



**Terms of reference: professional standards sub-committee (PSSC)**

**1. Purpose and scope of this document**

To provide the terms of reference for the professional standards sub-committee of the faculty board at the Royal College of Physicians.

**2. Objectives of the professional standards sub-committee**

To set the professional standards for membership of the faculty of physician associates and the physician associate managed voluntary register.

To oversee and approve applications to membership of the faculty of physician associates which includes registration on the physician associate managed voluntary register in the UK.

To develop, maintain, and monitor a register of full members who have met:

- standards of professional competence
- standards of conduct by demonstrating good character and submitting to a code of conduct
- standards of health to demonstrate their fitness to practice is not impaired by any health issue (until such times as statutory regulation is achieved)

To develop and maintain a separate student section of the register to aid transition on graduation to full membership of the faculty of physician associates and the physician associate managed voluntary register.

To advise the faculty of physician associates and the Royal College of Physicians on fees for student and full membership of the faculty of physician associates this includes registration on the physician associate managed voluntary register

To develop and maintain a process and procedure to adjudicate questions of fitness to practice brought before the professional standards sub-committee concerning persons on the managed voluntary register (excluding students; these issues should be referred to and managed by their respective university physician associate programme).



To establish an appeal process by which a person denied placement on to the managed voluntary register or stricken from the register for just cause may request reconsideration to be placed on the register.

- to lead on taking forward statutory regulation of the physician associate profession in the UK.

The professional standards sub-committee shall continue to review and develop the application process for persons to apply to be included on this register.

The professional standards sub-committee shall establish and publish clear and concise definitions of eligibility for the register. (It must be taken into consideration that persons deemed eligible by the professional standards sub-committee for the voluntary register may well be considered for automatic inclusion on the statutory register at the time of its inception.)

Documentation shall consist of but not limited to:

- application document
- proof of graduation from an approved physician associate programme
- proof of passing of a national examination or equivalent
- proof of an English language capability
- Self-declaration of continuing professional development (CPD), health status, criminal activity and/or certificate of sponsorship or Indefinite Leave to Remain if from outside the EU.

### **3. Composition of the professional standards sub-committee**

The professional standards sub-committee will comprise the following posts.

- a) Chair (Member of the Faculty of Physician Associates Faculty Board)
- b) Deputy Chair
- c) At least 3 physician associates or practising clinicians with physician associate experience from the six sub-specialties listed below:

- Surgery
- Emergency medicine
- Paediatrics and child health
- Psychiatry and mental health
- General Practice



- Obstetrics and gynaecology
- d) Registrar of the Royal College of Physicians
- e) Student representative (member of the Faculty of Physician Associates)
- f) Royal College of Physicians staff in attendance (tba)
- g) Patient representative (either via Patients Association or RCP Patient and Carer Network)
- h) Allied Health Professional representative
- i) HEI representative (Nominated by the UK and Ireland Universities Board for PA Education)

The chairperson shall be appointed by the faculty of physician associates board and sit for the duration of the committee.

The professional standards sub-committee shall choose from among the sitting committee members a deputy chair. The post may be held in perpetuity and will be responsible to liaise with the administrators to ensure the professional standards sub-committee's business is appropriately documented and published.

No professional standards sub-committee member shall hold two officer positions on the same committee simultaneously.

The professional standards sub-committee may create other officer posts as deemed necessary for the proper function of the committee. Other professionals may be co-opted in for specific cases depending on the nature of the fitness to practice complaint and the expertise required at that time.

#### **4. Method of appointment of professional standards sub-committee members**

Members are appointed for an initial term of three years. Appointments are by application to the faculty board to ensure the correct depth and breadth of expertise required. All sub-committee members must be in good standing with the faculty of physician associates (or their respective college for doctors) and be active in clinical practice with experience of physician associates.

The professional standards sub-committee shall be appointed by the faculty of physician associates board at the Royal College of Physicians and shall sit until such time as a statutory register is established by parliament, or a maximum period of three years.



The position of a professional standards sub-committee member is an unpaid position though the faculty of physician associates may develop a budget whereby certain expenses incurred by members of the professional standards sub-committee may be recompensed.

Once the professional standards sub-committee is established, vacancies occurring on the committee by resignation, incapacity, or death shall be filled by invitation of the faculty of physician associates.

Committee members may be removed from the committee by majority action of the commission as a whole for reasons of non-participation, civil malfeasance, or disreputable public behaviour.

Non-participation shall be defined as a professional standards sub-committee member who has more than two unexplained absences in succession from commission business.

## **5. Role of professional standards sub-committee members**

Committee members must be available to attend to the duties of the committee (which are numbered below):

- a. Agree entry requirements to the faculty of physician associates and managed voluntary register and review annually (including professional competence, conduct, good standing and health)
- b. Agree and review application process for faculty of physician associates and managed voluntary register and review at least annually, including fees
- c. Approval and second approval of applications to the faculty of physician associates and managed voluntary register and provide timely information for the list to be updated by Royal College of Physicians colleagues
- d. To receive information from the continued professional development (post registration sub-committee) to assist with monitoring compliance of members with professional standards
- e. To monitor members compliance with professional standards (until statutory regulation is achieved)
- f. Contribute to any fitness to practice concerns raised about faculty of physician associates members (not including students: these should be referred to the university physician associate programme)



- g. Contribute to the reviewing and updating of the fitness to practice procedures
- h. Work with UK and Ireland Universities Board for Physician Associate Education to maintain a physician associate managed voluntary register student list
- i. Contribute to taking forward statutory regulation of the physician associate profession in the UK

The faculty of physician associates board at the Royal College of Physicians shall have oversight responsibility for the professional standards sub-committee and the physician associate managed voluntary register and shall ensure there is adequate indemnity coverage for the legal protection of the committee.

The chairperson shall be responsible for the general management of the professional standards sub-committee and shall cause meetings to be held regularly and to be conducted in accordance with the rules and usages contained in the current edition of The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedures. In the event a complaint is received by the faculty of physician associates the chairperson shall cause an investigating review to be conducted by one or more committee members herewith called the investigating committee who in turn shall proceed in accordance with procedures established in the fitness to practice rules (Appendix 1).

The deputy chair shall have charge of recording and maintaining the minutes of all meetings, shall maintain and conduct correspondence on behalf of the professional standards sub-committee and shall assume the chair should the chairperson be unable to attend or complete an established meeting. It shall also be the responsibility of the deputy chair and another designated members of the professional standards sub-committee to receive and review all applications (whether initial or re-registration) for placement on the register and to have direct liaison with the administrative services provider to affect timely and efficient attention to all applications to the register. In the event an application is in question, the deputy chair will notify the applicant and cause the application to be brought before the professional standards sub-committee for adjudication.

Should neither the chairperson nor deputy chair be available or able to chair an established meeting a designated committee member (tba) would assume the post of acting chair.

Committee members must make every effort to participate in the professional standards sub-committee responsibilities to the best of their abilities.



Should any committee member find that they have a conflict of interest in any business before the professional standards sub-committee, they must so declare that conflict and recuse themselves from that business.

## **6. Quorum**

A quorum of the sub-committee requires 50% of members including the presence of the chair or deputy chair.

## **7. Frequency of meetings and minimum attendance**

Sub-committee meetings are held three times a year, typically at the Royal College of Physicians of London. An individual sub-committee member is expected to attend two out of three meetings averaged over two consecutive years. Failure to attend two consecutive meetings will be brought to the members' attention via a letter from the chair of the sub-committee. Failure to attend three consecutive meetings may result in cessation of tenure.

If during a meeting, information of a sensitive nature such as would compromise personal or patient confidentiality, the professional standards sub-committee may retire "in camera" to deliberate said issue. Deliberations conducted in these circumstances must be published in the meeting minutes in such a way as to protect confidentiality.