



Policy Advisory Committee
13 October 2016
Health and disability guidance

Classification	Public
Purpose	For decision
Issue	An update on the review of guidance on health and disability
Recommendation	To agree to publish the Guidance on Health and Disability.
Financial and resourcing implications	There will be a small cost incurred in designing the documents for final publication which is contained within the Professional Standards/Communications budgets.
Equality and diversity implications	Contained within the report.
Communications implications	Contained within the report.
Annexes	A. Draft Guidance for applicants and students with a disability or health impairment B. Draft Students with a disability or health impairment: Guidance for osteopathic educational institutions.
Author	Steven Bettles

Background

1. The GOsC issues guidance on Student Health and Disability, in the following documents:
 - a. *Guidance for applicants and students with a disability or health impairment*
 - b. *Students with a disability or health impairment: Guidance for osteopathic educational institutions.*
2. The aim of the guidance is to provide information to applicants, students and Osteopathic Educational Institutions (OEIs) on issues relating to disabilities and health impairments in students and prospective students. This will help students, and those considering becoming students of osteopathy, understand the type of support available and adjustments that might be made to help them throughout their studies. For OEIs, their obligations under equality legislation are clarified, and guidance given on the provision of support for students with a range of disabilities and health impairments. Provision is made for the entire student journey, from application to graduation.
3. The current Health and Disability guidance was written when the Equality Act 2010 was introduced, and its provisions were therefore new. A review process was implemented to update the guidance generally. This included a review of similar guidance issued by other regulators, as well as meetings with a number of OEIs to review their experience and views in this area. All OEIs were invited to contribute to this process.
4. Draft revisions of the guidance documents were presented to the Education and Registration Standards Committee on 3 March 2016.
5. In the revised consultation documents, we made a number of changes, including:
 - making greater reference to mental health issues, and how students might be supported in this respect.
 - providing case examples to help contextualise the guidance and giving more examples about the types of reasonable adjustments that can be made in the context of osteopathic education.
 - adding a section on 'Fitness to Study' processes.
 - increasing the section on types of discrimination in the OEI guidance to provide a greater explanation of these.
 - making reference to the updated QAA Benchmark statement for osteopathy¹ and Guidance on osteopathic pre-registration education (GOPRE)²

¹ Available at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/SBS-Osteopathy-15.pdf>

² Available at: <http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/news-and-resources/document-library/training/guidance-for-osteopathic-pre-registration-education/>

6. A three month consultation process took place until June 2016.
7. This report details the outcomes of the consultation process, of the subsequent changes that have been made to the guidance documents.
8. The latest versions of the health and disability guidance for students and for OEIs are included in Annexes A and B.

Discussion

Consultation process

9. The draft documents were publicised on the GOsC website. Details of this were specifically sent to stakeholders, including OEIs, other regulators, the Institute of Osteopathy, the Department of Health, the Professional Standards Authority and patient groups.
10. Only one response was received in response to this. Feedback was, however, also sought from an Inter-regulatory education group meeting in June, attended by representatives of other healthcare regulators, as well as the Centre for the Advancement of Inter-professional Education.
11. We also held a focus group on 14 June to look specifically at the health and disability guidance. This was attended by representatives of OEIs, students and practising osteopaths with disabilities or health issues, the Institute of Osteopathy and an education expert with a special interest in disability issues. We were looking for feedback in relation to specific questions, including:
 - Do you think the draft guidance is clear?
 - Are the case examples within the guidance helpful? Could these be expanded or enhanced?
 - Is it helpful to have the expanded section in the OEI guidance on different types of discrimination?
 - Is the expanded reference to mental health issues sufficient?
 - Is there anything which could be added or changed within the guidance documents to make them clearer, and more helpful?
12. The focus group was well-received, and provided considerable feedback which was very helpful in further revising the guidance documentation. Detailed feedback is available from Steven Bettles (sbattles@osteopathy.org.uk) on request, but in summary, the focus group comments included:
 - A general approval of both documents.
 - A suggestion of greater consistency being needed in the language used throughout both documents.
 - A question as to whether summary guides could be provided for students.
 - A question as to whether the student guidance needed to contain so much information about what osteopaths, and the GOsC, do.

- The need for a case study focussing on mental health and the fluctuating needs of students with mental health conditions.
- In relation to the expanded section on discrimination in the OEI guidance, consider adding something on victimisation and harassment.
- A suggestion that a broader range of resources be developed to support good practice in relation to the management of health and disability issues in students.

Summary of post consultation revisions

13. Following the consultation process, the guidance documents were revised and updated to take into account some of the comments raised. The revisions can be summarised as follows:

- We revised the language used in both documents in the context of disability issues. Reference to 'special' circumstances and 'special' needs, for example, was felt to be inappropriate, and we have ensured that the term 'learning needs' is used consistently. Other examples of language which might have had a negative context, have also been amended (for example – 'only reasonable adjustments needed', and 'do not *inherently* discriminate'.)
- We added a paragraph to the student guidance - '*How can I become an osteopath*' briefly summarising the nature osteopathic education in the UK.
- We amended one of the case examples in the student guidance so as to have a more positive outcome.
- We added a case example on recurring mental health issues to the OEI guidance.
- We added some explanation on the context of victimisation and harassment to the OEI guidance within the section on different types of discrimination.
- In relation to reference to students' fluctuating behaviours in the OEI guidance, we have added a suggestion that OEIs consider the training needs of staff in recognising such behaviours.
- We reformatted the student guidance to shift the information on the GOsC's role to the very start of the document, prior to the introduction itself.

14. The language of the revisions was checked once again by colleagues with experience in health and disability issues, and by an external education expert with a particular interest in this area who had also taken part in the focus group.

15. The revised guidance documents are provided at Annexes A and B.

Next steps

16. Consideration will now be given to the best format for publication, largely in relation to the guidance aimed at students, to ensure that this is as accessible and appealing as possible.

17. The revised guidance will be published over the winter.

18. Feedback from the focus group indicated that the osteopathic educators who attended, in particular, found it useful to discuss issues relating to health and disability with colleagues and others with an experience or expertise in this area. As a consequence of this, it was felt that there might be value in holding an event aimed at osteopathic educators to discuss some of the key themes in relating to the support of students with health and disability issues. This idea was put to OEIs at a meeting on 12 September 2016, and was positively received. The plan is to arrange an event for February/March 2017, which will also help to raise awareness of the publication of the revised guidance.

Recommendation: to agree to publish the Guidance on Health and Disability.