

PHECC Council Meeting Minutes
15 June 2023
PHECC Office, Naas & Video Conference



Present:

Alison Smith
Fiona McDaid

Video Conference:

Jason van der Velde (Acting Chair)
Aidan O'Brien
David Menzies
Dennis Keeley
Martin O'Reilly
Niamh Collins
Patrick Fleming
William Merriman

Apologies:

Jacqueline Burke
Conor Deasy
Hillery Collins
Jimmy Jordan
Tess O'Donovan
Tomás Barry

In attendance:

Con Foley, Council Secretary
Richard Lodge, PHECC Director
Brendan Cawley, PHECC Manager
Ray Carney, PHECC Manager (VC)
Ricky Ellis, PHECC Manager
Pauline Dempsey (VC)
Karen O'Neill, Council Administrator

1.0. Closed Session

The Chair updated Council on the outcome of a recent Recognition of Qualifications [ROQ] appeal against a delegated decision of the Director. The Director was asked to circulate a brief summary of the facts surrounding the ROQ application, the original decision, and the outcome of the appeal. Following discussion, it was agreed the relevant policies and procedures would benefit from a legal review and update to ensure they remain robust, appropriate and relevant.

2.0. Open & Welcome

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Jason van der Velde, who welcomed all to the meeting, noting apologies received.

Agenda Item 7.1.3 was addressed at this point.

3.0. Declarations of Interest

No notifications of Conflicts of Interest had been received in regard to any item on the Agenda.

4.0. Chair's Business

4.1. Correspondence

No correspondence had been received by the Chair.

The Director received two items of correspondence that were addressed under Agenda Item 6.2 Matters Arising and 7.1.3 Access to 2021 CPGs for Training/Upskilling.

4.2. Legislation Update

No further significant developments have taken place since the last update to Council, and it is understood that the review process in the Department continues.

4.3. Education Strategy Day

As there have been many challenges in arranging attendance for this meeting, it was proposed to defer the Education Strategy Day Meeting to coincide with the September meeting of Council. From a brief discussion, it appears that the original date of the Council meeting of September 7th would be the preferred date for the Strategy Day.

This would involve rearranging the date of the Council meeting to September 14th or 21st , (or some other date), if that was more feasible. Council members will be consulted regarding these options.

5.0. Quality & Safety Report

5.1. Assessment Cancellation Policy (POL052)*

The draft policy brought to the May meeting had been amended in line with suggestions made by Council at that meeting and was now presented for final approval. Council approved the Assessment Cancellation Policy document.

Resolution: That Council approves the draft POL052 Assessment Cancellation Policy as presented in Council papers.
Proposed: Patrick Fleming Seconded: David Menzies
Carried without dissent.

6.0. Minutes & Matters Arising

6.1. Minutes of May Meeting*

The Minutes of the May meeting were considered to be an accurate record thereof and were formally approved by Council.

Resolution: That Council approves the draft minutes of the Council meeting of 18 May 2023.
Proposed: Denis Keeley Seconded: David Menzies
Carried without dissent.

6.2. Matters Arising

Referring to item 8.1.7 of the Directors Report, the Director has received a formal request from the Director of NAS to defer the forthcoming NASC/UCC AP Programme Review site assessment. Considering the reasons outlined in said correspondence, Council was informed that the Director has granted an extension to the current review and deferred the site visit element until September/October this year. This will result in additional costs to PHECC of approximately €14,000. Council noted the decision to postpone the assessment would allow NAS sufficient additional time in preparation and asked the Director to monitor the additional expenditure carefully. It was also noted that no new Advanced Paramedic courses will commence in 2023.

7.0. Education Report

7.1 Education Committee Update

7.1.1 Who Can Teach EFR Courses

As discussed at the May Council meeting, a request from an officer in NAS on behalf of An Garda Síochána regarding the eligibility of EFR Instructors had been passed to the Education and Training Committee for review. The committee considered same, noting the requirement in place since 2007 that access to an EFR instructor course is restricted to PHECC registered practitioners, and now recommend to Council that the current EFR Education & Training Standards (2014) are maintained.

The arguments outlined by the Education Committee were considered, balancing the possibility of widening access to other emergency responder services while also giving primacy to PHECC’s mission to protect the public.

While the decision was to maintain the status quo for the present, Council agreed that inputs from clinicians on Council, including representation from the organisations in question, be formally compiled and presented to the Education & Training Committee to try to reconcile these positions and, in due course, revert to Council again on this matter.

7.1.2 Future of Paramedic Scope of Practice – Feedback

The Committee had reviewed MAC’s paper “Future of Paramedic Scope of Practice” and the reaction was largely supportive. However internal resourcing and external engagement will also be required to develop the concept further. Further discussion points included concern surrounding the lack of

alternative care pathways , given the proposal for non-conveyance; Paramedic undertaking of personal and professional development; upskilling of faculty to teach the expanded scope along with challenges of accessing clinical placements.

Agenda Item 7.1.3 was addressed earlier in the meeting, following the closed session.

7.1.3 Access to 2021 CPGs for Training/Upskilling:

The Director informed Council of recent receipt of correspondence from NAS requesting a 12-month extension to the current deadline for upskilling of the 2021 CPGs. Considering that the 2023 suite of CPGs is planned for release shortly, issues surrounding the approaching deadline for completion of training/upskilling on the 2021 CPGs had been flagged by the committee. Possible challenges for non-statutory providers in meeting the deadline were also highlighted.

Following discussion, it was agreed that, at CPG publication stage, both MAC and the Education & Training Committee would make a recommendation on the upskilling/training timeframe, dependant on the amendments to that specific suite of CPGs.

Noting two significant amendments included in the 2023 suite to be released, related to the Trauma Triage Tool CPG and non-conveyance being non-core for Paramedics, it was agreed that the majority of changes are minor.

Subject to the two large statutory providers confirming that their education need for the 2023 amendments to the 2021 suite of CPGs are minor, Council passed the following resolution.

Resolution: That Council approves the publishing of the 2023 update to the 2021 CPGs, allowing an 18-month timeframe for upskilling to occur for all core 2021 CPGs and the 2023 update.
Proposed: David Menzies Seconded: Aidan O'Brien
Carried without dissent.

It was noted that the planned release of the 2023 update to the 2021 CPGs is July 2023, resulting in the deadline for upskilling/training on both the 2021 CPGs and 2023 update being 31 December 2024.

Resulting updates to Council Policy for Implementation of Timeframes for CPGs (POL018) will be presented for approval at the September Council meeting.

Council took a short recess following agenda item 7.1.3, during which Ricky Ellis and William Merriman departed the meeting.

8.0. Directors Report

8.1. Directors Report to Council

8.1.1. COVID-19 Arrangements

There were no further developments to report.

8.1.2 Staff Recruitment Update

Mr. Brian Dunne has been appointed as Deputy Director, which will lead to a vacancy in the position of Chair of FRACC. A new Finance Officer has also been appointed, which will allow the current Finance Officer to transition to her new post as Approved Training Institution Co-Ordinator. Interviews have been scheduled for a temporary Grade III post in Accreditation. There was no further progress to report on the positions of Registrar and Secretary to the Board. A timeframe for recruitment of an education support position is unknown as the Registrar post, awaiting DoH approval, is prioritised at present.

8.1.3 PHECC Audits

The 2023 Internal Audit process of PHECC Governance is currently underway, with the ICT security audit due to commence in July.

A virtual meeting has been arranged for next week with the auditors conducting the Deep Dive into the Management of PHECC Assessor Panels, to update on the status of the review. It is expected that a draft report, for actioning, will follow.

8.1.4 Community Care Specialist Paramedic Education Standards

Further to discussion at the May Council meeting, contacts have begun with NASC and NAS with a view to running a pilot scheme for the forthcoming Community Care Specialist Paramedic course being run by NASC, in conjunction with UCC, commencing in September 2023. As permitted by Council, copies of the relevant Education Standards and Competency Framework have been made available to NASC as the blueprint for the next cohort of NAS/NASC Community Care Paramedic students. Sharing of these documents is consistent with the interim proposals relating to practitioners being privileged to deliver the new specialist CPGs relating to Community Paramedics.

A response has been received from NAS welcoming the opportunity for collaboration on this advancement. The immediate challenge of the significant difference in the duration of the proposed MSc course and the Specialist Community Paramedic Education Standard was noted and requires further scrutiny.

8.1.5 Quality Review of NASC/UCC AP Programme

As referenced in item 6.2. above, the Director has granted an extension to the current review, including site visits, of the Advanced Paramedic Programme.

8.1.6 Quality Review of Paramedic Programmes

On completion of the review of the Advanced Paramedic programmes (UCD and NASC-UCC), a tender will be issued for a quality review of all three PHECC recognised paramedic education programmes conducted in the State (NASC-UCC, DFB-RCSI and UL.) The reviews will take place in Q1 2024.

8.1.7 Recognition of Qualifications Obtained Outside the State

The Director proposed a legal review, requesting clarifications, of current PHECC policies POL002 Recognition of Qualifications Obtained Outside the State and POL004 Assessment of equivalence of Professional Qualifications Obtained in Ireland.

The review will encompass qualifications achieved and experience gained both inside and outside of the State with any possible issues arising in the awarding of NQEMT status being identified. A copy of POL004 was included in the papers for information.

It was noted that PHECCs Recognition of Qualifications Policy results in and is concerned with the awarding of an academic qualification i.e., NQEMT, rather than awarding registration.

8.1.8 Review of PHECC Appeals Policy and Procedure (POL019)

The Director proposed a legal review of PHECCs Appeals Policy. As agreed by Council, the review will provide clarity on a number of issues in relation to the panel composition, the process, and the potential outcomes of an appeal.

Separately, and by reference to SI109 (S.15) and (S.18.6) of Council Standing Orders, Council decided to convene a short virtual out-of-ordinary meeting in the coming weeks to consider and approve an interim amendment to the PHECC Appeals Policy (POL019) pending a full review of same.

8.1.9 Expressions of Interest for Panel Members

Expressions of Interest [EOI] will be issued for membership of the Appeals Panel, Preliminary Proceedings Panel, and the Fitness to Practise Panel. Council members are invited to submit EOIs for any of these panels.

8.2. Delegated Decisions of the Director

The Report was noted by Council. It was also noted that a small number (3) of voluntary withdrawals

from both the GVF and QRF assessment process indicates the strength and integrity of the accreditation process itself.

9.0. Secretary Report

9.1. Governance Activity Q1 2023

A number of metrics of Council activity were presented for consideration. Activity levels of both Council and its Committees were considerably ahead of 2022 in all respects, particularly in Governance matters; some concerns were expressed however regarding overall attendance levels at Council meetings and the relatively low face-to-face participation during the quarter reviewed.

10.0. Registration Report

In line with RUL007 PHECC Registration Rules, Council noted the addition of those individuals detailed in the Registration Report to the PHECC Register, as approved by the Director via delegated decision (Ref. POL049 Delegated Decision of the Director).

11.0. AOB

It was reported that NAS are moving forward in implementing the 7th Schedule amendments agreed between PHECC and the Medicines Unit in the DoH.

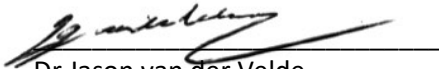
Preliminary discussions have taken place and a proof of concept is to be reviewed regarding the development of a mobile programme (APP) for Community First Responders. PHECC's role to develop standards rather than providing data capture was noted. Any subsequent recommendations will be presented to Council in due course.

Further enquiries will be made regarding the likely date of the September Council meeting and integration with the Education Framework workshop. Council members may expect further contacts in this regard.

All were wished a pleasant summer break, with the next meeting currently scheduled for September 7th at 10:00hrs.

The meeting concluded at approximately 1.05pm.

Signed:



Dr Jason van der Velde
Acting Chairperson

Date: 6th September 2023