



Policy and Education Committee

14 October 2020

Update on Quality Assurance and transition to Mott MacDonald

Classification	Public
Purpose	For noting
Issue	To update the Committee on the transition to Mott MacDonald as quality assurance provider
Recommendation	To note the progress made in reviewing the quality assurance process, including the development of a new Quality Assurance Handbook.
Financial and resourcing implications	This is agreed under the contract provision.
Equality and diversity implications	There will be equality, diversity and inclusion implications in relation to the quality assurance process and RQ review process, which will be taken into account in the development of the revised QA Handbook
Communications implications	None in relation to this paper
Annex	None
Author	Steven Bettles

Background

1. Members will be aware that Mott MacDonald were appointed as the provider of GOsC quality assurance services, and commenced their contract on 1 July 2020. This allowed a brief transition process, with the former contact with The Quality Assurance Agency coming to an end on 31 July 2020. An oral update on the Quality Assurance tender process was made at the Committee's meeting on 10 June 2020, with the announcement of Mott MacDonald's appointment being made public on 29 June.
2. This paper provides an update on activities undertaken by, and in conjunction with Mott MacDonald, since the commencement of the contract. This includes the ongoing development of a revised Quality Assurance handbook and RQ review process, and a timetable for the Committee to approve an interim handbook to be used in visits in relation to the College of Osteopaths and London College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2021.

Discussion

3. The Policy Manager and Quality Assurance Liaison Officer have met regularly online with the Mott MacDonald project team since the commencement of the contract. As well as specific meetings on key issues, a weekly meeting takes place between the Quality Assurance Liaison Officer and Mott's Operation's Manager. This ensures a collaborative approach to the management of the contract, and the key priorities, including the review of the Quality Assurance Handbook and RQ review process.
4. The Mott MacDonald project team have been keen to understand the issues affecting the osteopathic education sector, and to this end have attended The GOsC meeting with the Council of Osteopathic Educational Institutions on 8 July 2020, and the Stakeholder Reference Group meetings in relation to the revision of the Guidance on Osteopathic Pre-Registration Education (GOPRE) on 20 July 2020 and 24 September 2020.
5. In addition, one to one meetings have been held by Mott Macdonald with each of the Osteopathic Education Institutions to understand their particular circumstances, build relationships, and seek feedback on quality assurance issues. Similar one to one meetings have been held with the visiting team to gain insights to inform the QA review process. A summary of the outcomes of such meetings has been provided:

Key themes from meetings with the OEIs as reported by Mott MacDonald were:

- They would welcome more transparency in decision making and in requests for information.

- They appreciate the more collaborative approach GOsC have taken over the last 18-24 months particularly in recognising some of the individual challenges to the organisations.
- There are challenges with some of the governance structure for OEIs validated by universities and related GOsC conditions around governance and management.
- Challenges with visitors working at competing providers, sharing of strategies/commercial information can be challenging.
- Unsure of how information was summarised in its presentation to the Committee.

Key themes from meetings with the visitors were:

- Challenges around conflicts of interest due to it being a small sector.
 - Would appreciate more support through a community of practice, and targeted training closer to the time of events.
 - Would welcome more transparency and openness in review process.
 - Challenges around the quantity of work involved in the review process.
6. A visitor workshop was held online on 17 September (attended also by the Policy Manager), to further develop a collaborative approach and utilise visitors' expertise in osteopathy and reviews, to support in producing a set of review criteria. These review criteria look to build on existing themes of review and enable consistency in decision making across the differences in the OEIs and to provide efficiencies in the quality assurance process.
 7. The project team have begun work to map criteria against existing themes of review and the Osteopathic Practice Standards to provide more clarity to both providers and visitors as to the focus of RQ visits pre and post visit. In addition to they have developed draft processes, and tools that will be incorporated in the revised handbook. The visitor one-to-ones provided the opportunity to feedback on the training process which will be incorporated into the training plans for this year. The visitor workshops and collaborative approach to producing the review criteria will also go support and contribute to the training of visitors.

Review of QA Handbook

8. As mentioned above, a revised Quality Assurance Handbook is being developed by Mott MacDonald. This is a required aspect of the contract in order to replace the QAA produced handbook, and provides the opportunity to review the QA process as a whole and to consider how the RQ visit process might be modified and enhanced, taking into account feedback from OEIs and visitors. Some of the modifications proposed to the RQ visit process include:

- **Review coordinator:** A key change that Mott MacDonald propose making to the QA process, is the removal of the review coordinator. The aim of removing the review coordinator from the QA process is to offer greater ownership to the visiting team, and offer direct liaison with the with OEIs, instead of correspondence being directed through the review coordinator. It is believed that this will build stronger foundations between the OEI and visiting team for the review to take place. The project team will support the visitors during this process and will deal with more operational matters.
- **Review criteria:** The development of the review criteria aims to provide efficiencies in the review process. Part of this will be seen in the reduction of the visit duration, as more of the work is done upfront through the review of the pre-work and engagement prior to the visit taking place. The purpose of the visit is to triangulate the evidence provided and review any gaps.
- **Mapping tool:** The mapping tool will replace the self-evaluation document used for the pre-visit work. The mapping tool will incorporate the review criteria to support in consistency in evidence and implementation, and decision making.

Timetable

9. The revised QA handbook is being developed as outlined, but an interim handbook will need to be approved to facilitate RQ visits due to take place for the College of Osteopaths and the London College of Osteopathic Medicine around April/May 2021 (dates to be arranged). It is proposed that an interim handbook will be provided for approval by the Committee in relation to these visits at an extra meeting to be held late November/early December. At the same meeting, members will be asked to approve the RQ specifications in relation to each visit, and to approve the visitors in each case.
10. One thing being explored is the possibility of a more blended approach to visits, with, where appropriate, some aspects being conducted remotely. This will aid with visits where there are multiple sites, and, in the current coronavirus pandemic, enable an agile and flexible response to be made where OEIs may be under particular restrictions, ensuring that RQ reviews can proceed. Mott MacDonald have experience in running remote QA reviews using MS Teams as a platform for group discussions and meetings, ensuring that outcomes of remote visits are the same as for face to face visits.
11. Following the approval of the interim QA Handbook, further work and consultation with stakeholders will take place to produce a final version for reporting to the Committee for approval at its March 2021 meeting. The College of Osteopaths and LCOM visits will continue to take place against the interim handbook, however, as the process will be underway by the time the Committee meets.

Recommendation: To note the progress made in reviewing the quality assurance process, including the development of a new Quality Assurance Handbook.