

Suspension of the Validation of Complementary Therapy Programmes

In a recent statutory appeal into the refusal by the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) to validate a degree programme for the Acupuncture Foundation of Ireland (AFI), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) upheld HETAC's right to make validation conditional on the establishment of satisfactory arrangements for professional regulation.

In its report the NQAI also urged HETAC to determine what such arrangements might look like, including the question of whether a single national federation was essential, and to consult with the Department of Health and Children (DOHC) in this undertaking.

At a consequent meeting between the Department of Health and Children and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council it was agreed:

- 1) The Department and HETAC will jointly develop the definition of a federation of professional self-regulatory bodies as proposed in the report. This will build on our experiences of attempting to support the emergence of such federations over the past five years. The Department will lead this project.
- 2) The Department and HETAC will jointly commission an independent review of current research findings on the effectiveness and safety of complementary therapies and the state of the art internationally on regulation and academic recognition of these professions. HETAC will lead this review. It is expected that it will conclude in February 2011.
- 3) HETAC will suspend programme validation in the fields of complementary therapies while the actions on definition of federation and review of research are underway.
- 4) Senior officers of the Department and HETAC will continue to liaise on this topic.

These agreed actions are being implemented immediately. As a consequence, no applications, for either the validation of programmes or the registration of a provider, will be processed pending the conclusion of items 1 and 2 above.

18th June 2010