

Education and Training Committee, 22 November 2018

Threshold level of qualifications for paramedics – transition update

Executive summary and recommendations

### **Introduction**

This paper provides an update on work the Executive has undertaken with education providers to understand their plans to manage the transition to degree only approved paramedic programmes being open from 1 September 2021.

### **Background information**

- [Threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register for paramedics, Education and Training Committee, 1 March 2018](#)

### **Discussion**

The Committee is invited to discuss the matters highlighted in the paper.

### **Decision**

With respect to section 4 (paragraphs 4.3-4.9) of the paper, the Committee is asked to consider the three options set in Table 4 and decide how the Medipro Ltd. programme should be managed in light of the revised threshold level of qualification.

### **Resource implications**

- Further resource required to enact options 2 & 3 set out in Table 4 of the paper.

### **Financial implications**

- Partners will be appointed to support option 3 set out in Table 4 of the paper.

### **Date of paper**

12 November 2018

## Threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register for paramedics – transition update

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Committee previously decided at their meeting on 1 March 2018 that the threshold level of qualification for paramedics should be raised to a degree (levels 6/9/10 on the relevant frameworks for higher education qualification across the UK).
- 1.2 The Committee also decided that all programmes must be delivered at degree level for all cohorts commencing from 1 September 2021. The Committee felt this lead in time was important to enable education providers and employers to plan and manage workforce supply during the transition period.
- 1.3 It was also decided that we should no longer accept requests for programme approval for programmes being proposed for delivery below degree level.
- 1.4 This paper provides an update on work carried out to date with education providers to understand their plans:
  - to close existing programmes delivered below the revised threshold level;
  - to make changes to approved paramedic programmes to manage the transition period to degree only entry in September 2021; and,
  - to seek approval for new paramedic programmes delivered at degree level.
- 1.5 The Executive is currently using this information to advance further discussions with education providers. We expect this to result in formal quality assurance activity through our approval and monitoring processes over the next three academic years.

### 2 Major changes to existing programmes

- 2.1 Education providers were asked to indicate if they were planning to make major changes to their existing approved paramedic programmes during the transition period.

**Table 1 – Approved paramedic programmes which will be making significant changes to manage the transition period**

Yes	8
No	42

- 2.2 Changes planned during the transition period commonly relate to:

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- Increasing student cohort numbers and intake frequency
- Changing criteria to include Year 2 entry routes onto programmes
- Introducing accelerated pathways through degree programmes
- Introduction of an apprenticeship route
- Reduction in practice-based learning hours
- Recruiting additional programme team members

- 2.3 The Executive are now following up those education providers who are planning on making changes to ensure these can be assessed where needed via the major change process.

### **3 New degree programmes**

- 3.1 We also asked education providers to advise us if they were intending to seek approval for a new degree programme during the transition period.

**Table 2 – Education providers planning to seek approved for new degree programme**

Yes	3
No	19

- 3.2 Most education providers are already deliver programmes at Diploma / Foundation and Degree level. However based on the responses, it appears four education providers will no longer offer approved paramedic programmes following the completion of the transition period.

### **4 Closure of programmes**

- 4.1 Table 1 sets out the education providers intentions to close approved programmes which are currently delivered below the revised SET 1 threshold.

**Table 3 – Education providers intending to close approved programmes which do not meet the revised threshold level of qualification**

Yes	21
No	1
Awaiting confirmation	1 <sup>1</sup>

- 4.2 Based on this data, the Committee can take assurance that the education sector will be reflective of degree only entry routes from 1 September 2021. This is however subject to the Committee’s further consideration around one programme which has indicated its intent to remain open following the end of transition period.

Medipro Limited

- 4.3 Medipro Limited have notified us that they intend to continue delivering their approved paramedic programme. As such, the Committee must consider what action, if any, is needed to be satisfied that approved paramedic programmes are delivered at the revised threshold following the completion of the transition period.

Education provider	Medipro Limited
Validating body	Qualsafe Awards Ltd
Programme award	Medipro level 6 Paramedic Practice
Mode of study	Full time
First intake	1 July 2018

- 4.4 The above mentioned programme was approved prior to the Committee’s decision to increase the threshold level of qualification. As such, the programme was assessed to meet SET 1 as it was stated at the time, which was a Certificate of Higher Education (or equivalent).
- 4.5 The programme is validated by Qualsafe Awards Ltd and the award aligns to the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), which is produced by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (OfQual). The programme is designed to meet the RQF requirements at Level 6. For the purposes of facilitating the transfer of learning across frameworks, Level 6 on

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<sup>1</sup> Education provider has been recommended for approval at December Education and Training Panel. Subject to approval being confirmed, discussions around future closure plans will commence.

the RQF is broadly comparable (although not equivalent) to learning at Levels 6/9/10 of the equivalent higher education qualification frameworks<sup>2</sup>.

- 4.6 The programme itself is delivered on a full time basis over two years, with learners progressing through structured learning at Levels 3, 4, 5 & 6 (in accordance with the RQF). The programme has been deemed to meet the standards of education and training in all areas, withstanding SET 1 following the revision made to change the threshold qualification level to a degree.
- 4.7 The Committee is asked to discuss how they would like to proceed regarding the above mentioned programme to be satisfied the above mentioned programme meets SET 1. The Executive proposes three options are available to the Committee.

**Table 4 – Options regarding the management of Medipro Ltd. programme**

Option 1:  No further action	Based on the information contained in this paper, the Committee could decide to take no further action. The programme in question would continue to be approved and subject to regular monitoring.
Option 2:  Commence withdrawal of approval	The Committee could decide to proceed with a withdrawal of approval process. This process would be initiated on the basis of the decision taken by the Committee to raise the threshold, with degree only programmes being approved from 1 September 2021.  Through this process, the education provider would be provided with an opportunity to submit written observations to the Committee, detailing how they believe their programme meets SET 1. These observations would be used to inform a final decision on approval.
Option 3:  Undertake an assessment of programme against the revised threshold	The Committee could direct the Executive to structure and undertake a documentary assessment of how the programme meets the revised SET 1 threshold. This assessment would be carried out by paramedic visitors, based on a submission of documentary evidence by the education provider.  The education provider would be asked to submit evidence which demonstrates how the programme meets:

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<sup>2</sup> 'Qualifications can cross boundaries' - [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries.pdf?sfvrsn=a852f981\\_12](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-can-cross-boundaries.pdf?sfvrsn=a852f981_12)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6 on the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications bachelor's degree<sup>3</sup>; and</li> <li>• The Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statement for Paramedics 2016<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> <p>When considered together, both frameworks encapsulate the academic standards expected of graduates, as it relates to degree level training for paramedics.</p> <p>The frameworks are outcomes focused, so an education provider should be able to map their programme to these frameworks, to demonstrate that the learning undertaken is equivalent to a Level 6 degree, and is appropriate to the subject area, in this case paramedic practice. The visitors would be asked, on the behalf of the Committee, to determine if individuals completing the programme will have undertaken the level of learning deemed necessary to meet the standards of proficiency.</p> <p>The visitors would undertake a documentary review of the evidence submitted and seek clarification from the education provider where required. A visitors report, detailing the visitors' recommendations, would be produced for the Committee to consider further in making a final decision about whether the programme meets the revised SET 1 qualification threshold.</p> <p>In the event the Committee decides the programme does not meet SET 1, the withdrawal of approval process would be commenced, as outlined in option 2.</p>
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4.8 The Executive recommends that option 3 would be a proportionate measure to take to seek assurance that the above mentioned programme meets SET 1.

4.9 **Decision:** The Committee is asked to consider the three options in Table 4 and decide how the above mentioned programme should be managed in light of the revised threshold level of qualification.

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<sup>3</sup> Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Quality Assurance Agency Subject Benchmark Statement - <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/27035/1/SBS-Paramedics-16.pdf>