

Education and Training Committee, 12 June 2017

Education research

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The Education Department regularly seeks the views of education providers about how the approval and monitoring processes are working and uses this to improve its work. However, the HCPC's overall approach to the quality assurance of education and training programmes has remained broadly consistent since these operational processes were established.

The attached research brief proposes commissioning research with education stakeholders to ascertain their views on our approach to education approval and monitoring. The outcomes of the research could inform any future changes to our approach to education quality assurance.

The research brief sets out the key research aims, which are to gather views on:

- the advantages and disadvantages of our current approach to education quality assurance;
- the opportunities available to reduce burden;
- the opportunities there may be to further use the data we hold and work more collaboratively with other regulators; and
- how helpful our guidance and information materials are and if there are any areas we could improve.

Decision

The Committee is invited to discuss and approve the attached research brief (subject to minor editing amendments).

Background information

We have previously commissioned similar research to help in developing other areas of our work – for example, we commissioned similar research with stakeholders to understand views and experiences of the standards for continuing professional development and the CPD audit process.

Resource implications

- Commissioning the research
- Supporting the research team

The resource implications are accounted for in Policy and Standards planning for the 2017-2018 financial year.

Financial implications

We anticipate a budget of up to c.£35,000 for the research (inclusive of all costs). The financial implications are accounted for in the Policy and Standards budget for 2017-2018 and will be accounted for in budgeting for 2018-2019.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Education research brief

Date of paper

25 May 2017

Stakeholders' views and experiences of the HCPC's approach to education quality assurance

1. Purpose and research aims

- 1.1. This project will explore education stakeholders' views and experiences of our approach to education approval and monitoring.
- 1.2. The research aims to gather views on:
 - the advantages and disadvantages of our current approach to education quality assurance;
 - the opportunities available to reduce burden;
 - the opportunities there may be to further use the data we hold and work more collaboratively with other regulators; and
 - how helpful our guidance and information materials are, and if there are any areas we could improve.
- 1.3. We expect the research to include the following core components:
 - Surveys, interviews and/or focus groups with key stakeholders;
 - A final report analysing the findings of the research and possible implications for the HCPC.
- 1.4. A budget of up to **c.£35,000** is available for this work (depending on the scope of the research). The deadline for proposals is 1 August 2017.

2. About the HCPC

- 2.1. The Health and Care Professions council (HCPC) is an independent professional regulator set up to protect the public. We register the members of 16 different professions. We set and maintain standards which cover education and training, behavior, professional skills and health; approve and monitor educational programmes which lead to registration; maintain a register of people that successfully pass those programmes; and take action if a registrant's fitness to practice falls below our standards.
- 2.2. We were set up in 2002 and now regulate 16 health and care professions (around 340,000 registrants), including, for example, biomedical scientists, operating department practitioners and radiographers. 15 of these professions are regulated UK-wide. Social workers are regulated on an England only basis, with separate regulators in the other countries.

3. Background to the research

Introduction

- 3.1. Our standards and approval and monitoring processes focus on protecting the public to make sure that prospective registrants are fit to practise when they join the register for the first time.
- 3.2. We currently approve 1040 programmes delivered by 145 education providers. Although most programmes are delivered or validated by a Higher Education Institute (HEI), we also approve programmes delivered by charities, private training providers, employers and professional bodies.
- 3.3. The majority of approved programmes are pre-registration programmes and are approved against our standards of education and training, which are common across all the professions that we register. These standards cover areas such as admissions; curricula; programme management and resources; placements; and assessment.
- 3.4. We assess programmes against the standards of education and training at approval visits. The assessment is carried out by 'visitors', registrants in each of the professions we regulate, and individuals with service user and carer experience, who make recommendations about approval to our Education and Training Committee. This may include recommending that certain conditions should be set before approval is granted.
- 3.5. A programme that successfully meets the standards of education and training will allow a student who completes the programme to meet the standards of proficiency, the threshold standards for safe and effective practice in each profession. If a student successfully completes an approved programme they are eligible to apply for registration, subject to health and character checks and payment of the registration fee.
- 3.6. As well as approving and monitoring education and training for people who want to join our register, we also approve a small number of qualifications for those already on the Register, for example, prescribing programmes. For registrants who successfully complete these post-registration programmes, we will make a mark on the Register known as an 'annotation'. Although we use the same open-ended approval process for these programmes, they are reviewed against different standards.
- 3.7. There are two monitoring processes: annual monitoring and major change. Both of these processes are documentary and may trigger a new approval visit.
 - Annual monitoring is a retrospective process by which we determine whether a programme continues to meet all the SETs.

- The major change process considers significant changes to a programme and the impact of these changes in relation to our standards.

3.8. We also listen to and, where necessary, investigate concerns raised about programmes we have approved. We aim to ensure our regulation is robust, rigorous and effective, without being overly burdensome for education providers.

A changing landscape

3.9. Our current approach to education quality assurance has been in place since 2004. In that time, the education landscape has changed in a number of ways:

- the professions and providers we interact with have changed;
- the types and availability of placements has changed;
- health care delivery, funding and commissioning has changed (with growing diversity between the four countries of the UK);
- service delivery models have become less focused on health or the medical model, resulting in changes in education; and
- there is a stronger drive for regulators to work together more.

3.10. With all the changes outlined above, we believe it is important to consider whether the processes we currently follow are still the best approach.

Regulation rethought

3.11. In 2016 the Professional Standards Authority (PSA) set out proposals for how it believes health and care regulation could be transformed for clarity and flexibility. In relation to the reform of education and training, the PSA believes:

- there is duplication between professional regulators and other regulators in education resulting in unnecessary expense and regulatory burden on higher education and training institutions;
- professional regulators should focus on setting and assessing learning outcomes for registration, and leave others to assess course management; and
- there should be a review of regulatory approach to ensure that there is a clear focus, intelligence sharing and no duplication, leading to a more proportionate and risk-based approach.

3.12. This research provides an opportunity to begin to explore these issues and others with our stakeholders.

Scope of proposed research

3.13. This section outlines the scope of the proposed research.

Key questions to be addressed in the research

3.14. The purpose of the research is to explore education stakeholders' views and experiences of the HCPC's approval and monitoring processes, with a focus on their effectiveness and opportunities for improvement. In particular:

- How effective are we at achieving the aims we set out to achieve?
- Are there any opportunities for reducing burden in our current approach?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of our current approach? In particular we wish to explore the following aspects:
 - Open-ended approval.
 - Approval at the programme level.
 - Multi-professional approach to approval and monitoring.
 - Approach to approving post-registration programmes.
 - Involvement of learners and service user and carers in our processes and decision-making.
 - Education providers' responsibility and accountability for practice based learning / placement education.
- What more could we do to effectively use the data we hold, and the data available from other organisations, to inform our approach, and to help others?
- What do our stakeholders think about our guidance and information?

Qualitative research

3.15. We welcome all proposals which will meet the research aims outlined in this brief. However, we anticipate that the research is likely to include (but might not be limited to) surveys, interviews and/or focus groups with key stakeholders. This will need to include:

- Education providers
- Visitors
- Professional bodies
- Other education stakeholders (for example, education regulators; commissioners; and bodies representing education providers).
- Other professional regulators
- Learners

3.16. We are particularly interested in exploring any trends within or between different professions and different models of education delivery, and any differences between the four countries of the UK.

3.17. We will work with the appointed researcher(s) / research team to facilitate the research as necessary (e.g. by sending out surveys).

Research governance

3.18. We expect the appointed researcher(s) / research team to meet with the HCPC on a regular basis and to provide progress reports on a regular basis

3.19. The appointed research team will be required to develop a project plan with key milestones from the outset of the commission. This will be agreed with the project lead and regularly updated as required for the duration of the research

3.20. Payment of the research budget will be made in instalments. We anticipate the following.

- 50% of the budget paid on agreement of contracts.
- 50% of the budget paid on sign off of the final report.

Final report

3.21. The report of the completed research will be used to consider any possible future changes to our approach to quality assuring education and training programmes.

3.22. The final report will include the following.

- Information about the research methodologies adopted.
- Findings from the research.
- Discussion of possible implications for the HCPC.

3.23. The research team is required to present the final report at a meeting of the HCPC Education and Training Committee (date to be confirmed).

4. Next steps and anticipated timescale

4.1. Proposals for this work should be submitted by email to Jane Tuxford, PA to the Director of Policy and Standards by no later than 1 August 2017.

Email: Jane.tuxford@hcpc-uk.org

4.2. If you have any queries regarding the research brief, or the tender process, please contact Katherine Timms, Policy Manager:

Email: Katherine.timms@hcpc-uk.org

Telephone: 020 7840 9168

4.3. There is no prescribed format for submitting research proposals. However they should include the following:

- A proposal for how the research would be conducted.
- An outline timescale including key milestones.
- Any ethical considerations or approval needed.
- The researcher(s) CV(s).
- A breakdown of costs.

4.4. We anticipate the following timescales for this work. Please note, in the event that the number of proposals received delays the process of appointing the researcher(s)/research team to carry out this work, these dates may change.

Action	Timetable
Invitation for proposals issued	13 June 2017
Deadline for proposals	1 August 2017
Shortlisting	By 29 August 2017
Interviews/meetings with shortlisted researcher(s)/research teams (if required)	w/c 18 September 2017
Researcher(s)/research team appointed	By 29 September 2017
Deadline for final report (with a draft available before on a date to be agreed)	27 July 2018
Presentation of findings to HCPC Education and Training Committee	September 2018

4.5. We anticipate a budget of up to **c. £35,000** (depending on the scope of the research). This budget is inclusive of all costs, including VAT (if applicable) and any contribution to overheads (if applicable).

Shortlisting criteria

4.6. Our decision to shortlist or appoint will be based on the research brief, and on an overall assessment of how far the proposal has addressed the HCPC's needs. We will particularly assess research proposals as to the extent to which they meet or exceed the following indicative criteria.

- The proposal demonstrates understanding of the role of the HCPC and in particular its role in education quality assurance.
- The proposal demonstrates understanding of the research aims.
- The proposal describes an appropriate methodology.
- The proposal demonstrates the involvement of an appropriate range of stakeholders.

- The proposal demonstrates a commitment and ability to delivery to project on time to an appropriately high standards.
- The proposal represents value for money.

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5. References

- 5.1. An introduction to our education processes - [http://www.hcpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/10003662An introduction to our education processes.pdf](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/10003662An%20introduction%20to%20our%20education%20processes.pdf)
- 5.2. Standards of Education and Training - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000295EStandardsofeducationandtraining-fromSeptember2009.pdf>
- 5.3. Standards of Education and Training Guidance - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10001A9DStandardsofeducationandtrainingguidancefor educationproviders.pdf>
- 5.4. Standards for podiatric surgery - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004BD9Standardsforpodiatricsurgery.pdf>
- 5.5. Standards for prescribing - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004160Standardsforprescribing.pdf>
- 5.6. Education annual report 2015 - <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004FF1Educationannualreport2015.pdf>
- 5.7. Regulation rethought: Proposals for reform - <http://www.professionalstandards.org.uk/docs/default-source/publications/thought-paper/regulation-rethought.pdf?sfvrsn=10>