

May 12th, 2011

Update on the Validation of programmes in complementary therapies

As published in June 2010, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC) formally suspended the validation of programmes in the areas of complementary therapies, pending the completion of a review, jointly commissioned by HETAC and the Department of Health and Children (DOHC), on the regulation and academic recognition of five specific therapies.

A research proposal was jointly developed by the parties in Summer/Autumn 2010 and a Request for Tenders was subsequently published, with a closing date of 2nd December 2010. Following the assessment of the applications received, a successful tenderer, SMCI Associates, was awarded a contract to undertake the research. Specifically SMCI will conduct research, to be completed by October 2011. The outcomes of that research will be:

- 1. the identification of all academically accredited/validated programmes of higher education provided by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Ireland; universities in the UK; in comparable HEIs in countries that have established national frameworks verified as compatible with the Bologna qualifications framework; in Australia and in New Zealand, in the areas of complementary therapies at the time the research commences. This research will take as its primary focus five fields; the three specific complementary therapies identified by the Department of Health and Children Working Group Report - acupuncture, herbal medicine and Traditional Chinese Medicine and two additional fields Osteopathy and Chiropractic.**
- 2. the identification of all academically accredited/validated programmes of higher education in the same jurisdictions, where, since 2005 validation has been withdrawn or refused or where validated provision has ceased over the last five years, and an analysis of the reasons for this, whether these be driven by academic, market, political, reputational or scientific concerns.**
- 3. suggested criteria to enable the identification of fields which have the academic and professional maturity to warrant the academic validation of programmes by HETAC, drawing on the information and analysis in 1 and 2.**

A further piece of research tendered for, on the therapeutic effectiveness, safety and contemporary public policy on the regulation of the same fields since 2000 was not awarded. No tenderer met the criteria for the award of this part of the research and, following further consideration it has been decided not to proceed with this aspect of the research.

PREVIOUS NOTICES

18th June 2010

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.