

New Programme Submissions

Guidance for Providers

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Introduction

As part of its role as the regulatory body for dentists and dental care professionals (DCPs), the General Dental Council (GDC) has a statutory responsibility to promote high standards of education in all aspects of dentistry. The GDC sets out required Standards for Education for all UK programmes that lead to registration as a dental professional. This is one of the GDC's statutory functions and the Education and Quality Assurance New Programmes Submission process is used to support the GDC's primary role to ensure the Standards are met.

The GDC's powers come from the Dentists Act 1984, which uses the term 'sufficiency' to describe the standard required of a programme to enable graduates to apply for registration as dentists. 'Sufficiency' is granted to individual Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS/BChD) and Licence in Dental Surgery programmes where students are deemed to have received the requisite knowledge and skills for the practice of dentistry.

To award qualifications that lead to registration with the GDC as a dentist, the provider must hold dental authority status. Dental authority status is a legal status granted to education providers by the Privy Council. Holding dental authority status allows students of that institution to practise dentistry under supervision without committing the offence of illegal practice of dentistry.

Graduates of dental authorities hold qualifications which the GDC recognises as conferring a right to registration in the dentists register (provided that the other requirements of registration are met). It is the responsibility of the education provider and/or awarding organisation offering the qualification to ensure that they or any new provider hold authority status.

The Education and Quality Assurance Team (EQA) will check that any new providers of BDS/BChD programmes hold dental authority status before any new programme submissions are processed.

Dental authority status is not required by providers of DCP (Dental Care Professional) education programmes. DCP programmes are subject to 'approval' by the GDC registrar. These powers are also derived from the Dentists Act 1984 but allow for greater authority over DCP programmes by the GDC.

The GDC has published a set of Standards for Education. These standards are the regulatory tool that the GDC uses to ensure that a programme is fit for purpose. The four standards are central to the GDC's quality assurance processes and contain a total of 22 requirements. The four standards cover:

1. Patient protection and safety
2. Student development and support
3. Quality assurance of the programmes
4. Examination and assessment

Standards 1-3 are only applicable to organisations that provide both programmes and examinations. Standard 4 is only applicable to the providers that deliver assessments.

Equality and diversity requirements are integrated across the standards, and specifically addressed in requirements 3, 12, 18 and 20.

The Standards for Education require that providers only allow students to be awarded a qualification if they demonstrate a set of learning outcomes, which have been defined in the current GDC Safe Practitioner Framework

New Programme Submission Process

The Quality Assurance (QA) process for making new programme submissions is the same for dentist and DCP programmes, but the decisions made will differ depending on the programme type. The decision of 'sufficiency' or 'sufficient' refers to programmes that lead to registration as a dentist. A decision of 'approval' or 'approved' refers to programmes that lead to registration as a DCP.

The submission process is an evidence-based activity involving assessment and evaluation of information provided. All proposals for new programmes must be clearly mapped against the relevant learning outcomes in Safe Practitioner and must also demonstrate how the new programme will meet the Standards for Education.

Providers should initially inform the EQA Team of the intention to submit a new programme submission by emailing the QA Team inbox qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org. An email acknowledging the request will be sent within 5 working days. An EQA lead will be assigned to the submission, who will be responsible for the managing the process, send out the necessary GDC guidance and documentation, and will be your contact throughout the process.

Providers may find it helpful to speak with the EQA lead prior to submitting documentation. The purpose of the meeting is to provide support and answer queries about the submission process. Providers can use this opportunity to discuss any deadline dates that may be required for completion of the submission, for example, if awaiting other external approval for the programme. However, the GDC is not able to informally approve any plans shared before submission documentation is received and assessed.

The timescale for achieving a final decision on the submission is, however, dependent on any necessary requests for additional information once the process has commenced.

Submission Documents

New Programme Submission Form for Providers

The aim of this form is to give an overview of the proposed programme, its set-up and general structure. The form must be fully completed and answer all questions about the programme, including programme length, whether full time or part time, staffing and staffing structures, and the

assessment strategy. The number of cohorts expected in each intake and projected start date must also be included. Any areas deemed not applicable should be completed with 'n/a'.

The Annex One mapping table within the online form should be fully completed stating what evidence is available to demonstrate how each requirement is met. As some evidence may not be available until the programme begins, the information must clearly specify what evidence will be available in future, for example at the first inspection. The Standards for Education document contains examples of the types of evidence that providers may use to demonstrate how each of the Requirements will be met.

It is important to submit as much relevant supporting evidence available with the completed mapping table to demonstrate that the proposed programme is likely to meet the Standards for Education. All documentation must be submitted via the online form; however, we will be able to send a GDC secure file share if additional space is required. The EQA lead will send this link only if the provider requests.

Annex Two – Learning Outcomes Mapping Table

A key part of the submission is the mapping of assessments against the learning GDC Learning Outcomes. The corresponding Annex Two mapping table must be completed to evidence how the provider is assured that students will demonstrate the learning outcomes by the end of the programme. Information must clearly map appropriate and robust assessment methods to each of the learning outcomes. The Annex Two should be uploaded on to the online form.

Assessment and Evaluation of Evidence

An initial evaluation of the submission will be carried out by the EQA lead to establish whether the evidence submitted is of an appropriate standard, and plans have been developed in enough detail to be sent to two subject-specific GDC Education Associates for full evaluation. Education Associates will be selected in accordance with their registration category, specialty, or other area of expertise. Conflict of interest will be checked prior to allocation.

Where necessary, the EQA lead may request additional evidence from the provider prior to sending to Education Associates to ensure that information is complete as possible. A period of up to one month will be given to provide this additional evidence, and the provider is responsible for addressing requests for in the best way they see fit. If there is any difficulty in meeting this or any other agreed deadline, the EQA lead should be informed, and where there are mitigating circumstances, an extension to the time may be granted. However, if the documentation is not provided within the agreed extended deadline, the submission will be forwarded to the Education Associates for assessment unless withdrawn by the provider.

Education Associates will assess the submission documentation and evidence, record and submit their findings. Education Associates assessments will:

- make a professional judgement as to whether the plans for the programme outlined in the submission documentation are likely to meet the requirements in Standards for Education and GDC Learning Outcomes
- highlight areas requiring additional information or clarification
- identify deficiencies in the submission, for example, plans that indicate that some learning outcomes may not be met or the assessment of them will be inadequate
- identify risks that need to be addressed with the submission which could impact upon the achievement of learning outcomes, for example, an uncertain patient supply, overreliance on one teaching or assessment mode
- indicate whether each requirement is likely to be 'met', 'partly met', or 'not met'.
- explain reasons for the evaluation
- recommend any pre-inspection monitoring activity
- confirm a recommendation to the Registrar

Following the assessment outcome from both Education Associates a calibration meeting may take place to discuss and agree the findings.

Recommendations

The Education Associates will make one of the following recommendations:

Option A:

I am assured that the programme is likely to **meet** or **partly meet** the Standards for Education. No risks have been identified that should prevent the programme from commencing.

I recommend that the submission is accepted

Option B:

I am assured that the programme is likely to **meet** or **partly meet** most of the Standards for Education.

No risks have been identified that should prevent the programme from commencing, but elements require monitoring in the next twelve months.

I recommend that the submission is accepted

Option C:

I am not assured that the programme is likely to **meet** or **partly meet** the Standards for Education. There are risks that should prevent the programme from commencing.

I recommend that the submission is not accepted.

Registrar Considerations

Once the submission has been reviewed in full, and there is sufficient evidence to allow a decision to be made, the Education Associates' recommendation is presented to the GDC Registrar. The provider may request that the submission is sent to the Registrar for a decision at any point after the Education Associates' initial evaluation.

The Registrar's decision of 'sufficiency' or 'approval' is provisional pending full inspection. This will be detailed on the GDC website, and providers may accept students onto the programme. A letter from the Registrar will be sent to the provider.

The letter from the Registrar will grant provisional approval, making clear that the GDC should be notified if there are any significant changes to the programme and delivery once provisional approval has been granted. The letter will also indicate any additional monitoring required, or any other activities stipulated by the Registrar.

The following entry will appear on the GDC website under the provider's details:

This programme has been provisionally accepted by the GDC Registrar. The decision regarding approval of a new programme for dental care professionals will not be made until the first cohort has completed their studies and examinations or assessments, and the programme has been inspected by the GDC. The recommendations of the panel following inspection must then be considered by the Registrar. Please contact the provider for further information about the programme.

If a programme does not gain provisional approval the provider will be notified giving reasons why it was unsuccessful. The provider can use this information to make any improvements and make a re-submission. There is no timescale in which a re-submission needs to be made.

Pre-Inspection Monitoring

The Registrar's decision may include the need for pre-inspection monitoring, based on the Education Associate assessment of the submission and quality of evidence presented. Pre-inspection monitoring will, in most cases, be a desk-top activity carried out by the EQA lead, and Education Associates involved in the submission may also be consulted.

Occasionally, it may be deemed necessary to carry out an interim inspection prior to the first cohort of students graduating. This will in most cases include the EQA lead, and Education Associates involved in the initial submission assessment.

New Programme Inspections

Once the submission has been accepted, and delivery commences, the GDC will carry out a full new programme inspection before the first cohort of students graduate. New programme inspections will usually be carried out around mid-point of the final year for the first cohort and will include an inspection of the final assessments when they occur.

A successful inspection outcome will lead to full approval/sufficiency given to the programme and students will be able to Register with the GDC when they graduate.

The GDC website will be updated indicating that the programme has achieved full approval/sufficiency status.

Feedback

The EQA team are committed to improving the way we work and appreciate any ideas about how our procedures, documentation and communication methods can be improved.

We include the collection of feedback at the end of all our processes; however, feedback can also be provided by emailing the EQA team at qualityassurance@gdc-uk.org.

General Dental Council

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