



General
Osteopathic
Council

Policy and Education Committee

**Minutes of the Policy and Education Committee held in public on Thursday
7 March, at Osteopathy House, 176 Tower Bridge Road, SE1 3LU and
hosted via Go-to-Meeting video conference**

Confirmed

Chair: Professor Deborah Bowman

Present: Dr Daniel Bailey
Sarah Botterill
Bob Davies
Professor Patricia McClure
Professor Raymond Playford
Nick Woodhead

Council Assoc: Harriet Lambert
Laura Turner

In attendance:

Fiona Browne, Director of Education, Standards and Development (Dir. ESD)
Stacey Clift, Senior Policy Officer (SPO)(online)
Banye Kanon, Senior Quality Assurance Officer (SQAQO)
Michelle McDaid, Quality Assurance, Project Director, Mott MacDonald (online)
Liz Niman, Head of Communications, Engagement and Insight (HCEI)(online)
Matthew Redford, Chief Executive and Registrar
Paul Stern, Senior Policy Officer (SPO)(online)
Lara Winter, Mott MacDonald
Hannah Warwick, Mott MacDonald

Observers with Speaking Rights:

Fiona Hamilton, Chair, Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions (COEI)
Santosh Jassal, Secretary, Osteopathic Alliance (OA)(online)
Dr Jerry Draper-Rodi, Director, National Council for Osteopathic Research
(NCOR)(online)

Observer/s:

Jo Clift, Chair Designate of Council
Dr Bill Gunnyeon, Chair of Council
Margaux Garway-Templeton, Registrant (online)
Kerri Holden, Registrant (online)

Item 1: Welcome and apologies

1. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting.
2. A special welcome was extended to the Chair designate of Council, Jo Clift.
3. Apologies were received from:
 - Steven Bettles, Head of Education and Policy
 - Dr Marvelle Brown, Committee Lay Member
 - Maurice Cheng, Chief Executive, the Institute of Osteopathy
 - Glynis Fox, President, the Institute of Osteopathy
 - Simeon London, Committee Registrant Member

Item 2: Minutes and matters arising

4. The minutes of the meeting, 4 October 2023, were confirmed as a correct record subject to the following:
 - Santosh Jassal's title 'Secretary' to the Osteopath Alliance to be inserted in the list of attendees.
 - Paragraph 19b to be amended to read: A meeting was held with the Institute of Osteopathy and other stakeholders to clarify AHP strategies and associated contracts with the Institute of Osteopathy and any impact that these may have on undergraduate education and the profession as a whole'.
5. There were no matters arising

Item 3: Health and Disability Guidance

6. The Director of Education, Standards and Development introduced the item which considered the plans to review and update the Health and Disability Guidance:
 - Guidance for Applicants and Students with a Disability or Health Condition
 - Students with a Disability or Health Condition – Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Institutions
7. The key messages and following points were highlighted:
 - The paper presented an update about engagement to date on the health and disability guidance and plans for further development.
 - Members were asked to provide feedback on the approach to date and being planned for, reflecting in particular:
 - The exploration of the possibility of an [easy read](#) version, and having the drafts reviewed from a [plain English](#) perspective to address some of these issues.

- how we present, promote and support the use of the guidance ultimately with its specific target audiences. This might include, for example, separate resources – case studies and scenarios in different formats such as videos, stories from actual students or former students, or osteopaths practising and managing a neurodiversity or health condition effectively.

8. In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- a. Members welcomed and supported the work undertaken on the guidance to date.
- b. In response to the concern that none of the seven students who had taken part in the focus group knew of the existence of the Guidance. The Executive were equally surprised and would be investigating the reasons; were the institutions aware of the guidance, how the GOsC can build more awareness, and to take the opportunity to promote the guidance when and wherever possible.
- c. It was asked if there was any thinking on how to address a disability where a student might face a life-changing health situation? How can the student be supported in continuing the student journey and whether continuing that journey is viable. It was acknowledged that this was a scenario that had not been included but it was noted that more mature students may have prior and previously unknown additional needs which might need to be considered to ensure the right support is available.
- d. It was commented that in some cases, students did not declare a health condition at enrolment, only doing so later during the academic year, therefore entry data cannot always be reliable. In response, it was explained that it was planned to incorporate EDI data across progression and non-progression data and this would be a source on which to draw information in the future.
- e. It had been acknowledged that the information provided in the guidance might be overwhelming, as highlighted by the focus group, who had suggested a summary for more easy reading and signposting to further details. This had been taken on board and the Executive would be exploring working with Plain English Campaign and Easy Read to address.
- f. A question was raised concerning the implementation of the guidance, how that might work and the challenges around interpretation. It was added that the documents do not provide enough guidance on the real-lived experiences of students with the scenarios being 'neat.' It was considered that more detail was required on the management of risks and legal management of needs.
- g. It was commented that although the paper described the response rate as low, it should be taken into account that the pool for the target group is small and, therefore, the resulting response is a very positive and welcome

outcome.

- h. In response to the question asking how the impact of the data can be measured against the wider trends of an increase in students with disabilities, it was explained that this would be presented in the follow up to the review to try to identify any change. It was added that the information is currently based on census data and the GOsC's registration data. Since 2019 enrolment data had shown an increase of 6.5% for those declaring special educational needs and 2% declaring a single health condition.

9. In summary the Chair noted:

- The overall endorsement for the co-production approach.
- The attentiveness to impact and implementation and whether reaching the relevant audience.
- Recognition that a target audience may not always be open to sharing information.

10. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, offered thanks and appreciation to students for their participation and contributions to the focus group and input into the guidance.

The Committee:

Noted: The Committee considered and noted the draft updated guidance documents and provided feedback on:

- **Studying osteopathy with a disability or health conditions: guidance for applicants and students**
- **Students with a disability or health condition: Guidance for Osteopathic Educational Providers**

Item 4: Recognition of professional qualifications

11. Paul Stern, Senior Policy Officer, introduced the item concerning the recognition of professional qualifications.

12. The key messages and following points were highlighted:

- a. The paper provided an update on the treatment of UK, European Economic Area (EEA) and Swiss osteopathic qualifications following Brexit between the UK and EEA/Switzerland and asked committee members to consider the GOsC's regulatory response.
- b. Concerns have been raised by the Council of Osteopathic Educational Institutions (COEI) with regards to the lack of portability of UK qualifications for EU students being a significant barrier to student recruitment.

- c. Although the UK has made a number of agreements pertaining to the recognition of professional qualifications, these do not go as far as reintroducing what was previously in place when the UK was a member of the European Union.
 - d. Agreements on recognition of professional qualifications have implications for our registration process as well as the treatment of UK qualifications.
 - e. Given the GOsC's current limited understanding of how certain EU regulators are treating UK qualifications, it is proposed to meet with them to raise awareness and understanding of the standards of UK qualifications and to explore issues around portability.
13. In discussion the following points were made and responded to:
- a. It was suggested that due to the varying regulatory positions overseas, there may be limitations for engagement. In France, for example, although the osteopathic profession is recognised (for those with the requisite training), and the title protected, osteopathy is not regulated.
 - b. It was commented that the work being undertaken is timely when considering the sustainability of the profession and the challenges with recruitment in the UK in comparison to France, for example, where the challenge is that of too many osteopaths. It was suggested it should be a key priority for the profession to have support of the wider profession to find solutions.
 - c. Members welcomed the idea of a more streamlined system with qualifications being recognised from countries like Norway, Iceland and Switzerland but it was noted that not many registration applications are received from those countries.
 - d. It was explained that the work on the recognition of professional qualifications was in its early stages of thinking and the impact of the political issues and challenges were recognised. The agreement established at the time of the UK's departure from the EU, whilst providing a framework to enable agreements for EU wide recognition of professional qualifications, does not restrict the UK from setting up separate agreements between the professions of the UK and individual EU countries. It is acknowledged that an EU wide approach would not work for osteopathy as the profession is not regulated in all EU countries. The approach would be to target countries to begin a conversation with the possibility of establishing Memorandums of Understanding or a bilateral agreement on recognising osteopathic qualifications between the UK and that country.

- e. It was explained that within the UK's Free Trade Agreement process recognition of professional qualifications sits within the services part of the agreement. Negotiations are currently taking place with countries, such as Canada, Mexico, and India with the potential for commitments on the recognition of professional qualifications with these countries. If something was agreed with a country like Canada, it could be similar to what is established with Switzerland and might be mutually beneficial. An additional consideration would be to ask if the registration route for international applicants was proportionate in terms of language and education.
- f. Members highlighted joint models for established recognised qualifications worldwide including New Zealand and Australia.
- g. It was agreed that Canada would be a good option as there may be fewer barriers but the provision is not regulated and the comparative osteopathic educational standards do not currently exist. It was noted that many osteopaths who have trained in the UK and travel to New Zealand and Australia to practise do not return to the UK.
- h. It was highlighted that the major issue for COEI is the loss of students from the European market experienced following Brexit. The number of students from non-EU countries is small.
- i. It was suggested that it would be interesting to test with Council how it would like to be viewed internationally and how proactive it should be in developing this view in addressing the issues supporting the recognition of professional qualifications.

14. In summary the Chair noted the questions prompted by the discussion:

- What is the GOsC trying to resolve?
- What is the quality of understanding of the different elements and solutions?
- Does the UK education / workforce align with other countries?
- Next steps will be to submit the approach for Council's consideration.

Noted: The Committee considered and provided feedback on the contents of the paper with particular reference to the questions as outlined.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the approach to further exploration of the issues arising from changes to the international environment in relation to recognition of professional qualifications and the GOsC's regulatory response.

Item 5: Duty of Candour: Research report on workshop with patients conducted for the GCC and the GOsC

15. Paul Stern, Senior Policy Officer, introduced the item which considered the implications arising from the Duty of Candour: Research Report workshop with

patients, conducted for the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) and the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) and to publish the report.

16. The key messages and following points were highlighted:

- a. Community Research have undertaken a deliberative workshop with a diverse range of patients to explore the effective implementation of the duty of candour in the context of osteopathic and chiropractic practice.
- b. The report provides a rich resource from which to develop resources to support dialogue between osteopaths and patients when the duty of candour should be considered.
- c. The Committee were asked to reflect on the report, the findings, the proposed response and the questions:
 - Have the right areas been covered?
 - Are there any gaps?
 - How else might the findings be translated into supporting osteopaths in practice and improving information for patients?

17. In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- a. Members were advised duty of candour is a statutory requirement for professionals but further communications would reiterate this position to insurers. It was suggested that insurer provision includes mediation services which could avoid possible FtP involvement in patient/practitioner concerns where appropriate.
- b. It was asked if the guidance could be translated/summarised into something more accessible for osteopaths to ensure that the importance and benefits of the information being provided would be understood.
- c. It was suggested that the report demonstrates the broader context showing that candour is an issue wider than the relationship between the practitioner and patient but is something which impacts across a number of situations and settings.
- d. It was explained that Duty of Candour is contained within the Osteopath Practice Standards along with other guidance. Resources may be explored to support difficult conversations.

18. In summary the Chair noted:

- The Committee's support for the report and publication
- Recognised that there remain aspects for development
- Recognised the links to other areas of support for osteopaths and patients.

Noted: the Committee considered the implications and the GOsC response to the Duty of Candour Report.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to recommend the publication of the report.

Item 6: North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot) – Recognition of qualification (RQ)

19. The Senior Quality Assurance Officer (SQAQO) introduced the item which considered the Recognised Qualification (RQ) initial review at the North East Surrey College of Technology (Nescot), in relation to:

- Bachelor of Osteopathic Medicine (BOst)

20. The key messages and following points were highlighted:

- a. The Visitor report contained recommendation for approval of the recognition of Nescot's Part Time Bachelor of Osteopathy qualification with no conditions.
- b. The visitor report addressed an update on conditions imposed on the full-time programmes in 2023, which it is suggested are being met.
- c. Options are outlined for consideration of recognition of the BOst (Part-time) programme for a period to coincide with that of the existing Nescot programmes, or to recommend that all Nescot programmes including the BOst (Part Time) are recognised with no expiry date.
- d. It was noted that the Visit process had been collaborative and supportive.

21. In discussion the following points were made and responded to:

- a. It was agreed that the establishment of the institution's electronic booking system would be investigated.
- b. Members agreed that Option 2 was the preferred recommendation for the institution.

Agreed: the Committee agreed that the evidence outlined is sufficient to indicate that the conditions related to the full-time programmes have been met, and agreed to recommend to Council that it recognises the MOst and BOst (full time) and the BOst (part time) without an expiry date, subject to the approval of Privy Council.

Item 7: London School of Osteopathy (LSO) – Recognised Qualification specification

22. The declaration of Fiona Hamilton, Principal of the LSO, was acknowledged. As a non-voting participant she was not required to leave the meeting.

23. The Senior Quality Assurance Officer introduced the item which sought the Committee's approval of the Recognised Qualification specification for the RQ review at the London School of Osteopathy for their Master of Osteopathy (MOst) and Bachelor of Osteopathy (Hons.).
24. The key messages and following points were highlighted:
- a. The London School of Osteopathy currently provides qualifications in Master of Osteopathy (MOst) and Bachelor of Osteopathy (BOst), the recognition period of which is 1 September 2019 with no fixed expiry.
 - b. This paper seeks the approval from the Policy and Education Committee for the updated review specification as presented.
 - c. It was confirmed that the Visitors had been checked for conflicts of interest.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the updated Recognised Qualification review specification as presented.

Item 8: The British College of Naturopathy and Osteopathy (BCNO) Group – Recognition of Qualification (RQ)

25. Professor Ray Playford declared interest and did not participate in this discussion. Jo Clift also as a non-voting member declared an interest.
26. The SQAQO introduced the item which sought the Committee's approval of the Review specification for the Recognised Qualification review at the BCNO Group.
27. The key messages and following points were highlighted:
- a. The Committee was asked to approve the review specification for the next BCNO RQ visit which will take place during the 2024/2025 academic year.
 - b. The specification includes aspects outlined from the most recent Annual Report Analysis.
 - c. Visitors will be appointed in due course.
28. The Committee had no additional comments regarding the BCNO Group and agreed the recommendation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft review specification for the BCNO Group RQ Review.

Item 9: Plymouth Marjon University – Recognition of Qualification (RQ)

29. The SQAQO introduced the item which sought the Committee's approval of the Review Specification for the renewal of the Recognised Qualification (RQ) review at Plymouth Marjon University.
30. The key messages and following points were highlighted:

- a. Plymouth Marjon University provides the following qualifications, the recognition period of which is 1 February 2021 until 31 January 2026.
 - Master of Osteopathy (MOst) (4 years full-time)
 - Master of Osteopathy (MOst) (6 years part-time)
 - b. The visit will take place Tuesday 3 December – Thursday 5 December 2024.
 - c. The Visitors will be appointed in due course.
 - d. A draft review specification was presented for the Committee to approve.
31. The Committee had no additional comments regarding the Plymouth Marjon University and agreed the recommendation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the review specification for Plymouth Marjon University renewal RQ Review of the following programmes:

- **Master of Osteopathy (MOst) (4 years full-time)**
- **Master of Osteopathy (MOst) (6 years part-time)**

Item 10: Swansea University – Recognition of Qualification (RQ) Specification

32. The SQAO introduced the item which sought the Committee's approval of the Review Specification for the renewal of the Recognised Qualification (RQ) review at Swansea University.
33. The key messages and following points were highlighted:
- a. Swansea University currently provides the following qualification the recognition period of which is 1 December 2019 with no fixed expiry.
 - Master of Osteopathy (MOst)
 - b. A draft review specification was presented for the Committee to approve.
 - c. The review dates and Visitors are to be agreed in due course.
34. In discussion the following points were made and responded to:
- a. It was suggested to include students' experience including clinical experience.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the review specification for Swansea University renewal RQ Review of the following programmes:

- **Master of Osteopathy (MOst)**

Item 11: Updates from Stakeholder Observers

35. Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions (COEI)

Key messages were:

- a. An exhibition organised by COEI is currently taking place in the Upper Hallway of the House of Commons for a period of one-week highlighting the patient journey. The exhibition was an opportunity to highlight the challenges facing osteopathic education and has garnered some interest.
- b. The COEI website is now live and contributions from the GOsC and other stakeholders are welcome.
- c. A workshop was held in the Autumn of 2023 looking at leadership and how osteopathic courses did or did not meet the requirements of GOPRE in the context of leadership. There were nine attendees representing five osteopathic institutions. The meeting showed the OEIs shared the same ideas about what leadership looks like and what can be achieved by students. It was agreed that if the student/patient dyad were considered, there would be more opportunities to demonstrate nascent leadership activities.

36. Osteopathic Alliance (OA)

Key messages were:

- a. The Osteopathic Performing Arts Care Association (OPACA) will be leaving the Alliance due to funding and resourcing issues. It is hoped that they will continue as a network group.
- b. A number of institutions will be holding conferences in the coming months including the Sutherland Cranial College of Osteopathy (SCCO), the Molinari Institute of Health (MIH), and the Institute of Classical Osteopathy (ICO). There will also be a number of anniversaries taking place, the SCCO will be celebrating its 30th anniversary and the ICO its 70th. Celebrations will also include the 150th year anniversary of osteopathy.
- c. Student talks are continuing. In discussions, students feedback they are seeking more hands-on practice and how to formalise treatment plans using an osteopathic philosophy.
- d. The profile of the OA has increased since the publication of its statement in November.
- e. As this was the final meeting of the Chair, on behalf the OA thanks were extended to Professor Deborah Bowman, in appreciation for her leadership during her term of office.

37. National Council for Osteopathic Research (NCOR)

Key messages were:

- a. The launch of the Research Network has taken place with an initial membership of 200 with the aim of developing a membership of up to 500 members and currently reaching out to stakeholders and the wider profession.
- b. Due to the planned merger of the UCO with another institution, NCOR are looking into its hosting situation and whether it might need to relocate. Conversations are ongoing.
- c. Glynis Fox, President of the Institute of Osteopathy, was appointed as a Trustee of NCOR taking over from Maurice Cheng. Maurice will be stepping down as NCOR Chair later this year and recruitment for the Chair position will commence in due course.
- d. Working with the company which provides technical support for the PROMs project and following feedback from osteopaths, an update is being developed that will decrease the administrative burden in recruitment of patients by streamlining the process. The update will initially benefit the UK but if successful will be expanded worldwide.
- e. In January 2024, NCOR held 1:1 meetings with each of its stakeholders. The next group meeting will take place in April.
- f. The QAA Benchmark Statement is to be published on the QAA website in due course.

Noted: The Committee noted the updates of the Observers with Speaking Rights.

Item 20: Any other business

38. It was noted that this would be the final meeting for Sarah Botterill (Lay), and Chair, Professor Deborah Bowman (Lay) whose terms of office would end on 31 March. On behalf of the Committee and Council, Sarah and Deborah were thanked for their contributions to the Committee with special thanks to Deborah for her service and leadership as Chair since April 2020.
39. The Chair offered her sincere thanks to Sarah for her work and support over the past four-years.

40. Thanks were also offered to Harriet Lambert attending her last meeting as a Council Associate.
41. Each thanked the Committee and the Executive recognising the work undertaken, the opportunities afforded and the learning gained as members of the Policy and Education Committee.

Date of the next meeting: Thursday 6 June 2024 at 10.00