

Education and Training Committee, 11 June 2020

Update on timeline for public consultation on SET 1 for Operating Department Practitioners

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

In March ETC, we set out our approach to date on ODP SET 1 and proposed to consult on changing this to degree level. We provided a timeline for the process and set out a public consultation window between January and March 2021. ETC has asked the Policy and Standards team to explore the possibility of moving this consultation forward to Q3 of the 2020-2021 financial year.

The Policy and Standards Team has begun the initial stakeholder engagement work with education providers and a summary of findings from this survey is included in this paper. While the survey is just an initial piece of work, it highlights the importance of further engagement before a full consultation is launched. In particular it shows the importance of approaching the consultation in a way that recognises the position of the four countries and their unique workforce needs.

This paper provides an overview of the early engagement we have had with education providers and how this information is being used to shape our planned consultation. In addition, the paper sets out the factors we considered in the timing of our consultation, including the existing commitments of the team and how the SET 1 ODP consultation interacts with projects the team has already prioritized. The paper also sets out the impact of COVID-19 and the steps we are taking to reduce the risk of consultation fatigue on stakeholders.

During the presentation of our paper to SMT in May 2020, discussion focused on ensuring that we worked proactively to address differences in approach across the four nations. Ahead of ETC we have begun to engage with stakeholders who can provide insight into the decisions taken in Scotland relating to education standards for ODPs. Through these engagements we aim to understand the workforce and other needs in different parts of the UK which will inform our process going forward.

Decision

ETC is invited to approve this paper.

Resource implications

Resource implications are factored into the Policy and Standards workplan for 2020-21.

Financial implications

Financial implications are factored into the Policy and Standards workplan for 2020-21.

Appendices

Appendix A - Update on timeline for public consultation on SET 1 for Operating Department Practitioners

Appendix B – Profile of pre-registration ODP programmes (as of 30 January 2020)

Date of paper

03.06.2020

Update on timeline for public consultation on SET 1 for Operating Department Practitioners

In our March paper, we set out our approach to date on ODP SET 1 and proposed to consult on increasing this to degree level. We provided a timeline for the process and set out a public consultation window between January and March 2021. ETC has asked the Policy and Standards team to explore the possibility of moving this consultation forward to Q3 of the 2020-2021 financial year.

This paper provides an overview of the early engagement we have had with education providers and how this information is being used to shape our planned consultation. In addition, the paper sets out the factors we considered to decide on the proposed consultation date, including the impact of COVID-19, and other priority projects being taken forward by the Policy and Standards team.

Establishing the views of stakeholders

At the last ETC meeting we discussed doing some early stakeholder engagement to assess support in the sector for the change to BSc (Hons) and what support would be required to implement any change. This will allow us to fast track implementation.

We have commenced engagement by surveying the attitudes of ODP education providers to the proposed change to SET 1. The survey was sent out to 25 education providers who have ODP courses and we received 14 responses.

This initial phase of engagement has highlighted the importance of further engagement before a full consultation is launched. In particular it shows the importance of approaching the consultation in a way that recognises the position of the four countries and their unique workforce needs. We will reflect on this and revise our consultation approach accordingly.

Of the respondents, three are based in Scotland while the remaining 11 are based in England. The survey included 10 questions to gauge the appetite of education providers for a new SET1 for ODPs and to establish when education providers would be able to meet new standards, taking into account any barriers they foresee in implementation.

Programme levels currently offered by education providers

Of the 14 respondents, six education providers already provide at BSc (Hons) level only while the remaining respondents provide a mixture of DipHE, BSc and BSc

(Hons). Just over 70% of all respondents already offer BSc (Hons) qualifications for ODPs.

Support for the proposed change to BSc or BSc (Hons) only provision

77% (n=10) of respondents were strongly supportive of a change to BSc or BSc (Hons) delivery only.

While there is strong overall support, there is a notable discrepancy between providers in England and in Scotland, with all Scottish respondents opposing a move to BSc (Hons) only. There is currently only one provider of ODP programmes in Scotland, which offers the course at Diploma level. The support shown in this survey is also a reflection of the number of ODP programmes in England as compared to Scotland. This discrepancy can be seen when viewing the roughly 14,500 ODP registrants by home country, where 13,000 are registered in England and just 424 in Scotland. The survey did not receive responses from any providers in Wales or Northern Ireland and we will have to be mindful of the different approaches in different parts of the UK as this process progresses.

Scottish providers noted that the current provision in Scotland is a result of a recent consultation between providers and NHS Education Scotland (NES), which responds to Scotland's workforce needs relating to ODPs. This concluded that diploma level was:

“what service asked for and require to match the gap in workforce both currently and to enable future workforce models/ plans to service planned enhanced elective care activity”.

Another Scottish respondent noted that the current provision in that country was “driven by service needs developed in partnership with NES and NHS Boards.”

On the other hand, English providers were very welcoming of the proposed change, noting that this change would be line with the roles of ODPs which had “evolved substantially since the introduction of the DipHE” and that it is “important that students have an undergraduate programme which represents this.” As many English providers are already meeting the BSc (Hons) level, they argued that a new higher standard would level the playing field for providers in England arguing that the ability to offer DipHE programmes undercut their own provision of BSc (Hons) programmes.

Further consultations with stakeholders on this issue will be necessary in order to find a solution which meets our obligations as a UK-wide regulator and ensures that there is a clear and consistent way forward.

We plan to engage with NHS Education Scotland prior to the consultation to establish in further detail why they have taken this approach, as well as the professional bodies for ODPs to establish to what extent they are engaged with Scotland. We will also engage with NHS stakeholders in Wales and Northern Ireland and ensure that there is thorough consultation in all nations.

What support education providers may require

We asked respondents to anticipate any possible concerns their institution may have during a planned transition. From their responses it is clear that an additional issue which will have to be a focus of the next stage of consultations will be the workforce concerns highlighted by education providers in our survey. Around one-third of respondents anticipated some form of workplace friction in a proposed move to BSc (Hons). However, it seems that these concerns could be ameliorated by a well-managed transition period as can be seen by the two quotes below.

“We already have a very large workload with only two full time and one part time staff members in the team. Placements being one of the most time-consuming tasks. However, from a local level we are already delivering a BSc (Hons) level programme.”

“There needs to be a transition from Dip HE which is typically 2 years to a BSc (Hons) which is typically 3 years. The process needs to be managed to avoid a 'fallow' year where no students are completing or applying for registration. This may mean HE institutions have an overlap where they are running out a Dip HE and running in a BSc (Hons) to avoid this situation.”

Possible timeframes to implement BSc (Hons) only provision

Our survey asked respondents several questions to understand their needs during a possible transition to BSc (Hons) only provision. These questions asked providers to estimate the amount of time to close existing DipHE programmes and to establish (or change) BSc (Hons) programmes.

The responses suggest that it is highly likely that we will need an implementation lead in period for education programmes. For paramedics, when the decision was made to increase SET 1, the implementation period was delayed by three years until 1 September 2021, after which we will only continue to approve ODP programmes that are delivered at Honours level.

It is worth noting that Scottish respondents reiterated their reluctance to move to BSc (Hons) only provision in these questions and did not think there was a reasonable timetable for such a change in Scotland.

Factors considered in the timing of the consultation

Impact of COVID-19

COVID-19 has of course had a significant impact on registrants and it is vital that we do not unnecessarily add to this burden. Even once the pandemic begins to ease, stakeholders – and registrants in particular – are likely to have a backlog of work which was deprioritised during the response to COVID-19. This means that even as

conditions improve there will still be a risk of stakeholder fatigue which can have a negative impact on the consultation process.

Prioritisation of projects

Timescales for this consultation are currently subject to the Policy and Standards team's capacity and priorities. The team has a large number of ongoing projects, including responses to COVID-19, and several of our existing projects will require public consultation. We do not believe it would not be possible to run more than two of these consultations simultaneously as we would likely see stakeholder consultation fatigue should we do so.

Before the end of this financial year we plan to undertake consultations on a range of projects. These projects include the Standards of Proficiency, Guidance on Health and Character and Returning to Practice. These need to be prioritised ahead of ODP SET 1.

These are therefore likely to progress over summer and autumn of this year, with ODP SET 1 unable to advance before January 2021. Without careful consideration of the timing of these projects, we run the risk of a consultation receiving poor participation from valued stakeholders.

Next steps

Meeting the needs of stakeholders across the UK will need a significant amount of early engagement before a general public consultation. In the months leading up to the planned consultation in January 2021, we will engage with education providers, professional bodies, trades unions and the NHS bodies responsible for education in all four countries, among other stakeholders. This will allow us to pre-empt any concerns about any change to SET 1 in advance and address these where possible.

With that in mind, the Executive intends to take proceed with this consultation to our original proposed timeline. This would mean taking a consultation document to ETC and Council in December 2020. The consultation would run then from January to March 2021.

Profile of pre-registration operating department practitioner programmes

Figures correct as 30.01.2020

Table 1: All open approved programmes by type of award

Type of award	Number of programmes	
Bachelors	1	2%
Bachelors with Honours	33	77%
Diploma of Higher Education	9	21%
Total	43	

Table 2: All approved programmes by level of award¹

Level of award	Number of programmes	
Level 6/9/10	34	79%
Level 5/8	9	21%
Total	43	

Table 3: All approved programmes by type of award and country

Type of award	England	Scotland	Wales	NI
Bachelors	1	0	0	0
Bachelors with Honours	32	0	1	0
Diploma of Higher Education	8	1	0	0
Total	41	1	1	0

Table 4: Summary of proposed new programmes by type of award*

Type of award	Number of programmes	
Bachelors with Honours	7	100%
Bachelors	0	0%
Diploma of Higher Education	0	0%
Total	7	

* All proposed programmes are in England

Table 5: Summary of provision by provider and level

Type of award	Number of providers	
Level 6 provision only	18	69%
Level 5 provision only	3	12%
Mixture of level 6 and 5 provision	5	19%
Total	26	

¹ Levels are from the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and then after '/' the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Level 4/7 includes Certificates of Higher Education; Level 5/8 Diplomas of Higher Education and Foundation degrees; level 6/9/10 Bachelor's degrees.