

Education and Standards Committee

Meeting Minutes
23rd January 2019
PHECC Office, Naas

Present

Shane Knox (Chair)
Paul Lambert (Vice Chair)
Róisín McGuire
Chris O'Connor
Gareth Elbell
Frank Keane
Niamh O'Leary
Peter McDaid

In Attendance

Richard Lodge, PHECC Director
Kathleen Walsh, PHECC PDO
Ricky Ellis, PHECC PDO (part meeting)
Hillery Collins, Vice Chair Council (part meeting)
Bláthnaid O'Donnell, PHECC Support Officer

Apologies

Tom Brady
Melissa Redmond
Ray Lacey
Tess O'Donovan
Ben Heron

Absent

Adrian Murphy

1. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted. The Chair extended thanks to the Committee members on behalf of Tom Brady for all their well wishes.

2. Minutes from 20th November 2018 and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2018 were reviewed. Some amendments were highlighted and agreed.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20th November 2018 subject to the agreed amendments.

Proposed: Chris O'Connor

Seconded: Paul Lambert

Carried without dissent

2.1 Matters arising

Kathleen Walsh referred to the resolution arising from agenda item 10 of the Minutes – 'EMT CPC Booklet' wherein the 'EMT CPC Subcommittee' are referenced. It was advised that the addition of the word 'EMT' was an error and should be removed from the resolution.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee, based on the recommendations of the CPC Subcommittee, as approved by Council, accept the modifications to the EMT CPC Guide 2018 for Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Practitioners.

The Chair raised the topic of skills deficit and quality oversight within the Advanced Paramedic Programme indicating that this matter, at Council's request, had been discussed at the last Education and Standards Committee meeting in November 2018. The Chair requested that the minutes be amended to reflect that this conversation had taken place with reference to addressing the risk and subsequent actioning in relation to quality oversight required for the AP programme, encompassing its examinations and skills deficits.

Hillery Collins suggested that the minutes be amended under agenda item 13 A.O.B. as related to his concerns for the AP standard and need for exam quality assurance.

The Chair queried the previous matter of the Committee recommending to Council that the accreditation and approval of practitioner courses remain as a function of the Committee. He asked why this was not presented to Council. Kathleen Walsh stated this recommendation was prepared for Council however it was not an agenda item. The Director shared that he considered this matter of the Committee's recommendation for change of delegated decisions and sought to explore this further before its presentation to Council as he was recently in post.

Resolution: That the Education and Standards Committee request to Council that accreditation and approval of practitioner courses remain a function of the Committee.

Proposed: Paul Lambert

Seconded by Gareth Elbell

Carried without dissent

3. Education and Training Standards Revision RFT – Status Update

Frank Keane excused himself from this discussion due to a concern that he was representing UL as an RI and UL has also expressed a potential interest in applying for the RFT.

Kathleen Walsh presented the status update for information. She extended thanks to the work of the subgroup involved in developing the tender and to the Committee members who participated in the recent tender evaluation for the review of the Education and Training Standards. Ms Walsh advised that the submission received did not meet the minimum criteria and all fourteen participants, who had initially expressed an interest, were advised that PHECC did not award the contract.

The Chair queried if there were any common threads that could be identified as barriers in this area. Kathleen Walsh noted that feedback from some of the participants indicated that costings and tight timeframes were of concern and offered that the specifications and requirements may need to be amended.

Niamh O'Leary stated that the standards are out of date and that there is a need, from practitioners' point of view at all levels, for same to be updated. The Chair reiterated this indicating that this review was a priority which needs to be addressed and be aligned with CPGs and examinations. It was also stressed that this review is overdue in accordance with the Statutory Instrument requirement.

Discussion ensued among Committee members as to what may be the best solution for securing a supplier, whether to engage an individual or an organisation, via tender, expressions of interest, or other alternatives. It was suggested to hire a Programme Development Officer, who would have familiarity within this field, CPGs etc, and who would be seconded to oversee this area. Hillery Collins indicated that coordinating the review in this manner may be quicker and more effective than going through the tender process again. The Director shared that he is seeking to progress a way forward for ensuring the review is completed for 2019 and indicated that it may be a matter of engaging an individual, with administration support, to focus on this area or explore the possibility of using an existing supplier framework established by the Office of Government Procurement. Kathleen Walsh stated that these approaches are currently being considered along with changes to the specifications prioritising the practitioner education standards and competency frameworks. The Chair stated that there were already a number of evidence-based competency frameworks in practice and that the initial priority would be to align Advanced Paramedic, Paramedic, and EMT, standards with PHECC CPGs. This would need to be done by focusing on process and taking into account international standards, stakeholder concerns and engagement. The Director advised that it would be pragmatic to consider all options going forward, organisation versus individual, and possibly for the Committee to reconvene on this matter, in the next 4 weeks and before the next planned meeting, after the Director has considered the options.

Resolution: That the Director will consider the most effective method for review and revision of Advanced Paramedic, Paramedic, and EMT, standards and will revert to the Committee with a proposal in several weeks' time and before the next scheduled meeting.

Proposed: Róisín McGuire

Seconded: Peter McDaid

Carried without dissent

4. Quality Review Framework Revision

Ms Walsh read through a synopsis of this section for information. She highlighted any key changes for the revision of the Quality Review Framework resulting from the Committee's feedback and additional review.

Ms Walsh advised that there had been a reduction in the number of quality standards, she noted that the QRF overview document, at page 6 of the papers, provided examples to assist the RIs in understanding and applying the documents in practice. Further overview could be located on page 12 (point 2.6.2) – Self Assessment Toolkit showing how each RI/ATI will rate their own compliance against particular components. There have also been slight amendments made to the assessment methods, on page 17 of the papers. Depending on adequate resourcing for QRF implementation, it is proposed that at least fifteen onsite reviews will be undertaken each year for years one, two and three. Ms Walsh stated that the onsite element of the QRF review is critical as this is when the compliance report is generated, identifying any issues regarding immediate action and areas where improvement is required.

The Chair queried the future composition of the panel conducting onsite reviews and whether or not there is a requirement for a PHECC Educator to be on same. Ms Walsh advised that each panel will be comprised of a blend of individuals representing educators, PHECC practitioners, and those with quality assurance experience.

Hillery Collins questioned the alignment of the Quality Review Framework and the Governance Validation Framework. Kathleen Walsh indicated that there is ongoing engagement between both with designated PHECC staff member supporting both frameworks. Mr Collins advised that he will be seeking costings for the QRF at a later stage.

Kathleen Walsh went through an overview of the process timelines as outlined in the QRF overview papers (page 22). She stated that with the external review commencing any areas of concern are identified, she advised that RIs are offered a period of twenty weeks to revert confirming that necessary changes have been actioned and are in place. Frank Keane queried whether it would be beneficial for the applicant to be notified of such concerns following the desktop review to afford them the opportunity to resolve such concerns by the time the onsite element of the review is conducted. This may avoid any potential delays in the process. The Director indicated that it may be constructive that any identified concerns be immediately communicated to the RI by the lead and suggested that a one-liner reflecting this position be added to the papers. The Chair suggested that the best way forward may be to test this matter and gather feedback regarding same.

Regarding the composite report Kathleen Walsh advised that this will be furnished to the Committee, including feedback gathered from the RIs, and then to Council for final approval before being published on the PHECC website.

The Chair queried if there was an appeal process in place should any RI be unhappy with the review process. Ms Walsh advised that there was a twenty-eight-day timeframe within which an appeal could be lodged through the normal appeal process. Each RI had been forwarded a copy of this formal appeals process along with the composite report.

Paul Lambert queried PHECC's position regarding any changes to reports deemed as necessary on foot of feedback being received from the RI before any reports are published to the PHECC website. He indicated that there could be a factor of commercial sensitivity to be considered and that potentially PHECC could be leaving themselves open for legal action if any inaccuracies were to be published. The Chair advised that reports were sent to the RI to review and the Director reiterated that RIs are given the opportunity to check reports for factual accuracy prior to any data being published.

Paul Lambert sought clarification on the procedure for findings of non-compliance and any sanctions arising from this. Kathleen Walsh advised that this is dependent on the significance of the issue but that major concerns identified would be escalated to the Director and in turn Council to remedy.

The Chair asked about the selection process for scheduling visits. Kathleen Walsh indicated that there were a number of factors to be considered such as organisations that have come on stream from OFA/FAR, the schedule of GVF Assessments and findings from the Self-Assessment report completed by the institution.

The Chair extended thanks on behalf of the Committee to Kathleen Walsh and Paul Collins for the level of work and diligence they dedicated to this matter.

Resolution: That the Educations and Standards Committee approve the final edits to the Quality Review Framework and a final draft to be submitted for approval at the February Council meeting.

Proposed: Chris O'Connor
Carried without dissent

Seconded: Gareth Elbell

5. Recognised Institution Status

Kathleen Walsh gave a summary of current RI Status and course approvals. She also advised that there was a housekeeping exercise required to follow up on formal notification of programme cessations, when questioned by Paul Lambert regarding the HSE NASC and UCD listing.

Committee members were updated on the RI assessor panel selection process which had been undertaken last December. Ten individuals, all practitioners, had successfully interviewed and will be commencing this role shortly.

6. Teaching Faculty Framework Revision

Kathleen Walsh advised that a working group has been established for this matter, to be chaired by Chris O'Connor, and that the first meeting of this group has been scheduled for 30th January 2019.

The question was raised regarding an individual's eligibility to partake in the working group who is not currently a member of the Committee. Ultimately it was decided that it would be prudent for Committee members only to participate in this group. The Chair emphasised that it was not an individual's contribution and knowledge base that was being called into question, but that procedure needed to be followed as had been previously agreed at the Education and Standards Committee meeting in November 2018.

Kathleen Walsh asked Committee members for feedback on the Teaching Faculty Framework, to include renewal documentation, as this would be beneficial for the revision of the content. It was pointed out that the recommendations from the recent appeal hearing for Educational Award Holder had been included in the meeting papers.

Chris O'Connor shared that there are certain elements of the Teaching Faculty Framework that are open to interpretation. Also, that there is a need for clarification within certain areas, in particular, with regard to appeals and what qualifications are equal to. This point was reiterated by Niamh O'Leary who indicated the need for more transparency within the framework. The Chair advised that the Appeal Panel recommendations together with feedback arising out of the working group should all feed into the drafting of the Teaching Faculty Framework. For information, Kathleen Walsh updated the Committee on current figures which comprise of 25 facilitators, 131 tutors and 87 assistant tutors. Frank Keane questioned if these individuals are all PHECC practitioners/registrants. The question arose as to how to proceed if an individual's registration status is inactive and whether this should preclude someone from becoming an education reward's holder. Paul Lambert advised that there should be orientation to PHECC cascade and how educators/tutors need to interact with PHECC. The Chair agreed with this point and added that there needs to be some form of link between educators and PHECC.

7. Recognition of Qualifications – Stats

The Chair raised a query regarding qualification recognition and the upgrade of same at application stage. The example was from a particular application seeking Paramedic status but recognised at a higher level - Advanced Paramedic. Kathleen Walsh advised that applications are viewed with clinical, theory and practice components taken into consideration. Hillery Collins asked if it would be more prudent for applicants to be contacted and advised of their eligibility for higher recognition and asked to change this on their application.

Paul Lambert stated that this attests to the fairness and transparency of this process insofar as all aspects of applications are taken into account and ones that are deemed to be suitable for a higher level are communicated to the applicant. Kathleen Walsh noted the applicant is informed of the higher qualification outcome but may pursue the lower qualification if desired.

Kathleen Walsh informed the Committee of an upcoming Brexit meeting with other regulators taking place on 25th January in the DoH. In relation to our own process, PHECC will be treating the UK as a third country, outside of the EU. Hillery Collins requested that it be highlighted that the border is a unique area. The Director assured that this point was emphasised at the last meeting and will be raised again.

The Chair queried the matter of obtaining letters of good standing from regulators to substantiate applications from outside of the EU. It was indicated that there is no visibility of any disciplinary issues with applicants from outside of the EU as these cannot be searched on the Internal Market Information System (IMI). The Chair further advised that there has been an increase in the numbers of EMTs gaining access to Paramedic courses in UK Universities and returning to Ireland as a Paramedic, seeking recognition with PHECC. There may be a further increase in these figures going forward as a result of Brexit. Frank Keane indicated that it was difficult trying to arrange having contingencies in place when there is uncertainty around what contingencies are being planned for.

8. Paramedic Examination Standard

Jacqueline Egan, PHECC Programme Development Officer responsible for examinations, provided documents in the meeting papers to accompany this agenda item. As Ms Egan was not in attendance at the meeting Kathleen Walsh summarised on her behalf. Attendees were advised that feedback was being sought on this matter which will be raised again at the next Education and Standards Committee meeting on 27th March, for presentation at the April Council meeting. It was agreed that any feedback on the draft Paramedic Standard would be forwarded to the PDO by 6th February as requested.

It was requested that Ms Egan provide an update on the proposed process for examiner training and provide feedback to the Committee on the nomination submissions from Recognised Institutions regarding the exam panel.

9. AOB

9.1 Kathleen Walsh advised the Committee of the addition of Naloxone Nasal Spray to the current DoH list of approved medications for the Cardiac First Response and Medications for Listed Organisations. This amendment will need to be brought to the Medical Advisory Committee for incorporation into the relevant CPG and instructor course material. Frank Keane queried if this addition would affect practitioners as well as CFR Groups. The Chair advised that as this relates only to the Eighth Schedule of medications, practitioners will not be affected. The changes will be communicated to the RIs.

9.2 Chris O'Connor requested an update on the Irish Heart Foundation criteria for CFR A instructors and was advised by Kathleen Walsh that there was no recent update on policy change/level of training since November and that she will follow up.

9.3 Chris O'Connor requested an update on the status of CPC. The Chair indicated that this had formed part of the PHECC Strategic Plan and that Council has agreed to introduce CPC for Paramedics and APs, to commence this year in-line with the recommendations of the subcommittee.

The meeting concluded at 13.15pm approximately. The next scheduled meeting of the Education and Standards Committee is 27th March @ 10.00 am in the PHECC office.

Signature: 
Chair

Date: 15/4/19