

Brochure for Institutions seeking to Start a new Course

Introduction

The Health Professions Council (HPC) is the new regulator whose duty is to safeguard the health and well-being of anyone using or needing the services of the 12 health care professions it regulates.

HPC approves entry routes (courses, qualifications, and institutions) for registration in the following professions :

- Arts Therapies (Art, Music and Dramatherapy)
- Biomedical Science
- Clinical Science
- Dietetics
- Occupational Therapy
- Orthoptics
- Paramedic Practice / Paramedicine
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry / Chiropody
- Prosthetics & Orthotics
- Radiography (Diagnostic and Therapeutic), and
- Speech & Language Therapy.

HPC will be pleased to discuss the process of approving a new institution, course or qualification with any actual or prospective education and training provider in these professions in the UK.

Pre- and Post-Registration Courses

At present HPC is only approving courses which lead to initial entry on the Register ("pre-Registration"). Institutions seeking accreditation for Continuing Professional Development courses should contact the relevant professional body in the first instance. [Add list here, or cross reference to elsewhere ?]

Criteria

Having consulted widely, HPC has set criteria that any prospective pre-registration education and training will need to meet the following criteria :-

1. **Meet the various Standards of Education and Training set by the Council**

HPC sets Standards of Proficiency for safe and effective practice for each Part of the Register (ie. each profession) and standards of Education and Training to enable students / trainees to meet the Standards of Proficiency upon successful completion of the entry route. These standards will include rigorous assessment procedures.

The Council then sets standards for the outcomes of approved entry routes.

The Council also sets standards for institutions to be " properly organised and equipped for conducting the whole or part of an approved course of education and training ". These standards will include accommodation, equipment, learning and pastoral support for students, adequate placement education, financial soundness, and, perhaps most importantly, an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff.

The Standards of Proficiency, of Education and Training, and for institutions' suitability are available from the Council and can be found on our web site. The outcome standards have been accepted as the Subject Benchmarks for the relevant professions as published by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), or equivalent documentation if no Subject Benchmark (yet) exists.

HPC places great store by the proper integration of academic and clinical components of a course and a multi-professional approach to the design and delivery of provision where appropriate.

Any course applying for approval at HPC must be able to meet all these standards. These standards have all been produced collaboratively or in consultation with :

- HPC (or its predecessor bodies),
- the relevant professional bodies,
- the Department of Health, and
- the QAA or Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

2. Be Prepared to accept external Scrutiny and Evaluation

Key features of modernised education and training and professional self-regulation include :

- consistency over time and across the UK,
- transparency,
- accountability,
- collaboration, and
- comparability.

HPC, the professional bodies, and QAA (and the Commission for Health Improvement and Audit (CHIA) prospectively) are charged with setting and maintaining educational standards on a UK-wide basis. Courses seeking approval must be prepared to be scrutinised, visited, and reviewed to ensure compliance with these standards.

The process of ensuring this compliance is a collaborative developmental one which also includes any body commissioning or funding the provision. Entirely privately funded provision still falls under the remit of either QAA or QCA for quality assurance purposes.

HPC places a special premium on evidence provided in confidence by students.

How HPC will exercise its external evaluation powers in detail, and do so collaboratively with the other stakeholders, is set out in [SET and other documents].

You may also like to look at QAA's procedures for Academic Review or CHIA's for audit to gain a flavour of how this sort of activity is conducted and the implications for your institution. HPC's visitors will operate in a similar way by scrutinising documents in advance, visiting sites and meeting staff and students. Visits will be undertaken at the start of a course, at periodic intervals, at major change and if HPC feels a visit is needed. Visits are supported by on-going monitoring.

3. Meet the Definition of a "Competent Authority" under European Directives

Any institution wishing to deliver education and training and award qualifications leading to eligibility for state registration must meet the definition of a Competent Authority. This definition is not set by HPC but by European Law and means that a regulated profession's entry qualifications must be awarded by bodies approved by government for that purpose. The term for such bodies is "competent authority". In the UK this covers all higher education institutions which are approved by Parliament and the Privy Council and fall under the remit of the Quality Assurance Agency. It also includes any institution falling under the aegis of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Only education institutions fitting these criteria can therefore be designated as Competent Authorities and award appropriate qualifications.

4. Conform to Admissions Criteria for Students

HPC operates a policy of working with the other stakeholders (eg. the course authorities for academic requirements and the commissioning bodies for good health and good character) within the broad guidance of :

- evidence of relevant academic accomplishment and aptitude (whether at A level / Scottish Highers or degree level as appropriate for the profession),
- a robust Accreditation of Prior Learning and Experience policy,
- an ability to complete the course, and
- suitability to work in the public sector after qualification (by specific reference to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act).

The aim of HPC requirements on admissions is to work with other stakeholders to ensure that appropriately qualified and motivated students will be admitted to courses against criteria which are as inclusive as possible. HPC is, however, anxious to prevent courses from enrolling students who, for whatever reason, cannot either complete the course or practise the profession, and where that could have been predicted.

Courses must have coherent and consistent and appropriate threshold admissions criteria in order to meet the requirements of European Law for regulated professions.

5. Preserve the Integrity of Awards

Any award made which is intended to lead to eligibility for state registration must demonstrate consistency of appropriate standards both over time and by comparison with other equivalent UK awards.

Awards not based on rigorous assessment procedures cannot be approved by HPC. This will include the number of allowable "resits" of any exams or assessments.

The award must also be appropriate for the profession concerned and the academic level at which it is taught. An award must not confuse the public as to the proficiency of its holder.

Process

Institutions wishing to collaborate with HPC to gain approval for a course (and qualification) should write formally to the Secretary of the Education and Training Committee (address below). The Secretary will then refer the request to the appropriate [JVC – title to change]. This [JVC] will nominate a member to work with you towards an approval. At the same time other relevant stakeholders (who will be different profession by profession and country by country) will also need to be working with you to concert all the various approvals needed, develop resources, and integrate procedures.

You will have a named contact officer and contact member of the profession expert in education and training to assist you in the approval process.

Sources of Advice

Additional advice on the profession, on quality assurance procedures, on regulatory matters, on European Law, and on higher education can be obtained from the following sources :

- the relevant professional body,
- Quality Assurance Agency,
- Council for the Regulation of Healthcare Professionals (after [date to follow]),
- National Co-ordinators for Directives EEC 87/48 (at DTI) and 92/51 (at DfES),
- the representative bodies for post-secondary education (Universities UK, the Standing Conference of Principals, the Association of Colleges, Open Learning Foundation [check name], and
- UK Health Departments and, in England, the Work Force Development Confederations and, in Wales, Health Professions Wales.

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