

Education and Standards Committee

Meeting Minutes 13th March 2018

PHECC Office, Naas

Present

Shane Knox (Chair)
Paul Lambert (Vice Chair)
Róisín McGuire
Ray Lacey
Chris O'Connor
Tess O'Donovan
Frank Keane
Tom Brady
Gareth Elbell
Peter McDaid

Apologies

Adrian Murphy
Ben Heron
Melissa Redmond
Niamh O'Leary

In Attendance

Kathleen Walsh, PDO
Jacqueline Egan, PDO
Hillery Collins, Vice Chair Council
Evelyn Murphy, PHECC Support Officer
Margaret Bracken, PHECC Support Officer

1. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed the members and apologies were noted. The Chair welcomed Ms Evelyn Murphy, who is replacing Margaret Bracken as the support officer for Education and Standards. The Chair expressed his condolences to Mr Brian Power, Programme Development Officer, on the recent death of his father. The first anniversary of the Rescue 116 tragedy was noted and marked by those present.

1.1 Minutes from previous meeting of 11th January 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th January were reviewed. Discussion took place and amendments were noted on 8.1 and agreed.

Resolution: That the minutes of the Education and Standards Committee meeting held on 11th January 2018 be approved with noted amendment.

Proposed: Gareth Elbell
without dissent

Seconded: Róisín McGuire Carried

Agenda item 8.1 Report from Examinations Research Workshop

A report from the PHECC NQEMT Paramedic Examination Standard research workshop which was held on 21st November 2017 was discussed at the January meeting. The selection of representation relevant to the work for OSCE considerations was discussed and some members were of the opinion that this did not adequately meet the brief for this workshop. It was shared that defined criteria should be established by the Education and Standards Committee for the selection of invited experts. This was not reflected in the draft minutes. It was agreed to amend the minutes to reflect this discussion.

1.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2. Continuous Professional Competence Subcommittee

The Education and Standards Committee, at their meeting on 5th September 2017, established an expert group to develop the CPC requirements for Paramedic and Advanced Paramedic. The CPC Sub-Committee, chaired by Mr Ricky Ellis, Programme Development Officer, have held four meetings to date. A draft report with a series of recommendations from the Subcommittee to the Education and Standards Committee, prepared by Mr Ellis, was included in the meeting papers for consideration and approval. The following documents were included as attachments in the report for acceptance:

- Continuous Professional Competence Standard for registered Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Practitioners (STN017)
- CPC Guide for Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Practitioners (PUB046)
- Continuous Professional Competence Education Programme Accreditation Application (FOR063).

* Chris O'Connor joined the meeting.

2.1 Report of Subcommittee

Mr Ellis presented to the Committee and a broad discussion of the subject area ensued. The Committee discussed the implications of non-compliance with CPC and its link with registration. Communication with registrants was considered paramount. Registration linked matters were also discussed i.e. the possibility of informing CPG providers of non-compliance. This matter will be referred to Registration. The need to inform recognised institutions of the requirements of CPC was also identified. The matters discussed mostly related to the implementation phase of CPC. The Committee expressed a desire to retain control of the implementation phase of CPC until it has been embedded effectively before handing over to the Quality and Safety Committee. The Committee thanked Mr Ellis and commended him and the CPC Subcommittee on their work to date.

Resolution: that the Education and Standards Committee accept the documents and recommendations as set out in the CPC Subcommittee report and propose that the documents and recommendations be presented to Council for approval.

Proposed: Tom Brady
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Ray Lacey

* Brian Power, Programme Development Officer, joined the meeting.

3. Paramedic Examination Standard

At the January 2018 Council meeting, following a detailed discussion on the operation of the PHECC OSCEs in line with the implementation of the Paramedic NQEMT Examination Standard (Interim) V1, Council approved with immediate effect, the Paramedic NQEMT Examination Standard (Interim) V2, with the removal of the critical fail element and the inclusion of two examiners in each OSCE station, where possible.

A revised Paramedic NQEMT Examination Standard (Interim) was included in the meeting papers. Draft terms of reference for the Paramedic NQEMT Examinations Subcommittee were also included. It was proposed and agreed by the members that Mr Chris O'Connor join the Subcommittee. Ms Jacqueline Egan, Programme Development Officer, provided an overview.

3.1 Interim Standard

The Chair proposed that a full review of the PHECC Megacode OSCEs be carried out and the report circulated to the Examinations Subcommittee and hence as appropriate to the Education and Standards Committee. Ms Egan advised the Committee that the expectation is that the development of the new Paramedic Examinations Standard could take approximately 6 months depending on availability of educational experts, evidenced material and resources. The Chair directed that it would be acceptable that the Paramedic NQEMT Examination Standard be completed for presentation to the Education and Standards Committee by the end of September. The Chair also directed that the process for review of OSCE feedback must include the Examinations Subcommittee and Education and Standards Committee. Ms Egan advised the Committee of the Examinations Subcommittee meeting date of 21st March, and the feedback will be circulated for review for the members.

Mr Power notified the Committee that the Interim Standard was agreed by Council and stated that any change to the Standard will go through the approval process mechanism of Education and Standards recommendation to Council for approval. The Chair advised of the need to review the current Interim Megacode OSCE skill sheets and scenario, but not the need to amend the interim Standard agreed by Council.

3.2 Paramedic NQEMT Examination Subgroup Terms of Reference

The Chair advised that the role of the Education and Standards Committee is to nominate members to the Examination Subcommittee. He stated that the proper process was not followed by the Chair of Council. The Chair noted that no members from the Education and Standards Committee were asked to join the Examination Subcommittee. Ms Egan advised that it was agreed by the Education and Standards Committee that emailed expressions would be sought from each of the Paramedic level RIs, requesting two nominations to the Subcommittee from each RI, and that she carried out this task. Ms Egan stated that the Chair of Council nominated her as Chair of the Subcommittee and in this role she invited additional members to the Subcommittee: two members of the exam quality panel, the PHECC exam team, and Mr Brian Power for his expert education knowledge in the area of examinations. The Chair stated that the Committee is happy to continue with the Subcommittee in its current form.

The Chair proposed Chris O'Connor join the Exam Subcommittee, and all members agreed. Ms Egan welcomed Mr O'Connor to the Subcommittee, and notified Subcommittee members that the membership will be revised.

Resolution: That the Examinations Subcommittee Terms of Reference be approved by the Education and Standards Committee subject to the amendment of the membership to include Mr Chris O'Connor.

Proposed: Paul Lambert
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Tom Brady

* Brian Power left the meeting.

4. MCQ Exam results and RI notification

4.1 Refer to Practitioner Examination Handbook

The members sought that the RIs be informed by PHECC of candidate's examination results. Ms Egan advised that the PHECC relationship is with the exam candidate as this is the person who submits an exam application to PHECC. This could be a recommendation to Council to allow for exam result notification. If approved PHECC will revise the necessary application forms and processes in order that the candidate's permission is sought. Mr Collins suggested the Exam Subcommittee should look at this and discuss how to inform the RIs. Ms Egan clarified the role of the Exam Subcommittee.

Mr Lambert proposed that a candidate who is unsuccessful in the MCQ component of their Paramedic NQEMT should be allowed to go forward to take the OSCE component of the NQEMT exam. The rationale put forward was that under the current schedules deployed in the RI the timeline between the MCQ and the OSCE does not include time to facilitate an unsuccessful candidate taking the OSCE. Ms Egan notified the Committee that as Council has approved the Examinations Standard in January 2018, a period of 6 months must elapse before a resolution of Council can be amended and that this is in line with Council Standing Orders.

Resolution: that the Education and Standards Committee recommend that Council approve the Paramedic Examination (NQEMT) Standard (Interim) V3 with the removal of the requirement for a Paramedic exam candidate to be successful at MCQ before a candidate can progress to take the OSCE.

Proposed: Chris O'Connor

Seconded: Frank Keane

Carried without dissent

5. Exam scheduling for NQEMT – verbal update

Ms Egan gave an overview of the current exam scheduling procedures for the NQEMT examinations. She informed the Committee that the public view of the exam request calendar was recently closed. Instead the RIs were corresponded with by email seeking them to submit their proposed examination dates in line with their respective assessment schedules.

Ms Egan advised that they cannot always give the date requested, but that it might mean having to change the exam within a one or two day period, due to management of resources with the exam and IT team. Mr Lambert expressed that the examination dates requested by the RI should be approved by PHECC. He also expressed that he believed that PHECC do not have the resources to manage the current examination demands by the RIs and that additional support was required.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee believe that there is a need for extra resources and that there is a risk to the Organisation due to it being unable to deliver examinations as per the requirements of the RIs. Council should increase exam resources to manage exams on an ongoing basis.

Proposed: Ray Lacey

Seconded: Chris O'Connor

Carried without dissent

*Ricky Ellis, Programme Development Officer, left the meeting.

6. Provision of CPGs for views and rechecks by NQEMT candidates

6.1 POL020 Council Policy for Viewings and Rechecks

Ms Walsh provided an overview. Candidates are unable to bring anything into the Viewing and Recheck session with them. The Committee proposed that the CPGs should be allowed as a reference during the session which would benefit the candidate. Ms Walsh suggested that any change be recorded in the relevant policy and procedure documents and associated handbook. Mr Keane proposed that the CPGs should also be provided at the SWA and MCQ exams.

Mr Collins expressed that it is unfair to ask candidates to make calculations during the exam without any calculators, and that calculators or a pencil and paper should be provided for candidates to calculate accurately. Ms Egan informed the Committee that onscreen calculators are available for candidates taking the MCQ exam. The Chair proposed that a PHECC exam viewing coordinator on the day of the session, records information on a feedback spreadsheet, and that no material leaves the examination room. Ms Egan stated that feedback on the unsuccessful test items is recorded by the viewings coordinator.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee agree that the policy be amended to include provision of the CPGs and calculators at candidate viewings and rechecks.

Proposed: Frank Keane

Seconded: Chris O'Connor

Carried without dissent

7. Appeals Panel

7.1 Nomination of Committee Member

Ms Walsh briefed the Committee on the Appeals Panel and noted that Council have requested that a member from the Education and Standards Committee be nominated for the Appeals Panel.

Resolution: that the Education and Standards Committee nominated Frank Keane to join the Appeals Panel.

Proposed: Roísín McGuire

Seconded: Paul Lambert

Carried without dissent

7.2 POL019 Council Policy and Procedure for Appeals V3

Ms Walsh notified the Education and Standards Committee that Appendix 1 was updated, and Point 5 was added. The Committee asked to examine this. The Chair drew attention to points 2 and 4 within Appendix 1, and asked if point 2 could be removed from the Appendix. Mr O'Connor stated that point 4(b) does not make sense and that 4(c) is inconsistent with effective and appropriate procedure. Ms Egan notified the Committee that when the revisions are carried out the Appeals Policy, including the Appendix 1 and all associated documents, will go to Council for approval. Ms Egan also advised that the NQEMT examination handbook will be revised to reflect this and many other changes and indicated that this revision work will take place in April and May.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee recommend approval to Council with the removal of points 2 and 4(b) from Appendix 1 and the inclusion of a new point 5 and all related documents.

Proposed: Chris O'Connor
without dissent

Seconded: Tom Brady Carried

8. Terms of Reference

The Chair notified the Committee that an Exam Quality Panel Chair will be nominated at the first meeting of the Panel and directed that a meeting be convened as soon as possible in order to consider additional members. Ms Egan advised that expressions of interest would be sought for membership to all examinations related panels in line with the approval of the terms of reference by Council.

The amended Terms of Reference were included in the meeting papers and were recommended by the Education and Standards Committee for approval by Council as follows:

8.1 Examination Quality Panel Terms of Reference

Proposed: Tom Brady
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Paul Lambert

8.2 Examiner Panel Terms of Reference

Proposed: Ray Lacey
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Roísín McGuire

8.3 Test Item Writing Panel Terms of Reference

Proposed: Gareth Elbell
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Ray Lacey

* Jacqueline Egan, Programme Development Officer, left the meeting.

9. CPGs, upskilling and general considerations for education and training

Mr Lambert expressed concern to the Committee regarding currency of CPG publications, dates of release from PHECC and availability for students and practitioners as it relates to training and upskilling. Members discussed the issue of version control for the publishing of CPGs and related communications to the RIs and agreed this should be prioritised to address any potential risks identified. The Chair noted this matter including synchronisation of the education and training standards, CPGs, and examination materials, was previously reviewed by Council in 2017. It was suggested by Mr Collins that the Chairs of the Committees meet and propose recommendations for Council for managing this risk.

Ms Walsh updated the Committee on the field guide, and informed the members that it is currently being printed.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee propose to Council that the Chairs from each of the Committees meet and propose recommendations to Council for future alignment of CPGs, standards and exam materials.

Proposed: Paul Lambert
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Frank Keane

10. FAR Education and Standards Review

10.1 Recommendations from Working Group – Summary Document

Ms Walsh presented the summary document which included the recommendations from the Working Group as was included in the meeting papers. Committee members discussed the various recommendations particularly a change of the student/instructor ratio and duration of the re-certification course. Ms McGuire noted that the recommendations put forward were to provide positive actions in the short term to support the transition process for OFA to FAR. Ms Walsh noted improved data collection from RIs re FAR courses could contribute to future revisions for the FAR standard. Mr O'Connor suggested a blended learning approach with online programme could be employed to possibly reduce duration of the course. It was queried whether PHECC could develop online programmes for FAR. Ms Walsh shared that there have been several RIs looking at such developments and the Committee agreed any such proposals should be supported by PHECC. Mr Collins suggested that the pass rate for the MCQ presently at 80% should be reconsidered to change to 60% pass rate and review the FAR standard 12 months onward. The Chair advised the Committee that the report by Audrey Kirwan previously presented to the Committee should be reviewed again regarding its recommendations, and submitted to Council for consideration.

10.2 Revised Standard document

Ms Walsh presented the revised draft FAR Education and Training Standard completed by the Working Group. The Chair advised that 'caring attitude' referred to under attitudinal objectives was not measurable and suggested this reference be removed from each learning outcome but be included at the start of the publication as an overall objective. Ms Walsh noted that the Working Group removed reference to 'special circumstances' in the Standard as there were no indications that these were utilised in the training for FAR responders.

Resolution: That the Working Group will further revise the draft FAR standard based on the recommendations as per the summary document and in view of the above discussions. The draft will then be presented to Council for its review and approval.

Proposed: Ray Lacey
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Peter McDaid

11. Quality Review Framework (QRF)

11.1 Interim Evaluation Report – Paul Collins (QRF Panel Chair)

Ms Walsh briefed members of the Interim Evaluation Report which was included in the meeting papers.

11.2 RI Survey

Ms Walsh advised the Committee that the RIs were asked to provide feedback of their experience and views of the QRF, through completion of the online RI Survey. To date 14 responses have been received.

12. Recognised Institutions

12.1 RI applications, Status Update and course approvals

A current listing of recent RI and course approvals was provided for information purposes for the Committee.

12.2 Responder Certification Activity – 2017

A copy of the responder certification activity for 2017 was included in the meeting papers for the Committee.

12.3 Online RI portal – Status

Ms Walsh advised the Committee that the online portal for managing RIs will be going live in the next few weeks. It will be supported by a user manual and also consider future supports eg webinars to assist applicants and RIs.

12.4 RI Engagement Event

Ms Walsh shared feedback from the RI engagement event held the previous day, including the group discussions focusing on the QRF and its implementation. Ms Walsh referred to several of the Committee members who were present at the event and asked if they had any observations to share. Mr Keane suggested that there is a need for a graduated approach to the QRF as it may be onerous for smaller Organisations and that future event planning may need to deliver to separate groupings re responder and practitioner levels.

12.5 March Information Session for OFA providers

The invitation was included in the meeting papers and Ms Walsh advised the Committee on the number of attendees from the regional sessions held to date and the general feedback and themes/issues raised by participants.

13. Recognition of Professional Qualifications

13.1 Application Update

Ms Walsh gave an update on the statistics for the application process. Mr O'Connor and Mr Collins queried how applications were assessed and criteria utilised by the Assessors Panel. Ms Walsh offered to prepare information for the next meeting providing an overview of the process to include reference to EU directives and Irish regulations.

13.2 2016 Stats submission to Department of Education and Skills

The statistics were included in the meeting papers for the Education and Standards Committee as per previous request and Ms Walsh gave an overview.

14. Working Group on Research

Ms Walsh gave an overview and summary of the first meeting held in February. The Chair advised the Committee that Council are in the process of developing a new strategic plan including considerations for research. He requested that the Working group establish its terms of reference and recommendations to proffer to the Committee and then on to Council. Ms Walsh informed the Committee that a Working Group for Research meeting was in the process of being scheduled.

Recommendation: That the Education and Standards Committee propose Chris O'Connor as Chair for the Working Group on Research.

Proposed: Frank Keane
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Paul Lambert

15. AOB

15.1 The Chair stated that he was questioned recently about his 'stewardship' of the Committee and his ability to act in this role in a neutral and unbiased manner. He requested members to discuss whether they had any concerns about how he chaired the meetings, and if he presented in any biased or unfair manner. He asked for the Vice Chair, Mr Lambert, to manage the discussion. The Chair excused himself from the meeting at this point.

The Chair and PHECC staff were asked to rejoin the meeting after a brief Committee discussion. The Vice Chair, Mr Lambert, stated that among the Committee there was an unambiguous and unanimous agreement and that The Chair has the full support of the Committee to continue as Chair. The Chair thanked Mr Lambert and the Committee for their support.

15.2 Mr McDaid expressed his concern over the significant number of items on the agenda, and queried if additional meetings are needed could this be facilitated by PHECC staff. Ms Walsh acknowledged the lengthy agenda and important items for discussion and action, she noted that additional meetings may be necessary however resources would need to be assigned and managed.

15.3 Mr Collins proposed that at some stage in the future that he would like to discuss the Interim Standard and the examination process.

The meeting concluded. The Chair thanked all for attending.

The next meeting of the Education and Standards Committee will take place in the PHECC Office on Wednesday 9th May @ 10am.

Signed: _____

Chair

Date: _____

11/6/2018