
Consultation document

Consultation on revisions to the standards of education and training

November 2025 – February 2026

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Foreword

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)'s standards of education and training (SETs) are central to ensuring high-quality education and training across the 15 professions we regulate. The implementation and quality assurance activity against these standards forms a core part of how we protect the public. Through education providers ensuring learners meet our professional standards, we are able to help prevent unsafe or ineffective care in the future. The SETs set out how education providers must prepare learners to meet our professional standards, ensuring programmes are properly organised, outcome-focused and aligned with public protection.

This consultation presents our proposed revisions to the SETs. It has been developed through extensive engagement with education providers, learners, service users, professional bodies, and internal HCPC teams. We have also convened expert panels with external stakeholders on key themes including equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), simulation in learning, technologies such as artificial intelligence, and different models of learning.

Drawing on our pre-consultation engagement, we propose a revised set of SETs. Following consultation, we will analyse the responses and finalise the revised SETs. Once any changes have been approved by Council, we will begin a period of implementation to ensure that any revisions to the SETs are adequately understood, and that stakeholders are fully prepared for the revised SETs coming into force. We will then update the supplementary guidance to reflect the revised SETs.

The proposed revisions aim to:

- ensure that all learners receive high-quality and fair education experiences, regardless of the learner's route into the profession;
- strengthen the standards to better support education providers in preparing learners for safe and effective practice;
- improve clarity and usability through structural changes, including a formal split between institution-level and programme-level standards;
- embed equality, diversity and inclusion across the standards to strengthen EDI across all aspects of education provision;
- future-proof the standards, particularly in the context of rapidly evolving technology (such as artificial intelligence); and

- ensure alignment with other HCPC standards and support implementation by education providers.

We are grateful to the stakeholders who have contributed to this review as part of our pre-consultation engagement. Their insights have shaped the proposed changes and helped us identify areas where the standards can better support inclusive, future-focused and high-quality education.

This consultation sets out the proposed revisions to the SETs and invites feedback from all stakeholders. Your views will help us refine the standards before final publication in 2026.

Introduction

The HCPC's statutory role is to protect the public by regulating healthcare professionals in the UK. We promote high-quality professional practice by:

- setting standards for education, training and practice;
- approving education programmes;
- maintaining a register of professionals who meet our standards; and
- acting when professionals do not meet our standards.

The SETs set out how education providers must prepare learners for professional practice. They ensure that education providers are properly organised to deliver high-quality education and training. This consultation follows extensive pre-consultation engagement with stakeholders, expert panels, and internal research.

The consultation

This consultation seeks the views of our stakeholders on the draft revised standards of education and training (SETs). The SETs are a core part of our regulatory framework and set out how education providers must prepare learners for professional practice. They ensure that programmes are properly organised, outcome-focused and aligned with public protection.

The SETs are important to a wide range of stakeholders, including education providers, learners, service users, professional bodies and employers. They are also essential to how the HCPC carries out its work as a regulator, particularly in approving and monitoring education and training programmes to ensure those who complete programmes meet our requirements for registration.

Regular reviews of the SETs are essential to ensure they reflect current practice in education and training, support innovation in education and align with our strategic priorities – including those set out in our Corporate Strategy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. This review also responds to developments in technology, and the increasing diversity of education delivery models.

In this document you will find information about the proposed changes to the SETs, the rationale behind them and how to respond to this consultation. The proposed revised standards are published in this document and on our website.

The consultation will run for 13 weeks from early November 2025 to early February 2026. We welcome responses from all stakeholders and will use your feedback to refine the standards before final publication in 2026.

The standards of education and training review

The standards of education and training (SETs) require periodic review to ensure they remain relevant, accessible, and fit for purpose. The last full review of the SETs was completed in 2017. In March 2024 we began the next review of the SETs, as part of our wider programme of standards development and improvement.

The review includes six key stages:

- **Phase 1: Mobilisation and research**

This involved identifying the scope of the review, establishing our stakeholder groups and engagement plan, and continuing to conduct research throughout the review. The research aspect of this phase continues to run throughout the review.

- **Phase 2: Listening and gathering insights**

This phase ran from May to August 2024. We scoped review topics, gathered insights from a variety of stakeholders and sought views from them on the current standards.

- **Phase 3: Formulating proposals with our stakeholders**

This phase ran from August 2024 to April 2025. We shared initial ideas with stakeholders and received feedback on them. We used our expert panels to gain views on each topic and reflections on outcomes for the review. The equality impact assessment was also updated.

- **Phase 4: Preparing consultation**

This is our current phase. We have prepared the revised standards for consultation. The consultation will be open for a period of 13 weeks from November 2025. We will undertake various communications and engagement activities to encourage responses to the consultation.

- **Phase 5: Consultation analysis and finalising changes**

This phase will begin early 2026. It will include a full analysis of the consultation responses we have received, as well as updates to the equality impact assessment.

● **Phase 6: Implementation**

We propose that this phase will take place over a period of around 12 months, and we have included questions within the consultation on how long this period should be. We will be communicating any changes to all relevant stakeholders, and reflecting on the impact of the changes and of the review.

Throughout the review we have engaged extensively with internal and external stakeholders, including education providers, learners, service users, professional bodies and HCPC colleagues. Through our engagement, we have aimed to understand:

- how the SETs are used by stakeholders in practice;
- what changes in education and health and care delivery should be reflected in the standards;
- any concerns or challenges stakeholders have with the current standards; and
- how sector-wide developments, such as technological changes and workforce pressures, impact the application of the SETs.

As part of our pre-consultation activity we conducted desk research, hosted five workshops (with the education team, education providers, learners and service users), convened five expert panels on four key themes (EDI, technology (including AI), different models of learning and simulation in learning), and ran a stakeholder survey. These activities helped us identify key themes and areas to develop and change our standards. The central themes included:

- embedding equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of education;
- supporting diverse models of learning, including apprenticeships and employer-led programmes;
- ensuring fair and safe practice-based learning environments;
- promoting ethical and effective use of technologies, including artificial intelligence and simulation;
- strengthening partnership governance and accountability; and
- improving the clarity, accessibility and usability of the standards.
- These themes have shaped the proposed revisions to the SETs. The changes aim to ensure the standards remain high-level and outcome-focused, while being applied across a wide range of education settings and delivery models.

Key proposed changes

There are currently 52 standards in the current SETs. We propose a varying degree of change to all 52 of the existing standards (including merging some standards), and the addition of five new standards. This results in a revised set of 46 proposed standards. The proposed revisions can be summarised as follows:

- 17 standards with major revisions, such as introducing stronger expectations or incorporating the purposes of another existing standard;
- 15 standards with moderate revisions, such as clarifying expectations or making the standard more outcome focused;
- 8 standards with minor revisions, like adjusting language to be more active or aligned with other standards;
- 12 standards 'removed' by being incorporated into another standard; and
- 5 new standards on use of technology and competency, staff support, feedback to learners and evidence-based design.

The key changes to the standards are summarised below.

1. Key structural revisions

We have formalised the institution and programme split within the standards to clearly distinguish where the standards sit, and to support accountability and implementation across different parts of the organisation. We have also created new thematic groupings for the standards, reordering them and grouping them into themes that reflect a logical sequence based upon how programmes are developed and delivered.

We are also proposing a new foreword to the standards, which will complement them and help education providers interpret and apply them. The glossary has also been updated to reflect the proposed changes to the standards. The guidance will also be updated to reflect any changes made.

2. Changes to SET 1

We have moved the normally-expected qualifications from the wording of this standard into the guidance. We have also provided further clarity by outlining new criteria to determine equivalent qualifications that could be accepted. We are not proposing to change the requirements for minimum qualifications.

3. Strengthening our standards in relation to diverse education delivery models

We have drafted proposed revisions which will apply equally across traditional or non-traditional programmes. We have not created separate standards for specific models of learning. Instead, the revised SETs embed expectations that are applicable across all contexts, supported by guidance and examples where needed.

4. Clarifying our standards around technology usage

We have introduced standards to frame our expectations around the appropriate, ethical, and effective use of technology. We have also amended existing standards to encourage the considered integration of technology in education.

5. Embedding EDI within the standards

We have revised the standards with respect to creating a more active and directive approach to EDI issues in education and training. We have embedded EDI throughout the standards to ensure that it is not treated as a standalone issue but is embedded across the design, delivery and culture of programmes.

Consultation supporting documents

To support understanding of the proposed changes, we have produced a document that outlines each revision to the standards and the rationale behind them. The full draft revised standards of education and training are available in this consultation document and on our website.

We welcome your feedback on the proposed changes and look forward to engaging with your views. Your input will help us ensure the revised SETs support high-quality, inclusive and future-ready education for the professions we regulate. Below, you will find a set of questions to guide your response to the consultation.

Consultation questions

Q1: What effect has the revised structure (including the institution/programme split and glossary) had on the accessibility and understanding of the standards? Please explain your reasons as to why things have improved or not.

(Worsened it / No change / Improved it / Don't know)

Q2: How well do the revised standards support the embedding of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of education and training, and where could further improvements be made?

(Believe they worsen the embedding of EDI / Neutral / Believe they support the embedding of EDI / Don't know)

Q3: Do the revised standards take the right approach to supporting inclusive education and training and addressing barriers to access, participation and course completion? Please explain your reasoning.

(Disagree that they take the right approach / Neutral / Believe that they take the right approach / Don't know)

Q4: Do the revised standards set out sufficient expectations for providers on the appropriate role of technology in education? How could they be further improved?

(Disagree that they set out sufficient expectations / Neutral / Agree that they set out sufficient expectations / Don't know)

Q5: Are the revised standards applicable to all models of learning, including apprenticeships, blended learning and employer-led programmes? Please explain any gaps you believe to be present.

(Applicable to none / Applicable to some / Applicable to all)

Q6: Are the expectations around partnership working and shared governance clear and appropriate for all settings where programmes are delivered? What could be improved?

(Disagree that they are clear and appropriate / Neutral / Agree that they are clear and appropriate / Don't know)

Q7: Are there any aspects of the revised standards that could result in equality and diversity implications for groups or individuals based on protected characteristics, as defined by the Equality Act 2010?

- ☐ Age
- ☐ Disability
- ☐ Gender reassignment
- ☐ Marriage and civil partnership
- ☐ Pregnancy and maternity
- ☐ Ethnicity
- ☐ Religion or belief
- ☐ Sex
- ☐ Sexual orientation

Q8: What challenges, if any, do you foresee in implementing the proposed revised standards within your organisation or sector?

Q9: Once any changes to the standards are finalised, how long would your organisation need to implement the changes?

Q10: Do you have additional comments, concerns, or recommendations about the proposed revisions to the standards of education and training not already discussed above?