

Council, 11 February 2010

Standards of proficiency and threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register for hearing aid dispensers

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

The Hearing Aid Council (HAC) and Health Professions Council (HPC) consulted jointly between 15 July 2008 and 15 October 2008 on draft standards of proficiency and the threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register. The consultation was publicised via the HAC and the HPC websites, a joint press release, communication with professional bodies and other stakeholders, and a letter sent by the HAC to all registered dispensers.

At its meeting on 11 December 2008, the Council discussed and agreed the outcome of the consultation. Unfortunately, the legislation necessary to regulate hearing aid dispensers was delayed.

The S60 has now been published and has been debated in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. The legislation lays down that hearing aid dispensers will transfer from the HAC to the HPC on 1 April 2010.

Now that the S60 has been published the Council can consult again on the standards of proficiency and threshold level of qualification if it believes it is necessary. This option could be used if changes to the standards were required following publication of the legislation. However, the Council can decide that this is not necessary if changes are not required and it can then make the final decision about the standards of proficiency and threshold level of qualification.

The standards of proficiency have been copy-edited and laid out in line with the Council's decision on 11 December 2008 and are attached to this paper as a draft, subject to the Council's ratification at today's meeting.

Decision

The Council is invited to agree that:

- it is not necessary to consult again on the standards of proficiency and threshold level of qualification for hearing aid dispensers;
- the standards identified in the attached paper and agreed by the Council on 11 December 2008 should be published, subject to minor editing amendments; and

- that the threshold level of qualification for entry to the hearing aid dispensers part of the register in the standards of education and training should be set at a foundation degree and read:

‘Foundation degree for hearing aid dispensers’

Background information

The Council previously discussed the standards of proficiency and threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register at its meeting on 11 December 2008. The papers are available here:

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100025D56Standardsproficiency.pdf>

The Council submitted a response to the consultation on the draft S60 legislation. The response can be found here:

<http://www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/external/index.asp?id=91>

Resource implications

- Type-setting and publication of standards

These implications are accounted for in the policy and standards budget for 2009/2010.

Financial implications

- Printing standards of proficiency
- Printing standards of education and training

These implications are accounted for in the policy and standards budget for 2009/2010.

Appendices

- Copy of the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers.

Date of paper

1 February 2010

Standards of proficiency

Hearing aid dispensers

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Health Professions Council's standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers.

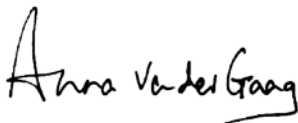
The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. These standards play a key role in ensuring that registrants practise safely and effectively.

We approve education programmes to make sure that they allow students to meet these standards when they satisfactorily complete the programme. We also assess applications from individuals who have trained outside of the UK and some applications via our 'grandparenting' process against these standards. Any applicant who meets these standards is eligible to apply for registration.

We consulted on the draft standards from July 2008 to October 2008 and are grateful to all those who gave up their time to help us with this task.

I am confident that the standards are both fit for purpose and reflect current thinking in relation to safe professional practice across the profession.

These standards are effective from 1 April 2010.



Anna van der Gaag

Chair

Introduction

This document sets out the **standards of proficiency**. These are the standards we have produced for the safe and effective practice of the professions we regulate. They are the minimum standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public.

You must meet these standards when you first become registered. After that, every time you renew your registration you will be asked to sign a declaration that you continue to meet the standards of proficiency that apply to your scope of practice.

We also expect you to keep to our **standards of conduct, performance and ethics** which are published in a separate document.

The standards of proficiency in this document include both generic elements, which apply to all our registrants, and profession-specific elements which are relevant to registrants belonging to one of the professions we currently regulate. The **generic standards are written in black**, and the **profession-specific standards are written in blue** to help you distinguish between them.

The generic standards explain the key obligations that we expect of you. Occasionally, we have pointed out specific elements of those key obligations. We have not attempted to create exhaustive lists of all the areas that each generic standard covers; we have simply highlighted specific elements where we consider this to be helpful.

A note about our expectations of you

The standards of proficiency play a central role in how you can gain admission to, and remain on, the Register and thereby gain the right to use the protected title(s) of your profession.

It is important that you read and understand this document. If your practice is called into question we will consider these standards (and our **standards of conduct, performance and ethics**) in deciding what action, if any, we need to take.

The standards set out in this document complement information

and guidance issued by other organisations, such as your professional body or your employer.

Your scope of practice

Your scope of practice is the area or areas of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to yourself.

We recognise that a registrant's scope of practice will change over time and that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focused and specialised than that of newly registered colleagues. This might be because of specialisation in a certain clinical area or with a particular client group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research.

Your particular scope of practice may mean that you are unable to continue to demonstrate that you meet all of the standards that apply for the whole of your profession.

As long as you make sure that you are practising safely and effectively within your given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where you are not proficient to do so, this will not be a problem. If you want to move outside of your scope of practice you should be certain that you are capable of working lawfully, safely and effectively. This means that you need to exercise personal judgement by undertaking any necessary training or gaining the necessary experience.

Meeting the standards

It is important that our registrants meet our standards and are able to practise lawfully, safely and effectively. However, we do not dictate how you should meet our standards. There is normally more than one way in which each standard can be met and the way in which you meet our standards might change over time because of improvements in technology or changes in your practice. As an autonomous professional you need to make informed, reasoned decisions about your practice to ensure that you meet the standards that apply to you. This includes seeking

advice and support from education providers, employers, colleagues and others to ensure that the wellbeing of service users is safeguarded at all times.

In particular, we recognise the valuable role played by professional bodies in representing and promoting the interests of their members. This often includes guidance and advice about good practice which can help you meet the standards laid out in this document.

Service users

We recognise that our registrants work in a wide range of settings. Different professions sometimes use different terms to refer to those who use or who are affected by their practice. The use of terminology can be an emotive issue.

We have tried to use a term in the generic standards which is as inclusive as possible. Throughout the generic standards we have used the term 'service users' to refer to anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants. Who your service users are will depend on how and where you work. For example your service users might be your patients or clients. The term also includes other people who might be affected by your practice, such as carers and relatives.

These standards may change in the future

We have produced this version of our standards after speaking to our stakeholders about how the draft standards would work and how relevant the draft standards were to registrants' practice.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and will keep our standards under continual review. So we may make further changes in the future to take into account changes in practice.

We will always publicise any changes to the standards that we make by, for instance, publishing notices on our website and informing professional bodies.

The generic standards

The standards play a key role in our decision-making process. It is members of the professions who apply these standards in a way which is specific to the individual profession.

The generic standards within this document were first published in November 2007 and as a result, were not part of the consultation on the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers. We have committed to reviewing the generic standards in 2010–11 to ensure that they are still fit for purpose.

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Expectations of a health professional

1a Professional autonomy and accountability

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

- understand the need to act in the best interests of service users at all times
- understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council
- understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process and in maintaining health and wellbeing
- be aware of current UK legislation applicable to the work of their profession

1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

1a.3 understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality

1a.4 understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent

1a.5 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

1a.6 be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement

- be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative
- know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional

- recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions

1a.7 recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and be able to practise accordingly

1a.8 understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise

- understand the need to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice
- understand the need to maintain high standards of personal conduct
- understand the importance of maintaining their own health
- understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career-long learning

1b Professional relationships

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

1b.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers

- understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
- understand the need to engage service users and carers in planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals
- be able to make appropriate referrals

1b.2 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

1b.3 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, service users, their relatives and carers

- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7.0 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5
- understand how communication skills affect the assessment of service users and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical ability and learning ability
- be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others
- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status
- understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
- understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist service users whose first language is not English, wherever possible
- recognise that relationships with service users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility
- be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems
- be able to recognise anxiety and stress in service users, and recognise the potential impact upon communication
- understand the difficulties in communication experienced by those with impaired hearing and be aware of appropriate steps to overcome communication barriers
- recognise the need to seek external assistance in situations where communication is ineffective for whatever reason

1b.4 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user

- recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users
- recognise the need to use appropriate interpersonal and communication skills to facilitate effective care for those with impaired hearing
- understand the need to empower service users to manage their aural health and related issues
- recognise the need to provide advice on self treatment where appropriate

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The skills required for the application of practice

2a Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

2a.1 be able to gather appropriate information

- be able to undertake and record appropriate case histories
- understand the need to make and keep full and accurate records of assessment results, hearing aid prescriptions and actual settings, rehabilitation plans and outcomes

2a.2 be able to use appropriate assessment techniques

- be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- be able to check that equipment is functioning accurately and within specifications and to take appropriate action in the case of faulty functioning and operation

2a.3 be able to undertake or arrange investigations as appropriate

2a.4 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected

- be able to interpret the data arising from case history, physical examination and hearing assessments

2b Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

2b.1 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions

- recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice
- be able to conduct evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit procedures
- be aware of a range of research methodologies

- be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
- be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice

2b.2 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements

- be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments
- be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice

2b.3 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales

- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different client groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors
- be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users

2b.4 be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skillfully

- understand the need to maintain the safety of both patients, clients and users and those involved in their care
- ensure that the environment in which service users are seen is appropriate for the assessment, service, care and attention given
- be able to safely use appropriate techniques and equipment to assess hearing loss and the physical condition of the ear
- be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system and performance settings and/or associated technologies for service users
- be able to plan, implement and manage appropriate rehabilitation programmes for service users to optimise outcomes

- be able to safely and competently take impressions of the ear
- be able to safely and competently programme and physically fit hearing aids
- understand the need to provide service users with access to continuing care, maintenance and support

2b.5 be able to maintain records appropriately

- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- understand the need to use only accepted terminology in making records

2c Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

2c.1 be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly

- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care
- be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the service user
- recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately
- be able to recognise those conditions or circumstances that require the involvement of other professionals and give the appropriate advice to service users

2c.2 be able to audit, reflect on and review practice

- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
- be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
- understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review
- be aware of emerging technologies and new developments in hearing assistance

Knowledge, understanding and skills

3a Knowledge, understanding and skills

Registrant hearing aid dispensers must:

3a.1 know and understand the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice

- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to their practice, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- understand, in the context of hearing aid audiology:
- the anatomy and physiology of the outer, middle, inner ear and central auditory pathways
- psycho-acoustics
- acoustics, speech production and perception
- the measurement of hearing and of other auditory system functions
- hearing aid and associated technologies including selection, fitting, programming and evaluation
- appropriate approaches to auditory rehabilitation

3a.2 know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different approaches to practice, and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual

3a.3 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
- be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety legislation
- be able to select appropriate protective equipment and use it correctly
- be able to establish safe environments for practice, which minimise risks to service users, those treating them, and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control

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