

Agenda Item 21

Enclosure 18

**Health and Care Professions Council
06 December 2018**

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

For approval

From Oliva Bird, Policy Officer

Council, 5 December 2018

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

Executive summary

Introduction

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.

To date, HCPC has only amended the level set out in SET 1 once, when we increased the threshold level for paramedics from certificate of higher education to degree level in 2018. This decision was made following a public consultation in late 2017, where 82% of respondents indicated support for increasing the threshold level of qualification.

We also considered reviewing the threshold level for operating department practitioners (ODPs) in 2014.¹ However at the time a significant majority of programmes (71%) were still delivered at the threshold level (as opposed to 96% of paramedic programmes above the threshold when we decided to amend this). Therefore it was decided that we first proceed the case for paramedics and review this at a later date.

Since amending the threshold level for paramedics, we have decided to develop a policy statement which provides guidance on when we will consider amending the threshold level. At its meeting on 22 November 2018, the Education and Training Committee agreed the content of the policy statement subject to minor changes, and recommended it to Council on this basis.

We received legal advice on the policy statement ahead of the Education and Training Committee on 22 November 2018. In light of minor amends suggested by the Committee, this is subject to final legal scrutiny which we will obtain following this Council meeting.

If approved, this will be published on the website in the near year.

¹ <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000464CEnc11-ThresholdlevelofqualificationforentrytotheRegister.pdf>.

Decision

The Committee is invited to approve the content of the policy statement at Appendix A.

Resource implications

There are currently no expected resource implications for this.

Financial implications

There are currently no expected resource implications for this.

Appendices

Appendix A: Policy statement on review of the threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register

Date of paper

23 November 2018

[DATE OF PUBLICATION]

Policy statement on review of 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 reviewing the threshold level of qualification for entry to the register. This statement provides guidance on when we will consider amending the threshold level.
- 1.2 Please contact the Policy and Standards Department (policy@hcpc-uk.org) if you have any questions about this statement.

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. There are a number of professions where at least some provision is delivered at a different level to the threshold level of award.
- 2.4 The threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register applies to pre-registration education and training programmes. Any change to SET 1 would not affect individuals who are already on the HCPC register and who may have completed programmes delivered at a different level in the past.

When the threshold level may need to be reviewed

- 3.1 The HCPC keeps all of its standards under review and will amend them from time to time as the need arises. It is important to do so given the rapid pace at which professions may develop.

- 3.2 As a profession develops over time, changes to the scope of the profession's standards of proficiency or the depth and complexity of the education and training required to meet those standards needs to be reflected in the threshold level set out in SET 1.

Broad principles on reviewing the threshold level of qualification

- 4.1 When considering whether to amend the threshold level of qualification, we will have regard to the following principles:

Standards of proficiency and the development of the profession

- 4.2 The starting point for any decision to change the threshold level for a profession is the standards of proficiency. An increase in the threshold level would need to be justified on the basis that the level was necessary to deliver the standards of proficiency.
- 4.3 We will therefore consider whether the threshold level should be increased on a profession by profession basis, when we have evidence that the education and training needed to meet the standards of proficiency needs to be changed in order to ensure that entrants to the register are capable of safe and effective practice. In assessing this, we will consider how a profession has developed over time, and the depth and complexity of education and training required to meet the standards.

Profile of pre-registration programmes

- 4.4 We will also consider whether the threshold should be changed if the majority of entrants to a profession are qualifying at a level above the existing threshold but which is necessary to meet the existing standards of proficiency. For example, when we consulted on changing SET 1 for paramedics, 96% of programmes were above the threshold.

Views of stakeholders

- 4.5 As part of any review of the threshold level of qualification for one of our professions, we will consult stakeholders on any proposed changes and the timetable for their implementation.

Appendix 1: Threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register (SET 1)

The Council normally expects that the threshold entry routes to the Register will be the following.

Bachelor degree with honours for:

- biomedical scientists (with the Certificate of Competence awarded by the Institute of Biomedical Science, or equivalent);
- chiropodists / podiatrists;
- dietitians;
- occupational therapists;
- orthoptists;
- physiotherapists;
- prosthetists / orthotists;
- radiographers;
- social workers in England; and
- speech and language therapists.

Diploma of Higher Education for operating department practitioners.

Equivalent to Certificate of Higher Education for paramedics.¹

Foundation degree for hearing aid dispensers.

Masters degree for:

- arts therapists;
- clinical scientists (with the Certificate of Attainment awarded by the Association of Clinical Scientists, or equivalent);
- forensic psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in forensic psychology, or equivalent);
- health psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in health psychology, or equivalent);
- Level of qualification for entry to the Register
- occupational psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in occupational psychology, or equivalent); and
- sport and exercise psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in sport and exercise psychology, or equivalent).

Professional doctorate for clinical psychologists.

Professional doctorate, or equivalent for:

¹ To be changed to degree level on 1 September 2021.

- counselling psychologists; and
- educational psychologists.