

Education and Training Committee – 10 March 2011

Changes to HAD approved programme first intake dates

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 10 March 2010, the Education and Training Committee agreed a list of currently approved programmes as well as a list of programmes which were approved historically for specific periods. The recommended lists were based on the approval information which was available from the Hearing Aid Council (HAC). These lists became effective from the date of the register opening (1 April 2010).
- 1.2 This paper seeks to update the Education and Training Committee on the history leading to changes to the first intake date of approved programmes for hearing aid dispensers (HAD) since its' meeting on 10 March 2010. The Committee is asked to agree the amendments to this list outlined in Appendix 1.

2. The current list of approved hearing aid dispenser programmes

- 2.1 Article 15(8) of the Health Professions Order provides that:

“(8) The Council shall maintain and publish a list of the courses of education and training, qualifications and institutions –

- (a) which are for the time being approved under this Order: or
- (b) which have been approved under this Order but which are no longer approved, together with a record of the periods in respect of which they were approved.”

- 2.2 Paragraphs (1) and (2) of Article 6 of the Health Care and Associated Professions (Hearing Aid Dispensers) Order 2009 provides that:

“(1) The HPC and the HAC shall enter into arrangements (which may include financial arrangements) to facilitate the introduction of arrangements for the regulation of hearing aid dispensers by the HPC arising out of this Order.”

“(2) The arrangements entered into under paragraph (1) shall include arrangements to ensure that all the names in the HAC register which are to be entered in the HPC register with effect from 1st April 2010 are so entered.”

2.3 In turn, paragraph 7 of the Health Care and Associated Professions (Hearing Aid Dispensers) Order 2009 outlines amendments to paragraph 1A of schedule 1(6) of the Health Professions Order 2001. The amendment of schedule 1(6) refers to the following definition:

“the HAC Register” means the register of dispensers of hearing aids maintained by the Hearing Aid Council under section 2(1)(a) of the Hearing Aid Council Act 1968.”.

2.4 Therefore, it is necessary for the Committee to maintain and publish lists of approved programmes for hearing aid dispensers. These lists should take into consideration the register transfer arrangements outlined above.

2.5 18 programmes delivered by nine education providers were included on the current list of approved programmes for hearing aid dispensers. The list records the following information for each hearing aid dispenser programme:

- Profession
- Education provider
- Validating body
- Programme title
- Mode of study
- First intake
- Last intake (if applicable)
- Additional information (if applicable, eg. graduation date)

2.3 The first intake date for each programme was agreed by the HAC at the time of transfer. It was the understanding of the Health Professions Council (HPC) that students from any cohort that commenced on a programme prior to the first intake date were not eligible to apply to the HAC register and were therefore not eligible to apply to the HPC register.

3. Applications to the Register

3.1 The HPC received applications for registration between August and December 2010 from individuals who commenced their study prior to the first intake date for an approved HAD programme. Applicants were correctly advised they were not eligible to apply to the Register based on the date they commenced their study and that it was likely an application would not be successful should an applicant insist it to be progressed.

4. Education providers' understanding of Hearing Aid Council approval

4.1 As a result of the unsuccessful applications to the Register, the Education Department received contact from education providers delivering approved HAD programmes, and by unsuccessful applicants. Each contested the accuracy of the HPC approved programme list based on their understanding of HAC approval. The education providers who contacted the Education Department held a common understanding that students

from any cohort, which graduated after the date the HAC granted approval, were eligible to apply to the HAC register. At the point of transfer the HPC had received no evidence from the HAC to indicate such arrangements were in place.

- 4.2 Although each education providers' understanding of HAC approval was consistent, it became apparent the process applied by the HAC to retrospectively approve programmes and graduating cohorts varied between education providers. Some education providers were required to provide further documentary evidence as part of the HAC approval process and others were required to undergo an additional process to obtain retrospective approval after HAC approval was granted. The evidence submitted to the HAC by each education provider also differed. Some conducted specific HAD modules for students' and others provided evidence to the HAC that the curriculum design of a programme met specific HAC requirements.

5. Clarification of first intake dates for Hearing Aid Dispenser programmes

- 5.1 After seeking legal clarification, the Education Department wrote to all education providers delivering HAD approved programmes clarifying the HPC position regarding first intake date for approved programmes. It was made clear to education providers that individuals who completed an approved programme were eligible to apply for HPC registration based on when they first started that programme. Therefore any individuals that commenced an approved programme prior to the first intake date recorded by the HPC were not eligible to apply to the HPC register.
- 5.2 Education providers were also advised any amendments to the first intake date for approved HAD programmes could only be made with supporting evidence. The letter asked each education provider to submit documentary evidence which demonstrated the HAC granted retrospective approval for their programme and/or that all cohorts who graduated after approval was granted were eligible for HAC registration. This documentation was to be submitted to the HPC by 7 January 2011.
- 5.3 In response, some education providers submitted letters of HAC approval, or documentation and email correspondence regarding applications for retrospective HAC approval. However most could not provide specific evidence, which demonstrated retrospective HAC approval was actually granted to a programme. However in the case of the De Montfort University, BSc (Hons) Audiology programme, evidence of email correspondence was supplied which indicated retrospective HAC approval was granted.
- 5.4 Education providers were also advised the HPC would attempt to try and obtain further clarification from those who were responsible for HAC approvals regarding this matter. However, as the HAC had been abolished, there was no guarantee this would be possible.

6. Outcomes from Registration Appeal Panel

- 6.1 In a memorandum dated 17 December 2010, sent from the HPC solicitor (on behalf of Birch Dyson Bell LLP), the Education Department was updated with further legal advice following the outcome of a HPC Registration Appeal Panel hearing. At that hearing, held on 16 December 2010, the Hearing Aid Dispenser panellist, (who was a former HAC Council member), confirmed that the approval dates for HAC approved programmes were not cohort approvals but simply the date on which approval was granted by the HAC.
- 6.2 The Hearing Aid Dispenser panellist confirmed HAC approval related to a particular programme for as long as it has been running with most programmes being relatively new at the time of HAC approval in any event. The legal advice within the memorandum continued to state 'Although it is not HPC policy to make retrospective approvals, as part of the transfer of regulatory responsibilities, the Council agreed to recognise all programmes approved by the HAC and that would include any which HAC had approved retrospectively.'

7. Amendments to the current list of approved HAD programmes

- 7.1 Based on this legal advice, the Education Department began amending the first intake dates for HAD programmes. In a letter dated 10 January 2011, education providers received clarification of the HPC position regarding the first intake date for hearing aid dispenser programmes. In particular, each education provider was advised the HPC would amend the first intake date for an approved hearing aid dispenser programme to incorporate the retrospective nature of HAC approval. For the programmes which were already in dispute, amendments to the first intake date were carried out immediately.
- 7.2 Appendix 1 details the amendments made to the current list of HAD programmes based on the correspondence and documentation received from each education provider. The first intake dates recorded at the time of transfer from the HAC to the HPC, and the amended dates are detailed in respect of each programme.

8.0 Decision

- 8.1 The Committee is therefore asked to agree the following:
- To accept the amendments to the current list of approved hearing aid dispenser programmes outlined in Appendix 1.

Background information

- 'Hearing Aid Dispensers – list of approved programmes' - Education and Training Committee Paper (Enclosure 9), 10 March 2010.

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Appendices

Appendix 1 – amendments to the current list of approved HAD programmes

Date of paper

15 February 2011

Appendix 1 – amendments to the current list of approved HAD programmes

Education provider	Programme Name	Mode of study	First intake date at time of transfer	Amended first intake date
Anglia Ruskin University	Aptitude Test	Flexible	01 April 2010	No change
Anglia Ruskin University	FDSoc in Hearing Aid Audiology	Distance Learning	10 July 2008	No change
Aston University	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	18 September 2007	28 September 2003
Aston University	Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology	Full Time	03 March 2008	23 September 2007
De Montfort University	Aptitude Test	Flexible	01 April 2010	No change
De Montfort University	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	09 November 2006	01 September 2003
De Montfort University	Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology	Full Time	01 January 2008	No change
Mary Hare	Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology	Full Time	20 July 2009	No change
Queen Margaret University	Diploma in Higher Education Hearing Aid Audiology	Full Time	25 March 2010	21 September 2009
Queen Margaret University	Diploma in Higher Education Hearing Aid Audiology	Part Time	25 March 2010	21 September 2009
Swansea University	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	18 June 2007	01 September 2001
University College London	BSc Audiology	Full Time	09 November 2006	01 September 2003
University College London	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	09 November 2006	01 September 2003
University College London	MSc Audiology (with clinical competency certificate or certificate of audiological competence)	Full Time	09 November 2006	01 September 2006
University of Bristol	BSc Audiology	Full Time	18 June 2008	01 September 2004
University of Bristol	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	18 June 2008	01 September 2004
University of Manchester	BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full Time	01 September 2004	01 September 2002
University of Manchester	MSc Audiology (with clinical competency certificate or certificate of audiological competence)	Full Time	18 June 2007	No change