



Policy and Education Committee

9 March 2022

The role of students within Recognised Qualification visits

Classification	Public
Purpose	For decision
Issue	The role of students in relation to Recognised Qualification (RQ) visits.
Recommendations	To consider the options for increasing the student voice in relation to Recognised Qualification visits, and to agree next steps.
Financial and resourcing implications	No immediate cost implications, but changes to visiting panel make up (for example, increasing the size of the panel or including observer/s would impact on the cost of visits.
Equality and diversity implications	None immediate, but EDI issues would factor on any potential changes as a result of discussions – for example, recruitment processes.
Communications implications	There may be communications implications depending on agreed next steps.
Annex	Current Mott MacDonald/GOsC visitor role description.
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Key messages

- This paper explores the potential role of external students in Recognised qualification visits.
- Visitor panels are made up of two osteopathic visitors and one lay visitor. We have never previously used students as visitors on an RQ visit, but technically this might be possible.
- The potential benefits and challenges of utilising students as visitors or as observers are discussed – paras 7 and 8 refer.
- Feedback from the Committee is sought on the options outlined and next steps.

Background

1. As part of our review of quality assurance processes, we have been considering how the student voice might be better integrated into these, and, in particular, the Recognised Qualification (RQ) initial and monitoring visits.
2. Student input into current RQ visits is via panel discussion with the RQ visitors. Student feedback processes and actions in relation to past feedback would also be reviewed as part of the RQ visit. Students might also contact the panel with unsolicited information. For ongoing monitoring, annual monitoring reports provide details on student feedback and actions taken in response to this, so the student voice is heard in this context and is a factor in evaluation of programmes.
3. Visitor panels are made up of two osteopathic visitors and one lay visitor. We have never previously used students as visitors on an RQ visit, but technically this might be possible.
4. This paper outlines some of the issues and options in this respect, and seeks the Committee's input on whether and how this suggestion should be developed and explored further.
5. The current visitor role description is included for information at the annex.

Discussion

6. Potential benefits of having students as RQ visitors would be the direct involvement of the student voice at the centre of the RQ process, with the opportunity to gain insights from students in the sector reflected in the visitors' reports, and thus informing Committee decision making. Student voice within RQ visits currently is from students of the institution under review. An external student perspective might therefore add value to the process.

7. There are potential challenges and issues to consider however in regard to including students on visiting panels. For example:
- The visitor role is demanding, and students may find it challenging to devote the time and energy to it when they're studying.
 - Students would have (generally) little or no quality assurance experience. Might this impact on the quality of the overall review process?
 - There are likely to be specific additional training requirements for students – over and above what would normally be the case for visitors.
 - With the lowish number of providers and visits, we could potentially recruit students who never actually get to do a visit, which would be frustrating for them, and potentially deter others from applying.
 - Assuming we recruited students, we might then have a challenge in terms of the make-up of the team and consistency (for example, 1 osteopath, 1 student and a lay visitor, or 2 osteopaths, a student and a lay – thus increasing the size of the panel).
 - Were we to utilise student visitors, would this be something better aimed at students in the latter part of their studies, as being more experienced?
 - Would they need to be studying currently, or could we consider recruiting recent graduates? If so – how recent would they need to be in order to provide 'the student voice'?

Students as observers

8. One option which might help to address some of these issues whilst still increasing the student voice in the QA process is for students to act as observers on a visit, rather than as visitors. The benefits of this would include:
- The role would be less demanding for an observer, and may be more easy therefore to fit in with their own studies. They might not, for example, be required to review all submitted material, or contribute to the drafting of the report.
 - The visitor team could still seek insights from a student observer, and thus reflect this in their report.
 - If for any reason it was problematic to recruit a student observer/s, then the visit might still go ahead.

- The process of recruiting and using student observers is likely to be more flexible and targeted than student visitors, leading to a more agile process.
9. From a potential risk perspective to this approach, it could be argued that the use of students as observers might be less impactful than having them as a full member of the visiting team. That said, it would still represent an increase in the current student involvement on RQ review, and provide a student perspective from outside the organisation being reviewed.
10. We are keen to explore the Committee's view on the potential use of students as RQ visitors or observers. Main options are:

Maintain the status quo	Student input is via feedback provided at RQ visits and more broadly as reported by providers in RQ mapping documents and annual reporting
Recruiting students as visitors	Consider the potential benefits/challenges outlined in 6 and 7 above.
Students as observers on RQ visits	Would this be a more proportionate and agile way of increasing student input given the issues raised above?

11. Depending on the outcome of this consideration, next steps could include:

- Consideration of specific role descriptors (for example – student observer).
- Discussion of any proposals with the Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions.
- Consider whether visitor role description needs amending (as currently drafted it would not include the possibility of student visitors, but could be amended to allow this).
- Undertake sessions with students to raise awareness of QA issues and how what we do impacts on them.
- Feedback to the Committee on the outcome of the above.

Recommendations:

To consider the options for increasing the student voice in relation to Recognised Qualification visits, and to agree next steps.