

Education and Training Committee

Minutes of the meeting of the Education and Training Committee held in public as follows:

Date: Wednesday 6 March 2024

Time: 10am

Venue: Videoconference (Microsoft Teams)

Present: Helen Gough (Chair)
Penny Joyce
Steven Vaughan

Apologies: Rebekah Eglinton
Katie Thirlaway

Attendees:

Francesca Bramley, Governance Manager
Brendon Edmonds, Head of Regulatory Development and Performance
Karen Flaherty, Head of Governance
Rosemary Flowers-Wanjie, Policy Manager (for item 9)
Rachael Gledhill, Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships
Richard Houghton, Head of Registration
Jamie Hunt, Head of Education
Thomas Miller, Policy Manager
Andrew Smith, Executive Director of Education, Registration and Regulatory Standards and Deputy Chief Executive

Public Agenda

1 Welcome and introduction

1.1 The Chair welcomed those present to the meeting.

2 Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Katie Thirlaway, who had helpfully provided some feedback and questions in advance of the meeting in relation to the items to be considered, which the Chair would share during the meeting.

3 Approval of agenda

3.1 The Committee approved the agenda.

3.2 It was noted that the item relating to the English language proficiency consultation feedback had been moved to the private session of the meeting as the analysis was still at an early stage.

4 Declaration of members' interests in relation to agenda items

4.1 No interests were declared.

5 Minutes of the Education and Training Committee meeting held in public on 8 November 2023

5.1 The Committee approved the minutes as an accurate record of its meeting held in public on 8 November 2023.

6 Matters arising

6.1 The Committee noted the matters arising from its previous meeting.

6.2 It was agreed that the Head of Governance would continue to progress arrangements for the seminar relating to data and statistical process control (SPC) charts with the Chair of Council as part of the Council's development programme and this action could be closed.

Performance Reports

7 Registration Performance Report

7.1 The Committee received a report from the Head of Registration, which outlined performance for the period from October 2023 to January 2024 and service improvements under way.

7.2 The Committee noted the good performance across the main registration services and contact centre. The following areas were highlighted:

- the median application assessment time for UK applications during the period was between two and four working days, significantly below the service standard of ten working days;
- the number of international applications had been reducing since the end of the second quarter of 2023-24, however, the team were maintaining performance against the service standard of 60 working days in which to make a first decision;
- the renewal periods for occupational therapists, biomedical scientists and radiographers had ended during or shortly after the reporting period and there had been an increase in the renewal rates for each profession compared to the previous renewal periods;
- the report now included details of readmission applications after the renewal period had ended as previously requested by the Committee;
- the performance targets for responding to enquiries by telephone, email and post had been maintained;
- delays with appeals beyond the median performance standard of 100 days were likely to continue as there had been a further cancellation of a hearing day; and
- the quality assurance frontline checks continued to be developed providing a good level of ongoing assurance as well as identifying learning through the findings.

7.3 The Committee recognised the challenges presented in managing the fluctuations in international applications and maintaining the service standards.

7.4 The channels used by registrants to contact and communicate with the HCPC were being considered as part of user experience and design work, informed by the data from the Registration team. This would give a better understanding and enable the HCPC to anticipate registrants' needs and preferences and around communication and to support these through digital technology where possible. While the resource implications were not significant, there would be a need for postal communication in a minority of instances as a reasonable adjustment to ensure services were accessible to those with disabilities and when sending original documents.

7.5 The changes to the renewals process, improvements to and more proactive communications and online applications through the registrant portal implemented in the last two years had improved the renewals process for registrants with fewer contacts and enquiries received. This may also have had an impact on renewal rates. All the professions were now familiar with the new system and communication methods introduced in the previous renewal

process. The relevant professional bodies were also supporting the HCPC in communicating with registrants.

Action: In relation to both performance reports, it was requested that any changes or new developments were highlighted in the summary to allow the Committee to focus on the areas of greatest potential significance and impact.

8 Education Performance Report

8.1 The Committee received a report from the Head of Education, which outlined the performance measures across the operational processes in the Education team and current performance against these.

8.2 The Committee noted that:

- more performance measures had trended down and were rated as 'amber' or 'red', which was due to small sample sizes for some measures and a complex case involving a programme proposed below the qualification threshold level of entry to the register in the approval process;
- performance for time taken to complete the performance review process had dropped, reflecting the impact of a spike in reporting activities and a slight backlog in case progression and planning, however, with five cases concluded, it was expected that performance would return to within service levels as current performance was closer to meeting expectations than in previous years;
- the spot check outcomes measure showed compliance had reduced since the last report, which did not reflect any concerns about the quality of the reports or decision-making but rather the timeliness of delivery as measured at particular progress points as a result of higher levels of compliance checks;
- the current focus on performance review should lead to an improvement in performance in the next few months and this was currently in a better position than in the previous year; and
- progress with performance review assessments had been demonstrated in the recent quality assurance audit, which had given this area the highest possible rating for a first review of 'green/amber' with four recommendations, all of which were being addressed.

8.3 The Committee noted the balance to be struck between monitoring and delivering performance measures related to timeliness and the quality of the service. There were also limitations on the sensitivity of the data where small sample sizes were involved and the Head of Education was keen to understand whether using statistical process control (SPC) charts could help address this by highlighting special cause variation over a longer period and where measures needed to change due to a change in process, for example to reflect that the HCPC was setting fewer conditions.

Consultations and Reviews

9 Planning for the Standards of Education and Training review

9.1 The Policy Manager joined the meeting for this item and explained the purpose of the periodic review of the standards of education and training (SETs) in ensuring the standards remained relevant and up to date. The planned approach to the review, including the timeframe, and the pre-consultation engagement and the range of stakeholders to be consulted were also set out.

9.2 The topics identified for the review were:

- blended learning;
- use of technology, such as artificial intelligence (AI);
- simulation in learning;
- apprenticeships and earn and learn routes;
- data-led decision-making;
- sustainability;
- equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) practice in education;
- service user and carer involvement in education; and
- SET 1 thresholds.

9.3 The Committee provided its views on the following areas:

- seeking specialist expertise on the topics during engagement as part of the review from external reference groups, including outside of healthcare;
- involving placement coordinators in employers in the stakeholder engagement;
- ensuring that the research on the use of AI encompassed its use in both professional practice and in the delivery of education in an appropriate learning environment;
- making sure that the consultation would consider whether any changes to the SETs were needed so that the SETs continued to be outcome focused rather than specific and the option to provide guidance or information to registrants about specific topics as an alternative; and
- ensuring a balance between the HCPC's role as a regulator to set standards and reflecting where practice was developing ahead of the standards.

Governance

10 Review of Committee effectiveness

10.1 The Committee noted the feedback provided from Committee members and

attendees in response to the questionnaire circulated in advance of the meeting and the themes identified.

- 10.2 The review had provided some helpful points for reflection, particularly in relation to ensuring that the independent Committee member was kept informed about the interaction between the Committee and Council as part of the feedback loop. The Committee Chair would also compare the themes with those raised in the reviews being carried out by other Council committees.

11 Review of standing orders

- 11.1 The Committee reviewed the proposed changes to the standing orders and requested the following additional changes:

- to have a clearer separation of the provisions applying to the Committee and those applicable to the Education and Training Panel (ETP); and
- to reduce the membership of the ETP to two members of the Committee with arrangements for a reserve in the event of absence or incapacity.

- 11.2 The Committee members highlighted the absence of the student voice, which had previously been represented in the membership of the Committee.

Action: The Chair and the Head of Governance would consider options to incorporate the student voice to a greater extent in the work of the Committee.

12 Committee forward plan

- 12.1 The Committee noted the proposed programme of business for 2024. The plan would continue to be reviewed and updated during 2024.
- 12.2 It was highlighted that although there would be two annual reports presented in 2024, this would revert to annual reporting in November in future years.

13 Resolution to move the meeting to private session

- 13.1 The Committee resolved that the remainder of the meeting would be held in private, because the matters being discussed related to matters which, in the opinion of the Chair, were confidential or the public disclosure of which would prejudice the effective discharge of the Committee's or Council's functions.

The meeting was briefly adjourned.