

Department of Education & Policy

Approval of Retrospective Qualifications
for Speech and Language Therapists

Executive Summary and Recommendations

1. Introduction

Speech and Language Therapists did not become regulated by the CPSM until October 2000, and thereafter the HPC in April 2002. Prior to this the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) was the professional body under the National Health Service (Speech Therapists) Regulations Act 1974 (previously the 1973 and 1946 Acts). The Statutory Instrument was amended in 1985 as follows: ... *The condition relating to certificates issued by the College of Speech Therapists is extended to provide for recognition of courses of training and examinations by the College as well as for approval by the Secretary of State.*

Over the last twelve months the RCSLT have logged ~600 calls from Speech and Language Therapists (SLTs) who hold a number of qualifications (approved under the NHS Acts 1974 and 1985) and a RCSLT Certificate to Practice, and who wished to come onto the HPC Register. This group of professionals had taken career breaks and hence were not registered with the CPSM during the eligible period of the previous 18 months and were therefore not entitled to automatically transfer over to the HPC Register.

There are two problems for this group:

- 1.1 Due to fact that they were a) not registered with the CPSM and that b) no speech and language therapy qualification taken prior to 1 October 2000 had been recognised by the HPC, members of this group have been unable to register through the approved UK qualification route and have been advised to pay £200 to apply through grandparenting. This is despite the fact that they already hold a qualification recognised under the aforementioned legislation specific to Speech Therapy. Up to 500 of the 600 callers above have expressed an interest to register immediately if they could do so through Article 9 (2) (a) (ii) ie holds an approved qualification but needs additional education, training and experience, rather than Article (13) ie grandparenting.
- 1.2 In addition to the above approximately half of this group are unable to submit an application to register with the HPC until after the grandparenting window is closed due to career breaks and a requirement to undergo additional education, training and experience under Article 19 (3). This time-limit restriction applies if the only route through which these potential registrants could apply is via grandparenting.

If the qualifications approved under the previous legislation were retrospectively approved by the HPC then those holding such qualifications could apply to be registered through Article 9 (2) (a) (ii), including those who could not apply until after the transitional period was closed. In all cases

Article 19 (3) would pertain i.e. to undertake additional education, training or experience as per the HPC's current policy. Thus both issues 1 and 2 detailed above would be addressed.

2. Decision

The Committee is asked to agree:

that the qualifications contained in the attached spreadsheet (see Appendix 1), which were approved under previous statutory legislation, be retrospectively approved as acceptable qualifications for entry to the SLT Register and that Article 19 (3) would pertain in all cases.

Following a review of the curriculum of such qualifications, carried out by the RCSLT in conjunction with the relevant registrant SLT member of Council, the attached letter (appendix 2) from the RCSLT, dated 13 January 2005, clearly identifies that there are no substantive changes in the content of these qualifications in respect of the HPC's Standards of Proficiency compared to the current BSc(Hons), other than expected programme improvements, which areas would be addressed by the necessity for additional education, training or experience required under Article 19 (3).

3. Background information

Under the 1974 NHS Act, RCSLT had the authority to issue a Certificate to Practice to those who had undertaken an approved programme. These programmes were inspected and approved by RCSLT as the accrediting and regulating body. Many of them were called BSc(Hons), but other award titles included BA, BEd, MedSci, MA, MSc and prior to circa 1980, a Diploma in SLT. They were all however accredited by RCSLT and were therefore judged to be of the same standard. There is therefore no reason why therapists with these qualifications should not meet the HPC Standards of Proficiency since they hold the same qualifications as SLTs currently on the HPC Register, subject to the requirements specified in Article 19 (3). RCSLT has recently supplied HPC with a complete list of the names, qualification dates, titles, and higher education institutions at which the qualification was obtained, of all such persons. Analysis undertaken by RCSLT suggests that there could be as many as 1500 (see Appendix 3).

4. Resource implications

There are no resource implications.

5. Financial implications

There are no financial implications..

6. Background papers

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Spreadsheet of the qualifications which were approved under previous statutory legislation, and which the Committee is requested to retrospectively approve as acceptable for entry onto the SLT part of the HPC Register, and that Article 19 (3) should pertain in all cases.

Appendix 2: Letter from the RCSLT identifying that there are no substantive changes to the listed qualifications.

Appendix 3: Analysis of lapsed membership for graduates 1975-2000

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