

September 2019

Policy statement on assessing the threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register

- 1.1 We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). This policy statement sets out our broad approach to assessing the threshold level of qualification for programmes seeking approval.

About the threshold level of qualification to the Register

- 2.1 The first of the standards of education and training ('SET 1') sets out the threshold level of qualification required for entry to the Register for each of the professions we regulate. SET 1 does this by specifying types of academic awards.
- 2.2 SET 1 provides the threshold levels of qualification 'normally' expected to meet the remainder of the standards of education and training, and thus deliver the standards of proficiency.
- 2.3 The standard includes the term 'normally' as the HCPC's governing legislation requires the standards of education and training to be established based upon the outcomes set out in the standards of proficiency. As a result it would be improper for us to refuse to approve a programme which delivered the standards of proficiency and met the remaining standards of education and training, solely on the basis that it did not lead to the award of a qualification specified in SET 1. As SET 1 sets a threshold, programmes may be delivered at academic awards / levels equivalent to this level, if equivalence to SET 1 can be established.

The role of visitors in assessing SET 1

- 3.1 Visitors are appointed in accordance with our governing legislation to work on behalf of the Education and Training Committee to make recommendations regarding programme approval. Visitors are specifically required to determine if the relevant education standards are met based on their review of a programme. This includes any consideration regarding SET 1.

Programmes leading to the SET 1 threshold level of qualification

- 4.1 Where new programmes contain qualifications leading to registration which are specified in SET 1, education providers are not specifically required to provide any further evidence to support this. All specified SET 1 qualifications can only be awarded where an education provider has UK gained degree awarding power, which is granted in accordance with the regulated academic

framework in the relevant country¹. We are satisfied on this basis that no further evidence is needed to support the provision of such qualifications to meet SET 1.

- 4.2 However, visitors can still set conditions or require further evidence from an education provider regarding SET 1 where they have reason to, to ensure the standard is met. This would usually only be the case if visitors identify gaps academically between the programme's qualification and its design, curriculum or assessment.

Programmes leading to an award which is different to SET 1 qualification

- 5.1 Where the qualification being awarded by a new programme is different from that specified in SET 1, the education provider is required to evidence how the qualification proposed is equivalent to that which is normally expected to meet SET 1.
- 5.2 To facilitate the visitors' assessment of equivalence to the specified SET 1 qualification, the education provider must map their programme to the relevant Quality Assurance Agency Framework of Higher Education Qualifications descriptor (QAA FHEQ)².
- 5.3 For example, where a diploma is being proposed as leading to registration in a profession normally requiring a bachelor's degree, an education provider will need to map to the relevant QAA FHEQ descriptor. This mapping exercise will be done as an additional approval process requirement.
- 5.4 Visitors will review this mapping to determine equivalence to SET 1. They will use the information provided and any subsequent discussions with programme stakeholders to make this determination. Where reasonable to do so, they will set conditions and request further evidence in relation to SET 1 as a result.
- 5.5 Should the visitors conclude SET 1 has not been met, they will be required to recommend non-approval of the programme, and provide reasons to support this conclusion. In this circumstance, the education provider can make observations to the Education and Training Committee regarding such a recommendation.
- 5.6 The Education and Training Committee will make the final decision regarding programme approval, including any determination regarding the equivalence of a qualification to SET 1.

¹'The right to award UK degrees', Quality Assurance Agency, August 2018 - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/degree-awarding-powers-and-university-title>

²Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education Qualifications, October 2014 - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf>