

**Minutes of the thirty sixth meeting of UKHEAC held on Friday 21 June 2019
New House Country Hotel, Cardiff**

- Present: Members:** Professor Dame Jessica Corner
Professor Karen Bryan
Professor Ieuan Ellis
Professor Raymond Playford
Professor Steve Thornton
Professor Martin Steggall
Dr Stephen Riley
- Observers:** Katerina Kolyva (CODH)
Anne Trotter (NMC) (via telephone)
Daniel Smith (GMC)
Damian Day (GPhC)
Professor Jenny Higham (UUK) (via telephone)
Jo Marvell (HEE)
Professor Chris Jones (Welsh Government)
Stephen Griffiths (HEIW)
Dr Graeme Atherton (NEON) (Guest)
- Officers:** Ed Hughes (OfS)
Andrew Taylor (OfS) (Assistant Secretary)
Helen Fouquet (OfS)
Cliona O'Neill (HEFCW)
Steven Hill (Research England)
- Apologies: Members:** Dr Claire Mallinson
Professor Donna Fitzsimons
Professor David Crossman
Professor Helen Langton
Beth McMahon
Leanne Patrick
David Williams
- Observers:** Jenni Cannon (DfE)
Richard Drummond (GDC)
Brendon Edmonds (HCPC)
Joanna Robinson (MRC)
Alan Robson (DHSC)
Helen Raftopoulos (SFC)
Professor Stewart Irvine (NES)
Karen Wilson (NES)

Welcome and opening remarks from the Chair

1. The Chair welcomed colleagues and guests to the thirty sixth meeting of the UKHEAC. Apologies were noted and brief introductions were given by all those present in the meeting or joining via telephone. New members Steve Thornton and Helen Langton (who attended the working dinner the previous evening) were welcomed to the committee.

Minutes of the UKHEAC meeting held on 19 March 2019

2. The minutes from the March meeting were reviewed by members and agreed as accurate, subject to a correction to paragraph 37 to note that Wales has a new first minister not a new health minister.

3. The actions noted in the minutes from the last meeting were reviewed and agreed as either completed or are scheduled on the agenda for the June or November meetings.

4. It was reported that the minutes and letters from past meetings of the UKHEAC are now available online, through the OfS website¹. Members agreed that the letters sent to all nations (not just England) should be made available in the same way.

Matters Arising

5. The OfS secretariat reported on the ongoing process to appoint new members to fill current vacancies for England on the UKHEAC. Two vacancies were filled through the recent recruitment process, and three are currently being re-advertised. The OfS are working with stakeholders to encourage a more diverse pool of applicants to create a committee membership that better reflects the diversity of the student population. In order to assist in this process, the UKHEAC secretariat will be collecting equality and diversity data on existing UKHEAC members so that we can understand the current balance of the committee.

Action: Secretariat to circulate the recruitment advert to members for information and to encourage wider dispersal to try to reach a diverse pool of candidates.

Action: Secretariat to collect equality and diversity monitoring data on existing committee members.

6. The committee gave further consideration to the previously discussed proposal of roles on the UKHEAC and the potential for the creation of lead members and task and finish groups for certain topics. This issue remains an ongoing matter and open for member recommendations on potential topics and how we should be developing our approach. Members suggested that rather than try to anticipate the issues and identify leads in advance, the committee may wish to respond to actions or issues arising from meetings to determine leads and inputs.

7. The committee noted the feedback letter that was sent to the appropriate contacts for each of the UK nations following the last meeting in March. There was some discussion on the impact and reach of these letters given the lack of replies (other than from Wales, which was gratefully received) with members suggesting the committee may need to consider other options to promote UKHEAC feedback and communication and to encourage cross-nation discussions.

¹ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/funding-for-providers/health-education-funding/ukheac/>

GPhC consultation on pharmacy education

8. Damien Day from the GPhC updated the committee on the recent consultation on education and training standards and highlighted some of the concerns the GPhC have on the lack of clinical placement time in the current degree standards which has led to the proposals for an integrated 5 year degree model.

9. The committee expressed some concerns over the viability for the proposed reforms in the consultation, in particular how the challenges for funding for an integrated model would be addressed (both in terms of public funding and student fee contributions). GPhC indicated that they are looking at various funding issues and will be discussing the options with all the UK funding bodies as they wish to develop an approach that is financially viable.

10. Members also raised some concerns about the likelihood of possible restrictions on the numbers of students who can enter pharmacy with an integrated clinical placement and the type of placements that may be required. While the GPhC recognised that practicalities of funding may lead to some limitations, it is envisaged that the current levels of pharmacy recruitment would not cause a significant issues with finding places for all pharmacy students. The UKHEAC recommended care should be taken to avoid over-regulation and suggested keeping the programme flexible to open up more options and opportunities for students as well as developing inter-professionalism links.

Augar Review

11. Members discussed the Post-18 review of education and funding (the Augar Review) which was published at the end of May. It was noted that any implementation of the review will be subject to Government decisions.

12. It was recognised that any while any potential decisions taken on the Augar recommendations are primarily for the future of funding and student fees in England, they will have cross border impacts and carry implications for each of the devolved nations, so it is important that there is cross-nation dialogue.

13. The committee highlighted some of the risks that any potential implementation of the review recommendations would need to address, such as concern for funding if teaching grant supplements do not fully compensate for reductions to student fees, and potential equalities implications of proposed changes to the repayment model.

14. Members also highlighted the importance of foundation years as an entry point to health programmes, particularly for widening access students, suggesting that the recommendation in the Augar review that these no longer be eligible for student support should not be implemented without suitable exemptions for health subjects being put in place.

15. The committee identified a possible short term negative impact arising from the publication of the Augar Review was that its publication could deter applications from students in the current year if they anticipate future changes to the fee system. Members reported some evidence that applicants were already seeking to defer entry for this reason, and strongly suggested that additional information and clarity from the Government on how the Augar Review recommendations might be taken forward might help to mitigate this impact.

Workforce Planning

Workforce planning in Wales

16. Stephen Griffiths from HEIW gave a short presentation to UKHEAC outlining workforce strategy in Wales, noting the direction of approach for the workforce to become more generalist, shifting focus to primary care and noting key workforce ideas. The health and wellbeing of staff was highlighted as a key issue, with Wales aiming to reduce the increasing burden and pressure on staff and improve retention, outcomes for patients, and safe staffing levels. The focus on support for staff and their health and well-being was welcomed by committee members.

17. It was reported that a consultation on workforce strategy was expected to be published in summer 2019. HEIW colleagues are meeting with equivalents in England and Scotland to discuss workforce planning with the intention to learning from each other and shaping the UK agenda together.

Workforce planning in England

18. The Committee discussed the recently published NHS Interim People Plan, noting the policy themes focusing on shortage areas and workforce need. HEE reported that the plan will be developing a narrative that will inform the next spending review which is expected later in the year. It was also noted that the new Chief People Officer, Prerana Issar, will be conducting a major staff engagement exercise this summer looking at three core themes of kindness, compassion and high performance.

19. Members felt that the Interim People Plan was not clear enough on the role higher education providers should have in the planning and delivery of the future workforce, and there needed to be more detail on the systems for financial support for healthcare students and more emphasis placed on higher education terminology over service terminology when discussing the recruitment and retention of students training to be healthcare professionals.

20. The UKHEAC suggested the plan should look beyond immediate interventions to solve the current workforce crisis and should focus more on nurturing staff wellbeing and retention as in Wales (though the committee acknowledged the challenges of working with a large scale and complex workforce strategy in England). Some particular concerns were raised with regard to the age of the workforce with the potential for numbers of staff who might soon seek retirement and leave the workforce early. Members recommended that any consideration of future workforce supply should take a holistic view across all health disciplines and a greater emphasis should be given to supporting staff welfare throughout all stages of their education and career.

21. It was suggested that dialogue and comparisons of the approach between all the UK nations, and their fit with the corporate plans from regulatory bodies, could be usefully shared between administrations.

Widening access and participation

22. The UKHEAC welcomed Graeme Atherton from the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) to discuss their work on widening access and participation. Graeme highlighted some of the recent evaluation reports from NEON and noted the work that they are doing in collaboration with HEE.

23. Some key questions were raised for the UHKEAC to consider such as;

- Is there are consistent definition of what widening access is,
- how can professional bodies be engaged with WP issues,
- how can NHS trusts help to widen participation,
- What are the wider implications for widening access from a cross UK perspective.

24. Members agreed there is a need for providers to make widening access more visible in strategic planning and encouraged greater interdisciplinary work to share good practice and learn across health professions. Members highlighted the contrast between medicine and other health professions (in terms of outputs and effort and programmes to address them) as an example.

25. The Committee discussed the differences in approach required for aspiration raising compared to supporting changes to promote widening access in recruitment practices, recognising the challenge to inspire and draw in students from under-represented groups is different to the need to account for this in selection processes. Members agreed that there needs to be further development of the complementary approach between inspiring and selecting.

26. Members suggested barriers exist throughout the whole admission process which need to be identified and that it is important that the individual needs and circumstances of students (such as travel and geography) are recognised when embedding widening access initiatives. The committee also suggested developing greater awareness among prospective students at an early stage (regarding the nature of different healthcare professions) as this would help them to understand the profession better and should lead to improved retention.

UKMED

27. The UKHEAC was joined by Daniel Smith from the General Medical Council to talk about the UK Medical Education Database (UKMED). The database is being developed by the GMC as a resource to track students through their training and careers which could help stakeholders to better understand the inputs into the medical workforce.

28. Members were very supportive of the development of this database and saw the potential for its use as a comprehensive and longitudinal way to track medical students and the medical workforce. The committee expressed interest in exploring the opportunities for developing similar databases for other health professions. It was acknowledged that there had been considerable resource invested by the GMC to bring this project to fruition and it though it was noted there may be differences in the legal powers between GMC and the other professional regulatory bodies which may limit what data can be gathered and held.

29. The UKHEAC will continue to encourage the development and use of the UKMED database and longitudinal tracking data and will liaise with other stakeholders to support the development of similar systems for other health professions where possible. Members agreed that it would be useful to have such data available on a UK wide basis, but still be able to split it up to show the outputs for each nation.

Action: Support professional bodies and stakeholders in investigating options to develop a similar database to UKMED for other professions.

Update on Welsh issues

30. Colleagues from Wales provided an update to the UKHEAC on Welsh issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

31. Welsh Government had confirmed that the bursary system in Wales for non-medical healthcare provision will continue for a further year (2019-20), with more work due over the summer and the autumn on the future, with an announcement on the approach for 2020-21 to be given at a later stage. The advantages of having a commissioned model and ability to work with education providers was recognised as having benefits to the supply of the future workforce, however it will be for the Minister to determine the position for the future.

32. Contracts with universities are due to end in July 2021 and HEIW are currently working through a process to ensure continuity of education provision. It was noted that this is expected to include further consideration of widening access and participation and delivery across Wales.

33. HEIW are planning to increase the number of GP trainees from 136 to 160 in the first instance, before then growing them to 200. They confirmed that they are working on the plan for all other healthcare commissions, with the expectation that there will be increases in a range of professions. A plan for a potential second pharmacy school in Wales (to be opened in Swansea) is under consideration. It was reported that an additional 40 medical places a year had been made available from 2018-19, on a long-term basis.

34. Colleagues in Wales reported that there have been some recruitment difficulties, noting that pre-registration nursing has struggled to recruit to their allocated numbers. Investigation is taking place into various alternative routes and pathways into nursing, with a concern that the traditional three year undergraduate route alone may not be able to deliver all the future nurses required.

35. HEFCW reported that they are reviewing their expensive subject premium in Wales, given changes to student fees and funding from 2018-19. In addition, Wales was mindful of the cross-border implications from the recommendations in the Augar Review, including timings of any changes for fees, and whether sufficient funding would be available for subjects which were more expensive than the fee cap. Changes to the bursary system might impact on subjects affected.

Update on English issues

36. Helen Fouquet and Ed Hughes provided an update to the UKHEAC on English issues not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

37. The OfS reported that the Strategic Interventions in Health Education Disciplines programme is in its second year of delivery and has been widened in scope to cover all the allied health professions. Recent outputs are the allocation of funding to 10 new challenge fund proposals and the commissioning of an investigation into male student participation to nursing and allied health. Outcomes from these projects will be presented to UKHEAC in due course.

38. Colleagues in England noted that recruitment remains difficult and volatile, with a lot of uncertainty from students and increasing numbers applying through clearing which makes predicting intakes much more difficult. The underlying issues are complex, and vary by geography, route and applicant to create a mixed picture where no one solution fits all.

Update on Scottish Issues

39. There were no colleagues present from Scotland to provide an update on Scottish issues.

Update on NI issues

40. There were no colleagues present from Northern Ireland to provide an update on Northern Irish issues.

Any other business

41. It was reported that HEE are carrying out a survey on advanced clinical practice (ACP) and are keen to engage with all relevant stakeholders to help understand the needs of ACP staff, so any colleagues interested in this should engage with HEE and give feedback.

The next meeting of the UKHEAC will be in London on 22 November 2019.