

Education and Training Committee 27 September 2007

Update on process for complaints made about educational programmes

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

There is currently no public process for complaints made about educational courses. At present, the Education and Training Committee investigates an approved programme from the outset if any information is received about which may call into question whether it should be approved.

Ensuring that a programme which has been approved by HPC continues to meet our standards is a vital part of our role in protecting the public. Approving programmes is how the HPC ensures that those who are admitted to the Register via the UK-approved course route (the majority of our applicants) have the professional knowledge and skills required in order to practise safely and effectively.

The primary way by which HPC ensures these programmes continue to meet the Standards of Education and Training, and that those completing the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency, is via the Annual Monitoring process, and the Major / Minor change process. However, it is also recognised that additional information about an approved programme may be received via other means. This information may come from a variety of sources, from students, to practice placement educators, to others.

This paper is to update the Committee on the research the Executive is conducting to establish a clear and transparent process to consider information received. The process should balance the need to disregard information which is not related to how a programme meets the Standards of Education and Training, or information which is not relevant to the regulator, with the need to take action if it appears that a programme which appears on the Register of Approved Courses does not meet HPC's standards.

Update

The Executive is currently analysing the nature of the complaints about educational programmes we have already received. We are also mindful that any future procedure will be about educational programmes and should not encourage people to identify an individual, or imply that course leaders will always be subject to fitness to practise proceedings if a complaint is received about their course.

We have started to collate background information from a variety of sources such as the Office of Independent Adjudicator (and their national equivalents), the

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), other regulators, Higher Education Institutions and the Healthcare Commission to ensure that any future proposal for a complaints procedure will work in conjunction with the current procedures and follows best practice. The Executive is looking to present the findings and recommendations from this research at the next Committee meeting on the 4th December 2007.

We are currently conducting further research. This includes:

- Guidance for education providers and complainants in line with the proposed procedure to ensure that complainants use the most appropriate route;
- The criteria required to ensure that any complaint has been through all other relevant complaints processes;
- Possible outcomes from a complaint;
- The criteria for determining the suitable outcome from the complaint;
- Procedures for dealing with urgent cases;
- More information on how a directed Visit would be undertaken; and
- The Council's legal responsibilities under the Order if programme approval may be withdrawn.

The Executive welcomes any input that members of the Committee can give in the development of any complaints procedure, and will individually contact those who express an interest before any proposal is put before the Committee.

Decision

The Committee is requested to note the document. No decision is required.

Background information

A paper 'Process for complaints made about educational programmes' was put to the Committee on the 12th June 2007. The Committee considered the paper and requested the Executive to conduct further research.

Resource implications

The project to establish this process and to do further work on the detailed operational requirements forms part of the workplans for the relevant departments for this financial year.

Financial implications

None

Appendices

None

Date of paper

17th September 2007

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2007-09-17	a	POL	PPR	Process for complaints about educational programmes	Draft DD: None	Public RD: None