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THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL

Chief Executive and Registrar: Mr Marc Seale

Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London SE11 4BU
Telephone: +44 (0)20 7840 9710
Fax: +44 (0)20 7840 9807
e-mail: *colin.bendall@hpc-uk.org*

PROFESSIONAL LIAISON GROUP FOR STANDARDS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING: GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATION PROVIDERS

MINUTES of the second meeting of the Professional Liaison Group for Standards of Education and Training: Guidance for Education Providers held at **10.30 a.m. on Thursday 24 March 2005** at Avonmouth House, 6 Avonmouth Street, London SE1 6NX.

PRESENT:

Miss E Thornton (Chairman)
Ms H Davis
Ms C Farrell
Mr A Mount
Miss G Pearson
Miss P Sabine
Dr A van der Gaag
Professor D Waller
Mr D Whitmore

IN ATTENDANCE:

Ms M Andersen-Warren	British Association of Dramatherapists
Mr D Ashcroft	Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
Mr M Bailey	British Paramedic Association
Ms H Booth	Association of Operating Department Practitioners
Ms J Carey	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Ms S Gosling	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Ms V Huet	British Association of Art Therapists
Ms S Hill	British Association of Prosthetists and Orthotists
Ms A Lawson Porter	College of Occupational Therapists
Ms A Paterson	Society and College of Radiographers
Ms H Patey	Association of Professional Music Therapists
Ms R Simpson	British Dietetic Association
Mr N Springham	British Association of Arts Therapists

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Ms J Stansfield Psychology and Speech Pathology, Manchester Metropolitan University
Ms G Stephenson Division of Orthoptics, University of Liverpool
Mr A Wainwright Institute of Biomedical Science

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the PLG for Standards of Education and Training: Guidance for Education Providers
Ms R Tripp, Policy Manager, HPC
Ms S Woolf, Education Manager, HPC

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chairman welcomed members and attendees to the second meeting of the Group. She explained that the purpose of the meeting was to share developments since the HPC had published the document “Key Decisions from our Consultation on Standards of Education and Training and the Approvals Process”. The Group hoped to share its thoughts and decisions from its first meeting on 11 March; to listen to attendees’ thoughts and ideas; and to work together to produce guidance for education providers. The meeting did not have a specific agenda as the Group did not wish to limit discussion to particular points.

The key decisions document had made a number of commitments about the further guidance and information which the HPC would publish, including Visitors’ guidance and an Approvals Handbook. Both of these had been drafted and would be issued for consultation. However, the Group felt that its remit did not extend to providing further detail on the approvals process, which would be addressed in a separate document. The guidance prepared by the Group would need to fit within, and make cross references to, the existing framework of documentation issued by the HPC, professional bodies and other organisations.

At its first meeting, the Group had felt that the use of the term “curriculum guidance” could lead to misunderstandings about the HPC’s objectives. The Group had noted that professional bodies had a long-standing record of some development of curricula. As the Group’s role extended beyond curriculum guidance, members had decided that it should be re-named. The Group wished to issue general guidance which would make cross-references to documentation issued by professional bodies.

The Policy Manager (Rachel Tripp) had e-mailed representatives of the professional bodies to request information on existing documentation which addressed the SETs. Some professions had a great deal of documentation while others were developing theirs, or had little or none.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The following points were made by attendees:-

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- There was a continuum of professions, ranging from those which had a well-established involvement in curriculum guidance to those which had limited experience. Some professions had worked with the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine to produce a joint curriculum or joint documents, which had become out-dated and fallen into disuse.

- Professional bodies welcomed the opportunity to learn from colleagues and to produce documents which had not previously been available. It was felt that this could be particularly empowering for some of the smaller professions. It was suggested that the HPC should consider issuing a joint statement with each professional body. In response to a question, the Chairman explained that all professions would have an opportunity to respond to the HPC's consultation about draft documentation.

- It was sometimes difficult for a professional body to provide a very detailed curriculum, as it would quickly become out-of-date. Instead, curricula tended to focus on outcomes and professional bodies had timetables for developing curriculum guidance. Attendees recognised that the HPC would link its guidance to existing documentation, to avoid continual consultation on revisions to HPC documentation as curricula and other documents were revised.

The meeting broke into three discussion groups (each comprising members of the Group and representatives of the professional bodies) to discuss how existing documentation met the requirements of the SETs.

POINTS FROM DISCUSSION GROUPS

The discussion groups made detailed notes which were handed in to be fed into the document's development, but as a brief summary they also raised the following issues during the feedback session:-

Cross-referencing

- The framework of guidance should be enabling rather than prescriptive and cross-references should be to specific documents.

- Guidance issued by the HPC should relate to other documents such as the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) benchmark statements and the standards of healthcare education issued by the Ongoing Quality and Enhancement Body (which related to England only).

- Guidance issued by the HPC should make reference to health and disability issues.

- The QAA's documents made reference to carers and a code of ethics and it was felt that the HPC's guidance should also make reference.

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Points in the SETs

2.2.1: The requirement for students to prove a good command of written and spoken English should refer to both UK and international students.

2.2.2: There was uncertainty about the HPC's requirements for criminal convictions checks on registrants. It was explained that the PLG on Health, Disability and Registration appreciated that there was some difficulty and was examining how the HPC could assist education providers.

2.3: The education provider's equal opportunities policy and anti-discriminatory policy should be provided, but also should be up to date.

3 and 4: Needed to be linked and cross-referenced to other documents.

3.1-3.13: Words such as "resources" and "off-site" needed to be defined. The HPC did not wish to recommend levels of resourcing (e.g. staff/student ratios) but it could judge whether a course was appropriately resourced. The nature of provision of programmes was broadening, with some programmes becoming more workplace-based and off-site.

4.1: The programme specification was important to ensure that learning outcomes enabled those completing programmes to meet the Standards of Proficiency.

4.4: The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice, but it was unclear how any curriculum statement could ensure that. Some attendees suggested that Visitors should be expected to be actively engaged with their professional body, although it was pointed out that there were some lay Visitors.

5: It was felt that practice placement standards should be cross-referenced to QAA documents.

5.2: The phrase "appropriately qualified and experienced staff" should be clarified.

5.6: It was felt that it was not always viable for the education provider to maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

6: Assessment standards – current guidelines left this as the responsibility of the education provider. It was felt that joint approval events should include a statement about assessment strategy.

Glossary: The phrase "the process of validation" needed to be clarified and it should be made clear that threshold standards were above those generated by the QAA and professional bodies.

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CONCLUSION

The Policy Manager would re-circulate the table showing how professional bodies' documentation met the SETs and would allow the professional bodies several weeks to complete the information. Information from these tables and the flip-charts used at the meeting would be collated and circulated to members of the Group, before going to representatives of the professional bodies for comment. The members of the Group would then meet to consider the draft guidance, prior to a full consultation on the draft.

In response to a question, the Chairman confirmed that the HPC would acknowledge professional bodies' role in developing guidance. All those individuals who had attended the meeting would be identified in the HPC's documentation, unless they preferred not to be named. The Policy Manager (Rachel Tripp) would e-mail all the attendees to check whether they were content to be named.

Action: RT

DISCUSSION AMONGST PLG MEMBERS

The Group met after the representatives of the professional bodies had left. The group agreed that the day had been useful, and that the representatives from professional bodies had appeared to find it a positive meeting. The Group agreed that the HPC should make it clear that the SETs were used to approve programmes, whilst other documents were 'guidance' and hence indicated a means of meeting the standards.

It was agreed that, once the final version of guidance had been published, a page should be added to the education page of the HPC's website which would contain the latest information about cross-referenced documents.

It was felt that the Group would need to meet perhaps once or twice more.

Date and venue of next meeting: To be advised.

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