

6 March 2024

Planning for the Standards of education and training review

Executive Summary

The Standards of education and training (SETs) set out what education providers must do to prepare learners for professional practice. The SETs are required for us to meet our statutory obligations and public protection duties.

We review our standards periodically to ensure that they are up to date with current practice. The latest review of the SETs took place from 2014-2017. The review included research by the University of Keele on interprofessional education (IPE) and preparation for practice¹. This was complemented by a range of stakeholder events to discuss the SETs and how they could be amended or strengthened.

Planning for the next review is underway. In line with our overarching objective to ensure that the SETs are up to date with current practice. The aims of the review are to:

- identify changes to current practice and if appropriate reflect these in the SETs;
- identify ways to strengthen the SETs that enable education providers to prepare learners for professional practice effectively;
- ensure alignment across HCPC standards; and
- ensure that education providers can implement any changes effectively.

The review will include pre-consultation engagement to inform our understanding and our proposals for the consultation period open to all stakeholders. We will target our engagement towards stakeholders that are most impacted by changes to the SETs – for example education providers, professional bodies, employers and learners.

The paper below sets out the proposed approach to the review, the activities that are planned throughout and the proposed topics that will be explored in the review.

We would like the Committee's views on:

1. the suggested topics identified for the review;
 2. the identified stakeholder groups; and
 3. the approach to the review and timeframe
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¹ The title of the report was Preparation for practice: The role of the HCPC's Standards of education and training in ensuring that newly qualified professionals are fit to practise. It focused on preparedness for practice, similar to the research with University of Plymouth, however it was more focused on the effectiveness of the SETs in ensuring preparedness and whether there was a need for additional standards.

Previous consideration	<p>Initial conversations on the SETs began during the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics review (SCPEs). This is particularly so in relation to sustainability. In October 2023, the Council approved the consideration of sustainability as part of the SETs review.</p> <p>The Committee and the Council have also discussed the SETs review in relation to research on preparedness for practice in early 2024 at their meetings on 8 November 2023 and 15 January 2024 respectively.</p>
Decision	<p>We would like the Committee's views on the proposals for the review set out in the paper.</p>
Next steps	<p>Following Committee discussion, we will begin our initial stakeholder engagement and research activities.</p>
Strategic priority	<p>Strategic priority 2: Enable our professions to meet our standards so they can adapt to changes in health and care practice delivery, preventing harm to service users.</p> <p>Strategic priority 4: We regulate, take and communicate decisions which are informed by a deep understanding of the environment within which our registrants, employers and education providers operate.</p> <p>Strategic priority 5: Employees feel valued and supported, and fully able to contribute. The organisation is resilient and able to quickly adapt to changes in the external environment</p> <p>Strategic priority 6: The public, registrants, learners and employers understand the value and importance of regulated health and care professionals</p>
EDI impact and Welsh Language Standards	<p>The SETs will impact HCPC processes and our stakeholders. Included in the planned activity is the completion of a detailed equality impact assessment. This will include ongoing consideration of the possible impact of any proposed changes on the protected characteristics of learners, newly qualified registrants and service users.</p>
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Planning the review of the Standards of education and training

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Standards of education and training (SETs) set out how education providers ought to prepare learners for professional practice and ensure education providers are properly organised to deliver education and training. The last review was carried out in 2014-17 and included stakeholder engagement and externally commissioned research.
- 1.2 In line with our overarching objective to ensure that the SETs are up to date with current practice, the aims of the review are to:
 - a) identify changes to current practice and if appropriate reflect these in the SETs;
 - b) identify ways to strengthen the SETs that enable education providers to prepare learners for professional practice effectively;
 - c) ensure alignment across HCPC standards; and
 - d) ensure that education providers can implement any changes effectively.
- 1.3 There are recent HCPC activities that will feed into this review, including research on preparedness for practice, the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) review and the Standards of proficiency (SOPs) review.
- 1.4 We propose that the review itself include the following key phases:
 - 1) Mobilisation and research
 - 2) Listening and gathering insights
 - 3) Formulating proposals with our stakeholders
 - 4) Preparing consultation
 - 5) Consultation analysis and finalising changes
 - 6) Implementation
- 1.5 Phase 1 represents our desk research period which will continue throughout the early stages of the review. Phases 2 and 3 are the important pre-consultation engagement activity. Phase 4 includes a formal consultation open to all stakeholder groups. It is followed by post-consultation drafting and legal review of the updated SETs in phase 5. During phase 6 we will implement the updated SETs into our internal processes and support education providers to implement the changes within their organisations.
- 1.6 This paper sets out the proposed approach to the review, the activities that are planned throughout and the proposed topics that will be explored in the review.

2. Review topics

- 2.1 Through consideration of the previous review and the recent reviews of the SCPEs and the SOPs, discussions with the Head of Education and recent announcements in health and care, we have identified the following topics to explore in the review:

a) Blended learning

Blended learning combines traditional and online learning methods. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, this approach is more common amongst education providers². We anticipate any changes related to blended learning in the SETs to be implemented in Standard 4 – programme design and delivery.

b) Use of technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence is being increasingly used across health and care in the UK. In 2023, the government announced a £21 million fund for the deployment of artificial intelligence tools in the NHS. In health and care artificial intelligence ranges includes the use of algorithms for diagnostics, image analysis, risk monitoring and service delivery.

In education, artificial intelligence is also being increasingly used by learners and education providers. Generative artificial intelligence is particularly useful in education settings. This refers to technology that can be used to create new content based on large volumes of data for example, ChatGPT.

Consideration of artificial intelligence in the review will relate to:

- how education providers continue to maintain academic integrity with increased accessibility of AI technology to learners;
- supporting staff and learners to become AI literate, including the risks and benefits of AI in learning and practice;
- how education providers cover emerging technology within practice as part of programme curricula. Any future changes are likely to be seen across several SETs such as standards two (programme admissions), three (programme governance, management and leadership), four (programme design and delivery), five (practice-based learning) and six (assessment).

In the review timetable below, we have included research on the use of artificial intelligence in education and health and care settings. This is subject to budget approval. The research will inform the review and help to assess whether there is a need for a standard on artificial intelligence.

c) Simulation in learning

Simulation in clinical education provides an important opportunity for learners to develop or enhance their knowledge and skills in a simulated environment. It has been an important part of health and care education for a long time however, it was used increasingly in the COVID-19 pandemic as an alternative learning route where clinical practice was limited.

² Health Education England, [Blended learning guidance report](#)

Any changes relating to simulation-based education will impact SETs 4 (programme design and delivery) and 5 (practice-based learning).

d) Apprenticeships and earn and learn routes

Apprenticeships are an increasingly popular route into health and care professions in England. In the 2021-22 academic year, there were 37,000 new NHS apprentices³. In Scotland, modern apprenticeships are also increasingly popular routes into the workforce – 92% of modern apprentices stay in work once they have qualified⁴. Scottish stakeholders are currently discussing how ‘earn and learn’ routes might be used for the professions we regulate, and Wales are piloting apprenticeship programmes in health. We will be mindful of the different plans and arrangements across all four nations of the UK.

The SETs require review in relation to how they apply to apprenticeships and similar routes to ensure they are effective. Apprenticeships are delivered by both education providers and employers. Consequently, it will be important to consider of how employers use the SETs to ensure learners’ effective preparation for professional practice.

e) Data-led decision-making

Data-led decision-making refers to making decisions based on a range of evidence for example, learner admissions, progression and achievement, financial reports, and energy consumption. For education providers, it is an important way to identify issues, manage resources, and create new policy.

Education providers are increasingly making decisions using data-driven evidence. However, there is currently no explicit reference to this kind of data or decision-making in the SETs.

The quality of the data that education providers use will impact the quality of decision-making, for example the accuracy and consistency of the data. It is therefore important for us to understand how education providers use data in their decision-making and to identify ways in which this can be included in the SETs.

f) Sustainability

Sustainability is increasingly important to health and care, with the NHS accounting for around 4% of UK emissions⁵. The government has set a net

³ Home Care Insight, [Health and care apprenticeships on the rise in the UK, research finds \(homecareinsight.co.uk\)](https://www.homecareinsight.co.uk)

⁴ Skills Development Scotland, <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/apprenticeships/modern-apprenticeships>

⁵ NHS England, [delivering-a-net-zero-national-health-service.pdf \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://www.england.nhs.uk)

zero target for the NHS to be met by 2040. Furthermore, climate change and environmental degradation are heavily linked to negative patient outcomes.

In the 2022-23 SCPEs review, we identified that many registrants have an interest in working more sustainably and there is also a gap in knowledge for others. As an outcome of the review, we committed to exploring how sustainability can be integrated into the SETs.

Many education providers are already implementing sustainable practices and addressing sustainability into their curricula. To keep in line with the current scope of the SETs, we will be limited in our approach to sustainability in this review to education provider's sustainable practices rather than their curricula.

g) Equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) practice in education

EDI was a key consideration of the SOPs and SCPEs. Both reviews resulted in significant changes relating to better supporting EDI in health and care through the SETs.

We need more information from our stakeholder groups to ensure a strong understanding of EDI in professional education. We will also need to know more from education providers to understand how they ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion in their programmes. This will help us to identify best practice and, where needed, update the SETs appropriately.

h) Service user and carer involvement in education

Current Standard 3.7 sets out that education providers must involve service users and carers in their programmes. Many education providers have been meeting this standard for a long time and have a high level of service user and carer involvement. There is potential for the standard to be more specific about when and how education providers engage service users, to ensure that involvement is impactful for learners in centring service users and carers in their practice.

i) SET 1 thresholds

Entry thresholds in SET 1 need to reflect updates to the SOPs. In the review, we will review the current thresholds. We will need information from education providers about whether the current thresholds align with education practice. For example, many professions now have Masters level entry thresholds.

3. External stakeholder engagement

3.1 We have considered the range of stakeholders that we plan to engage with as part of the review. These are set out below:

- a. Group A stakeholders
 - i. education providers
- b. Group B stakeholders
 - i. employers
- c. Group C stakeholders
 - i. learners
 - ii. newly qualified registrants
- d. Group D stakeholders
 - i. patients and service users
- e. Group E stakeholders
 - i. professional bodies

Group A – education providers and apprenticeship representatives:

3.2 Education providers will be the main audience for this review, and we plan to begin engagement with them in phase 1 of the review (see below).

3.3 The initial engagement with education providers will focus on:

- understanding how education providers use the current SETs;
- considering how education providers implement the current SETs; and
- identifying additional needs that education providers have that will support them to effectively prepare learners for professional practice.

Group B – employers (including practice educators):

3.4 These stakeholders will be heavily impacted by the implementation of the updated SETs.

3.5 We plan to engage with these stakeholders during phase 3 and 4 of the review to understand their experience of learners entering professional practice. This will help to understand the ways in which the SETs can be strengthened.

Group C – learners, newly qualified registrants only:

3.6 These stakeholders will be heavily impacted by any changes made to the SETs.

3.7 We plan to engage with them directly during phase 3 of the review to understand their experience of education as well as the transition between education and professional practice. This will help to understand the ways in which the SETs can be strengthened.

3.8 We will also draw upon our engagement with newly qualified registrants through the preparedness for practice research project (phase 1).

3.9 This research was commissioned to the University of Plymouth. It explored how well prepared newly qualified registrants are for practice and included interviews with 35 newly qualified registrants (NQRs).

3.10 It made the following conclusions:

- NQRS are perceived to be prepared for many areas of practice.
- Areas of weakness include management of caseloads, leadership and putting the theory they have learned into practice.
- Under-preparedness was exacerbated by the fact that the NHS was reported by participants to be overstretched and under resourced.
- Support for newly qualified registrants varies hugely in its availability and effectiveness with profession, age, size, and resourcefulness of the team being important factors in this.

Group D – service users:

3.11 We plan to engage with these stakeholders within phase 2 of the review. Their views will help to identify ways in which the SETs could be strengthened.

3.12 Service users will provide knowledge of their experience of registrants and the level of care they provide.

Group E – professional bodies:

3.13 We plan to engage with these stakeholders within phase 2 of the review. Their views will help to identify ways in which the SETs could be strengthened.

3.14 Professional bodies will play an important role in understanding registrant experiences and the education and training needs in each profession.

3.15 To support the review and ensure that our pre-consultation work is robust, we will also plan engagement with experts on the following topics:

- Sustainability
- Simulation in learning
- Equality diversity and inclusion

4. Internal stakeholder engagement

4.1 The main internal stakeholders who will be engaged with throughout the review are:

- Education team
- Education and Training Committee (ETC)
- Council

4.2 We will engage with ETC throughout the review, providing regular updates on the progress of the review. We will also seek the Committee's views on the consultation document prior to seeking Council approval.

5. Timeline of delivery

5.1 We have identified six phases for the review: research, listening and insight gathering, formulating proposals, drafting, analysis and finalising and implementation.

5.2 The below table sets out the proposed timeframe of delivery for these phases:

	Activity	Start date	End date	Duration	Details
Phase 1 – mobilisation & research (11 months)	Set up	February 2024	April 2024	3 months	Establish stakeholder engagement groups and expert panels, identify scope of review, set out ways of working with education teams
	Preparedness for practice	March 2024	April 2024	1 month	Review outcomes of finished report
	Commission research	April 2024	January 2025	9 months	Commission relevant research and research previous review
Phase 2 – listening and insight gathering (4 months)	Internal insights and learning	May 2024	August 2024	4 months (throughout phase)	Scope review topics and gather insights with education team, ETC, Council etc, and complete an equality impact assessment
	Engage stakeholder group A	May 2024	July 2024	3 months	Discussions about experience of current SETs
Phase 3 – formulating proposals (2 months)	Workshops with all stakeholder groups	August 2024	September 2024	2 months	Share initial proposals with all stakeholder groups and receiving feedback
	ETC and EDI Forum engagement	August 2024	September 2024	2 months	Present key topics and stakeholder feedback to ETC and EDI Forum
	Convene expert panels	August 2024	September 2024	2 months	Seek panel views on each topic and the relationship to health and care.
	Internal insights and learning	August 2024	September 2024	2 months (throughout phase)	Reflections on stakeholder feedback and outcomes for the review and completing an equality impact assessment
	Legal advice	October 2024	December 2024	3 months	Discuss risks and drafting with BM

Phase 4 – Preparing consultation (10 months)	Preparing consultation document	January 2025	March 2025	3 months	Begin drafting based on research outcomes and stakeholder feedback
	Reconvene expert panels	March 2025	March 2025	1 months	Seek panel views on draft updates to SETs (where necessary)
	Governance	March 2025	June 2025	3 months	Prepare paper to ETC and Council for approval
	Consultation	June 2025	August 2025	10 weeks	Consolidated consultation time, targeting stakeholder groups A, B and E and professional bodies
	Internal insights and learning	October 2024	August 2025	10 months (throughout phase)	Reflections on legal advice and Council discussion and identifying outcomes for the review and completing an equality impact assessment
Phase 5 – analysis and finalising (4 months)	Consultation analysis	July 2025	September 2025	3 months	Analysis of consultation responses (begins during consultation) and drafting of final version
	Legal advice	September 2025	October 2025	1 month	Discuss final version with BM
	Council paper	September 2025	October 2025	1 month	Prepare paper for Council approval of final version
	Publication	October 2025		1 week	Publication, engagement with stakeholder group A
	Internal insights and learning	July 2025	October 2025	4 months (throughout phase)	Reflections on consultation responses, legal review, and Council discussion. Draft consultation outcome document. Preparation for publication with comms and complete an equality impact assessment
Phase 6 – implementation (12 months)	Implementation	October 2025	January/ September 2026	12 months ⁶	Communicate changes to all stakeholders.
	Internal insights and analysis	October 2025	January/ September 2026	12 months (throughout phase)	Reflections on impact of changes on internal teams, especially education team.

⁶ The implementation period is currently scheduled for 12 months. However, this is subject to change based on the significance of changes.

6. Implementation

- 6.1 The timeframe for implementation of the SETs is heavily dependent on the outcome of the review and the changes that have been made.
- 6.2 Complex changes to the SETs, for example the introduction of a new standard, would require education providers to make significant changes to their programmes. They will require sufficient time to implement these changes.
- 6.3 If complex changes are made, we have timetabled a 12-month implementation period. This will also align with the new academic year 2026-27. If the changes made are not complex, the implementation period could be shorter (e.g. minimum four months, with compliance beginning in the 2026-27 academic year).
- 6.4 The impact of the changes being made on education providers will be reflected upon throughout the review. The necessary timeframe will be decided in phase 5 of the review.

7. Next steps

- 7.1 Following Committee discussion, we will (subject to the ETC's feedback and suggestions) begin the review as outlined above.