

Education Committee
15 June 2010
Public session
The Role of Lay Observers in Recognised Qualification Approvals

<u>Classification</u>	Public
<u>Purpose</u>	For Decision
<u>Issues</u>	This paper discusses the role of Lay Observers at Education Committee meetings to monitor discussions surrounding the approval of Recognised Qualifications (RQs). The Committee is asked to agree to the discontinuance of the use of Lay Observers in the Education Committee RQ deliberation process.
<u>Financial & Resourcing Implications</u>	<p>During the period 2010 to 2013 it is anticipated that the Education Committee will be considering at least 8 Recognised Qualification (RQ) Reviews, including new osteopathic qualifications and RQ renewal reviews.</p> <p>The daily fee for a Lay Observer is c£500, which would represent a saving of c£4,000 for the period above.</p>
<u>Equality & Diversity Implications</u>	None arising from this paper.
<u>Communications Implications</u>	Changes to the process would, in due course, require effective consultation with the osteopathic educational institutions (OEs), students and possibly other stakeholders to ensure they are content with the independence and fairness of the Recognised Qualification (RQ) accreditation process.
<u>Annexes</u>	None

Summary

1. This paper discusses the role of Lay Observers at Education Committee meetings to monitor discussions surrounding the approval of Recognised Qualifications (RQs). Following a dedicated discussion at the GOsC / OEI Meeting held on 20 May 2010, it recommends the removal of the requirement for a Lay Observer to observe the Education Committee's discussion and decision making process in relation to Recognised Qualifications (RQs).

Background

2. At its last meeting on 18 March 2010, the Education Committee considered arguments on the appropriateness and proportionality of the involvement of the Lay Observer to observe the Education Committees discussion and decision making processes in relation to RQs. It also agreed that contact should be made with the OEIs to seek their views.
3. The GOsC / OEI meeting took place on 20 May 2010. The note of this meeting is set out at Item 10 of the Private Agenda. The OEIs agreed to support the removal of the role of Lay Observer in the RQ decision making process.
4. The decision for the involvement of a Lay Observer was made by the Education Committee on 3 June 1999. It was subsequently reported to Council on 8 July 1999. If the Education Committee agrees to discontinue the role of the Lay Observer, this will be reported to the Council at its next meeting on 13 July 2010.

Discussion

5. The purpose and value of the involvement of the Lay Observer must be clear. The value of the Lay Observer was to provide OEIs with knowledge that an objective observer was present during Education Committee deliberations to ensure the proper consideration of RQs. The OEIs have agreed to support the removal of the Lay Observer suggesting that the original purpose of ensuring objectivity and independence in the RQ process is now addressed in other ways. These ways include the use of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to co-ordinate the visiting process. It is also noted that records showed that no objection had been recorded from a Lay Observer since their introduction to the RQ deliberation process.
6. It is submitted that there is no current purpose or need for a Lay Observer.
7. However, it will be important to ensure that mechanisms to demonstrate the objectivity of the RQ approval process are in place. This point will be taken into account as part of our Quality Assurance Review and proposals will be consulted on in due course.

Recommendation

8. The Committee is recommended to agree the discontinuance of the role of Lay Observer in the RQ Approval process.