

Health Professions Council
Park House
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September 8th, 2005

Returns to practice – consultation document

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for your letter of July 1st, 2005 enclosing your document "Returns to practice". We welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation.

The Prince of Wales's Foundation for Integrated Health is committed to the concept of integrated healthcare. This includes encouraging conventional and complementary practitioners to work together to integrate their approaches. One of the Foundation's key objectives is the provision of clear and reliable information to patients, practitioners and the public. We have restricted our responses to the questions where we have a contribution to make.

1. What are your views on these periods of time out of practice, and on the periods of time that health professional's will need to spend updating their skills and knowledge?

We agree that the time periods out of practice suggested by the HPC are suitable for returners to practice.

It is important that people are not discouraged from returning to practice if the time frames for updating skills is too long and/or restrictive. The proposed periods of time to update skills and the method of updating skills is both reasonable and flexible.

2. What are your views on our proposal that health professionals can make up their period of updating by any combination of supervised practice, formal study and/or private study?

The choice to allow people to combine their period of updating of skills is both flexible and achievable no matter what the returners personal circumstances

are. The activities suggested are broad and unrestrictive and allow the returner to make the best choice possible depending on the area of work or specialism they are returning to.

Consideration may need to be given to those who have not been practising for a long period of time – it may be advisable to request a period of supervised practice as compulsory to returning to practice (alongside the other options of updating skills).

3. What are your views on the activities that we suggest should make up the period of updating? Do you think we should include anything else?

The activities suggested are broad and allow returners to choose what best suits their needs and their profession.

4. What are your views on our proposals for supervised practice? What further information do you think we should provide?

We support proposals for supervised practice in professions especially where techniques may be evasive and a practitioner has not been in practice for a number of years. Supervised practice should be viewed as a beneficial part of a returner to practice skill.

We are not in a position to further comment on what should be provided.

5. What are your views on our proposed approach to formal study?

We believe that the proposals for formal study are quite flexible and give a good degree of options for returners to pursue.

It may be advisable that people who have been out of practice for more than 5 years to have a more integrated skills update – we feel that for those who have been out of practice for over 5 years would not to complete more than formal study (i.e. it would be advisable for returners to also incorporate supervised practice).

6. Do you agree with our proposal not to approve return to practice courses?

Yes we agree that such a measure may prove to be restrictive and that returners are best placed to decide what courses may be most appropriate for their own professional needs and the needs of their profession.

7. Do you agree with our proposal not to set a time period during which these activities must be completed?

We believe that all study should be completed within a 12 month period but the individual should have the freedom to choose when and how to block their study within that time frame.

8. Do you agree with our proposal to encourage health professionals that are not practising to come off the register?

Yes.

9. Do you agree with our proposed definition of 'practising your profession' for the purposes of registration? can we add anything to make it clear?

We agree that the scope of 'practising one's profession' should be left broad so that a practitioner can themselves make the decision of what is practising their profession. As professions and drawing on professional skills can vary as per the examples shown, we agree that there needs to be an amount of lenience shown and a degree of trust given to the practitioner to define what is actually drawing on one's skills and / or knowledge in the course of one's work.

10. Do you agree that our returners to practice requirement's should also apply to applicants with qualifications that are more than 5 years old?

Yes.

11. Do you agree that our returners to practice requirements should not apply to people who have been practising, but outside the UK?

Yes but are any checks carried out with registering bodies outside the UK to establish fitness to practice?