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## NEW LONDON PREMISES FOR THE COLLEGE

At its September meeting the College's Council took the historic decision to sell our offices in Princes Gate and move to new premises elsewhere in central London. The decision to review the College's long-term accommodation requirements had been made in November 2003 as one of the objectives in the College's Strategic Plan for 2004–2007, published on our website. Our initial assessment involved definition of the functions required of our headquarters' building and mapping them against 14 Princes Gate. This analysis demonstrated that our current accommodation falls well short of our current and future requirements. Council agreed that to determine our accommodation needs, we should undertake a major consultation exercise, with advice and support from consultants, Colliers CRE.

The process of consultation included in-depth interviews with a wide range of individuals from various parts of the College, questionnaires to all members of College Council and staff, and discussions in faculties involving the wider College membership. Responses included the following points on what was seen to be important about the College's main building:

- it should be a showcase for the profession;
- it should look and feel like a Royal College, and should convey tradition;
- it should express a professional, business-like and efficient image;
- it should be modern, caring, independent, open and equitable;
- it needs to be welcoming and have a collegiate atmosphere;
- it should convey professionalism and an outward-looking organisation;
- it should be expert, innovative, leading, progressive and confident;
- it should be fit-for-purpose, flexible, efficient and a good place to work; and
- it should be symbolic: a place that members can feel they are part of.

The consultation exercise showed that, beautiful as the present building in Princes Gate is, it does not fulfil these requirements and it is no longer fit for purpose. It has served the College well for many years, but our consultants advised us that doing nothing was not an option. If the College decided to stay at Princes Gate, we would need to spend well over £1.5m simply on bringing the building up to current

health and safety standards. Council members are rightly concerned about the conditions in which staff are working, and consider this as a matter of urgency. Working conditions for staff on the second and third floors, and in particular in the basement, do not meet modern standards. Improvements to the building would not deal with the need to provide more office space for around 30 members of staff who are at present working in other offices in central London. Nor would they provide suitable accommodation for internal meetings, conferences and the new assessment systems being introduced for those entering the specialty of general medical practice from 2007.

Members will be aware that a new single assessment process is being developed for general practice, which will meet the requirements of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB) for CCT as well as membership of the College. The assessment will include a clinical skills element in the form of a multiple stations OSCE/simulated surgery.<sup>1</sup> As part of the planning for this, Council has commissioned work on the requirements and viability of an education centre that would act as a conference venue, as well as hosting the new Clinical Skills Assessment. This evolution was positive and development of an education centre has been included in our initial planning.

Council has considered carefully a wide range of possible options, including only having a small office for core functions in London and having the education centre in another part of the country, such as Birmingham. Having considered all the options, the Council decided that the College should explore the option of acquiring a new site in London and building new premises that would include an education centre.

The College is at an important stage in its development and we are determined to have a building that will reflect our values and meet our current and future needs.

Obviously, this is only the beginning of the story. We have a long way to go before we move to new premises, and we will keep you informed of developments as we progress.

We will be posting progress reports on the College website: [www.rcgp.org.uk](http://www.rcgp.org.uk).

**Hilary De Lyon  
Colin Hunter**

## REFERENCE

1. Wass V. Ensuring medical students are 'fit for purpose'. *BMJ* 2005; **331**: 791–792.