



Policy and Education Committee

10 October 2024

Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Student Fitness to Practise

Classification	Public
Purpose	For decision
Issue	Recommendation of Guidance about professional behaviours and student fitness to practise in osteopathic education for publication.
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To agree to recommend Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Student Fitness to Practise to Council for publication2. To note the updated Equality Impact Assessment.
Financial and resourcing implications	Consultation, engagement and publication costs are included in our 2023/24 budget.
Equality and diversity implications	Equality and diversity issues are a key component of this work. We sought advice from an EDI consultant to inform the review process and we will further explore this as part of the consultation. Equality issues featured in the consultation, and are reflected in the final draft. An updated Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Annex D.
Communications implications	The consultation will be communicated through our usual channels as outlined in the consultation strategy.
Annexes	<p>Annex A – Table of issues considered with responses</p> <p>Annex B - Draft updated Guidance about professional behaviours and student fitness to practise in osteopathic education (post consultation changes shown in red)</p> <p>Annex C – Summary of post consultation changes</p> <p>Annex D – Updated Equality Impact Assessment</p>
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Key messages from the paper

- This paper reports on post-consultation changes made to 'Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Fitness to Practise for Osteopathic Students and Educational Providers'.
- We have summarised the issues considered and our responses to these in Annex A, updated the draft guidance with the changes shown in red (Annex B). A summary of those changes is also attached at Annex C.
- The Equality Impact Assessment has also been updated (Annex D)
- The Committee is asked to agree to recommend the updated guidance to Council for publication.

Background

1. At its [October 2023](#) meeting, the Committee agreed to recommend 'Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Fitness to Practise for Osteopathic Students and Educational Providers' for consultation in accordance with the strategy outlined. Council further agreed this for consultation at its [November 2023](#) meeting. The consultation took place as agreed and was open from 7 February 2024 to 1 May 2024.
2. The consultation outcome and analysis was reported to the Committee at its June 2024 meeting. The Committee agreed that we should take some further time to further update the guidance as a result of the feedback received and to seek stakeholder input this.
3. We are now reporting to the Committee with the final version of the guidance for consideration, highlighting further changes made and seeking a recommendation to Council to publish this.

Discussion

4. Initial changes to the current guidance included:
 - Greater clarity around the focus on professional behaviours and health and disability issues including specifying what those professional behaviours looked like for students for the first time.
 - Combining the guidance into one document aimed at both students and education providers.
 - Ensuring the guidance reflects the 2019 version of the Osteopathic Practice Standards, and further developed the professional behaviour aspect of the document, and replaced the table in the current version with a more integrated reference to the standards in each theme of the OPS, with examples of what is expected, as well as types of behaviours which might raise concerns in relation to each.
 - A review of the procedural section regarding the management of fitness to practice cases.

5. As a result of consultation feedback, key areas for further consideration post consultation were:
 - Expansion of case studies to ensure consistency and application to illustrate the effective implementation of the guidance (cases where students are found able to continue with remediation, contrasted also with cases where this is not the case).
 - A further review of the contrast between 'low-level' and 'serious' concerns, and how low-level issues can combine to become a serious issue.
 - The way in which student fitness to practise processes are referenced, and the extent to which this aspect remains helpful within the guidance and reflective of contemporary regulatory thinking.
 - Clarity and accessibility – ensuring effective design and presentation of the guidance (this is implicit, really, but worth noting given the comments received in the feedback).
 - Some helpful comments from the patient focus groups and others about some of the expected student behaviours
6. We further considered the issues raised, and these, together with our responses are set out in Annex A. Where additions have been made, these are shown in red within the updated draft guidance as Annex B. The changes are further summarised in Annex C.
7. Key changes have included
 - the addition of a case scenario where a student did not engage with the process and was not able to continue,
 - Further clarifications as to the nature of the process element of the guidance regarding the student fitness to practise process,
 - the addition of the possibility of 'disposal by consent', where if parties are in agreement as to what the outcome should be the matter may be resolved along these lines without convening a formal panel.
8. We shared the updated guidance with the Council for Osteopathic Education Institutions in August, and offered to host a focus group on 12 September, for educators and/or students to discuss the changes, but there were no takers for this. The updates were again shared with COEI at the September RELM (Regulator/Educators Liaison Meeting) with the opportunity for COEI members to comment on the changes.
9. We also held a meeting with the Institute of Osteopathy's Head of Policy to discuss the changes as some of the points to which these related were provided in the Institute of Osteopathy's (iO's) consultation feedback, particularly around the alignment with changes in the wider regulatory structure about consensual disposal. This was welcomed and the changes viewed positively.
10. An updated Equality Impact Assessment is also included as Annex D.

11. We are now seeking the agreement of the Committee to recommend the updated guidance to Council for publication.

Recommendations

1. To agree to recommend Guidance about Professional Behaviours and Student Fitness to Practise to Council for publication
2. To note the updated Equality Impact Assessment.