

Minutes of the thirty fifth meeting of UKHEAC held on Tuesday 19 March 2019
OfS offices, London

- Present: Members:** Professor Dame Jessica Corner
Professor Karen Bryan
Professor David Crossman
Professor Ieuan Ellis
Professor Farida Fortune
Professor Neil Johnson
Professor Donna Fitzsimons
Dr Stephen Riley
Karen Wilson
Chris Smith (via telephone)
David Williams
- Observers:** Katerina Kolyva (CODH)
Anne Trotter (NMC) (via telephone)
Martin Hart (GMC) (via telephone)
Professor Jenny Higham (UUK)
Samina Malik (HEE)
Professor Chris Jones (Welsh Government)
- Officers:** Ed Hughes (OfS)
Andrew Taylor (OfS) (Assistant Secretary)
Helen Fouquet (OfS)
Helen Raftopoulos (SFC)
Alyson Thomas (HEFCW)
- Apologies: Members:** Professor Anne Greenough
Dr Claire Mallinson
Professor Irwin Nazareth
Professor Raymond Playford
Professor Martin Steggall
Professor Saul Tandler
Professor David Adams
Professor Stewart Irvine
Leanne Patrick
- Apologies: Observers:** Jenni Cannon (DfE)
Stephen Griffiths (NHS Wales)
Richard Drummond (GDC)
Damian Day (GPhC)
Brendon Edmonds (HCPC)
Joanna Robinson (MRC)

Welcome and opening remarks from the Chair

1. The Chair welcomed colleagues and guests to the thirty fifth meeting of the UKHEAC. Apologies were noted and brief introductions were given by all those present in the meeting or joining via telephone.

Minutes of the UKHEAC meeting held on 21 November 2018

2. The minutes from the November meeting were reviewed by members and agreed to be an accurate record of the discussion.

3. The actions noted in the minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and the current status or response to each were noted by the Committee.

Matters Arising

4. The Committee noted the feedback letter that was sent to the appropriate contacts for each of the UK nations following the last meeting. Members queried why we had not received any response to the letters and discussed the issues of information sharing and raising the profile of the issues and recommendations that are made by the UKHEAC. A suggestions was made to ensure the minutes are available online.

Action: Secretariat to investigate options for making UKHEAC minutes public on the OfS website.

Development of the UKHEAC

5. The UKHEAC reviewed the current developments with regard to the appointment of new members and the working practices of the Committee. The appointment of two more student members to the Committee (with backgrounds in nursing and allied health) was welcomed and the OfS gave an update on their active process to seek five new appointments to fill vacancies in England from April.

6. The Committee gave brief discussion to the policy themes identified as priorities for 2019 and considered potential ways in which members might support the work of the Committee, perhaps through working groups or lead roles. There was some support indicated for the idea of having groups or leads who develop expert knowledge in order to help develop papers or prepare issues to bring to the UKHEAC to improve the quality of discussions.

7. There was some discussion on finding the right balance between NHS issues and HE issues to bring for discussion to the UKHEAC, and members agreed to give consideration to potential issues and topics that could promote a strategic discussion with a view to finding a possible lead area to pilot.

Action: Members to give consideration to possible issues that could be used to pilot a lead role within the Committee.

Recruitment

8. The Committee discussed recruitment across the UK and reviewed HESA data which showed trends in recruitment to pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health disciplines

over the last few years. A suggestion was made that the committee should also seek to include paramedic data in future analysis to enable a more complete picture.

9. Members expressed strong concerns that strategies that could mitigate the risks to the intention of increasing the number of nurses, midwives and allied health professional have not been implemented by Government. There are concerns that recruitment still needs more support and intervention in England, particularly for challenging to recruit professions (including nursing and in vulnerable allied health professions such as podiatry and therapeutic radiography). Members also noted that the low student intake to NMAH professions in 2017-18 will create repercussions for the future workforce, with a smaller graduate output expected in 2020. Members expressed a desire to re-visit the tracking of student graduates through to the workforce.

Action: Return to the issue of tracking student graduates through to the workforce for potential discussion at a future UKHEAC meeting.

10. The importance of treating all students equally was recognised, in particular with regard to the value and opportunity afforded through using school-leaving age students to help grow recruitment as this will represent the majority of entrants to the NHS and these students will offer a long career on graduation.

11. Some of the differences in recruitment support and student demand between health professions (such as medicine and NMAH) was noted. For those health professions where strong growth in the number of individuals in training has been achieved such as physiotherapy, children's nursing and paramedics; the Committee suggested that there could be a learning opportunity as to the factors that drive high demand for these courses to understand how demand from highly qualified individuals for other programmes might be generated

12. Sharing learning between the different nations within the UK was supported by the Committee as a potential solution to help inform approaches to recruitment where there are differences in outcomes (such as mental health nursing from Scottish and Welsh domiciled students which has seen increases from 2015-16 to 2017-18).

13. The Committee agreed on the importance of pre-registration undergraduate training as the main route to workforce supply and noted the risks posed to successful recruitment through this route resulting from an over-emphasis on new routes in policy development. It was also suggested that policy consideration should be given to targeting specific demographic groups (such as mature students) when addressing recruitment concerns.

NHS Long Term Plan

14. The long term plan for the NHS in England was discussed at the UKHEAC, with particular regard to cross-system impacts and likely challenges in developing the workforce implementation plan. The Committee indicated that care should be taken against putting too much emphasis on initiatives that do not recognise the long term trajectories of the workforce, with members recommending that the most important issues relating to capacity and resources should be prioritised.

15. The Committee agreed that there should be more cross-UK discussion to form a consensus on the required balance between generalists and specialists in the UK health workforce, thereby ensuring complementary education systems across the UK nations.

16. Members suggested that there needs to be more discussion on technology use and the digital advances in healthcare, to ensure that any recommendations in the workforce implementation plan are well-adapted for the future in terms of use and awareness.

17. The Committee recommended that the workforce implementation plan needs to recognise the close relationship between the health and higher education systems and in particular should have more detail on the role and involvement of academic staff. Members expressed concern that health workforce planning and academic planning are at risk of becoming divergent in terms of goals and delivery. The impending publication of the Augar Review of tertiary education funding, and the implications that this has for the higher education system in England was noted by Members, as well as the potential for associated impacts on other countries of the UK.

18. Members agreed that it would be very useful to return for further discussion on the Workforce Implementation plan and the Committee should seek to invite Baroness Dido Harding or other well positioned colleagues (if able) to engage with members on the key issues.

Action: Invite guest speakers from NHS England and / or HEE to engage with the UKHEAC and discuss the Workforce Implementation plan to the June 2019 meeting.

Exiting the EU

19. The Committee discussed several key questions relating to exiting the EU which were tabled for discussion at the meeting as follows:

- What are HE providers doing to prepare for Brexit outcomes?
- Are there any subjects, regions or professions with a particular reliance on EU staff which are at risk?
- Will it be possible to replace any loss in EU students or staff with home recruitment?
- What arrangements (such as qualification recognition) will need to be in place for a worst case scenario
- Are there any key messages from UKHEAC which need to be communicated to others? How might we advance this?

20. Some issues were raised with regard to the lack of clarity for EU students and staff and their ability to travel and work post exit in terms of visas with concerns on the impact on the workforce due to loss of EU staff. Short term concerns on the potential impacts due to travel disruption following an EU exit (in terms of clinical placements outside the UK) were also noted.

21. Members discussed the potential challenges with regard to recognition of qualifications after the UK exits the EU, and recommended there needs to be more clarity on what the arrangements will be for mutual recognition of qualification standards between Britain and EU countries with regard to regulated health professional qualifications.

22. The Committee noted concern at the impacts already being felt in research, with some anecdotal evidence that British academic staff are being asked to step down from leadership roles within European research collaborations and the implications for not being included and invited onto EU research groups responsible for developing future research programmes.

Outcome Agreements

23. Helen Raftopoulos presented the background and arrangements for university outcome agreements introduced by the SFC in 2012-13 for discussion and feedback by members. The

outcome agreements are intended to align university contributions to the Scottish Government priorities of: high quality learning and teaching, widening access, world-leading research, and innovation. The agreements are intended to encourage Scottish universities to demonstrate their distinct contributions against the public investment toward sector level impacts while complementing and support their institutional strategy.

24. The specific targets set for health provision in Scotland were reported as: encouraging more young doctors to enter GP and other shortage specialties; increase the retention and completion rates in nursing and midwifery: increase retention and completion of nursing students; improve the gender balance across all fields of nursing:

25. The Committee was encouraged to discuss the different approaches being taken by each of the UK nations to ensure delivery of key health education objectives with a view to understanding, identifying and sharing good practice and learning between each of UK nation.

26. Members advised caution should be taken around the use of targets in general, particularly noting that any regulatory approach should recognise the nuances and differences between different providers and hold them to account accordingly. Members also highlighted the risks for unintended consequences when utilising targets and suggested clear articulation of aims, with built in flexibility to take different approaches to delivery, might help to mitigate against this. A recommendation was made by members to investigate what similar arrangements may have been used historically to see what lessons may be learned.

27. Finally members noted that tackling any deep seated issues (such as widening access and participation) will need engagement across a range of organisations and levels, as many issues are not solely under HE provider control. There was some discussion on alternate approaches that can be taken to achieve outcomes, without the formality of targets and agreements, such as via an approach of aspiration driven values.

English issues

28. Members were updated by OfS on the current state of the Strategic Interventions in Health Education Disciplines (SIHED) programme, which is moving into its second year with a broadening approach and with the addition of an outreach officer. A second call for bids has been published with a broader scope than the first round, intending to drive innovation in outreach and delivery. Work on understanding different segments of the student market has continued. Research on mature student participation in NMAH has been published¹ and a project looking at male participation has been commissioned and is due to report in Autumn 2019.

29. Helene Fouquet reported to the Committee on the findings from a recent OfS investigation into healthcare apprenticeships in England which explored some of the reasons why they have not be recruiting as well as expected. The Committee recommended that the approach to the end point assessment for apprenticeships leading to professional registration should be reconsidered or removed (as other regulatory process that are in place to assure that required standards have been met should be sufficiently robust). Concern was also expressed for the sustainability of the funding approach to clinical practice placements and members noted some tensions between NHS Trusts and HE providers over perceptions on suitable student activity while on placements. Members suggested that the NHS long term plan could articulate more clearly the expectations and targets for students on apprenticeships.

¹ Report available at: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/research-on-recruitment-of-mature-students-to-nursing-midwifery-and-allied-health-courses/>

30. The Committee considered the proposals for the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) that are currently being consulted on by Research England. Members noted outcomes can be difficult to measure, recognising the challenges in articulating how to make an impact and how this can be identified in metrics. Members welcomed the approach to try and avoid league tables becoming a product of the KEF.

Scottish Issues

31. Helen Raftopoulos provided the update to the UKHEAC on Scottish issues.

32. It was reported that intake targets for 2019 in medicine are at 1,113, with an increase of 60 places, committed to widening participation and graduate entry which has been a successful model for recruitment. SFC report that they will be setting a minimum intake for Scottish domiciled students, which they expect will bring a reduction in students from the rest of the UK.

33. For nursing, they anticipate a 7.6% increase to 4,000 students. There will be a focus on recruitment to the North of Scotland, to address workforce challenges in the region, with 93 places expected to be available through the Open University to undertake courses to reach these difficult to recruit to areas. It was reported that Highlands and Islands University is developing a midwifery course.

34. Numbers in dentistry are expected to remain the same at 135.

Welsh issues

35. Alyson Thomas provided the update to the UKHEAC on Welsh issues.

36. It was reported that the funding for the expensive subject premium is under review and additional funding is being considered to underpin an expansion in medicine. In light of developments in KEF and HEIF in England, Wales will be looking to re-instate their HEIF equivalent of engagement funding.

37. It was reported that there is a new First Minister for Wales, who has a background in higher education. Last summer saw the publication of their long term plan and a national clinical plan is expected to be published in the autumn of 2019.

38. A new collaborative provision for medicine is being developed in North Wales between Cardiff and Bangor University, which is looking to develop several different paths for students to take to qualification.

NI issues

39. Donna Fitzsimons provided the update to the UKHEAC on Northern Irish issues.

40. It was reported that the current situation with regard to the suspension of the NI Assembly and the uncertainty around arrangements for exiting the EU were making matters acutely difficult for the NI government. There is a critical shortage of all professions which results in a lot of cross border activity which is a real concern as strategies for exiting the EU are not sufficiently addressing this issue.

41. A graduate entry programme for nursing is being considering along with a review of the curriculum. Similar work in reviewing the curriculum is also being undertaken in pharmacy, where student numbers have stagnated. For medicine, a review has advocated another 100 places are needed, and the £10,000 per annum cap on clinical placements was noted.

Any other business

42. The Committee extended its gratitude to all those members who are stepping down after today's meeting and in particular gave thanks to them for helping the UKHEAC during its review process over the last year.

The next meeting of the UKHEAC will be in Cardiff on 21 June 2019 with a working dinner taking place the night before on 20 June 2019.