

CONSTITUTION FOR THE HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS GROUP OF THE SOCIETY FOR ACADEMIC PRIMARY CARE

Name

1. The group shall comprise the heads of departments of general practice and primary care in medical schools in the UK and Ireland; hereinafter referred to as the HODS group.

Context

2. In general HODS (as HODS, rather than as individual academics) are mainly involved in the following tasks.
 - Managing the resources of university departments
 - Building academic capacity, including support for individual academic careers
 - Promoting the role of academic general practice and primary care within medical schools
 - Leading local programmes of high quality, mainly undergraduate, but also postgraduate education in general practice and primary care
 - Leading local, national and international programmes of high quality research and development in general practice and primary care
 - Linking with NHS general practice and primary care, mainly via local education and research networks

Many of these tasks are not exclusive to HODS and not all HODs will have responsibilities for all these functions. Some primary care academics, for example are involved in promoting undergraduate and postgraduate education within departments of medical education. However, HODS are the only group whose purpose is to provide leadership in integrating these activities and thus, supporting the development of general practice and primary care, from university centres.

Although all HODS are engaged in this task, local circumstances, strengths, interests, resources and opportunities vary enormously.

Definitions

3. A Department shall be considered as any University-based grouping of academic staff, formally or informally recognised within their institution, concerned with the provision of academic support for general practice and primary care, as described in section 2 above.
4. A Head of Department shall be considered as the person who is recognised locally, formally or informally, as having lead responsibility for the activities described in Section 2 above.

Where educational activities take place on more than one site, the HOD function shall be confined to the University that is responsible for the award of relevant degrees.

Each University shall be represented on the group by one person, to be agreed locally. Exceptionally, a second representative may be co-opted, without voting rights: for example, when a department, or its equivalent, operates from more than one site or where two departments have merged.

Aims

5. The aim of the HODS group is
 - support the development of general practice and primary care via university centres of excellence in research and education.

Objectives

6. Specific objectives of the HODS Group include :-
 - To provide academic support for the generalist clinical function
 - To promote multidisciplinary university centres of excellence in research and education for general practice and primary care
 - To integrate university centres within broader networks for education, research and service development in general practice and primary care
 - To influence national policies concerning academic medicine and academic general practice and primary care
 - To provide mutual support for heads of department

Activities

7. The activities of the HODS group shall comprise :-
 - sharing information and experience
 - co-ordinating reviews and the development of policy advice
 - responding to requests for advice and comment
 - advising other bodies on matters affecting university centres of general practice and primary care

The group works as a confederation of individuals with common responsibilities in different university contexts. The group may agree particular positions and policies on matters affecting academic general practice and primary care but decisions of the group are not binding in relation to the discharge of local responsibilities

Membership

8. Membership of the HODS group shall be open to all heads of departments of general practice and/or primary care in the UK and Ireland, as defined in sections 2-4 above.

There shall be two categories of membership :-

- A. Heads of department meeting the criteria in sections 2-4, including commitments to both research and undergraduate education for general practice and primary care in medical schools in the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- B. Members co-opted at the discretion of the group

Membership shall be granted by invitation of the group or by direct application to the Secretary, based on a written statement confirming eligibility according to the criteria in sections 2-4.

Applications for membership shall be considered by the HODS group as part of the business of an ordinary meeting and decided, if necessary, by a majority vote of eligible members.

Eligibility to vote

9. On the rare occasions when decisions of the Group require a vote, such as applications for membership and the election of office-bearers, eligibility to vote shall be confined to category A members.

Decisions shall normally be taken on the basis of a simple majority, except in the case of changes to the constitution which shall require the support of two thirds of all members who are eligible to vote.

Subscription

10. All members, irrespective of category, attending meetings of the Group and receiving minutes of the meetings shall be required to pay an annual subscription (£150 for 2014) prior to the July meeting of the HODS group

The annual subscription shall be used to cover administrative costs and the costs of the Chair and Secretary. Any balance at the end of the year shall be used to defray the cost of a HODS meeting.

Quorum

11. A quorum for business requiring a vote shall require 50% of category A members.

Attendance at meetings

12. When a Head of Department cannot attend a meeting of the group, a deputy may attend instead. Guests may only be admitted by invitation or by prior agreement with the Chair.

Office bearers

13. The office bearers shall be members in category A and comprise :-

- A chair elected by single transferable vote for a term of three years
- A secretary elected by single transferable for a term of three years.

An election shall generally take place for either post in rotation at intervals of 18 months, to allow for overlapping periods of office.

Nominations should be submitted to the Chairperson at least four weeks prior to a meeting of the group, to allow a postal vote of members prior to the meeting.

Exceptionally, at the request of a majority of members in category A, an office bearer may continue for an additional year in office.

Meetings

14. The group shall normally meet twice a year, and at other times as required.

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