

Response to the Securing student success: risk-based regulation for teaching excellence, social mobility and informed choice in higher education

Respondent: General Osteopathic Council
Sent by email to: HERA.CONULTATIONS@education.gov.uk

Osteopathic regulation

Osteopaths are statutorily regulated health professionals, and must be registered by the General Osteopathic Council (GOsC), one of the nine UK health professional regulators in order to practise in the UK.

Like all healthcare regulators GOsC exercise statutory functions to protect patients. The GOsC

- Keeps the Register of all those permitted to practise osteopathy in the UK.
- Sets and monitors the maintenance of standards of osteopathic training, practice and conduct.
- Assures the quality of osteopathic education. This includes statutory duties in relation to the quality assurance of undergraduate and pre-registration education.
- Ensures that osteopaths undertake CPD
- Exercises powers to remove from the Register any osteopaths who are unfit to practise or restrict their practice

Osteopathy is a primary healthcare profession, and an allied health profession within the NHS see (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/2017/04/chief-allied-health-professions-officer-extends-her-remit-to-two-additional-professions/>).

Osteopathic education and training

There are nine providers or osteopathic educational institutions (OEIs) in the UK awarding qualifications entitling graduates to apply for registration with the GOsC. Institutions include:

- Universities offering a wide range of degrees in health and other subjects.
- Specialist designated institutions with taught degree awarding powers.
- Institutions offering higher education validated or franchised by another University.
- Institutions offering higher education validated or franchised by another University within a further education institution.
- Institutions awarding diplomas that are not validated or franchised by another higher education institution.

A key focus of osteopathic education and training is that only those graduates meeting the *Osteopathic Practice Standards* (standards of competence and conduct (including professionalism and ethics)) are awarded recognised qualifications entitling

the graduate to apply for registration with the GOsC. Patient safety is a key part of the award of the degree.

Consultation overview: summary of key points

- Health professional education, which includes osteopathic education, must include a focus on patient safety¹. Sometimes, a student may not achieve the patient safety outcomes set. In these circumstances, osteopathic educational institutions may award a 'fall back' award which is student centred, but it will not be possible for a student to be awarded one of our 'recognised qualifications' (RQs) entitling the applicant to apply for registration with us.
- As part of our responsibility to ensure the integrity of our statutory register, it is important that only graduates meeting our *Osteopathic Practice Standards* are entered onto our register. It is therefore important for us to ensure that the relevant standards are maintained.
- The GOsC recognises and accredits qualifications which are also approved by the Privy Council (through the Osteopaths Act 1993) using a range of mechanisms including visits, annual report analysis, requirements to report against specific and general conditions, sharing of good practice and dialogue. The Quality Assurance Agency is currently commissioned by us to undertake aspects of our current quality assurance process including five yearly visits and our annual report analysis process.
- The Home Office has confirmed that the current GOsC / QAA process meets the educational oversight arrangements in place for Tier 4 licences.
- We are keen to work together with the Office for Students to ensure that quality assurance arrangements meet both our statutory requirements and those of the Office for Students and support providers to demonstrate this. In the event of imposition of conditions on an osteopathic provider, it will be important to ensure that we share information and take proportionate action for osteopathic education providers.
- Initial conditions for registration – We hope that the evidence provided by the GOsC / QAA review reports for OEIs published at: <http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/training-and-registration/becoming-an-osteopath/training-courses/> will contribute to providers being able to demonstrate that they meet initial conditions for registration. Reports include the following areas:
 - Course aims and outcomes
 - Curricula
 - Assessment
 - Achievement
 - Teaching and learning
 - Student progression
 - Learning resources
 - Governance and management (including financial and risk management and maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality)

¹ See Health and Social Care (Safety and Quality) Act 2015.

Consultation points

Q1: Do you agree or disagree that these are the right risks for the OfS to prioritise?

A: We agree that these are the right risks to prioritise. For osteopathic and health professional education we also believe that objectives of patient and public safety are integral to the quality of the education and the student focus.

Q11: Do you agree with the proposed approach to sector level regulation in chapter 2?

A: We do think that the OfS will be in a unique position to identify and share good practice and that this is an important component of quality. In our own approach to quality assurance we identify and share good practice and undertake thematic reviews to promote innovation and the enhancement of quality.

Q13: The initial conditions should provide reassurance that providers will meet the general ongoing conditions without creating unnecessary barriers to entry. Given this, are the initial conditions appropriate?

The conditions seem appropriate and most would appear to be demonstrated by the statutory quality assurance process undertaken by the GOsC and QAA. Reports are published at: <http://www.osteopathy.org.uk/training-and-registration/becoming-an-osteopath/training-courses/>

Q14: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed lists of proposed lists of public interest principles in the Guidance and who they apply to?

The public interest principles mostly mirror core elements of the GOsC / QAA review that OEIs are subject to and so these are supported.

Q15: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach on the application of conditions for providers wishing to seek a Tier 4 licence?

We observe that the current GOsC / QAA arrangements have previously satisfied Home Office requirements for Tier 4 licences. We welcome the opportunity for further discussion with the Office for Students to ensure a proportionate approach for osteopathic educational institutions.

Q19: Do you agree or disagree with the proposed approach to risk assessment and monitoring?

A: We note that the proposed approach to risk by the OfS is similar to the current approach with the GOsC with regulatory response being proportionate to the risk identified. OEIs are currently subject to rigorous process for being awarded an 'RQ' which includes submission of a self-evaluation document, a visit and a published report. RQs are granted subject to both general and specific conditions and these are monitored on a periodic basis by the GOsC. Currently visits take place every 5 years unless a new institution, or unless analysis of information suggests that a visit is required between scheduled visits, in which case, visits are when necessary. Information is submitted and analysed annually and a risk based response is

undertaken in response to information which includes submission of action plans and responses are monitored.

We would be keen for the GOsC and the OfS to share information to ensure that the osteopathic educational sector is not disproportionately regulated by two organisations with overlapping statutory responsibilities.

We would also highlight, here, however, that in relation to penalties, osteopathic students are unable to progress through courses if patient safety issues arise. We also note that the OfS has indicated that they will be proportionate with regards to progression rates, for example, taking into consideration the size of the cohort. Therefore it will be important to highlight the reasoning for decisions made.

Q23: Do you agree or disagree with the principles proposed for how the OfS will engage with other bodies?

A: We welcome the opportunity to work closely with the OfS to ensure the use of resources in an efficient, effective and economic way in ensuring the quality of osteopathic educational courses and in this respect support the principles outlined at paragraphs 328 to 335.

Contact: Please contact Fiona Browne, Head of Professional Standards, General Osteopathic Council at fbrowne@osteopathy.org.uk to discuss any aspect of this response.

Website: www.osteopathy.org.uk