

Consultation on the recommendations from the education and training review for the Accredited Registers programme

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care¹ promotes the health, safety and wellbeing of patients, service users and the public by raising standards of regulation and registration of people working in health and care. We are an independent body, accountable to the UK Parliament.
- 1.2 We oversee the work of nine statutory bodies that regulate health professionals in the UK and social workers in England. We review the regulators' performance and audit and scrutinise their decisions about whether people on their registers are fit to practise.
- 1.3 We also set standards for organisations holding voluntary registers for people in unregulated health and care occupations and accredit those organisations that meet our standards.
- 1.4 The Accredited Registers programme aims to enhance public protection and promote public confidence in health and social care occupations that are not statutorily regulated.
- 1.5 The Professional Standards Authority accredits registers of people working in a variety of health and social care occupations. In order to be accredited, organisations holding these registers must prove that they meet our demanding standards in areas such as education and training, registration and governance. In addition, the organisation needs to demonstrate its commitment to public protection.
- 1.6 Accreditation provides assurance to the public that the registers are well run and that the organisation requires its registrants to meet high standards of personal behaviour, technical competence and, where relevant, business practice.
- 1.7 The education and training review was commissioned by the Professional Standards Authority to review Standard 9 (education and training) of the Standards for Accredited Registers.
- 1.8 The report provides a series of recommendations that were put before the Authority's Board for consideration. This consultation considers the recommendations that were agreed by the Board. The minutes of the Board meeting are available on the Authority's website.

¹ The Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care was previously known as the Council for Healthcare Regulatory Excellence

1.3 The Board agreed that the Accredited Registers' education and training standards should be explicit to the public and that the wording of Standard 9 should be changed to make this requirement clearer. The Authority is proposing to:

- amend the wording of Standard 9 to make the education and training requirements of an Accredited Register clear to the public
- amend the assessment process to take into account the changes made to Standard 9.

1.4 The aim of this consultation is to obtain the views of the public about the proposed changes to the education and training standard (Standard 9).

2. Re-wording of Standard 9

2.1 It is proposed that an additional sub-section 9e be added to Standard 9 to make it clear that the Authority will expect an Accredited Register to make the education and training standards required for a registrant to be on their register explicit to the public.

2.2 The proposed wording for the new Standard 9e is that the organisation:

Makes its education and training standards explicit and easily accessible to the public to enable all those using the register to make informed decisions.

The Authority will use the following aspects to assess compliance with this standard:

- a) what it is that individuals need to achieve to gain entry to the register including:
 - i. the relationship of education and training standards to professional standards / National Occupational Standards (NOS) / Codes of Conduct
 - ii. the content of education and training programmes (for example expressed in the form of learning outcomes for the end of the programme or staged points through the programme, the use of QAA subject benchmark statements, core curriculum)
 - iii. the minimum qualification level for (the different) registrant groups described using a recognised UK Educational Framework (the Authority suggests using the framework on the Government's website²)
- b) the quality of the educational programme and institution and how these promote patient and client safety, facilitate students' development and help to ensure they are fit to practise (for example, requirements for teaching and

² <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levelsmean/compare-different-qualification-levels>

learning approaches, assessment, patient and client safety, programme planning and management, resourcing, quality assurance).

This evidence can be provided by:

- i. registers setting their own educational standards
- ii. showing how they have used the standards available in programmes and qualifications already regulated within educational frameworks (such as QAA, Ofqual or their equivalents).

3. Assessment of Standard 9

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Accreditation team will use the decision tree (diagram 1) to assess the information provided by the organisation on Standard 9.
- 3.2 In step 1, the Accreditation team will undertake a review of the organisation's website to assess the accessibility of the education standards to the public. The Accreditation team are not educational experts. However we believe that this will be a good reflection of the process an educated member of the public would take to understand the education and training requirements of practitioners on a register.
- 3.3 Where the Accreditation team is unable to make a decision, an independent education expert will be consulted to interpret the information presented.

Diagram 1: Proposed decision tree for the assessment of education and training

Step 1: Review Applicant/Accredited Register submission

- a) Has the organisation set out its educational standard for all the aspects identified in Standard 9e?
 - If yes, recommend acceptance
 - If no, go to step 2.



Step 2: Request further information and evidence

- a) On receipt of further information and evidence (including possible changes to a register's website), is it possible to identify clearly all of the different aspects of Standard 9e?
 - If yes, recommend acceptance
 - If no, go to part b.
- b) does the organisation make use of qualifications regulated by the educational regulators and consider patient safety?
 - If yes, is the use of regulated qualifications explicit and available? If yes, recommend acceptance
 - If the organisation does not use regulated qualifications or their use is unclear, go to step 3.



Step 3: Seek expert advice

- a) Can an expert (that is someone who understands educational frameworks) identify the different aspects of Standard 9e from the organisation's educational standards?
 - If yes, recommend acceptance subject to the organisation producing clearer information for the public
 - If no, then recommend that standard not met.
- b) Can an expert confirm that the standards required of qualifications not covered by the education regulators are sufficient in terms of quality?
 - If yes, recommend acceptance subject to the organisation producing clearer information for the public
 - If no, then recommend that standard not met.

4. How to respond

- 4.1 Please respond by email to the Accreditation team at accreditationteam@professionalstandards.org.uk using the form attached by 30 June 2015.
- 4.2 We will consider all of your responses individually and collectively when reviewing Standard 9 (education and training).

Annex A: Education and training consultation questionnaire

We will use the responses to this questionnaire to inform our review of Standard 9.

We have set out below a few questions that you might like to consider when making your response. Please do not feel constrained by these questions. If you would like to make any other points in relation to these proposals, please do so. Please note that we do not expect all respondents to answer every question.

PART I: Questions about you

1. Your name and/or the name of your organisation

Royal College of Nursing

2. Postal address

20 Cavendish Square

London W1G 0RN

3. Email address

Stephanie.aiken@rcn.org.uk

4. Phone number

020 7647 3378

5. How would you describe your organisation (or your own role if more relevant)?

With a membership of over 425,000 registered nurses, midwives, health visitors, nursing students, health care assistants and nurse cadets, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the voice of nursing across the UK and the largest professional union of nursing staff in the world. RCN members work in a variety of hospital and community settings in the NHS and the independent sector. The RCN promotes patient and nursing interests on a wide range of issues by working closely with the Government, the UK parliaments and other national and European political institutions, trade unions, professional bodies and voluntary organisations.

Part II: Questions about the proposed changes to Standard 9

6. Are you in agreement that there should be an additional sub-section 9e added to standard 9?

Yes No If no, please explain why you do not agree with this.

We support the addition of sub section 9e. The primary purpose of healthcare regulation is to protect the public. As such, it is essential that the public can understand and easily interpret the standards of education and training required for entry to an accredited register.

7. Is the proposed wording of standard 9e clear?

Yes No If no, please explain how improvements could be made.

The wording makes clear the intention to ensure information relating to the standards for education and training is accessible to the public. The last clause "to make informed decisions" is perhaps less clear. What are they making an informed decision about? Is this 'to understand the level of individual attainment required for registration'?

8. Do you think the decision tree (diagram 1) is a logical and fair process to use in assessing the education standard?

Yes No If no, please explain how it could be improved.

The use of a decision tree to outline the process for the assessment of education and training is a useful tool to present information in an easy to follow format. However, we would suggest that the decision tree presented would benefit from further refinement to ensure a robust process of assessment related to standard 9e.

Is the website the only communication method that will be assessed to ensure compliance with standard 9e? Is there a supposition that if the standard is achieved online then any other publically available material relating to education and training will either also meet the standard or is deemed less relevant in informing the public?

'Step two part b)' and 'Step 3' both set out suggested approaches to enable an organisation to demonstrate they have achieved standard 9e using additional processes. However, this could allow an organisation to achieve the standard without clearly demonstrating that information about their education and training standards is "explicit and easily accessible to the public". This new addition to Standard 9 is to ensure that education and training standards are explicit, so it

is difficult to justify the use of an expert to interpret information; this indicates an inability to articulate the requirements in a clear and transparent way.

It may be that the intention for Step 3 (seek expert advice) is for the organisation to be supported to produce clearer information for the public as a condition of acceptance, but clarification is required regarding the timeframe for this to be undertaken.

9. Are there any other comments you would like to us to consider that you have not mentioned above?

Within the information in part 3 (Assessment of Standard 9), the proposal is to use the accreditation team as assessors, suggesting this team will reflect the public view. We would suggest some caution here – whilst the team may not have educational expertise, they are working in a regulatory environment and are familiar with the language of standards. It would be good practice to consider the use of lay reviewers to support assessment of compliance with standard 9e.

We would strongly support the use of an outcomes based approach, rather than the use of lists or task based activities to indicate the content of education and training programmes

Whilst we welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation to strengthen the standard relating to education and training for accredited registers, the RCN maintains its position on the need for mandatory regulation and core education standards for Health and Social Care support workers. Whilst we acknowledge that accredited registers seek to enhance public protection, there are inherent weaknesses within this approach. This includes the potential for individuals to have their name on multiple registers, which leads to unclear accountability and a lack of regulatory cohesion. Our concerns are articulated in our policy briefing 40/12 'The weaknesses of voluntary regulation for health care support workers' available from: http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/493874/40.12_Support_worker_regulation_FINAL.pdf.

We would like to be able to quote and attribute material from your response in our published summary and final reports.

- Please tick this box if you do not want us to quote your response.
- Please tick this box if you are happy for us to quote your response but do not want us to attribute the quote to you.

If you have ticked either of these boxes, please explain why you regard the information you have provided in this questionnaire as confidential.

We will manage the information you provide in response to this consultation paper in accordance with our information security policies which can be found on our website (www.professionalstandards.org.uk).

Any information we receive, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality will be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Professional Standards Authority.

The Professional Standards Authority will process any personal data in accordance with the DPA and in most circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.