Public business

Adopting a student code of conduct and guidance on student fitness to practise

Purpose
To consider two RPSGB student documents for adoption by the GPhC

Recommendations

The Council is asked to agree:

i. To adopt the RPSGB student code of conduct and guidance on student fitness to practise, subject to necessary minor revisions.

1.0 Introduction

In 2007 the then Secretary of State for Health asked the CHRE to gather views on whether students studying to be health care professionals should be registered with their prospective regulator. The view of most regulators was that registration was unnecessary but that other, more proportionate measures should be in place, such as student codes of conduct and fitness to practise procedures. This was the view of the RPSGB.

The RPSGB convened task and finish groups to produce two student documents and commissioned literature reviews to inform the work of the groups. The documents were produced, agreed by the RPSGB’s Council, endorsed by the BPSA & CUHOP and adopted by PSNI, giving them UK coverage.

The documents were: Code of conduct for pharmacy students - this came into force in October 2009, and Guidance on student fitness to practise in schools of pharmacy - this comes into force in October 2010. The RPSGB wrote supporting
implementation documents and convened several seminars ftp for staff in all schools. The seminars were run by a barrister with extensive healthcare ftp experience.

2.0 **Key considerations**

2.1 The key consideration is whether these documents are fit to be adopted by the GPhC?

First, consider how they were developed. The RPSGB convened two expert groups with equal membership of CUHOP and BPSA nominees. Added to the nominees were experts from the GMC & GDC and a university registrar. By convening groups in this way the RPSGB secured external nominees from key stakeholder groups. Both groups were advised by an external solicitor who is an expert in education, health and regulation. The documents were developed appropriately will the full engagement of stakeholders.

Second, consider whether they are recent and relevant? The documents have existed for only a year. Recent significant changes affecting the documents are the establishment of the GPhC, the introduction of the *Equality Act 2010* and the introduction of the GPhC’s new standards. These changes do not affect the substance of the documents to any great extent: both document are still recent and relevant.

Third, were the documents consulted on before being agreed? There was a full consultation, including written submissions, seminars in schools and student focus groups. Changes were made in light of the consultation. The consultation process was appropriate.

2.2 Changes needed to the documents

*Code of conduct for pharmacy students:* As the *Code* was based on the seven principles in the RPSGB’s *Code of ethics for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians* and because the GPhC’s *Standards of conduct, ethics and performance* uses the seven principles in a very slightly modified form, the content of the student *Code* needs almost no alteration, other than changing ‘Society’ to ‘GPhC’, referring to the GPhC’s new standards and rewording the three altered principles. The principles become:

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<th>RPSGB</th>
<th>GPhC</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Make the care of patients your first concern</td>
<td>1. Make patients your first concern</td>
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<td>2. Exercise your professional judgement in the interests of</td>
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patients and the public
3. Show respect for others
4. Encourage patients to participate in decisions about their care
5. Develop your professional knowledge and competence
6. Be honest and trustworthy
7. Take responsibility for your working practices

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Guidance on student fitness to practise in schools of pharmacy: The changes needed are (1) references to Society/GPhC, (2) references to codes/standards, references to the Equality Act 2010 instead of the legislation it supersedes and (4) consequent changes to the bibliography. The only section which will not be appropriate is 3.2 on page 10, because it is a quote from the RPSGB’s Code of ethics.

An appropriate substitute from the GPhC’s Standards of conduct, ethics and performance would be:

‘The GPhC’s Standards of conduct, ethics and performance state:

You are professionally accountable for your practice. This means that you are responsible for what you do [...]. You must use your professional judgement when deciding on a course of action and you should use our standards as a basis when making those decision.

Standards of conduct, ethics and performance (2010)’

If you would like to review the documents, please goto:
Code: www.rpsgb.org/pdfs/ccpharmstudentsguide.pdf
FtP Guidance: www.rpsgb.org/pdfs/studftpsopguide.pdf

2.3 Endorsements by CUHOP/BPSA and adoption in Northern Ireland

If the paper is agreed, CUHOP and the BPSA will be asked if they would like to endorse both documents in their revised form. PSNI will be asked if it would like to adopt the document.
2.4 An additional benefit

Adopting and disseminating these documents would have an important benefit for the GPhC as a young organisation: namely introducing 23 universities, 100s of academics and 14000 students to the GPhC, some of its education & professional values and its image. Copies of the documents could be sent to universities for the start of the academic year.

3.0 **Equality & diversity implications**

The equality and diversity implications of these documents are considerable. Schools of pharmacy bring together students from diverse backgrounds with different belief and value systems. For example, ‘showing respect for others’ includes respecting diversity & cultural differences and being non-judgemental – these things are difficult for some students. Similarly, understanding what conduct is acceptable and legal presents other challenges for students, as does managing one’s own health. If the paper is agreed and documents are reissued, they will be accompanied by implementation guidance again which will emphasise the need for both documents to be used actively in schools so that students know what equality and diversity issues may be relevant to them. The guidance will encourage schools to use the documents as discussion tools to make students aware of equality and diversity issues as they affect them as students and how they will affect them as pharmacists.

4.0 **Communications implications**

Schools of pharmacy have been informed that these documents might be adopted. If the paper is agreed a further communication will be sent to schools and the BPSA.

5.0 **Resource implications**

Printing: £3k

6.0 **Risk implications**

There are no significant risks.

**Recommendations**

The Council is asked to agree:

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Damian Day, Head of Education and Quality Assurance, RPSGB
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