

Professional Liaison Group for the review of the standards of education and training, 23 November 2015

Theme: Link to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics – Proposed amendments

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The first phase of the standards of education and training (SETs) review has comprised a range of research and engagement activities to gather the views of stakeholders on the existing standards and accompanying guidance. This feedback has been synthesised into a number of key themes.

This paper focuses on the link between the SETs and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE), which has been identified as a theme for consideration by the PLG.

At its meeting in September 2015, the PLG considered a paper which summarised feedback from stakeholders and initial considerations from the Executive. This second paper builds on those considerations and discussions among PLG members at the last meeting and makes recommendations for amendments to the SETs and supporting guidance.

Decision

The PLG is invited to discuss this paper and to consider the Executive's recommendations in section 4 and the proposed amendments in Appendix 1.

Background information

See paper.

The current versions of the SETs and supporting guidance have been supplied separately as documents to note.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposed revised SET 4.5 and supporting guidance

Date of paper

11 November 2015

Theme: Link to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics – Proposed amendments

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is the second of two papers prepared for the PLG on the theme of the link between the standards of education and training (SETs) and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE).
- 1.2 This paper proposes specific amendments to the SETs and supporting guidance aimed at strengthening and clarifying the link to the SCPE.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting in September 2015, the PLG considered a paper¹ which set out the following:
 - the current approach taken in the SETs to ensure that the SCPE are taught and understood during the programme;
 - a summary of stakeholder feedback on related topics gathered during the review;
 - an overview of approaches taken by other UK health and social care professional regulators; and
 - initial considerations for the group.
- 2.2 The Executive recommended that a second paper be prepared for a subsequent meeting to propose some specific amendments to SET 4.5 and supporting guidance – which currently provides the most explicit link to the SCPE – and potentially to other standards.

3. Summary of PLG discussions

- 3.1 At its meeting in September 2015, the PLG agreed with the Executive's view that the link between the SETs and the SCPE needs to be strengthened, and that the guidance as currently written can be misleading in its emphasis on reading lists.
- 3.2 During discussions at that meeting, PLG members said that ethics are fundamental to education in health and care professions, as ethical behaviour is a key part of being fit to practise. PLG members felt that the SCPE should

¹ The previous paper from the September 2015 meeting of the PLG can be accessed here: <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/assets/documents/10004CF4Enc04-ThemeLinktothestandardsofconductperformanceandethicsFindingsandinitialconsiderations.pdf>

be referred to throughout the standards, for example in SET 2 on admissions, and in particular highlighted in SET 5 on practice placements.

- 3.3 Members noted that the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) education standards contain a form of words which may be appropriate to adapt to the SETs. The document 'Future Pharmacists' sets out requirements against which the GPhC approve education and training for student pharmacists and pre-registration trainee pharmacists. Under Standard 1 – Patient and public safety, criterion 1.1 states:

'There must be effective systems in place to ensure that students and trainees...understand what is and what is not professional behaviour and are familiar with the GPhC's Code of conduct for pharmacy students and Standards of conduct, ethics and performance.'

The evidence required to meet this standard includes evidence that the Code for pharmacy students and the standards are used to promote professional conduct; as well as summary outcomes of student fitness to practise hearings.

4. Executive recommendations

- 4.1 Based on feedback from stakeholders, discussion at the last PLG meeting and consideration of other regulators' standards, we are proposing that SET 4.5 and supporting guidance should be amended to clarify expectations and to further integrate the SCPE in approved programmes. Our proposal for an amended standard and supporting guidance is set out in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The key proposed changes include:
- Changing the standard to say 'programme' rather than 'curriculum' so as not to restrict how the SCPE might be incorporated;
 - Broadening the wording of the standard to cover 'expectations of professional behaviour' more generally, in addition to the SCPE themselves;
 - Providing additional information in the guidance about the rationale behind the standard;
 - Removing reference to reading lists in order to take out undue emphasis on documentation as a way of meeting the standard; and
 - Adding reference to the 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' within the main text of the guidance.
- 4.3 Our governing legislation sets out clearly the role of the SETs in delivering the standards of proficiency (SOPs). Such a clear link does not exist however between the SETs and the SCPE. Previous legal advice has been that the SETs cannot place an explicit requirement on education providers to ensure that qualifying students meet the SCPE. However, we believe that an in-depth, practical understanding of the ethical and professional obligations expressed in the SCPE is a vital outcome of education and training. Our proposed amendments are an attempt to express this more clearly.

4.4 In addition, we recommend the following:

- The guidance under SET 3.16 (on having a process in place for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct) should clarify that an education provider's assessment of a student's profession-related conduct should take the SCPE into consideration. This is consistent with the advice provided in the Guidance on health and character².
- Reference to the SCPE and link to SET 4.5 should be included in the guidance under SET 6.3 (on professional aspects of practice being integral to assessment procedures). This standard may need further examination to make sure it is clear and consistent with SET 4.5.

4.5 We agree that the SCPE are relevant to practice placements as well as the theory-based taught parts of a programme. Comments from stakeholders have indicated that it is often in the placement setting that conduct issues come to light which have not been picked up in the classroom setting. We will explore ways of incorporating reference to the SCPE and ethical and conduct issues in the standards on practice placements (SET 5) at a future meeting of the PLG.

4.6 The question of referencing ethical or 'values-based' considerations in the standards on admissions (SET 2) is also addressed in a separate paper.

5. PLG considerations

5.1 The PLG is invited to consider the recommendations above and the amended standard and guidance set out in Appendix 1. In addition we would welcome any other comments, reflections or proposed amendments from the group.

5.2 The group is encouraged to consider these in light of the key principles behind development and use of the standards and guidance. In particular, the SETs should:

- be set at the **threshold** level, to ensure that education and training programmes provide students with skills and understanding to practise safely and effectively and to meet the SOPs for their profession;
- be **flexible**, in that we aim to minimise prescription and to enable education providers to meet the standards in the way they consider most effective and appropriate (given institutional and professional considerations);
- be **meaningful**, clear and useful to education providers and other stakeholders; and
- reflect **existing provision** within education and training programmes, or be realistic or reasonable as requirements.

² Available on our website: <http://www.hcpc-uk.org/publications/brochures/index.asp?id=220>

Appendix 1 – Proposed revised SET 4.5 and supporting guidance

4.5 The programme must make sure that students learn about the expectations of professional behaviour and understand the implications of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Guidance

We want to make sure that students who complete approved programmes are familiar with and understand the expectations associated with being a regulated professional.

The HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics are broad standards that apply to everyone on our Register and those applying for registration. They set out our expectations regarding a professional's behaviour and cover their ethics, decision-making, communication and interaction with service users, carers, colleagues and others. The ability to meet the standards of conduct, performance and ethics is an integral part of being fit to practise.

We will want to see how the programme gives students the opportunity to learn about professional behaviour and to develop an understanding of which types of behaviour are appropriate for a professional and which are not. You will need to ensure that students are aware of their obligations to meet the standards of conduct, performance and ethics when they qualify and apply for registration with the HCPC, as well as throughout their future professional practice. This should include learning about practical application of the standards.

We do not prescribe how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics should be covered during the programme (for example, we do not require a dedicated module on ethics). However we expect the standards to play a prominent and structured role in the curriculum of a programme.

We have produced 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' to help students understand how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics apply to them.

Please also see SET 3.16 for guidance on dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Example questions

- How does the programme ensure students are prepared for the professional and ethical obligations of practising their chosen profession?

Other sources of guidance

HCPC, Standards of conduct, performance and ethics
HCPC, Guidance on conduct and ethics for students