

Standards of Proficiency PLG
Meeting: 7th March 2006
Panel chairs' questionnaires

Executive Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

At its meeting on 24th January 2006 the PLG requested that a questionnaire should be sent to the chairs of fitness to practise panels to ask them for their feedback about the standards.

The attached paper summarises the response received from the panel chairs.

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Background information

None

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Background papers

None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

23rd February 2006

Date	Ver.	Dept/Cmte	Doc Type	Title	Status	Int. Aud.
2006-02-14	a	POL	PPR	Panel chair's questionnaires	Final DD: None	Confidential RD: None

Panel chairs' questionnaires

Introduction

In July 2005, the Council appointed 15 panel chairs to chair hearings of the Investigating, Health and Conduct and Competence Committees. Prior to this date Council Members were involved in chairing fitness to practise panels.

The panel chairs were drawn from existing registrant and lay panel members. There are 4 registrant panel chairs and 11 lay panel chairs.

There were 8 responses to the questionnaire.

Experience of using the standards

The panel chairs reported that their experience of using the standards was a positive one.

One chairman reported that the standards were 'useful in framing statements to substantiate decisions'. Another said that the standards were useful 'in formulating challenging questions' to assist in the task deciding whether a registrant's conduct or performance had fallen below an expected level. One chairman referred to the standards as 'benchmarks' against which registrants can be judged.

Most of those who responded reported that they had found citing the standards to be a helpful way of formulating their decision. One chairman said: 'I was involved in a case not long ago where standard 1a5 had been breached. The registrant seemed to have strayed beyond his competence and experience, and it was helpful to be able to cite this standard in assessing his performance'. Others similarly reported that they had cited specific standards in their decisions whilst one chair reported that he tended only to refer to the standards in a generic sense.

Comments on the specific standards

The feedback received did not indicate that any additional generic or profession-specific standards were needed. One chairman said: '...as a lay person I have found the standards have met all our needs – so far! – for a measurement against which to judge actions or failures'. Others commented that the existing standards 'have been adequate in my experience so far' and 'cover all issues in great detail'.

There was some reference to the specific wording and role of the standards. One chair noted that some of the standards seem to overlap in places. Standards 1b.2 and 1b.3 (multi-disciplinary team working) and 1b.4 and 1b.5 (communication) are cited as an example where there is some degree of overlap. However, the chair recognised that

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‘each has a distinctive emphasis which is not doubt important in some situations’ and further felt that any attempt to incorporate such standards together might result in the standards becoming ‘both unwieldy and too wordy’.

Changes to the standards

There were a small number of suggestions for changes to the standards.

One of the chairs, a registrant chiropodist/podiatrist, suggested that we might remove the professional specific standard in 2b.5 which refers to orthoses because this is increasingly seen as a more specialist field.

Another chair said that we needed to make sure that the foreword to the standards was revised and that we should break up the introduction into headed paragraphs for ‘readability’.

A number of chairs suggested that we might helpfully incorporate the standards of proficiency and standards of conduct, performance and ethics together for ease of use.

Conclusions

The PLG is invited to consider the following conclusions:

The views of panel chairs accord with the conclusions drawn from the review of competence cases in that:

- (i) panel chairs view the standards as useful tools against which to judge the performance of registrants – they are ‘benchmark’ standards;
- (ii) the generic standards are easily applicable across the professions and sufficiently detailed; and
- (iii) the style and layout of the standards is generally sufficiently clear to allow easy use.

The PLG will wish to take into account of the views expressed by panel chairs as the review of the existing standards continues.

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