

# FACULTY OF FORENSIC & LEGAL MEDICINE

of the Royal College of Physicians of London



Registered Charity No 1119599

## Registrar's Report for 2011 -2012

### Board Meetings

The Board met throughout the Faculty's sixth year on

1. 3 October 2011.
2. 30 January 2012.
3. 16<sup>th</sup> April 2012.

The Minutes of these meetings are available on the website to give an indication of the discussion that took place. The Minutes are both full and accurate with only limited redaction on sensitive issues. This reflects the Board's wish to be open and transparent, thereby partly fulfilling its obligation to the public as a registered charity.

The amendment to the Standing Orders at the last AGM were:

*The Board may elect as Members persons from the following categories:*

*2.2.1 (by examination)*

*2.2.2 Medically qualified coroners who are judged by the Fellowship Committee to hold a relevant postgraduate qualification and who have made a notable contribution to Forensic and Legal Medicine through practice, research or training.*

*2.2.3 Forensic pathologists who are judged by the Fellowship Committee to hold a relevant postgraduate qualification and who have made a notable contribution to Forensic and Legal Medicine through practice, research or training.*

Two coroners and 14 forensic pathologists have thus far been accepted as Members via these equivalent qualification clauses.

Further amendments to the Standing Orders are proposed at this AGM to widen the membership base to include forensic psychiatrist and tribunal doctors.

## Attendance

Board Meetings			
	03/10/2011	30/01/2012	16/04/2012
Dr George Fernie	1	1	1
Dr Peter Schutte	1	1	1
Dr J Victoria Evans	1	1	1
Dr Michael Devlin	0	1	1
Dr Nicholas Clements	1	1	1
Dr Catherine White	1	1	1
Dr Andrew Reid	1	0	0
Dr Anthea Martin	1	0	1
Professor Richard Shepherd	1	1	1
Professor John Farnan	0	1	1
Professor Peter Vanezis	0	1	0
Professor Ian Wall	1	1	1
Dr Will Anderson	n/a	1	0
Dr Michael Robertson	1	1	1
Mr Phil Willan	1	1	1
Mr Clive Constable	1	0	1
Dr Patrick Cadigan	0	0	0

(co-opted in Jan 2012)

Revalidation Committee		
	30Sep11	16Dec11
Dr Nicholas Clements (Chair)	1	1
Dr George Fernie	1	0
Dr Matthew Lee	1	1
Dr Catherine White	1	1
Dr J Victoria Evans	1	1
Professor Dick Shepherd	1	1
Dr Andrew Reid	1	0
Dr Peter Schutte	1	0
Dr Neil Margerison	0	0
Dr Sandy Fielding	0	0

Fellowship Committee	
	Nov-11
Dr George Fernie	Nov-11
Dr Peter Schutte	1
Dr Julia Neild	1
Dr Nick Clements	1
Dr Roy Palmer	1
Dr Vicky Evans	1
Dr Cath White	1
Dr Andrew Reid	0
Dr Jeremy Smart	1

Academic Committee			
	Sep-11	Jan-12	Apr-12
Dr Vicky Evans	1	1	1
Dr Deborah Hodes		1	0
Dr Nick Clements	1	1	0
Jo Delaforce	0	1	0
Dr Michael Devlin	1	0	0
Dr George Fernie	1	1	1
Dr Andy Dott	0	0	
Dr Jason Payne-James	0	1	1
Dr Andrew Reid	1	1	0
Dr Bernadette Butler	0	1	0
Dr Peter Schütte	1	1	0
Prof Paul Marks		1	0
Prof Ian Wall	1	1	1
Dr Will Anderson	1	0	1
Dr Cath White	1	1	1
Mr Jerry Randle	0	1	n/a
Margaret Stark	0	0	1

Fellowship Committee	
Dr George Fernie	Nov-11
Dr Peter Schutte	1
Dr Julia Neild	1
Dr Nick Clements	1
Dr Roy Palmer	1
Dr Vicky Evans	1
Dr Cath White	1
Dr Andrew Reid	0
Dr Jeremy Smart	1

1 = present

0 = apologies

blank = no contact

## Board Elections

Prof Peter Vanezis came to the end of his term as an ordinary member of the Board. He has given excellent service to the FFLM and was instrumental in setting up the Diploma in Human Forensic Identification.

Five candidates stood for election to the vacancy. The first round count of votes was remarkably evenly spread amongst the candidates. The count had to go to the final round of counting, and Dr Sarah Redvers won by a small margin.

Dr Will Anderson was co-opted to the Board as Conference Organiser.

## **Promotion of forensic and legal medicine**

The FFLM will:

- Continue to work with Government to raise the profile of forensic and legal medicine and to contribute to and develop new policy
- Seek opportunities to promote the specialty to medical undergraduates
- Seek opportunities for sharing educational and good practice work with colleagues overseas
- Seek to publish articles to promote forensic and legal medicine awareness
- Seek to improve communications and press coverage
- Develop marketing and promotional literature

## **Education and training**

- Implement Faculty specialist examinations successfully and continue to refined these
- Maintain good communication links with the GMC and Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (AOMRC)
- Maintain Introductory Training Course for Forensic Physicians & Healthcare Professionals
- Maintain Development Training Courses
- Maintain e-learning course with Ulster University for membership examination
- Maintain and review faculty educational documents
- Maintain and support Forensic Science Committee
- Update Forensic Sampling guidance every 6 months
- Maintain a Research sub-committee
- Run an Annual Conference
- Produce new or updated guidance as appropriate

## **Professional development and standards**

- Respond to GMC consultation documents
- Contribute to associated work of other bodies such as the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Maintain Faculty CPD scheme including manual process for accreditation of courses relevant to Faculty members
- Promote guidance for Faculty members on CPD
- Promote participation in Continuing Professional Development
- Encourage members to recognise that CPD participation is becoming mandatory
- Review effectiveness of CPD scheme with feedback from Faculty members
- Maintain appraiser training courses
- Maintain Faculty appraisal service
- Monitor developments in relation to revalidation
- Continue to build on work to develop curriculum
- Participate in GMC credentialing pilot with hope of achieving specialist status through this mechanism - see appended report
- Promote Fellowship nomination procedure
- Continue to revise the Faculty examination
- Maintain Faculty CPD web-based on-line scheme
- Evolve guidance for Faculty members on CPD based on GMC requirements

## **Governance, Resources and Internal Matters**

- Present audited accounts to Board and AGM
- Present budget forecast
- Review standard of service provided by current auditors
- Review standard of service provided by C Hoare & Co
- Review the Standing Orders and Governance Regulations to ensure they are fit for purpose
- Review staffing and resources
- Develop in house policies and procedures
- Review faculty document management system
- Continue development of Faculty website

## **Revalidation**

The Revalidation committee has met twice since the last AGM and communicated by email. The three main MDOs have applied to become designated bodies, and this will allow the majority of MLAs to relate to their Responsible Officer within the organisation which employs them. Discussions about the FFLM becoming a designated body are still underway.

Dr Matthew Lee chairs the CPD sub-committee. The other members are: Dr Peter Dean, Dr Bill Dolman, Dr Angela Bramley, Dr Anthea Martin, Dr Tim Palmer, Dr Tom O’Gorman and Dr Jenny Holmes.

The Faculty is submitting a bid to the AOMRC via the RCP for funding for the training of specialty advisers who will be an integral part of the revalidation process. Specialty advice will be offered to the FFLM membership, and outside the membership, to Appraisers and Responsible Officers. This service is being co-ordinated by the AOMRC and all medical Royal Colleges and Faculties are taking part.

The following are being appointed as FFLM specialty advisers:

### Forensic Physicians:

Dr Jenny Holmes  
Dr Tom O’Gorman

### Sexual Offences Examiners:

Dr Linda Teebay  
Dr Winnie Maguire

### Medico-legal Advisers:

Dr Bryony Hooper  
Dr Udvitha Nandasoma

### Medical Coroners:

Dr Bill Dolman  
Dr Andrew Harris

## Membership trends

Forensic physicians (a category which includes Sexual Offence Examiners) make up the bulk of the membership, so much so, that even if we were to significantly broaden the membership base, I am confident that the overwhelming majority will remain forensic physicians.

Forensic Pathologists are now the second most numerous group. I suspect that market has now been saturated, and we will see the number of forensic pathologists plateau from here on.

The bulk of our membership is, of course, in the UK, with Australia second and the Republic of Ireland third.

Looking at numbers since 2007, we have seen very pleasing, strong growth. This growth peaked in 2010, just after the so-called "grandfather clause" route to membership closed for FMEs and MLAs. Since then the graph has flattened. There has been good growth in the number of Affiliates, but the number of new Members by examination and by way of the equivalent qualification clause for Forensic Pathologists and Medical Coroners, has not kept up with the number of Members and Fellows leaving.

Indeed, in July and September 2011, 100 of our membership failed to renew. At the time this came a shock to the Board as the total membership was in the order of 700.

We made every effort to find out why we had lost so many Fellows, Members & Affiliates. Of those who gave a reason for leaving:

- 62% had retired from forensic work
- 19% said FFLM too expensive
- 12% had died
- 6% said due to illness

Remarkably, we have made up almost all the lost 100 in the months since July 2011. Most of the new people in membership are Affiliates, but we have also had a surprising number of new Members via the equivalent qualification clauses, many of whom are overseas forensic pathologists. However, it would not be wise to count on that pattern repeating itself, in part because, as already mentioned, our forensic pathologist market is probably now saturated.

The low number of people passing the MFFLM exam is a matter of concern. The number is likely to remain about the same as in the first 3 years, which is about half a dozen. We cannot predict how many Members will join via the equivalent qualification clauses, but it's not impossible that we will get as few as 10 new Members next year. If that pattern persisted, and the 10 stayed in membership for an average of 20 years, we would eventually have a stable number of Members and Fellows of less than 200, and that is not sufficient for a viable Faculty.

At present we have over 450 Fellows and Members. A growth in Affiliate numbers to compensate for a gradual drop to 200 Members and Fellows would not be a solution, because the FFLM Board would become significantly less representative than that of any other Medical Royal College or faculty in the UK.

We seem to be at a critical point in our natural evolution and we need to change. There is a lot we can do to ensure we grow and have a vibrant, long term future.

The first thing we could do is improve the benefits of membership. When GMC revalidation comes in, the benefit of FFLM support will become more apparent to the membership, and that will add to what we already do regarding CPD and credentialing. FFLM specialty advisers will be advising appraisers and Responsible Officers, but I suggest not individual doctors working in forensic and legal medicine who are not in benefit of membership of the FFLM.

Last year Will Anderson and I sent out an email questionnaire to gain feedback on member satisfaction with our various activities such as Development Training Courses – and overall value for money. As a consequence of the survey, we have substantially increased the number of courses.

We face more than one challenge unique to the FFLM with regard to membership numbers. It is not just small numbers sitting the entry exam. Another challenge is the replacement of some doctors with forensic nurses. Our aim is to have a consultant-led NHS service, and we need to persuade our nursing and paramedic colleagues that this is the preferred option. I therefore advocate that we do all we can to welcome them into the FFLM fold.

We will increase the number of qualifications and diplomas we offer.

The FFLM currently offers two qualifications, the MFFLM and the Diploma in Forensic Human Identification. The Diploma in Forensic and Clinical Aspects of Sexual Assault (DFCASA) is currently offered by the Society of Apothecaries, but we have reached broad agreement in principle that the FFLM will take over this diploma in the fullness of time.

We plan to introduce a Licentiate qualification, the LFFLM. To my mind the MFFLM is sacrosanct. It must remain equivalent to MRCP and be a route to GMC specialist registration and NHS consultant status. In other words, I believe we must resist the temptation to boost the number of Members by lowering standards.

The LFFLM will cater for those FPs who cannot justify the onerous commitment required for the MFFLM exam. The LFFLM will be a more accessible, entry-level qualification. Nurses and paramedics will be eligible to take this qualification. In other words, the LFFLM will recognize the demographics of those who work in clinical forensic medicine. In due course we may wish to reserve a number of seats on the FFLM Board for Licentiates.

The Board has decided in principle to introduce two new diplomas apart from the LFFLM: the Diploma in General Forensic Medicine, and the Diploma in Legal Medicine. All qualifications with the exception of the flagship MFFLM will be open to non-doctors.

## Specialist Status

Contained in your delegate pack is a copy of Prof Ian Wall's excellent report on the credentialing pilot for the GMC. Ian will be running workshops on this important topic tomorrow.

This report goes to the very heart of what the FFLM is all about, and I will say no more - but leave it to Ian.

## Fellowship Committee

This Committee has once again met physically and corresponded by email. One outstanding application for Foundation Membership went to the President on appeal, and was successful.

Current FFLM membership at the time of writing is:

	<b>2012</b>	2011	2010
Fellows	134	(135)	(143)
Members	369	(389)	(305)
Affiliates	229	(219)	(231)
<b>Total</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>(743)</b>	<b>(679)</b>

The previous two years' figures are also shown for the purposes of comparison.

To make the policy of the FFLM as transparent as possible, certain features of the application process and the appeal policy are being added to the FFLM website. The additions are:

**For all applications:**

*If you are a qualified healthcare professional, the FFLM needs to verify that you are registered with a professional regulatory body and that you are in good standing. Please provide the web address of your regulatory body to enable the FFLM to verify your status on-line. If you know it is not possible to verify your status on-line with your particular regulatory body, then please provide the full name and postal address of the body.*

*The Board may exercise its discretion on a case by case basis and may allow you, if you do allied work, or if you are in training, to join as an Affiliate member even if you are not registered with a regulatory body.*

*Please note: If you are a healthcare professional and the FFLM cannot verify that you are in good standing with a professional regulatory body, then with the above proviso, your application for membership will not be successful.*

**The application process and appeals:**

*Applications are first screened to make sure the applicant is registered with a professional regulatory body and is in good standing. The applications are then passed to two senior members of the Board, usually the Registrar and the Vice-President in the same category as the applicant (i.e. either (i) Forensic Practitioner, (ii) Medical Coroner or (iii) Medico-legal Adviser). Not infrequently, these two senior officers will ask the staff to seek clarification from the applicant before completing the application process. They will either accept or reject the application, or they may suggest a different type of membership, e.g. Affiliate membership rather than full Membership, or the other way around.*

*If there is a split vote, the application is referred to the Fellowship Committee. The Fellowship Committee will consider the matter and the President, if present, will recuse himself/herself and will not consider any documentation relating to the application.*

*There is also an automatic right of appeal to the Fellowship Committee open to applicants who are turned down by the two senior officers.*

*Appeals are heard by the Fellowship Committee which meets bi-annually in February and November, and it provides recommendations to the Board, which makes the decision. The decision is by a simple majority vote of Board members, and the count excludes abstentions and absences.*

*A second line of appeal is possible after that, to the FFLM President in person. The President's decision is final.*

*If the President faces a conflict because he or she had in a previous FFLM office been party to a decision regarding the application in question, then the President will invite a past FFLM President or past FFLM Vice President to determine the final appeal. For the purposes of indemnity for the appeal, the past President or past Vice President will be temporarily co-opted onto the Board.*

*The criteria published for the acceptance of applications are normally applied in a straightforward manner. Some flexibility is applied in unusual cases. The FFLM has accumulated a bank of unusual cases which set precedents, and in the interests of fairness these precedents are followed, whenever possible.*

*Applications are treated with strict confidentiality. Reasons for an adverse decision will be given to an applicant on request. Information about applications, both successful and unsuccessful, will not normally be divulged to any third party, in order to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

***MFFLM via the equivalent qualification clause for coroners and forensic pathologists:*** *The list of equivalent qualifications which are accepted by the FFLM, may change without notice. Qualifications which are new to the FFLM may have to be considered by the Fellowship Committee which will make recommendations to the Board for a final decision. The Board's decision is by a simple majority vote of members, and the count excludes abstentions and absences, and is final. There is no second stage appeal to the President for the recognition of equivalent qualifications.*

## **Premises**

We moved into splendid new premises early in the New Year. It is easy to access the new premises from Euston or Kings Cross stations. It is more spacious than our old offices and that enables the whole Board and the major committees to meet, and we can also conduct some of our exams there – and this will save us money. There is also space for expansion of the staff which I think will be necessary in the coming year. It is light and airy and last but not least, it's on the ground floor!

The move was not without its problems, but the staff managed it very well.

## **Staff**

Clare Pillinger as Faculty Manager, Sarah Llewellyn as Information and Learning Coordinator, and Toni Nichols as Accounts and Subscriptions Administrator all continue to provide an excellent service. Toni is having a baby this year and we have appointed a full time maternity locum, Anna Dare, to cover her absence.

## **Website**

This continues to be accessible at <http://fflm.ac.uk> and has further evolved under the supervision of the IT Steering Group. The committee consists of:

Dr George Fernie (President)  
Dr Peter Schütte (Registrar)  
Dr Jo Molony (Website editor)  
Ms Clare Pillinger (Faculty Manager)  
Ms Sarah Llewellyn (I & L Coordinator)  
Mr Mark Eagling (Webmaster)

I remind members that electronic committee papers are the preferred medium. Members will continue to be aware of the use of electronic 'mail shots' from the Faculty on a variety of subjects of interest to them.

## **Journal**

The Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine goes from strength to strength as our flagship publication and there are an increasing number of articles relating to legal issues, reflecting the breadth of our membership. The Editor will provide additional detail in his report.

## **David Jenkins Chair in Forensic and Legal Medicine**

The FFLM's first Academic Dean, Prof Margaret Stark, now based in Australia, is this year's illustrious incumbent.

Dr Miranda Horvath, an eminent academic and forensic psychologist at Middlesex University, has graciously accepted the Chair for 2012 – 2013.

## **W G Johnston Memorial Fund**

The Trustees (Dr A Irvine, Dr R Roberts & Professor A Busuttil) continue as before to administer this Fund and also the David Jenkins Memorial Fund, reporting to the Treasurer.

## **Faculty consultations 2011-2012**

College of Emergency Medicine: Management of patients who attend A&E after sexual assault or rape  
May 2011

The draft charter for the current coroner service September 2011

GMC: Protecting children & young people October 2011

NICE: Preventing and reducing domestic violence November 2011

Revision to PACE codes January 2012

GMC: License to practise and revalidation regulations January 2012

GMC: The review of CPD January 2012

GMC: Good Medical Practice March 2012

## **Conclusion**

It has been another very busy year for the FFLM. We have continued to evolve and develop to an extent which has exceeded the expectations of most. We cannot be complacent. Much work still needs to be done to make us the vibrant and growing organisation which I'm confident we will continue to be.

Dr Peter Schütte FRCP FFLM  
Registrar

5<sup>th</sup> May 2012