

1. **Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), 1995, Seminar by the Disability Rights Commission (DCR) 20 January 2003**

This was a seminar for "Qualifications Bodies" on how DDA would be extended in 2004 and the implications for bodies such as HPC.

Inclusion on HPC's Register constitutes a "qualification" for the purposes of the DDA. This has two implications. The first is that how the Education and Training Committee (ETC) use their powers around good health for entry onto and staying on an approved course falls under the Act. The second is that HPC's conduct proceedings if applied to a disabled registrant might create different circumstances (but probably not where only matters of fact were at issue).

In both cases it will be for the Conduct and Competence Committee to initiate action under the relevant power in the Order. ETC will then implement it in the terms emerging from the outcome of the consultation exercise, (which is that HPC as a whole will use only one standard here and apply it consistently and universally, and that it should be an overarching standard not a detailed prescriptive one).

DDA specifically does not require HPC to "adjust" "competency standards" on behalf of disabled registrants or prospective registrants. The Government's very clear intention is to maintain the integrity of professions and of a single competency standard for all practitioners.

The DDA may give rise to some "reasonable adjustments" to the practice of the professions by employers. This would have implications for funding agencies' judgements on "fitness for purpose", which may in turn have (beneficial) implications for how ETC exercises its health powers in due course.

The single largest new factor for DRC emerged as being the role of funding agencies in health care professions where they made judgements on "fitness for purpose", which acted as the main driver for HEIs' decisions at admission to courses. This is a quite different situation from the regime at the funding councils and DRC undertook to look carefully at DH and Workforce Development Confederations in England.

In discussion with the other AHP professional bodies also at the seminar, it seemed that current practice in education and training for the professions regulated under the HPO is already broadly in compliance with DDA. This current implicit position will need to be made explicit and aligned with new Codes in due course.

2. **QAA Seminar on Programme Specifications on 18 December 2002**

This was a very useful up-date on how Programme Specifications (PS) have developed to date. I was able to put on record that PSs would not of themselves meet ETC's requirements for information about courses. They would be a very useful tool to help the Committee (and visitors). It emerged that PSs would not be consistent between HEIs but could diverge between different purposes (eg. contract with students, QA tool, appendix to prospectus, and others).

3. **Learning & Teaching Support Network Advisory Board Meeting
21 November 2002**

The minutes of this meeting were published on 23 January 2003.

I was not able to attend, but the minutes show the following points of interest :

- Professor Anne de Looy (Head of the Department of Dietetics at Queen Margaret University College), and Prof. Sue Frost (the Dean for the health programmes at the University of Huddersfield) are now involved with the board,
- LTSN has deliberately re-aligned its scope to cover all the professions at HPC,
- Subject advisers have been recruited for the Arts Therapies and Paramedicine, and
- LTSN continues to collaborate also with the Health & Care Professions Education Forum.

4. **White Paper on " The Future of Higher Education "**

On 22 January 2003 the Department for Education and Skills published a White Paper on " The Future of Higher Education ".

In fact, it deals exclusively with provision in England funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. There are no direct references to Department of Health (DH) funded courses and just one oblique reference to DH liaising more effectively with HEFCE. There is, in fact, a DH / HEFCE forum where this can take place.

The only directly registrable qualifications which fall within the scope of the White Paper are for the Arts Therapists. Biomedical Science falls more broadly within its scope. This will be reported to the next Council meeting as a consultation received and dealt with there.

5. **DJ / QAA (Final) Prototype Reviews Steering Group Meeting 31 January 2003**

ETC members had all apologised for absence or had travel problems. The Secretary attended for a very constructive meeting which effectively remitted all the work and issues to the new DH Partnership working arrangements. The most interesting development was the proposal to extend discussion of the scope of these arrangements to all health provision in due course.