

# Education and Standards Committee

## Meeting Minutes

24<sup>th</sup> July 2019

PHECC Office, Naas @ 10:00am



### Present:

Shane Knox (Chair)  
Paul Lambert (Vice Chair)  
Róisín McGuire  
Gareth Elbell  
Peter McDaid  
Niamh O'Leary  
Ben Heron  
Tom Brady

### Apologies:

Frank Keane  
Tess O'Donovan  
Ray Lacey

### In Attendance:

Kathleen Walsh, PHECC PDO  
Jacqueline Egan, PHECC PDO  
Karen O'Neill, PA to Director  
Aisling Ryan, PHECC Support Officer

### Absent:

Adrian Murphy

### Teleconference:

Chris O'Connor

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## 1. Practitioner Education and Training Standards Review – Crowe Project – Presentation

Presentation was provided to the Committee by Crowe representatives - Vanya Sargent and Hugh O'Sullivan for the review and revision of the practitioner education and training standards and competency framework development. The Chair thanked them both and asked members for any comments or questions. It was discussed if the project timeframe of eight months is adequate. Ms Sargent responded that the summer months were factored in to this timeframe with desktop activities now occurring. Mr O'Sullivan, referring to the project plan, noted that item (d) and (e) are key timelines for stakeholder engagement and consultation. The approach for stakeholder engagement was discussed and will take place via telephone, face to face, online surveys, and focus groups, and interviews were also arranged to ensure everyone was provided the opportunity for input. Committee members emphasised the need for practitioner participation and Ms Sargent requested the members' support in encouraging registrant feedback to ensure broad viewpoints are represented. The Committee will be informed of project progress at its September meeting.

## 2. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted. Kathleen Walsh relayed apologies from the PHECC Director. The Chair welcomed Tom Brady's return to the Committee after his extended absence.

## 3. Minutes from 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019 were reviewed and approved by the Committee.

**Resolution: That the Education & Standards Committee approve the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2019.**

**Proposed: Peter McDaid**  
**Carried without dissent**

**Seconded: Gareth Elbell**

### 3.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

## 4. Examinations

Jacqueline Egan, PHECC PDO, updated the Committee on Examinations.

### 4.1 Paramedic Examination Standards

A summary on the status of the expression of interest (EOI) exercise seeking an educationalist to review the draft paramedic NQEMT examination standard was provided. A working group consisting of representatives from the three Recognised Institutions at paramedic level was convened for the evaluation of the EOI. One EOI was submitted – refer to evaluation matrix provided in meeting papers. The group determined that the submission received was not sufficiently robust to be awarded. Ms Egan provided the group's rationale for this. The Committee discussed the various points presented, including the issue of how an educationalist was defined and used for the purpose of the EOI, and then recommended that the working group consider their response and the feedback to the respondent. Tom Brady noted that the four week timeframe in which to complete the review of the draft standard was tight. Members spoke about the need to modify the specifications and then recirculate the request for tender to a wider pool of people. Ms Egan sought recommendations from the Committee for persons and expressed that the aim is for the standard to be approved by year end.

### 4.2 Audio Visual Policy for Examinations

Ms Egan stated that the Audio Visual working group comprised of a representative from each of the RIs at paramedic level and were due to meet this afternoon. AV policies obtained from NASC and UL, and RCSI's policy on simulation, were provided in the meeting papers. An update from the AV working group will be provided as appropriate.

### 4.3 Simulation for EMT - CPC

The working group consisting of Paul Lambert and Ben Heron developed content simulation for the assessment by RIs of EMT registrants who are unable to achieve the required patient contacts within the CPC cycle. The EMT simulation scenarios and assessment consist of two medical and two trauma skills as agreed by the Education and Standards Committee at their May meeting. The next step is for the Exam Quality Panel to review the material completed by the working group.

### 4.4 NQEMT Exams Report 2018

The 2018 NQEMT exam data contained in the meeting papers was discussed. Questions were raised regarding the presentation of the first attempt and second attempt data, in addition to that of candidates who were successful or unsuccessful following RPL. Ms Egan stated that the exam data reflected the number of attempts per component of the NQEMT. She also clarified that the unsuccessful data would also be captured in successful data, if the candidate progressed to being successful following a second attempt or following RPL. The Committee agreed that the number of attempts can be presented in the data but that the exam data should reflect individual candidates, first attempts, second attempts, and RPL candidates separately. The Committee agreed that the NQEMT exam data in its current format should not be published, however, it was recognised that there is a requirement to publish 2018 NQEMT data in an appropriate format. Going forward Ms Egan will work towards collating exam data based on candidate eligibility numbers and stated that plans for improving the robustness of the database are under consideration by the Executive as an immediate priority. The Committee raised the question of the previously published NQEMT results and they proposed that the historical NQEMT results reports should be removed from the PHECC website.



**Resolution: That the Education & Standards Committee recommend to Council that the NQEMT Examination 2018 results data, as presented to the Committee, is not published.**

**Proposed: Gareth Elbell**

**Seconded: Ben Heron**

**Carried without dissent**

Concerns were also raised by the Committee that the information may be seen as a comparison between various RIs. Kathleen Walsh added that the QRF requires RIs to collate KPIs regarding student numbers as PHECC don't collect information regarding candidates who drop out from practitioner courses. It was agreed as per the previous Education and Standards Committee resolution that following release of results to the candidates the RIs will be informed simultaneously.

#### **4.5 Examiner Training**

Ms Egan informed the Committee that examiner training is currently being planned by the Executive for later this year. There will be a stepped approach to training; currently the Examiner Training DVD is being revised and it is expected that examiners at all levels will review the DVD as stage 1 training in advance of stage 2 scenario based training workshops for October. Stage 3 training will be a workshop focused on the NQEMT exam requirements associated with the future Paramedic examination standard. A question was raised regarding who will provide the training. Ms Egan informed the Committee that previously Brian Power, PHECC PDO, delivered examiner training with experienced members of Exam Quality. Ms Egan stated that under the Terms of Reference of the Exam Quality Panel a Chair needs to be appointed and in addition new panel members need to be selected. The Chair suggested that a meeting of Exam Quality be convened to select a Chair and to make recommendations on new panel members which should include EMTs. For the purpose of selecting a date a doodle poll will be circulated to all Exam Quality members. The Chair stated that previous workshops delivered by Brian Power were of a high standard and that they should be repeated subject to Mr Power's availability. The Committee agreed with this. The Committee agreed that a meeting of the Exam Quality Panel be convened to nominate a Chair of the Exam Quality Panel and to select criteria for extending the Panel, with nomination and selection criteria to be presented to the Education and Standards Committee for ratification.

#### **4.6 Practitioner Examination Handbook**

A draft of the revised NQEMT Examination Handbook was tabled. Ms Egan informed the Committee that she will circulate a stakeholder feedback survey to all practitioner level RIs. She will also seek the RIs to circulate the survey to students in class at that point in time requesting feedback from them as students must read the handbook prior to completing the NQEMT exam application form. It was highlighted that due to GDPR it is not possible for PHECC to communicate with students who are not on the register and who have not had the opportunity to opt in to receive communication from PHECC. Ms Egan confirmed that a survey will be in digital format and will also be circulated to Committee members.

The Chair thanked Ms Egan.

## 5. Recognised Institution/ Approved Training Institution Report

### 5.1 Outcome Reports

The Chair excused himself from this agenda item declaring a conflict of interest related to applications under discussion and the Vice Chair took charge of the meeting. Kathleen Walsh gave a brief overview, referring to Committee papers for the RI/ATI report noting the status of renewals and new applicants. She referred to the course application for AP practitioner level from NASC and its progression for assessment, noting that commencement of the course has been listed for September 2019. The Vice Chair questioned whether the RI's timeline was realistic given the various stages of assessment including presentation to the Committee for its recommendation. Ms Walsh noted that clarifications were required from the RI for the AP application and this had been communicated to Council at its meeting the previous week. It was agreed that the outcome report needs to come back to the Committee at their September meeting and that the RI must follow PHECC assessment and approval processes for commencement of the AP course.

The change of a current NASC paramedic course to conversion to bachelor's degree programme with UCC, its academic partner, was notified to the Committee. Ms Walsh stated the matter was also discussed by Council as to whether a new application for programme approval is to be submitted. She stated that Council instructed the Director to seek confirmation of all proposed changes and determine if a new application was warranted. Discussion then took place about previous accreditation processes for practitioner programme approvals and renewals including the delegated decisions of the Council to the Director.

Ms Walsh referred to the outcome report for renewal status for a recognised institution, Career Path College trading as Irish Ambulance Training Institute. She shared that the renewal processes for RI status are aligned with the Quality Review Framework criteria. Clarifications were sought from the RI and were satisfactory meeting all the renewal criteria. As this is a new process for the Committee in reviewing, approving and recommending outcome assessments for RIs, Ms Walsh asked if the Committee was content with the report structure. No changes were proposed.

**Resolution: That the Education & Standards Committee approve the outcome report for Career Path College trading as Irish Ambulance Training Institute for RI renewal status.**

**Proposed: Ben Heron**  
**Carried without dissent**

**Seconded: Peter McDaid**

The Chair returned and resumed chairing the meeting.

## 6. Quality Review Framework Status

### 6.1 QRF Panel Formation

Kathleen Walsh provided an overview of the status of the QRF, stating that RIs and ATIs will be requested to complete self-assessment reports and quality improvement plans this year, with onsite reviews to be conducted also. A QRF Panel member training workshop for the QRF reviews took place on 10<sup>th</sup> July and a second workshop is scheduled for 25<sup>th</sup> July. Group work with case scenarios linking with QRF themes featured at the training. The Chair asked if the panel members suggested any changes. Ms Walsh responded the QRF desktop review prior to on-site is needed to see the quality of what is being submitted by the RIs and ATIs. PHECC will notify RIs and ATIs if there are issues requiring attention before the on-site review.



The compliance report provides feedback to the organisations for their quality improvement planning and then the composite report will be made public with their feedback. Jacqueline Egan added that she was impressed with the knowledge that the current RI/ATI application assessors have and that the group work with the scenarios was very good.

## **7. Terms of Reference of Committee**

Council is undergoing a governance review which includes the examination of the terms of reference of all Committees, and the revised terms of reference are not to be enacted until the review is concluded, as per Council. The Chair mentioned that the terms of reference had been sent to Council previously.

## **8. Teaching Faculty Framework (TFF) Working Group update**

At the May meeting Committee members were asked for feedback on the Educational Award (EA) and Renewal applications. Kathleen Walsh thanked all those who provided feedback and relayed that all PHECC facilitators will be surveyed about this. An update of the TFF working group activities was circulated following on from its meeting on the 18<sup>th</sup> July. Róisín McGuire, Chair of the working group, relayed that they were looking at the QQI National Framework Qualifications, comparing its learning outcomes on the various QQI courses for training delivery, evaluation, course design etc with PHECC learning outcomes in the Teaching Faculty Framework for the levels of instructors and EA holders. She stated there is also a requirement to look at the QRF to ensure consistency with the TFF.

## **9. Appeals**

### **9.1 POL019\_Council Policy and Procedures for Appeals**

### **9.2 POL004\_Council Policy Assessment of equivalence of professional qualifications in pre-hospital emergency care obtained in Ireland**

Kathleen Walsh provided the context for the Committee for its review of the above referenced policies as requested by Council. This included a summary of a recent appeal case which upheld the outcome of refusal of recognition of educational qualifications obtained within Ireland for seeking award of NQEMT certification. The Appeal Panel directed the applicant to follow Council Policy POL004 for recognition of prior learning, and it should not be considered under the EU Directive for recognition of professional qualifications.

The Committee was made aware that POL019 is under revision for the changes involving the scope of the policy, specifically point (e) relating to recognised institution applications. It was also asked to consider point (b) recognition of professional qualifications, subsequent to the recent appeal case.

Ms Walsh asked the Committee if they had any points of concerns for either policies. The Chair expressed that the responsibility for the recognition of prior learning, as addressed in POL004, should sit with the regulator and not with the recognised institution as currently directed in the policy (points 1-3). The Committee discussed the application of RPL for Irish applicants versus those outside of Ireland for the purposes of recognition of professional qualifications, and the requirement for Irish applicants to sit the PHECC NQEMT exam (point 5 of POL004). The assessment process for Irish versus EU member and non-EU member states was deliberated, with some Committee members stating that the application of the EU Directive should be utilised for Irish trained applicants. Gareth Elbell sought clarification on how the process was employed if no NQEMT existed within other countries. Ms Walsh referred to the historical context for

development of the policy, with the focus of the recent appeal only pertaining to applicants within Ireland and does not apply to other EU member states or those outside the EU.

Róisín McGuire queried point 3 of POL004 (RI determining RPL) and suggested that points 4 (additional training and point 5 (sitting the NQEMT exam) needed to be clarified. Ms Walsh noted that PHECC establishes the award of NQEMT as per its legislation citing Article 4 d. The Chair stated there is a weakness in the Council Rules and legislation issues need to be looked at with the Department of Health. Jacqueline Egan stated the candidates must sit the NQEMT exam. There was a robust discussion regarding the interpretation and meaning of Article 4 as it relates to PHECC function in assessing equivalence of qualifications within and outside the state. The Committee decided legal advice should be sought to clarify the matter and ensure that this function is supported and interpreted correctly for its employment with Irish and non-Irish assessments. The Chair restated that there also needs to be improvements to RPL Policy.

## **10. AP Programme Evaluation**

The Committee was provided with a summary of actions agreed by Council for the evaluation of the delivery of the AP programme. The specifications of the evaluation were drafted with input from several service providers. The expression of interest (EOI) document was circulated to academics within and external to Ireland. The deadline for EOI responses is next Monday 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019. A final report to be available by the end of September. Ben Heron queried if there was a complaint as to why the matter is not being dealt with through the Quality Review Framework structure and process. Kathleen Walsh replied that the QRF onsite review was conducted in May 2017, however Council had concerns regarding the teaching of CPGs within the AP curriculum and other components were identified. Council agreed a separate evaluation was required. Paul Lambert shared that the evaluation should be done through the QRF. Mr Heron asked if this was a regular feature investigating every institution outside the QRF. The Chair responded that it is different as it is a PHECC funded programme and needs to be evaluated. Reference was made to the existing service level agreement between PHECC and the RI extending to 2020, which included participation with an evaluation. Mr Heron asked if a complaint against an RI was raised how was it dealt with. Ms Walsh stated that if a complaint had been made then the QRF should be utilised in relation to a complaint. She said accountability and funding elements were significant for Council for the evaluation. Jacqueline Egan commented that the exams were devolved to the RI, and it was agreed that the Exam Quality Panel will be attending the next scheduled NQEMT AP exams.

## **11. Education Strategy**

### **Preparation of discussion document for oversight of degree programmes.**

Council, as considered at its May meeting, is seeking the Committee to prepare a discussion document for PHECC's oversight of paramedic degree programmes. Kathleen Walsh referred to current events taking place to support this activity as outlined in the meeting papers. The Chair asked about what sort of proposal and body of work was required. The Committee debated the need for PHECC input into Higher Education Institutes' current paramedic entry degree programme, with the Chair noting weak legislation for this. Other regulators and international experiences from the US and Australia were mentioned as models to look at. Paul Lambert noted there is a link required with Higher Education Authority.

The Committee explored the issue of progressing a discussion document on the matter with external assistance. However, members noted that it formed part of a larger remit for an overall education strategy. Reference was made about the present work on the PHECC Council strategy and where education strategy fits into this for its development, questions also arose as to who should facilitate this. The Committee to feedback to Council noting a lack of legislative support in relation to oversight for paramedic entry level degree programmes. And if the document is to progress then Council should look for external company engagement.



## 12. Recognition of Qualifications – Stats

A summary of recent activities in the area of recognition of overseas qualifications was presented. It was noted that PHECC Executive are continuing to engage with the DoH and UK regulator HCPC in preparation for Brexit.

## 13. CPC portfolios guidance to registrants

A CPC Portfolio Guidance to Registrants hand out was circulated to the Committee. Following on from May's meeting review of legal advices relating to clinical reflections in e-portfolios, the Committee was asked to consider the development of further guidance to registrants for providing reflective practice. Information would expand upon what is the current CPC Guide. Jacqueline Egan mentioned confidentiality and anonymisation and stated there needs to be consequences in legislation. The Chair suggested, in the context of GDPR, we need to seek consent from the patient. Niamh O'Leary noted that a court of law will use reflective practice entries, and if data is removed there is no viable evidence. Members discussed breaches in confidentiality, GDPR issues, and how this should be addressed by CPC assessors. Peter McDaid expressed concern for FTP matters. It was agreed that Kathleen Walsh and Committee members who are CPC assessors will link with the EMT CPC Coordinator to consider the issues for further guidance and look at what other regulators provide for guidance on such matters.

## 14. Feedback from PHECC RI/ATI Engagement Event – 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019

Representatives from sixty RIs and ATIs attended either the morning or afternoon sessions, and feedback was submitted from twenty six people who completed PHECC evaluation forms about the event. The members reviewed the feedback which was included in the meeting papers. The Chair questioned if any actions were required. Kathleen Walsh noted several points raised in the evaluations and on the day relating to: responder certificates, fees for same and the communication process for this, and greater group discussions for participants. Ms Walsh noted that guidance for initiation of the QRF, with focus on continuous quality improvement including external authentication, was identified for possible delivery in September, however this was resource dependent. PHECC support for proposals for e-learning and development of online exams was mentioned to participants, with none forthcoming.

## 15. AOB

Gareth Elbell enquired if new CPGs are being developed noting that the field guide and its associated app, education and training standards, and CPGs, all need to be published simultaneously. The Chair relayed that the Medical Advisory Committee agreed not to develop multiple new CPGs unless there is a need to, but rather to concentrate on refining existing CPGs. Jacqueline Egan commented that the new field guide app is a huge piece of work. Kathleen Walsh suggested that all feedback regarding CPGs be sent to the MAC or to Brian Power who is responsible for this area.

There being no other business the meeting concluded at 14:30pm approximately.

The next scheduled meeting of the Education and Standards Committee is 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019 @ 10.00 am in the PHECC offices.

Signed:   
Chair

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> September 2019.