandatory.

It was made very clear by the Board that the policy must be open and transparent. The wording agreed to accompany the policy was: "This reduced rate has been developed for individuals who have been long-standing members of the BAaC, who are over the age of 70 years, and are reducing their practice to an average maximum of six patients per week."

JB thanked the Board for the decision and no further questions were asked.

**Action point 12: the MSC is to keep a watching brief on the political scene and to offer recommendations to the Board as and when required.**

**Action point 13: TW to inform ACMAC that the BAaC cannot make any further financial contributions, but that there may be scope for collaboration once the strategy is finalised.**

End of Open Meeting

Draft minutes prepared by Anna de Oliveira  
Reviewed by Teresa Williamson on May 28<sup>th</sup> 2019  
Approved by the Board on June 18<sup>th</sup> 2019

Next Board meeting scheduled for Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am, at 63 Jeddo Road.



Signed Philip Rose-Neil (Board chair)

Date: June 18<sup>th</sup> 2019