

19 July 2016

**Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) response to Department for Business Innovation and Skills Call for Evidence: Accelerated courses and switching university or degree**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Health and Care Professions Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation.
- 1.2 The Health and Care Professions Council is a statutory UK-wide regulator of health, social work, and psychological professions governed by the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001. We regulate the members of 16 professions. We maintain a register of professionals, set standards for entry to our register, approve education and training programmes for registration and deal with concerns where a professional may not be fit to practise. Our main role is to protect the health and wellbeing of those who use or need to use our registrants' services.
- 1.3 We quality assure ('approve') for the purposes of registration 868 programmes, 760 of which are delivered in England.

**2. Our response**

- 2.1 We are responding to the 'all other institutions' questions which are relevant to our role as described above. Our comments are most relevant to the following questions:

**Q3. What do you see as the main barriers to a more extensive credit transfer system?**

**Q5. What do you see as the barriers to more accelerated degrees being available?**

**Health and care pre-registration programmes**

- 2.2 The feasibility of increasing the numbers of accelerated degrees which lead to registration as a health and care professional may be rather limited. Programmes are already intensive because of longer academic years combining delivery of both teaching and time spent learning on placement in practice.
- 2.3 In recent years there has been an increase in the development of shorter length pre-registration education and training at masters level. This has helped attract students who have a previous first degree and/or substantial professional experience. There may be scope for the development of further such innovative models of provision in pre-registration education and training

in some professions, but this is distinct from accelerating existing three year undergraduate degree programmes.

### **Barriers to 'accelerated' programmes**

- 2.4 Regulation, of various kinds, is a potential barrier to accelerated programmes or to innovative models of delivery. Students completing programmes which lead to registration in a regulated profession have to demonstrate that they have met required professional standards by their completion. These professional standards are non-negotiable, potentially limiting the scope for discretion in delivery.
- 2.5 As a statutory regulator, our role is firmly focused on ensuring the outcomes which secure protection of the public. Our approach to the approval of education and training for the purposes of registration is outcomes based, with no explicit requirements around the length or model of education and training we expect. We will approve any programmes which meets our standards of education and training, ensuring that a student who successfully completes that programme is fit to practise.
- 2.6 However, other organisations involved in this area are often much more explicit or prescriptive as to the level and length of training they expect, which may preclude 'accelerated' routes. These organisations include other statutory regulators and organisations such as professional bodies who are often involved in accreditation of education and the development of curricula. Even where a regulator makes no such requirement, the profession itself and the perceptions and expectations of graduate employability may be an effective barrier to such programmes being developed.

### **Credit transfer system**

- 2.7 The consultation document notes that one barrier is that academic credits are not a 'universal currency'. For health and care programmes, the difficult task of matching learning outcomes is made more complex by the necessity to also assess equivalence of professional standards, especially those which are about demonstrating application and skill. This is not to say that this is impossible, but to acknowledge the additional time and effort involved.
- 2.8 We do not set prescribed limits on the amount of AP(E)L that is permissible. However, other organisations such as professional bodies sometimes do so.