



Education and Registration Standards Committee

19 September 2013

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) evaluation of review visits

Classification Public.

Purpose For decision.

Issue The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertook a review of feedback from recent General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) quality assurance review visits and has produced a report together with a number of recommendations for the Committee to consider.

Recommendations

1. To note the contents of the evaluation report and action plan at Annexes A and B.
2. To agree the actions recommended by the QAA in relation to the evaluation report.
3. To note that the matter of teaching and clinic observation will be clarified in the review visitor training taking place in October 2013.

Financial and resourcing implications None.

Equality and diversity implications None.

Communications implications None.

Annexes Annex A - QAA evaluation report for review visits.

Annex B – QAA recommended action plan.

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Background

1. Under the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) Business Plan for 2013, Section 1.1, we have outlined the need to 'ensure that initial education and training is of high-quality and is fit for purpose in an evolving healthcare and higher education environment.' One of the specific activities that we have agreed to complete in order to achieve this is: 'undertake major review of quality assurance process to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in terms of quality, effectiveness and cost/resource efficiency and that it embodies the aims of 'right-touch regulation' and Higher Education Better Regulation Group on streamlining data resources.' As part of this the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is contracted to provide regular evaluation reports of the GOsC quality assurance process.
2. The Education Committee last considered an evaluation report about the quality assurance arrangements on 14 March 2012. The response rate to the evaluation was extremely low with none of the OEIs responding to the feedback report. Findings from that review included a need to improve understanding of the review aims and the preparation and documents required.
3. The report from the QAA at Annex A is in respect of the academic year 2012-13, in which three GOsC reviews were undertaken using the revised Quality Assurance process which came into effect in 2012.
4. The QAA has drawn out some recommendations from the analysis of the feedback and these are presented at Annex B, together with confirmation of any actions already taken and recommendations for additional actions.

Discussion

5. The report states that: 'Overall, respondents indicated that the review achieved its purpose with 11 out of 13 respondents stating that the purpose was 'completely' met.'
6. The response rate for this evaluation was greatly improved. 100% of osteopathic educational institutions (OEIs) and 100% of Visitors responses were returned. One of the three feedback forms sent to the review co-ordinators was returned this year, reflecting staff changes that occurred shortly after the reviews were conducted. In addition to the feedback forms, the QAA consulted all OEIs for their views on the evaluation at a focus group meeting held on 15 July 2013. This means that the evaluation report should be a more rounded reflection of the feedback from the Visits.
7. This is a very positive endorsement of the revised review process and provides confidence in our processes for quality assurance from those stakeholders involved in the evaluation.

8. The Committee is asked to consider the report at Annex A and the corresponding actions/recommendations listed in Annex B to determine whether the actions already taken are sufficient to address the feedback provided and to agree to further recommendations made by the QAA. Each of these will be considered in turn.

Ability of visitors to observe teaching and learning

9. One review visitor commented 'There appears to have been a change in the guidelines meaning that some visitors who are not currently involved in osteopathic education are not allowed to observe any teaching other than in clinic. The comment refers to the restriction imposed in the 2011 Handbook, which stated that 'only visitors with current experience in teaching on osteopathic courses with RQ status will be used to observe teaching and clinics'. In November 2012 the Committee approved an amendment extending the criteria for observations and thus enabling more visitors to undertake observations.
10. The relevant change in policy has already been agreed by the Education Committee, to take account of this feedback, will be highlighted to all Visitors and review co-ordinators at the training days which take place on 9 and 19 October 2013.

Additional training on report writing/provision of a template for collection of evidence

11. One comment from a review visitor in relation to report writing was '...I find the handbook confusing especially when it comes to report writing'. When the visitors were asked what could help to improve this, the report states that: 'a template and further training on Qmmunity and report writing were suggested...'
12. The QAA plans to include additional training on report writing as part of the training for all review visitors in October 2013. This follows feedback from both this evaluation and previous feedback from the General Osteopathic Council and the osteopathic educational institutions on the need to continue to ensure consistency in the approach to drafting reports and outcomes.
13. As part of the administrative process, the QAA has also produced a supporting template for review visitors to assist in analysis of the self-evaluation document and to support the collection of evidence.
14. It is recommended that together with GOsC Executive input to the QAA training programme and the new evidence collecting template, that the actions planned by the QAA will address this feedback and that no further action is required. The GOsC will also continue to monitor and comment on the reports received from the QAA following reviews as another check of consistency.

Time allocation and submission of self-evaluation document (SED)

15. Feedback exists from both review visitors and the osteopathic educational institutions on the time allocated to review visits. From the perspective of the visitors, it was commented that reviews of institutions offering more than one qualification for review posed problems for the time allocated to the visit. The report quotes a Visitor as follows: 'This increased workload considerably for the visitors, who are paid for five days. This review took 2.5 days at the school, 3 nights away in a hotel, plus 4 extra days looking at documentation'
16. Visitor comments for improving time management included: 'providing the SED supporting documentation arrives early and well referenced I would like to think that I would be more organised by the time of the visit.' And 'earlier submission of the additionally requested documentation by the provider would assist in the preparation for the visit'.
17. In its recommended action plan at Annex B the QAA acknowledges that earlier submission of documentation would assist in the planning of the reviews.
18. The recommended actions at Annex B also state that the submission of the SED was discussed at the meeting with the OEIs in July 2013 with the suggestion that more guidance on the completion of the SED for OEIs might assist in earlier submission of the document.
19. The QAA has suggested that when the GOsC Review Handbook is next revised it should include more guidance on how to complete the SED. It may be that such guidance could be supplementary to the Handbook and that we could work with the QAA to support supplementary guidance to the Handbook in preparation for the next tranche of visits which will commence in 2016.
20. We will also give consideration to the timing and timescales for reviews as part of the wider Quality Assurance Review.

Administrative support

21. In relation to the administration system employed by the QAA to conduct reviews, the report states that:

'Institution respondents did not make any comments concerning the administrative arrangements for supporting the review. Two visitors commented that the administration of the review was well managed and organised. One visitor suggested that more training on Qmmunity (QAA's electronic communication system) would have been helpful...'
22. This was further commented on directly by visitors in the report stating: 'Visitors offered mixed reactions to the use of Qmmunity.' and 'of the four respondents who felt they were partially able to work productively using Qmmunity, one required more training'. The QAA report states that as part of its own development of its administration systems, the QAA has 'improved and simplified

Qmmunity, QAA's electronic communication system, so that it is easier for all reviewers to use. The improvements take effect from September 2013.' The QAA also confirms in its action plan that: 'Using Qmmunity will also be part of visitor training in October 2013'.

23. It is recommended that the QAA has addressed this action point sufficiently and that no further action is required.

Recommendations:

1. To note the contents of the evaluation report and action plan at Annexes A and B.
2. To agree the actions recommended by the QAA in relation to the evaluation report.
3. To note that the matter of teaching and clinic observation will be clarified in the review visitor training taking place in October 2013.

QAA evaluation report for review visits.



General Osteopathic Council

Report on Responses from the Evaluation Questionnaire

Academic Year 2012-13

from

The Research, Information and Enquiry Team

July 2013

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Contents

P2	Introduction
P2	Response rates
P2	Outcomes from the questionnaires
P2	The review method and support from QAA
P3	The GOsC review team
P4	Summary

Introduction

1. During the academic year 2012-13, three GOsC reviews were undertaken. This report presents the outcomes of the post-review evaluation process, based on the analysis of the questionnaire used. The analysis is based on the total number of reviews undertaken (for which completed questionnaires have been received) over the period.
2. The primary aim of the questionnaire was to ask the parties involved for feedback on the method and performance of the visitors and the QAA officer supporting the review.
3. Feedback on the method is passed to the QAA method coordinator to evaluate its effectiveness, consider developments to the process and inform visitor training. Feedback on the QAA officer may be used in the officer's performance review. Feedback on the visitors may be used in visitors' contract management.

Response rates

Questionnaire Group	Number sent	Number returned for analysis
Review Coordinators (CR)	3	1
Visitors	9	9
Institutions	3	3
Total	15	13

Table 1. Response rates to questionnaire survey by respondent groups

4. The response rate for this academic year continues to be high, although some respondents did have to be encouraged to reply. The response rate for CRs was lower this year as one CR was not contactable.

Outcomes from the questionnaires

5. In order to aid improvement, responses are analysed by respondent group where appropriate. However, it must be noted that this analysis is based upon a small number of respondents (13). Respondents were asked for feedback on two main areas: the review method and support from QAA; and the effectiveness of the team. They were asked to comment on the extent to which the review achieved its purpose and the team fulfilled their roles, using the descriptors 'completely'; 'to a large extent'; 'to some extent'; and 'not at all'.

The review method and support from QAA

6. Overall, respondents indicated that the review achieved its purpose with 11 out of 13 stating that the purpose was 'completely' met. Three respondents commented that the method was fit for purpose and seems to work well in its present form. Suggestions for enhancing the method included:
 - '...I felt that the panel might have appreciated more time to read all the material provided, or that the volume of material could be reduced.'
 - 'More time spent seeing classes'

- 'Earlier submission of the additionally requested documentation by the provider would assist in preparation for the visit'
 - 'The school requested the existing programmes as well as new programmes to be considered for 'RQ'. This increased the workload considerably for the visitors, who are paid for five days. This review took 2.5 days at the school, 3 nights away in a hotel plus about 4 extra days looking through documents and writing reports. Visitors could do a better job if they had more time.'
7. With regard to the method, one respondent commented that it was 'a very clear method that allowed a detailed review of the college'. Other comments included:
 - 'Lots of time in meetings but might be useful to have time to see and look at sessions – papers. Often feels a bit rushed.'
 - 'In this review, the GOsC requested consideration of a number of areas that had previously been identified by the QAA. Maybe more explicit structuring of the report concerning the treatment of these areas may assist the GOsC in determining the extent of the provider's progress.'
 - 'In this review the team were not given opportunity to discuss conditions. At the final meeting just strengths and weaknesses were considered.'
 8. One visitor commented 'There appears to have been a change in the guidelines meaning that some visitors who are not currently involved in osteopathic education are not allowed to observe any teaching other than in clinic. As someone currently involved I was requested to do a majority of the teaching observations which meant that I had little time in between meetings to prepare or digest information and less time to peruse the student work or hard copies of the supporting documentation'.
 9. Institution respondents did not make any comments concerning the administrative arrangements for supporting the review. Two visitors commented that the administration of the review was well managed and organised. One visitor suggested that more training on Qmmunity (QAA's electronic communication system) would have been helpful and that ARCS was better. It was also suggested that a template would be useful for new visitors to use to ensure they covered everything.
 10. Visitors offered mixed reactions to the use of Qmmunity. Only one respondent indicated that they were able to work productively using the Qmmunity site, although it would appear from their comments that they had used ARCs. Of the four respondents who felt they were partially able to work productively using Qmmunity one required more training, while another was becoming more familiar with it. Respondents also commented that they had difficulty accessing documentation:
 - 'It was difficult to initially access the documentation deposited. The organisation of the sections and the information / documentation took some getting used to, and it was not always easy to find documentation required.'
 - 'Seems to have a mind of its own as to where material gets posted and whether or not comments appear.'
 - 'It may have been due to the way the institution submitted the documents but the SED supporting documentation turned up in bits and pieces and was difficult to find. The SED referenced all supporting documents but the documents on Qmmunity were not numbered. To the whole process took a lot longer and was incredibly frustrating to work with.'
 11. Institutions were asked for comments regarding the level of student involvement. This was deemed to be 'entirely appropriate and adequate' and 'student involvement was a key part of the review and I would want to see it continue...'

The GOsC review team

12. All institution respondents and six visitors thought the review coordinator performed his role effectively. Three visitors indicated that the review coordinator fulfilled his role 'to a large extent' with two from the same review commenting that 'the team really needed an opportunity to discuss conditions' and 'we did not deliberate on conditions, areas for improvement, good practice etc at the end of the visit'. The review coordinator who responded felt he and the team had fulfilled their roles 'completely', adding that the team were 'highly effective'.
13. Two out of the three institution respondents thought the review team performed its role 'completely'; the respondent who indicated they performed it 'to a large extent' also added that 'the team were from varied backgrounds which was beneficial to the review'. Overall six visitors thought the team had performed its role 'completely' with one visitor commenting that the team worked well together. One suggestion to improve team performance was to 'organise time on the last day to discuss conditions and recommendations, rather than doing it online after the event'.
14. When it came to evaluating their own performance three visitors thought they had 'completely' fulfilled their roles; five 'to a large extent'; and one 'to some extent'. Five visitors indicated that they were 'experienced' or 'very experienced'; two had 'some experience'; and two that they were 'new'.
15. Visitors were asked to indicate what they thought they would do differently next time and comments included:
 - 'When doing the preliminary work I should have been more focused on my own agreed areas. Providing the SED supporting documentation arrives early and well referenced I would like to think that I would be more organised by the time of the visit.'
 - 'I found transcribing observation and meeting notes into electronic format during the visit was a bit distracting. I would have preferred to do this at home instead.'
 - '...I wasn't sure how it would work in practice (1) being used to two separate visits and (2) difference between 2 types of visitor/activities. Having gone through it once, I will feel a lot more confident next time. And we're not quite through the process at this stage, of course, but I don't anticipate any problems with the rest of it.'
 - 'I missed key documents in Qmmunity from the review co-ordinator which outlined which aspects of the review were to be my responsibility. I therefore spent far too much time looking at everything, rather than focussing on Clinical & Academic standards.'
16. All but two visitors thought the combination of handbook and training provided 'sufficient' information to act as a visitor. The two who felt they were 'partially sufficient' commented that they required more Qmmunity training. One stated that 'I feel the training has been very beneficial. I feel that the supporting handbook needs updating. During the training I received very well written and detailed documents relating to meetings with students, questions to ask, organising oneself for a review. In contrast I find the handbook confusing especially when coming to write my report. For example there seems to be a disparity between what is needed in different sections which can lead to unnecessary overlap'. Visitors were asked if there was any further support or guidance which QAA could provide. A template and further training on Qmmunity and report writing were suggested as ways QAA could help visitors perform their role more effectively. One visitor commented 'I thought the training was excellent and the support given was good all round'.

Summary

17. On the whole both the review process and the teams were well received. Visitors commented 'I really enjoyed being involved. I found the process was well supported by QAA and GOsC' and 'As a new lay visitor, I found the osteopathic visitors very helpful, both personally and through listening to what they said about the provision'.
18. In addition to the positive outcomes of the analysis, respondents identified areas which would benefit from development or further exploration through focus groups:
 - Further training on Qmmunity
 - More training on report writing
 - Provision of a template for the review process
 - More class observations
 - Earlier submission of documentation
 - Overall time allocation for the team and allocation of time for activities during the review.

QAA recommended action plan

Actions arising from Evaluation Report for GOsC reviews 2012-13

The following areas for improvement were identified in the report:

- Further training on Qmmunity
- More training on report writing
- Provision of a template for the review process
- More class observations
- Earlier submission of documentation
- Overall time allocation for the team and allocation of time for activities during the review.

The table explains how QAA has either already dealt with the issue or recommends dealing with the issue:

Area	Completed/Recommended Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further training on Qmmunity 	<p>QAA has improved and simplified Qmmunity, QAA’s electronic communication system, so that it is easier for all reviewers to use. The improvements take effect from September 2013. Using Qmmunity will also be part of visitor training in October 2013</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More training on report writing 	<p>To be included in the training programme for October 2013</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a template for the review process 	<p>The template used for visitors to analyse the self evaluation has been extended into a document which can be used to gather evidence throughout the review process and support the production of text for the report (T12). The template will be introduced by the CRs in advance of the two reviews in November 2012 and consolidated in training in October 2013</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More class observations 	<p>The comment refers to the restriction imposed in the 2011 Handbook, which stated that ‘only visitors with current experience in teaching on osteopathic courses with RQ status will be used to observe teaching and clinics’. In November 2012 the Committee approved an amendment extending the criteria for observations and thus enabling more visitors to undertake observations</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier submission of documentation 	<p>This refers to OEIs ensuring that the appropriate information is provided in support of the self-evaluation in the first instance, and that any requests for additional evidence are met promptly. The current Handbook gives advice on how to prepare the self-evaluation and the Method Coordinator and the CR are available to provide ongoing advice. The CR stresses at the preliminary meeting how important it is for additional evidence to be submitted in good time and chases if the documentation is not received.</p> <p>At the focus group in July 2013, OEI representatives suggested that more guidance could be provided in the</p>

Annex B to 4

	<p>next version of the Handbook. It was also accepted that OEIs could learn from their staff's involvement as visitors to other institutions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall time allocation for the team and allocation of time for activities during the review.	<p>The review process is always intensive and demanding of visitors' time, especially when they are in full employment and little can be done about this. The benefits to their institutions and to their personal development are generally regarded as adequate recompense.</p> <p>Two new CRs (with considerable experience of other QAA review methods) are now in place and are working with the Method Coordinator towards greater consistency in their approach to the management of reviews. This is being achieved through a programme which has included attendance at the focus group with OEI representatives in July and will include visitor training in October.</p>