

**Health Professions Council
Education and Training Committee, 12th June 2007**

Standards of proficiency for psychologists

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

The recent white paper, 'Trust, Assurance and Safety – The Regulation of Health Professionals in the 21st Century' said:

'Psychologists, psychotherapists and counsellors will be regulated by the Health Professions Council, following that Council's rigorous process of assessing their regulatory needs and ensuring that its system is capable of accommodating them. This will be the first priority for future regulation.'

The Department of Health in England previously consulted on proposals that HPC should regulate Applied Psychologists from March to June 2005.

It is anticipated that the Department of Health in England will publish a detailed implementation plan arising from the conclusions made in the white paper on 5th June 2007. It is further anticipated that this is likely to conclude that psychologists should become regulated by HPC in early 2008.¹

Professional Liaison Group (PLG)

The Executive proposes that a Professional Liaison Group (PLG) should be established to draft the standards of proficiency for applied psychologists. This will build upon previous work undertaken by the British Psychological Society in producing draft standards of proficiency.

Although at the time of writing the exact proposals of the government were not known, the Executive proposes this work at an early stage to ensure that resources are allocated and that plans are in place for the involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The attached workplan (appendix 1) outlines the work of the proposed PLG.

Timescales and approval mechanisms

The timescale detailed in the attached plan assumes that the applied psychologists part of the Register will not open before 1st April 2008 and that the PLG will not conclude its work in less than three meetings. This timescale may change dependent upon a number of factors including the contents of the implementation plan, and the passage of the legislation through the House of Commons, House of Lords and Scottish Parliament. In the workplan it is proposed that the chair of the PLG should agree any changes to the timetable.

¹ It should be noted that the government has yet to make a final decision about what the protected titles will be if psychologists are to be regulated, or the structure of the register. Therefore, the term 'psychologist' is used in this paper.

Given the tight timescale, and the requirement to consult, it is not possible to seek the approval of Council and of the Education and Training Committee in the normal way at their meetings, prior to the consultation of draft standards, and prior to their publication.

It is instead proposed in the workplan that:

- the draft standards should **not** come back to the Council prior to consultation but should instead be agreed by chair's action of the chair of the Education and Training Committee; and
- the Education and Training Committee and Council should be asked to ratify the standards for publication, following consultation, electronically.

Decision

The Committee is invited to:

- agree and recommend to Council that a Professional Liaison Group (PLG) should be established to draft the standards of proficiency for applied psychologists;
- to approve and recommend to Council the contents of the attached workplan; and
- pass a resolution that the chair of the Committee may approve the draft standards for consultation via chair's action.

Background information

Article 5 (2) of the Health Professions Order 2001 says:

The Council shall from time to time—

(a) establish the standards of proficiency necessary to be admitted to the different parts of the register being the standards it considers necessary for safe and effective practice under that part of the register.

Article 3 (14) requires that the Council must consult each time before establishing any standards or giving any guidance.

In conducting consultations, HPC follows the Cabinet Office's code of practice on consultations which recommends a minimum period of 12 weeks.

Resource implications

- Organising PLG meetings
- Research and writing of papers for PLG

Financial implications

- Producing consultation document
- Type-setting and publication of new standards
- Venues for meetings
- Attendance fee and expenses for Council members
- Reimbursement of expenses for non-Council members

These expenses are included in the 2007/2008 budget.

Background papers

None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Workplan

Date of paper

31st May 2007

Standards of proficiency for Psychologists – Professional Liaison Group (PLG)

Workplan

1. PLG sponsor

The Council

2. PLG Mission Statement / Terms of reference

To draft the standards of proficiency for psychologists. The PLG should use the draft standards of proficiency produced by the British Psychological Society as the starting point for its work.

The PLG should consider all relevant information in drafting the standards which might include:

- national occupational standards for psychologists;
- standards produced by the British Psychological Society; and
- the subject benchmark statement for Psychology produced by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

3. Meetings

The PLG should conclude its work in no more than three meetings.

4. Membership

The PLG should consist of up to ten members. Membership should be drawn from amongst the following groups:

- council members – registrant and lay;
- representatives from the British Psychological Society and other representative organisations;
- representatives from education providers; and
- representatives from patient organisations.

The PLG should be chaired by a member of Council. The Chair will be responsible for agreeing the exact membership of the PLG.

5. Timetable and outline of activities

The following is a draft timetable for the PLG's work and includes an outline of the group's activities at each meeting.

The plan assumes that the work will not be concluded in less than three meetings and that an applied psychologists part of the Register will not open before 1 April 2008. As this date is subject to change, any subsequent alterations to the timetable will be agreed with the chair.

12th June 2007

- Education and Training Committee meeting – recommendation of workplan to Council

5th July 2007

- Council meeting – approval of workplan

September 2007

- 1st meeting of PLG early September
 - First draft of standards
 - Legal context and background of the standards
 - Other standards and frameworks (e.g. mapping of existing standards of proficiency against QAA benchmark statements).

Late September/ early October 2007

- 2nd Meeting late September/ early October
 - Second draft of standards

October 2007

- 3rd meeting October
 - Final draft of standards
- Standards to be approved for consultation via chair's action of the chair of the Education and Training Committee.

November/December 2007 to January 2008

- Public consultation

February 2008

- Writing of consultation responses and revision of draft standards following consultation. Decisions arising from the consultation will take place with the agreement of the PLG chair and in liaison with the PLG membership.
- Electronic ratification of new standards by the Education and Training Committee and by Council.
- Laying out and publication of new standards in advance of the opening date of the Register.