

Initial recognition review, University of St Mark & St John
October 2016

Visitors' response to the action plan

Condition 1 - Revisit and comprehensively map external reference points, including the Osteopathic Practice Standards (OPS), the Guidance for Osteopathic Pre-registration Education (GOPRE) and the Subject Benchmark Statements for Osteopathy by May 2017, and ensure that their requirements are embedded throughout the programme

The action plan describes how this condition has been addressed through a process of revising the module descriptors after completing a comprehensive mapping. The visitors consider this to an effective response.

Condition 2 - Implement a phased strategy for ensuring external clinical placements are available from September 2019, consistent with the requirements of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Osteopathy, sufficient to meet projected student numbers and underpinned by service level agreements that articulate clinical arrangements and responsibilities, and the support and mentoring to be provided for placement supervisors and their students

A number of actions are described that allow for the preparation of placements and the development of links to new placement providers over the next few months. While these early stage preparations are reasonable, the condition requires that external clinical placements are available by September 2019. As a consequence, it is recommended that the action plan is extended further to September 2019 and that it follows a similar structure of headings suggested by the visitors for the marketing strategy. This would enable the Committee to more effectively monitor the implementation of this condition in the lead up to 2019.

Condition 3 - Implement, by September 2017, a fitness to practice policy that reflects current General Osteopathic Council (GOsC) guidance, and ensure that key staff, including external placement supervisors, are trained to participate in relevant stages of the process

The visitors consider that the actions planned with a target date of September 2017 are sufficient to fulfil this condition.

Condition 4 - Implement, by May 2017, a phased five-year clinic infrastructure development strategy that meets the requirements of the Subject Benchmark Statement for osteopathy and the Osteopathic Practice Standards (OPS), consistent with initial development requirements and planned growth in student numbers, as part of a comprehensive plan for learning resources and programme expansion

The proposals for systematic development of the clinic infrastructure seem to be realistic and carefully considered. The incremental development of clinic facilities is linked to the phased increase in student numbers. Consideration has also been given in relation to the training of clinic staff. There is sufficient detail to provide confidence that the project has been planned in sufficient detail, the stages articulated are reasonable and the timeline appropriate.

Overall, the visitors consider the detail is sufficient to enable the provider and Committee to monitor the project's progress.

The University does note that the initial programme and facility development could be delayed if the first year intake did not reach a threshold of 12 students. It should be noted that should this indeed be the case, there would remain the question as to the implications for those enrolled students concerning any impact on the quality of their programme and possible regulatory responsibility implications for the Committee. The Committee may therefore wish to consider requesting further information, or even a setting a condition, on exit strategies where the programme does not meet growth targets, consistent with programme viability.

On the visit it was observed that the existing Sports Therapy and Rehabilitation Clinic facility did not allow for confidential discussions to occur in the narrow cubicle spaces or have suitable break-away rooms for osteopathic tutorial discussions, etc. It is noted that this existing sports therapy clinic facility will be co-used while the osteopathy new build is completed. It is recommended therefore that temporary arrangements are made to provide greater osteopathic consultation privacy and a private breakaway tutorial space while works are carried out.

Condition 5 - Implement, by August 2017, a marketing strategy linked to forecast student numbers, to ensure that an appropriate range and diversity of patient presentations are available to meet students' learning needs, consistent with the expectations of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Osteopathy and the Guidance for Osteopathic Pre-registration Education

The strategy is very short-term and describes plans to grow clinic numbers over the next few months. The plan seems to focus heavily upon advertising, and does not really describe strategies for engaging with commissioners of healthcare.

The plan does not provide sufficient detail to enable the Committee to effectively monitor the effectiveness of the marketing activities in achieving target patient numbers. Commentary to accompany the plan would be useful to get a sufficiently detailed understanding as to how the intended strategy is designed to achieve the intended patient numbers and diversity requirements to meet the needs of the programme throughout the next four years.

Additionally, what system arrangements will be implemented such that relevant clinic patient profile data can be linked to students' collective and individual patient presentation learning needs? How will a deficit in patients presenting with particular problems be monitored and translate into marketing strategy adjustments?

It is suggested that the marketing plan would usefully include the following headings: general areas for development; actions to be taken; general comments; who is the responsible person; review and completion dates; success indicators; any updates; and who has overall responsibility for those actions.

In conclusion, the strategy needs to contain a lot more detail and to focus over a longer timescale.

Condition 6 - Implement, by March 2017, a comprehensive phased strategy for the recruitment, appointment and training of specialist staff, to provide students with a diversity of exposure to a range of osteopathic perspectives, so that staff are in post three months prior to programme start

The provider has identified a phased process to recruit additional staff as the student numbers increase over the first 3 years. The need for additional staffing has been included as an area for investment within the faculty academic deployment plan. This should be sufficient to support the staffing needs of the developing programme and the need to recruit

some additional sessional staff to assist in the delivery of specialist osteopathy subject components. There has also been commitment to appoint a clinic manager in 2019. The action plan is consistent with the information that the reviewers were given during the visit. The visitors consider this to be a reasonable and effective response to the condition.

6 March 2017