

Council, 5 July 2012

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics review - workplan

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

We periodically review all our standards to ensure they remain fit for purpose and up-to-date. This paper sets out a proposed workplan for the review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics between July 2012 and early 2015. As well as the background to the review, it also outlines the proposed review process with suggested key dates for each part of the review.

Decision

The Council is invited to discuss and agree the attached work plan (subject to any changes arising from the Council's discussion).

Background information

Paper for Council, Standards of conduct, performance and ethics: consultation responses and revised standards, 27 March 2008, at www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/1000218Bcouncil_meeting_20080327_enclosure11.pdf

Resource implications

The resource assumptions for the attached draft workplan are detailed in the Policy and Standards workplan for 2012-13.

Financial implications

The budget for externally commissioned research is up to £40,000. The financial assumptions of the attached draft workplan form part of the assumptions for the Policy and Standards budget for 2011/2012.

Appendices

None

Date of paper

22 June 2012

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Council – 5 July 2012

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The standards of conduct, performance and ethics are the high-level ethical standards the Health Professions Council (HPC) sets for all our registrants. These set out in broad terms the conduct we expect of those on our Register, with a focus on providing guidance to registrants based on our expectations of their behaviour.
- 1.2 We periodically review all our standards to ensure they remain fit for purpose and up-to-date. This paper sets out a proposed workplan for the review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics to commence in mid 2012. As well as the background to the review, it also outlines the proposed review process with suggested key dates for each part of the review.

2 Background to the review

- 2.1 We aim to review our standards approximately every five years. We last reviewed the standards of conduct, performance and ethics from 2006-2008. The current standards came into effect on 1 July 2008.
- 2.2 We review our standards in two different ways.
- 2.3 **Ongoing review** means the 'day-day-day' review of the standards by the Council, Committees and the Executive. This is primarily to ensure that the standards do not limit effective ways of working for registrants and education providers. Ongoing review might indicate that a specific change to a standard was necessary or indicate that a more detailed 'periodic' review should be brought forward.
- 2.4 **Periodic review** refers to when we review the standards in more detail to ensure that they:
- remain fit for purpose;
 - are well understood by our stakeholders including registrants, service users and carers, education providers and the public; and
 - take account of change including changes in practice, legislation, technology, guidelines and wider society.
- 2.5 In our last periodic review of the standards, the review was led by the Conduct and Competence Committee, and comprised of a series of research and consultancy activities which included an informal online consultation period seeking feedback on the standards. The review also looked at the standards and codes of practice of other organisations; changes in legislation;

information from fitness to practise panellists and a review of the cases heard; information from professional bodies; and information from groups with a patient/ public involvement perspective. The review culminated in a public consultation on revised draft standards, prior to their republication in July 2008.

3 Review process

- 3.1 In March 2012, the Council agreed that publications including standards, guidance and other documents could be amended without further Council or Committee approval where changes were necessary to reflect the registration of social workers in England from August 2012 and the organisation's forthcoming name change to the 'Health and Care Professions Council'. In line with this, the standards will be republished in July 2012 with minor revisions to the foreword and introduction, and some minor changes to the standards themselves, to update the terminology used.
- 3.2 The next planned periodic review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics was originally due to commence in 2013/2014. However, given the significant growth in the Register since 2008 and the forthcoming regulation of social workers in England, we are proposing bringing forward the start of the review to mid 2012. By bringing the review period forward, we will be able to take account of feedback already received about the existing standards, particularly from professions that have recently joined the Register, as well as other relevant policy developments.
- 3.3 We propose that the review be delivered in three phases – research, a professional liaison group, and finally a public consultation.

Phase one: Research 2012-2013

- 3.4 In this periodic review we are focused on carrying out a more thorough review of the purpose and usability of the standards. This would include a combination of internally delivered and externally commissioned research activities to seek the views of key stakeholders on the content and accessibility of the existing standards.
- 3.5 While we are still working on defining the terms of reference for the external research, we anticipate that it will include focus group discussions as we are particularly interested in engaging with a number of key audiences including the members of the public and of the professions we regulate. We intend to place specific focus on those who use the services provided by our registrants. We also particularly need to engage with the professions that have joined the Register since the last review of the standards – practitioner psychologists, hearing aid dispensers, and social workers in England. Issues to be considered might include the following:
- Are registrants aware of the standards and do they understand them?
 - Do the standards reflect professional practice and the expectations the public has of registered professionals?

- Where possible, are the standards applicable across all the professions we regulate?
 - Are the standards accessible to a range of audiences?
 - Given the growth in range of professions on our Register, are there further principles which need to be included in the standards?
- 3.6 We are interested in examining how our standards are used, their accessibility to service users, and how ethical principles set by the regulator can best be translated into understanding and practice. The research brief will be defined in terms to produce outcomes that will inform the following Professional Liaison Group's consideration of the standards.
- 3.7 The internal research will include work on how the standards are used by the HPC and will target further groups that would not be included in the external research. These might, for example, include:
- Education providers;
 - Fitness to practise panel members;
 - Fitness to practise case managers and hearing officers; and
 - Professional bodies.
- 3.8 We anticipate we will focus on gathering data from these groups through targeted online surveys. Our internal research focus may also include collaborative work with some other external organisations in targeted events to seek the views of specific service user groups. Further papers will be produced to update the Council on the more detailed proposals.

Phase two: Professional Liaison Group (PLG) 2013

- 3.9 A PLG would be convened to comprise of Council / Committee members, professional bodies, service user representatives and other relevant stakeholders. The outcomes of the activities described above would be reported to the PLG which would help put together a revised draft of the standards for consultation. A PLG workplan including terms of reference and the composition of the membership will be produced for Council consideration and approval in late 2012.

Phase three: Consultation 2014

- 3.10 A public consultation would be held on the proposed standards. We will look at ways to specifically target service user groups again at this stage of the process.

Other publications

- 3.11 Following the review process we will need to undertake work to update other guidance documents produce in line with the revised standards. A particular focus for this phase of the work will be on updating and consulting on the Guidance on conduct and ethics for students. We intend to include some

consideration of this guidance document as part of our wider review of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

4 Indicative workplan and dates

4.1 The Executive are proposing the following workplan, to allow sufficient time for research, and the consideration of the Professional Liaison Group prior to public consultation in mid 2014. The timings are indicative only, the timescales in the workplan may be subject to change in the future.

Time scale	Activity
End July 2012	Call for external research proposals from external organisations
August 2012	Planning of internal research projects
September 2012	Selection and approval of external research provider
End September 2012 – End January 2013	External and internal research period
December 2012	Professional Liaison Group workplan and terms of reference approved by Council
January-March 2013	Selection of Professional Liaison Group members
Mid February 2013	Final external research report submitted to HPC Executive
February-April 2013	Preparation of papers for consideration by Professional Liaison Group
May– October 2013	Professional Liaison Group to consider findings of research, other relevant information and to draft amendments to the standards for consultation
November 2013 – February 2014	Executive to finalise wording and develop consultation document
March 2014	Education and Training Committee – consultation document on revised standards considered by ETC
March 2014	Council Meeting – consideration of recommendations from ETC meeting, approval for public consultation
April to end July 2014	Consultation – public consultation on revised standards of conduct, performance and ethics

August-October 2014	The Executive will revise the standards as necessary following the responses received in the public consultation and seek legal advice when finalising the wording.
November 2014	Education and Training Committee meeting – consideration of consultation responses and revised standards for publication
December 2014	Council meeting – consideration of recommendations from ETC meeting, approval for publication
Early 2015	New standards of conduct, performance and ethics published and come into force