



**Education and Registration Standards Committee**  
**11 September 2013**  
**Student fitness to practise**

<b>Classification</b>	Public.
<b>Purpose</b>	For decision.
<b>Issue</b>	An evaluation of our student fitness to practise guidance.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. To note the emerging evaluation findings about the Professionalism in Research project.</li><li>2. To note the emerging evaluation findings about the student fitness to practise guidance.</li><li>3. To agree the details that should be reported about student fitness to practise cases in accordance with the current guidelines.</li></ol>
<b>Financial and resourcing implications</b>	The evaluation of our student fitness to practise guidance was undertaken in house and accounted for in existing work programmes of staff. The Professionalism research has been funded at a cost of £12 000 which includes the development of the survey questions and analysis and reporting of data.
<b>Equality and diversity implications</b>	It will be important to begin to collect diversity data for the student population and to compare this with the diversity data for students represented in student fitness to practise cases, in due course, to explore whether students with particular characteristics are over-represented. This is a piece of work that we will discuss further with the OEIs in due course. We will also undertake further work evaluating the management of health and disability guidance in due course to explore whether the guidance has supported a more diverse student population.
<b>Communications implications</b>	None.
<b>Annex</b>	Annex A – Analysis of student fitness to practise cases and trends (Private)



General  
Osteopathic  
Council

Annex B – Student fitness to practise: information about types of cases and sanctions from 2004 to 2013 (Private)

Annex C – Response to the Professional Standards Authority consultation from the British Osteopathic Association, the Council for Osteopathic Educational Institutions and the Osteopathic Alliance (Private)

**Author**

Fiona Browne.

## Background

1. The General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) Corporate Plan 2013 to 2016 outlines our goal 'to ensure that initial education and training is of high-quality and is fit for purpose in an evolving healthcare and higher education environment.' It states that 'we will support high standards of professional behaviours in students through student fitness to practise guidance, evaluation and ongoing activity.'
2. The 2013-2014 Business Plan states that we will 'evaluate outcomes from professionalism in osteopathy project and identify key findings for incorporation into other workstreams, including guidance on pre-registration osteopathic education, continuing fitness to practise proposals and related activities.' It also states that we will 'work in partnership with osteopathic educational institutions (OEIs) to support identification of good practice in relation to teaching and learning of professional behaviours and support sharing of knowledge about student fitness to practise.
3. Following a decision by the Education Committee to publish the suite of student fitness to practise guidance in December 2011, the guidance was published in early 2012. During 2012, the Committee also endorsed the progress of the student fitness to practise implementation programme: the professionalism in osteopathy research group which focussed primarily on the teaching and learning of professional behaviours. The Committee noted that the planned outcomes of this work were:
  - A customised elearning/assessing/measuring programme for OEIS (fully owned by GOsC) to use for individual/progress/longitudinal/comparative teaching and monitoring of professionalism.
  - A customised elearning/assessing/measuring programme for osteopaths (fully owned by GOsC) to use for individual monitoring of professionalism.
  - Customised scenarios for registered osteopaths to explore how the values learned at undergraduate level endure in registered osteopaths.
  - Papers sufficient for submitting for publication on e.g. learning curve of osteopath students/trainees for submission to publications.
  - A report evaluating the costs and benefits of the process for stakeholders to feed into future thinking and development on this area.
4. Throughout 2012, the Committee received updates on the progress of this work.
5. In February 2013, the Committee considered an emerging evaluation framework to frame thinking about how to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the student fitness to practise guidance and the contribution of the professionalism project.
6. The Committee considered the following questions helpful:

- Have the pre-registration tools supported the students to learn more about professional behaviours?
  - Have the results from the data analysis informed OEIs about any strengths or gaps in standards that they were not previously aware of?
  - What benefits have the OEIs found from using the tools and the data collected?
  - What have been the costs to the OEIs as part of the undertaking of the projects?
  - How would the OEIs like to take forward?
  - Have the OEIs referred to the student fitness to practise guidance since publication?
  - Have students referred to the student fitness to practise guidance since publication?
  - What use has been made of the guidance in student fitness to practise cases?
  - What works well in the guidance?
  - How could the guidance be improved?
  - Are there any gaps in the inventories that should be developed following experience with the Student Fitness to Practise guidance?
7. This paper provides information about the evaluation and emerging ways in which the findings will feed into both our work with pre-registration students and also the wider profession. The Education and Registration Standards Committee (the Committee) are asked to consider the feedback to agree the next steps.

## **Discussion**

8. The initial evaluation questions indicated above (in paragraph 6) focus on two different aspects of the student fitness to practise guidance. The first tranche focus on the teaching and learning of professional behaviours. The second tranche focus on the actual student fitness to practise guidance and its implementation. The questions have been taken into account as we have collected information about the usefulness of the professionalism project and also the student fitness to practise guidance.

### *Professionalism project*

9. Fiona Browne and Marcus Dye will provide a confidential presentation on the emerging findings and feedback from the pre-registration professionalism project and also the post-registration project at the Education and Registration Standards Committee meeting. Although, the data collected can provide some

emerging indications about findings, numbers are still small, we should be wary of drawing certain conclusions at this stage. Nevertheless, the emerging indications show the potential usefulness of the information collected. We will also report feedback from the OEIs about their perceptions of the usefulness of the tools at the meeting.

#### *Student fitness to practise cases and trends*

10. In order to provide feedback about the implementation of the student fitness to practise guidance, we analysed the student fitness to practise cases reported in annual reports from 2004 to 2013 and we have gathered feedback from five osteopathic educational institutions as part of a round of meetings with them. Further meetings are due to take place in the autumn. We will also provide an update of the feedback from the GOsC/OEI meeting on 11 September 2013.
11. The analysis is provided in confidential reports at Annexes A, B and C attached. This will also form part of a confidential presentation to the Committee which will take account of the additional feedback from the GOsC/OEI meeting on 11 September 2013.

#### *Emerging conclusions*

12. Whilst numbers are too small and data is insufficiently consistent and accurate to draw any certain conclusions at this stage, the following observations are noted from the analysis of the student fitness to practise cases reported and the feedback from the OEIs.
  - Consistency in the reporting of student fitness to practise data is required to enable meaningful comparisons to be drawn.
  - More detailed implementation plans should be developed and monitored by GOsC and by OEIs to ensure both the teaching and learning of professional behaviours (including the duty of candour) and also the effective implementation of the student fitness to practise guidance.
  - Further guidance about boundaries may be helpful.
  - Further guidance about sanctions may be helpful.
13. We will also provide additional feedback about these conclusions from the GOsC/OEI meeting on 11 September 2013.

#### *Reporting student fitness to practise cases to the General Osteopathic Council*

20. At the point of registration, the GOsC requires information about student fitness to practise findings to be reported to it. These are shortly to be managed more explicitly through a 'good character assessment' framework subject to approval of the Education and Registration Standards Committee on 19 September 2013. (See item 8 of the Committee agenda). On occasion, the GOsC may require further information from the OEI to ensure that the issue has been declared and

managed appropriately in order to support an applicant to demonstrate good character. This information will always be necessary to support fair consideration of a registration application and to ensure that statutory decisions about registration are made in the public interest.

21. The GOsC also requires consistent information about student fitness to practise cases to be reported as this helps to identify areas of concern and appropriate responses either from the OEIs, GOsC or both. Consistent information will continue to support the GOsC's purpose to ensure and maintain patient safety and quality of care and will therefore help the GOsC to deliver its statutory duty to 'develop and regulate' osteopathy.
22. The student fitness to practise guidance provides that 'OEIs should report student fitness to practise cases to the GOsC as part of their Annual Report. OEIs should also report details about individual students who have been subject to student fitness to practise procedures'.
23. The GOsC plans to clarify the level of detail required by the Student Fitness to Practise Guidance, to deliver the objectives as outlined above, as follows:
  - In relation to cases where findings have been proved:
    - Name of the student
    - Confirmation of the allegations found proved
    - The sanction imposed (and information about reviews of that sanction if appropriate)
    - Information about how the student was confirmed as meeting the Osteopathic Practice Standards at the point of graduation (if the student has graduated).
  - In relation to cases where there findings have not been proved the following anonymous information should be provided as follows:
    - The details of the allegations made
    - Confirmation that the findings were not found proved.
24. We also intend to explore with the OEIs how we might appropriately and fairly understand whether students with particular characteristics are over-represented in student fitness to practise findings when there are such small numbers.

#### *Implementation of the student fitness to practise guidance*

25. We propose to work in partnership with the OEIs to explore a consistent approach to implementation of the guidance.

### *Additional guidance*

26. In light of the particular patterns of cases emerging in recent years, and also potential dissonance about appropriate boundaries with different stakeholders, it is recommended that we explore the development of further guidance about boundaries in partnership with the osteopathic educational institutions to support the management of these difficult cases.
27. It is becoming apparent that the student fitness to practise guidance itself may also benefit from some revision – perhaps to include additional guidance about the duty of candour and sanctions following the feedback about student fitness to practise cases. It is suggested that a timetable for revision of the guidance be developed to take account of the feedback received about the guidance.

### **Next steps**

28. All these proposals are being discussed with the osteopathic educational institutions at their meeting on 11 September 2013 and further feedback from the that meeting will be reported to the Committee.
29. We will provide a further update on the evaluation at the next Committee meeting in February 2014.

### **Recommendations**

1. To note the emerging evaluation findings about the Professionalism in Research project.
2. To note the emerging evaluation findings about the student fitness to practise guidance.
3. To agree the details that should be reported about student fitness to practise cases in accordance with the current guidelines.