

Education Committee
15 December 2011
Pre-registration Curriculum content

<u>Classification</u>	Public
<u>Purpose</u>	For decision
<u>Issue</u>	To agree to the purpose of the pre-registration curriculum content project.
<u>Recommendation</u>	To agree to the purpose of the Pre-registration Curriculum Review as an aspirational document providing guidance about undergraduate osteopathic education to support the development of undergraduate education as outlined in paragraph 22.
<u>Financial and resourcing implications</u>	The costs of this work will be incorporated within existing staff time and planned OEI meetings.
<u>Equality and diversity implications</u>	Equality and diversity will need to be a key component of any pre-registration educational guidance.
<u>Communications implications</u>	None at present. Consultation will be necessary in due course when a draft of the guidance is at an appropriate stage.
<u>Annex</u>	None.
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Background

1. The GOsC Corporate Plan 2010 to 2013 states that we will 'consider the need for core curriculum content to supplement the Osteopathic Practice Standards' It also states that we will 'prepare and carry out a consultation on the concept of a pre-registration curriculum content document' during 2011/12. Our 2010/11 Business Plan states that we will scope and agree the terms of reference for this work taking into account other work streams.

2. A paper exploring the following was considered by the Education Committee on 16 March 2011:

- What are the issues to be addressed
- How is curriculum content mapped in the current QA process
- What are the issues in terms of development of the pre-registration core curriculum
- How might a review be carried out?
- Timescales.
- Draft terms of reference.

3. The Education Committee were asked to agree to develop a core curriculum content or core learning outcomes and to agree the draft terms of reference for the review.

4. The Education Committee were hesitant about the timing of the project in relation to the heavy workload of the Committee and the Osteopathic Educational Institutions (OEIs) in relation to Committee work. Some members expressed concern about the purpose of the project questioning the need for it and others thought that there was merit in continuing with the project not least because it would help practitioners and others keep up to date with what is being taught to undergraduate osteopaths. The Committee felt that a more detailed scoping exercise was needed.

5. The Committee agreed to reconsider the terms of reference when it had further information about the scope of the project and the resources required both internally and externally. Particular questions that the Committee suggested should be considered were:

- a. Whether the project would look at higher level educational learning outcomes or more specific core curriculum content.
- b. A more detailed scoping method should be set out.
- c. Further detail about project resources and staff

- d. An assessment of the workload of the OEIs to contribute to the project.
6. Since the meeting, the project has been delayed because it was thought that information from the Clinical Risk Osteopathy and Management (CROaM) study about how osteopaths were currently practising may well be useful to understand what OEIs should be teaching at undergraduate level.
7. On 17 November 2011, the OEIs were engaged in further discussion about the project – particularly about why the project might be supportive of osteopathic education and osteopathy. The OEIs were very supportive of the project going ahead and of a further scoping exercise being undertaken.
8. What was particularly interesting was that the discussion brought out the aspirational aspect of the guidance and the opportunity for the guidance to act as a marker for progress rather than additional requirements. In this way, the guidance would support and develop a consensus about how osteopathic education was developing and where it was going. It was more of a 'carrot' than a 'stick'.
9. This provides a different method of developing the guidance, one which is not so resource intensive, not requiring detailed mapping of current curricula yet potentially more useful. A public document setting out the aspirations of osteopathic education would be a useful way to support the development of osteopathic education. A copy of the paper that went to the GOsC /OEI meeting is set out below, including amendments suggested by the OEIs.
10. The purpose of this paper is to seek general agreement to the purpose of the review. We will then return to the terms of reference at the next meeting. This should hopefully also coincide the findings of the CROaM study which are hoped to be available for consideration shortly.

Discussion

What is pre-registration curriculum content?

11. It is envisaged that this question will be explored with the OEIs as part of the scoping of the project. It is envisaged that the educational statements would be guidance rather than requirements at an early stage. It could include the following:
- a. High level core outcomes.
 - b. More detailed curriculum objectives.
 - c. Core content.
 - d. Standards of assessment.
 - e. Standards for teaching and the delivery of training.

Why consider a core pre-registration curriculum?

12. The General Osteopathic Council has a statutory 'general duty of promoting high standards of education and training and osteopathy and of keeping the provision of that training under review'.

13. The purpose of the Osteopathic Practice Standards (OPS) is to outline the high-level standards and ethical principles required in order to practise as an osteopath and to provide further guidance on how these standards might be interpreted in a changing context. All osteopaths must comply with the OPS.
14. The purpose of the OPS is not to provide learning outcomes or objectives for the assessment of knowledge or skills required by osteopaths. This was identified as a disadvantage in the OPS consultation.
15. The OEIs are required to map their RQ curricula to the Standard of Proficiency and Code of Practice and from 1 September 2012 the OPS, to ensure that these high level standards can be achieved by graduating students as part of the quality assurance process. This helps us to confirm that the award of the RQ is 'evidence of having reached the standard'¹. However this mapping is not explicit and transparent to others including students, graduates, other osteopaths, specialist associations, other healthcare professionals, or patients.
16. In this way, the OPS does not set out detailed educational learning outcomes but supports educational learning outcomes defined by the OEIs.
17. The GOsC does not define core pre-registration curriculum content or core educational learning outcomes. Therefore there is no clear method to demonstrate consistency in terms of what osteopaths are trained and assessed in and can therefore do at the point of registration.
18. The absence of consensus could be interpreted as a lack of clarity for others, confusion about what graduates can do and expectations not being met, particularly, for example patients. Our 2009 OEI survey, for example, suggested that some OEIs teach pharmacology and nutrition in some detail and some do not.
- What implications, if any, might a lack of consensus about a core have for a patient consulting these newly qualified osteopaths from different OEIs?*
19. All other healthcare profession regulators define core educational outcomes, details about assessment or standards for education, in more detail than their standard for entry to the registers. This helps postgraduate training to build explicitly on what is learned at undergraduate level. However, this does not mean that the courses provided at different institutions are homogenous or turn out practitioners with identical 'restricted' skill sets. It does however, help to consolidate a clear understanding of what practitioners can do at particular points and it helps others to understand what happens in undergraduate healthcare education.
20. It is important to emphasise at the outset that the development of a pre-registration curriculum content or outcomes **is not** about homogenising osteopathic graduates. It must be an important principle of this work that progress and

¹ See Section 14(2) and Section 14(3) Osteopaths Act 1993.

continued innovation in osteopathy are supported; that the development of the OEIs and osteopathic education continues to be strengthened by embracing different approaches as part of an approach to pre-registration core outcomes².

21. This section starts to explore some of the advantages of describing pre-registration core outcomes to support the Osteopathic Practice Standards and some of the disadvantages. It is envisaged that the discussion with the OEIs will feed into a more detailed scoping project with the Education Committee.

Advantages of guidance about pre-registration curriculum outcomes

22. The advantages of guidance about pre-registration curriculum outcomes could include the following:

- It would be easier for stakeholders including qualified osteopaths, specialist associations, other healthcare professionals and patients to understand what newly qualified osteopaths can do.
- It may help qualified osteopaths to understand how practice is changing and how educational standards are continually enhanced.
- It provides a mechanism to more easily integrate the following types of changes into osteopathic education or to express that these aspects are already part of the curriculum:
 - Leadership competences common to all health professionals
 - Educational outcomes common to all health professionals.
 - Changes in the way that patients expect to be communicated with.
 - Research skills
 - Clinical audit skills.
- It may help a more collegiate approach within OEIs (whilst recognising that all will still, importantly, have unique and distinct 'flavours' of osteopathic practice taught within their undergraduate education).
- It could help to support the confidence of newly qualified osteopaths to know that they have been taught a 'common core' and could start to change the culture of osteopaths only taking associates who trained at the same OEI as themselves.
- It could help to strengthen 'osteopathic identity' and consensus at a time when fragmentation could be to the detriment of the profession whilst respecting the diversity of practice at different OEIs.
- It could help the effective development of advanced practice and career development if there was a clearer understanding of what is core to osteopathic education.
- It could support the actual teaching and assessment of particular aspects of clinical education if there were common outcomes specified by GOsC in guidance. This would also help to inform common aspects of assessment if this was felt desirable.

² Please note that the term 'outcomes' is used throughout this paper to mean all and any of the possibilities outlined in paragraph 11.

- It could help that particular elements currently only taught at some OEIs might be taught at all OEIs if considered important, for example, nutrition and pharmacology.

Disadvantages of guidance about pre-registration curriculum outcomes

- The perception that osteopathy is to be homogenised. This could be mitigated by being clear that the 'core' parts of the guidance would not in any way limit what could be taught at OEIs. There could be a common core, but a more varied and unique 'options' approach to an undergraduate degree for the different OEIs. It could also be mitigated by focussing more on outcomes rather than defined content to allow more flexibility in the way that the outcomes are delivered and assessed if this was thought desirable.
- Limited capacity in the OEIs to undertake significant work on this issue. This could be mitigated by providing support for the Project at GOsC. In particular, mapping relevant information in healthcare generally and including materials relevant to the undergraduate curriculum.

Next steps

23. On balance it is recommended that there are many benefits to exploring common outcomes for pre-registration curriculum content.

24. The Education Committee are asked to agree the purpose of the review as outlined in paragraph 22 of this paper in order that terms of reference and a more detailed scoping method be developed.

Recommendation: To agree to the purpose of the Pre-registration Curriculum Review as an aspirational document providing guidance about undergraduate osteopathic education to support the development of undergraduate education as outlined in paragraph 22.