



Policy and Education Committee
10 October 2024
Recognition of Professional Qualifications

Classification	Public
Purpose	For noting
Issue	The purpose of this paper is to update committee members on the work we are doing to explore improvements to the portability of UK qualifications within the EU and internationally.
Recommendation	To note progress on our work on recognition of professional qualifications.
Financial and resourcing implications	Meetings will be done online and any travel costs if required would be agreed within existing budgets and expenses policy.
Diversity implications	Following discussions with international counterparts, should we decide to make any changes to our international registration process, this will be accompanied by an equality impact assessment.
Communications implications	None
Annex	None
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Background

1. In Autumn 2023, the Council of Osteopathic Education Institutions (COEI) raised concerns with us regarding the impact of Brexit on the number of EU students coming to study osteopathy in the UK. In particular they raised concerns about the impact of Brexit on the portability of UK qualifications for European students when returning to their home country.
2. In March 2024, PEC was presented with a paper outlining the post Brexit commitments between the EU/EEA and the UK on the recognition of professional qualifications. The paper noted that whilst some agreements have been put in place, they do not put back in place the system that we previously had when a member of the EU. The paper set out our proposal to meet with EU regulators/professional bodies to try to improve our understanding of their treatment of UK qualifications and explore issues around portability.
3. In May 2024, the issue of recognition of professional qualifications and our approach to engaging internationally was presented to Council. It was agreed that given broader issues around workforce in the sector, there was value in us re-engaging with our international counterparts to raise awareness of our standards and to explore matters related to the recognition of each other's qualifications.

Discussion

4. Following May Council we have made some progress in engaging with international colleagues.

Engaging UK stakeholders

5. In July we had a meeting with members of COEI and the iO to discuss our proposed approach. At the meeting we discussed European regulators approaches to the regulation of osteopathy and considered the countries where it would be beneficial to have initial exploratory discussions. We also discussed differences between UK and EU education systems and reflected on the potential of divergence to impact on portability of qualifications.
6. During the meeting, it was agreed that we should initiate discussions with our Italian counterparts in the first instance given they are in the process of developing their regulatory system and international registration processes. It was also decided that we discuss UK qualifications and registration processes with the French, given the high number of students previously studying osteopathy in the UK. Discussions will start next month and we can update committee members on the outcome at the next PEC.

Central government engagement

7. We are continuing to build on our relationship with the Department for Business Trade (DBT) which is the central government department responsible for RPQ

policy. On 24 September we met with colleagues from DBT to understand if government policy on RPQ with the EU has shifted since we last spoke.

8. We were advised that the new government is seeking to improve the trading relationship with the EU and as part of this is considering an agreement on the recognition of professional qualifications. DBT are currently engaging with businesses and regulators to gather evidence and information in order to inform its approach.
9. DBT were in listening mode and we provided them with information about what we do as a regulator and the osteopathic profession, why this was an important issue, its impact on OEIs and explained what we are doing to engage internationally on this issue. DBT explained that this was only the start of the process, and the evidence and information would be presented to Ministers who would decide on next steps.

International engagement

10. In October 2024, the Chair of Council will be attending the Osteopathy Europe Autumn conference and our CEO, Matthew Redford, will be attending the Osteopathic International Alliance annual general meeting and conference. The focus of our attendance will be to re-establish relationships with international stakeholders and engage on a number of different issues, including raising awareness of our standards and discussing barriers to the portability of UK qualifications. This will also provide a useful springboard for any more formal discussions that may take place in the future.
11. Following these conversations we can take stock of what we have heard and consider the most appropriate next steps in order to move this work forward.

Recommendation:

12. That committee note the contents of this paper.