

THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL

Chief Executive and Registrar: Mr Marc Seale

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MINUTES of the twelfth meeting of the Approvals Committee held on **Tuesday 5 September 2006** at Park House, 184 Kennington Park Road, London, SE11 4BU.

PRESENT: Miss G Pearson (Vice-Chairman)
 Mrs S Chaudhry
 Ms H Davis
 Mr A Mount
 Miss E Thornton
 Mrs A Turner
 Mr M Woolcock

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr C Bendall, Secretary to the Committee
 Ms A Creighton, Education Manager
 Ms M Hargood, Education Officer (part)

Item 1.06/34 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mrs S Griffiths, Professor J Harper (Chairman), Professor T Hazell, Professor A van der Gaag (President) and Professor D Waller. The Committee noted that, in Professor Harper's absence, Miss Pearson would chair the meeting.
- 1.2 The Committee noted that the Chief Executive and Registrar was unable to attend as he was at a listening event.

Item 2.06/35 APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- 2.1 The Committee approved the agenda, subject to the inclusion of an additional item for discussion/approval on the arrangements for visits where one of the Visitors was unable to attend at short notice.

Item 3.06/36 MINUTES OF THE APPROVALS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 MAY 2006

- 3.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the eleventh meeting of the Approvals Committee should be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

Item 4.06/37 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 4.2 The Committee noted the actions list as agreed at the last meeting.
- 4.3 The Committee noted that some education providers which operated programmes approved against the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark statements were unclear about whether their programme had been approved by the HPC. The Committee noted that some education providers believed that the HPC needed to be involved in the quinquennial reviews of programmes, as many professional bodies were continuing to be involved in them.
- 4.4 The Committee agreed that the HPC should contact all education providers to clarify that the HPC's approval of a programme was ongoing (until any major change was considered by the HPC) and that the HPC did not need to be involved in the quinquennial reviews of programmes, even if professional bodies did. The Committee agreed that it should be made clear that Operating Department Practitioner programmes would be visited in 2006-2007.

Action: AC (by 2 November 2006)

- 4.5 The Committee noted that, for clarity, action point 5 in the list should read "HPC should approve all programmes leading to registration that contain the Standards of Proficiency, irrespective of the level of the final qualification award."
- 4.6 Item 12.1: Any other business
- 4.6.1 The Committee noted that the Executive intended to revise the annual monitoring process and operational procedures in the light of experience of operating the process and feedback from the assessment days. The Committee agreed that the Executive should provide feedback to Visitors about the outcome of recommendations made during the annual monitoring process and the minor/major change process.

Action: AC (Ongoing)**Item 5.06/38 EDUCATION MANAGER REPORT**

- 5.1 The Committee received a report on the work of the Education - Approvals and Monitoring Department.
- 5.2 The Committee noted that it took around three months from the date of a Visit for the conditions to be met and for a programme to be considered for approval by a meeting of the Approvals Panel.

- 5.3 The Committee noted that there were already 49 Approval Visits for the 2006-7 academic year, covering 66 programmes. The month of March 2007 was already at capacity for visits. The Department would send a further reminder to education providers, seeking details of programmes which required an approvals visit.
- 5.4 The Committee noted that the Executive would make small operational changes to the annual monitoring process, including revisions to supplementary information, to provide greater clarity to education providers.
- 5.5 The Committee noted that the Department had arranged a series of presentations to education providers across the UK in October and November 2006 and that there had been a very positive response, with some events already nearing capacity.
- 5.6 The Committee noted that two Education Officers had recently left the HPC and an advert for replacements was due to be published in September. The Committee noted that a new team administrator and a new education officer were due to start in September.
- 5.7 The Committee noted that there were a few discrepancies in the table of future visits which was attached to the paper.
- 5.8 The Committee noted that, following the Partner reappointments process which had been agreed by the Council, the total number of Visitors had been reduced by 104. 64 Visitors had chosen not to put themselves forward for reappointment and 40 Visitors were not appointed. The total number of Visitors was now 192, approximately 40 more than the estimated numbers required. The Committee noted that the Partner Manager continued to monitor the situation and that there had been a small number of complaints about the reappointments process.
- 5.9 The Committee thanked the Department for its hard work on the approval and monitoring of programmes.

Item 6.06/39 ARRANGEMENTS FOR VISITS WHEN A VISITOR IS UNAVAILABLE AT SHORT NOTICE

- 6.1 The Committee received a tabled paper for discussion/approval.
- 6.2 The Committee noted that a visit was planned to the Foundation Degree in Pre-hospital and Unscheduled Emergency Care programme at the University of Worcester on 6-7 September 2006. This was a new programme which was due to commence in January 2007. The visit was due to be combined with an internal validation event, which meant that a panel of academics and clinicians representing the education provider would scrutinise the academic award.

- 6.3 The Committee noted that the Executive had been informed at 5 pm on 4 September 2006 that one of the appointed Visitors could no longer attend due to bereavement. The Executive had confirmed that the remaining Visitor (a paramedic who had educational and clinical experience and experience of HPC visits) was willing to attend the visit alone if necessary.
- 6.4 The Committee noted that neither Visitor had raised significant concerns about the programme based on their initial reading of the programme documentation. The Committee noted that two officers from the Executive were due to attend the visit and both had considered the documentation in detail. The officers felt that there were no major points of clarification or additional information which needed to be discussed as part of the visit.
- 6.5 The Committee noted that article 16(6) of the Health Professions Order 2001 provided that Visitors should be selected "with due regard to the profession with which the education and training they are to report on is concerned and at least one of the Visitors should be registered in that part of the register which relates to the profession."
- 6.6 The Committee noted that, in the past, the Education and Training Committee and the Approvals Committee had discussed the combination of Visitors which should be appointed to visits in normal circumstances. The meeting of the Approvals Committee on 17 May 2005 had noted a paper that stated, in exceptional circumstances, for example the illness of an appointed Visitor, an individual who was not from the same part of the register might be appointed, with the consent of the education provider.
- 6.7 The Committee noted that the Executive had arranged for a Visitor from a different part of the register to be appointed, who would be able to attend the second day of the visit on 7 September 2006. That day would be the most substantial part of the visit and the Visitor would observe the process to ensure that it was conducted properly.
- 6.8 The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate for the HPC to ask Visitors to act as "stand-bys", who would attend a Visit at short notice if another Visitor was not available. The Committee agreed that this would be impractical, as any stand-by Visitors would probably expect payment of a retainer and probably had other commitments which meant that they could not hold open a large range of dates.
- 6.9 The Committee agreed that, in the individual circumstances of the proposed visit on 6-7 September described in the paper, it should proceed.

Action: AC (by 6 September 2006)

- 6.10 The Committee agreed that, if similar circumstances arose in the future, the Chairman of the Education and Training Committee should be asked to take Chairman's action on a case-by-case basis for individual visits. The Committee agreed that this would allow timely decisions to be made.

Action: AC (Ongoing)

Item 7.06/40 ANNUAL MONITORING OF PROGRAMMES CURRENTLY GOING THROUGH THE APPROVALS PROCESS

- 7.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 7.2 The Committee noted that the annual monitoring process had operated for the first time in 2006. During the six annual monitoring assessment days in May and June, Visitors had sometimes requested additional information from programme teams, in response to issues highlighted in quality assurance reports or external examiner reports. It had become apparent that the additional information normally related to an issue which had been discussed and resolved at a recent visit and the Executive had therefore provided documentation which was already in the HPC's records. The Committee noted no points had been raised during the annual monitoring assessment process which had not been raised at recent visits.
- 7.3 The Committee agreed that, in each academic year, programmes which had been approved by the HPC in the prior academic year, or which were currently going through the approvals process, would not normally be subject to annual monitoring. The Committee agreed that this would reduce the workload of education providers and streamline the link between the approvals and annual monitoring processes.

Action: AC (Ongoing)

Item 8.06/41 HPC APPROVAL OF INSTITUTE OF HEALTHCARE DEVELOPMENT PARAMEDIC PROGRAMMES

- 8.1 The Committee received a paper for discussion/approval from the Executive.
- 8.2 The Committee noted that, during the annual monitoring process in 2006, all Institute of Healthcare Development (IHCD) paramedic programmes had been required to complete the annual monitoring audit. Visitors had recommended that most programmes continued to meet the Standards of Education and Training (SETs), except for three programmes which had undergone a major change and required an approvals visit.
- 8.3 The Committee noted that it had been apparent that there was an overriding structure (including the curriculum, assessment and quality

assurance process) which governed the training centres running the IHCD programmes. However, there were apparent variations in management and delivery of programmes for a number of reasons, including sizes and location of centre, internal management structure and staffing of the centre and the number of students being trained.

- 8.4 The Committee noted that, in February 2004, the Education and Training Committee had agreed that the HPC should visit all IHCD paramedic training centres once the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark statement had been published. These visits were delayed due to the department's workload and because the paramedic training centres in England and Wales were due to be restructured. The Committee noted that reorganisation of the ambulance service trusts had now taken place and the paper proposed a timetable for arranging visits to individual centres.
- 8.5 The Committee noted that there was some uncertainty about the future of IHCD paramedic programmes and that it might not be an effective use of the HPC's resources to arrange visits to these programmes at this time.
- 8.6 The Committee agreed that:

(1) the Executive should contact the three training centres which had been identified by the annual monitoring assessment process as requiring an approvals visits, to seek clarification of the programmes' future and to arrange visits as appropriate in the light of that information; and

(2) the Executive should contact all other training centres to gather information about their programmes' future and approvals visits should be arranged as appropriate in the light of that information. The results of the information which was gathered should be reported back to the Committee in spring 2007.

Action: AC (Ongoing to spring 2007)

Item 9.06/42 ELECTRONIC RESOLUTIONS PASSED SINCE THE LAST MEETING

- 9.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 9.2 The Committee noted that the Approvals Committee which had been due to be held on 3 August had been cancelled, as a member had been unable to attend due to personal reasons. With Professor Harper's agreement, three electronic resolutions had been circulated to members of the Committee for agreement, relating to programmes for approval, major and minor changes to programmes and annual monitoring audits of programmes. The resolutions had been passed on 9 August.

Item 10.06/43 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- 10.1 The Committee received a paper to note from the Executive.
- 10.2 The Committee noted that Professor Jeff Lucas had asked to resign from the Committee with immediate effect at the Council meeting on 11 July. The Council had approved the request, which was made due to pressure on Professor Lucas's time.
- 10.3 The Committee noted that the vacancy created by Professor Lucas's resignation would not be filled for the time being.

Item 11.06/44 MINUTES OF THE APPROVALS PANEL HELD ON 17 MAY 2006

- 11.1 The Committee received the minutes of the Approvals Panel held on 17 May 2006

Item 12.06/45 MINUTES OF THE APPROVALS PANEL HELD ON 13 JUNE 2006

- 12.1 The Committee received the minutes of the Approvals Panel held on 13 June 2006.

Item 13.06/46 UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE APPROVALS PANEL HELD ON 11 JULY 2006

- 13.1 The Committee received the unconfirmed minutes of the Approvals Panel held on 11 July 2006.

Item 14.06/47 ADVERTISING PROTOCOL FOR EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- 14.1 The Committee received a paper for information from the Executive, setting out a document which had been prepared for education providers to ensure that they had guidelines to assist them when advertising their programmes, particularly in respect to HPC approval.
- 14.2 The Committee agreed that the phrase "relevant HPC Committee" in the document should read "Education and Training Committee".

Action: AC (by 2 November 2006)

- 14.3 The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for the document to include the standard statement on the approval of a programme by the HPC, which had been prepared for the University and Colleges Admissions Service.

Action: AC (by 2 November 2006)

- 14.4 The Committee noted that the Executive would notify education providers of any erroneous statements about the HPC on providers' websites.
- 14.5 The Committee noted that Visitors could consider the information about programmes which was provided to applicants (under SET 2.1), including whether information was misleading.

Item 15.06/48 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 15.1 There was no other business.

Item 16.06/49 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 16.1 Subject to discussion by the Education and Training Committee about the future of the Approvals Committee, the next meeting of the Approvals Committee would be held on Thursday 2 November 2006 at 11.00 am.
- 16.2 Subsequent meetings of the Committee would be held at 11.00 am on:
- Thursday 8 March 2007
- Wednesday 9 May 2007

CHAIRMAN

DATE