

Minutes of the Regulatory and Professional Policy Committee Meeting held online on 10 April 2025

Agenda Item A - Apologies

Name	Role	Present (Yes/No)
Mr Rory O'Donnell	Chair	Yes
Ms Gráinne Power		Yes
Ms Marie Louisa Power		Yes
Mr Peter Dennehy		Yes
Ms Dorothy Donovan		Yes
Mr Mark Jordan		Yes
Ms Geraldine Crowley		Yes
Dr Laura Sahm		Yes
Mr Richard Hammond S.C		Yes
Members of PSI staff in attendance for part or all of the meeting included:		
<i>Ms Joanne Kissane</i>	<i>Registrar and Chief Officer</i>	
<i>Ms Damhnait Gaughan</i>	<i>Head of Community Pharmacy Assurance</i>	
<i>Ms Cora O'Connell</i>	<i>Acting Head of Practitioner Assurance</i>	
<i>Mr Dan Burns</i>	<i>Head of Strategic Policy, Research and Communication</i>	
<i>Ms Laura Irwin</i>	<i>Community Pharmacy Quality and Safety Manager</i>	
<i>Ms Ciara Dooley</i>	<i>Professional Standards Coordinator</i>	
<i>Ms Louise Hamra</i>	<i>Pharmacy Practice Officer</i>	
<i>Mr Ryan Duffy</i>	<i>Strategic Policy Officer</i>	
<i>Ms Elizabeth O'Halloran</i>	<i>Strategic Policy and Research Coordinator</i>	
<i>The meeting commenced at 10 am.</i>		

Colour code: Red—for decision; Green—for discussion; Blue—for information

Agenda Item B – Declaration of Interests

Issue

Declaration of interests by Committee members.

Information

The Chair invited Committee members to declare any conflicts of interest regarding the items scheduled for discussion. Dr. Laura Sahm declared a perceived conflict of interest for items F.1 and F.2. Dr Sahm outlined that while she wished to facilitate the Committee with her educational expertise and experience on both items as the Committee would require, that she would abstain from voting on either item to avoid any perception of conflict of interest.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Chair highlighted the valuable input of Dr. Sahm on matters of the education and training of pharmacists and accepted her decision to abstain from any votes on both items.

Agenda Item C – Agreement on the meeting agenda

Issue

The meeting agenda had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

Information

No changes were proposed to the meeting agenda as circulated.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

None.

Agenda Item D – Approval of Minutes – 20 February 2025 meeting

Issue

Approval of the minutes of the Regulatory and Professional Policy Committee meeting held on 20 February 2025.

Information

The Chair noted that the draft minutes of the previous Regulatory and Professional Policy Committee meeting had been circulated to Committee members in advance.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

Decision Approved: The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting on the proposal of Ms. Marie Louisa Power and seconded by Mr. Mark Jordan.

Agenda Item E.1 – Operationalisation of Third Country Qualification Recognition (TCQR)

Route update

Issue

The Committee was provided with a verbal update on the operationalisation of the Third Country Qualification Recognition (TCQR) Route.

Information

The Committee heard a brief update on the ongoing actions being taken to operationalise the new TCQR route.

The Committee heard that the internal cross-unit working group continues to meet weekly to oversee key actions, and the ELT are briefed weekly. Updates continue to be provided to the relevant advisory committees as appropriate.

Following discussion at Council and engagement with the Minister for Health, revised draft fee rules will go before the PSI Council on 11 April for approval. If approved, they would then go for Ministerial approval. The Committee also heard that in the meantime, several aspects of the process have become operational.

The Committee heard that the procurement of the examination component is underway and that following an EOI process, a broader panel of assessors has been established and training is being developed for new panel members.

The Committee sought further information on procurement figures for the examination component. It was explained that the estimate figure was based on the overall five-year contract and on expected applicant numbers.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the update.

Agenda Item F.1 – Consideration of evaluation report: University of Galway proposed MPharm programme

Issue

The Committee was provided with the evaluation report in advance of the meeting.

Information

The Committee was asked to consider the evaluation report and recommend to Council that it grant its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy for a period of five years, subject to the conditions as recommended by the accreditation panel.

A short presentation was provided by Ms. Cora O'Connell. The Committee heard that in August 2024, the University of Galway (UoG) submitted a first-time application for the accreditation of a Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) Degree and that subsequently, an accreditation team was approved by Council and appointed.

The accreditation team visited UoG in November 2024. Following this visit, the accreditation team are recommending to Council, in their evaluation report, that it grant its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy for a period of five years, subject to a number of conditions.

The Committee discussed the evaluation report and the six conditions recommended by the accreditation team which relate to the establishment of a School of Pharmacy and its associated governance structures, appointment of a Head of School and other staff, confirmation of membership of the Affiliation for Pharmacy Practice Experiential Learning (APPEL) and/or alternative arrangements for placement provision, on-going updates on estate plans to support the delivery of the programme and a compliance visit by an accreditation team in the second year of the programme to review progress of the programme against the conditions and on-going compliance with the accreditation standards.

The Committee enquired as to whether there would be sufficient capacity for the additional student placements through APPEL, should the new programme be accredited. The Committee heard that APPEL had indicated that based on previous years, there should be sufficient capacity for the additional placements, particularly in the surrounding areas of UoG.

Following consideration of the evaluation report, the Committee agreed with the recommendations of the accreditation team, and, pending approval by PSI Council, strongly welcomed the addition of a new Master's degree in pharmacy as a very positive step for pharmacy in Ireland, for the benefit of patients, the wider public and the health service overall.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee recommended that Council grant its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy for a period of five years, subject to the conditions as recommended by the accreditation team on the proposal of Ms Marie Louisa Power and seconded by Ms. Dorothy Donovan.

Agenda Item F.2 – Consideration of evaluation report: Atlantic Technological University proposed MPharm programme

Issue

The Committee was provided with the evaluation report, response from Atlantic Technological University and a Letter from the Chair of the Accreditation Team in advance of the meeting.

Information

The Committee was asked to consider and discuss the evaluation report, the response from the Atlantic Technological University (ATU), letter from the Chair of the Accreditation team, and whether it required additional information at this stage, or whether it wished to recommend to Council that it defer its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy to be provided by the Atlantic Technological University, as recommended by the accreditation team.

A short presentation was provided by Ms. Cora O'Connell. The Committee heard that in December, ATU submitted a first-time application for the accreditation of a Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) Degree and that an accreditation team was appointed.

The accreditation team visited ATU in January and are recommending to Council in their evaluation report that it defer its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy. The Committee heard that the accreditation team had recommended that the Council defer its decision on the application to allow ATU time to submit revised documentation evidencing that the issues identified in the evaluation report had been satisfactorily addressed.

The Committee discussed the evaluation report and the recommendation of the accreditation team, in particular, the significant concerns which had been identified by the accreditation team in relation to leadership and appropriate staffing, plans for interprofessional learning and structured engagement with patients, approach to assessment and assessment strategy and preparedness for the delivery of pharmacy practice experiential learning.

The Committee discussed the response from ATU and its observations, and the letter from the Chair of the Accreditation team. The Committee highlighted the key responsibilities of

the PSI as the statutory body charged with setting standards for pharmacy education and training in Ireland and ensuring that all pharmacy programmes meet PSI's Accreditation Standards for the Five-Year Master's Degree Programmes in Pharmacy. The Committee also discussed student welfare and expectations. The Committee further emphasised the need to follow due process with regard to the accreditation of Pharmacy programmes.

Following a thorough examination of the matter, and having considered all provided documentation, the Committee took a vote on whether to recommend to Council that it defer its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy to be provided by the Atlantic Technological University, as recommended by the accreditation team, or to postpone further consideration of their recommendation to Council, pending sight of the full response from the accreditation team to ATU's response to the evaluation report.

The majority of the Committee voted in favour of postponing further consideration of their recommendation to Council.

The matter will be returned to the Committee once the accreditation team's response to ATU's response on the evaluation report is available. The Committee further emphasised that they wished to facilitate, insofar as possible, considering the matter at the earliest possible opportunity, including undertaking an additional committee meeting to consider the matter, if possible.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee agreed to postpone further consideration of their recommendation to Council, regarding the deferral of its recognition and approval for the proposed Master's degree in pharmacy to be provided by the Atlantic Technological University, pending receipt of the full response from the accreditation team to ATU's response to the evaluation report.

Agenda Item F.3 – Project Health Card update – Accreditation of New and Existing MPharm programmes

Issue

The Committee was provided with the health card for the project.

Information

None.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the project health card update.

Agenda Item G.1 – Patient and public involvement in our work

Issue

The Committee heard a verbal update on the PSI's progress on involving patients and the public in our work.

Information

The Committee heard that the PSI had hosted a meeting of the HPRA Patient Forum in PSI House on 25 March. The opportunity for the meeting had been facilitated by Patient Forum members and colleagues from the HPRA.

The Committee heard that the session had been highly informative, with helpful insight received from Patient Forum members on a range of regulatory topics, including training for vaccination services, the development of the Common Conditions Service, the proposal for a delineated operating model for pharmacies and future plans for engagement and communication with patients and the public. The Committee heard that PSI would be very interested in engaging with the HPRA Patient Forum again in the future, if there were opportunity, but that this would be subject to the future workplan of the Patient Forum and the HPRA.

The Committee also received an update on PSI's research application for an HRB Applied Partnership Award, which aims to identify the most effective, efficient, and proportionate methods for patient engagement and to provide actionable recommendations to enhance understanding of patient experiences with pharmacy services in Ireland.

The Committee heard that interim feedback had been received from the HRB, which had been largely positive overall but also sought further information and clarification on a number of aspects of the application. A response is being finalised for submission to the HRB, and a full decision is expected in June.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the update.

Agenda Item G.2 – Project Health Card update – Patient and public involvement in our work

Issue

The Committee was provided with the health card for the project.

Information

None.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the project health card update.

Agenda Item H.1 – Implementation of Taskforce recommendations update

Issue

The Committee heard a verbal update on the PSI's progress in implementing the Taskforce's recommendations.

Information

The Committee heard that the PSI continues to contribute to the work of the Community Pharmacy Expansion Implementation Oversight Group (IOG), which is charged with overseeing the introduction of a common conditions service in community pharmacies, and the continuation of prescriptions for contraception.

The Committee heard that the PSI has been progressing the development of training for the services, including engagement with IOG members and with the IOP. Progress is also being made on the development of other regulatory supports including guidance.

In addition to leading the training and regulatory supports workstream, the Committee heard that PSI regularly provides regulatory input and expertise to the other IOG workstreams, including the drafting of protocols, legislation and other operational aspects of the service.

The Committee was reminded that the delivery of training and other regulatory supports are dependent on the finalisation of the protocols, secondary legislation and other operational elements. The drafting of PSI Council rules to enable common conditions training for pharmacists is also dependent on the completion of secondary legislation drafting.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the update.

Agenda Item H.2 – Project Health Card update – Implementation of Taskforce recommendations

Issue

The Committee was provided with the health card for the project.

Information

None.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the project health card update.

Agenda Item I – 2025 Work Plan Projects – Project Health Card updates

Issue

Project health cards were provided to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

Information

The Committee noted the following project health cards:

- Propose and implement policy changes agreed with the Department of Health that relate to pharmacists and pharmacy services
- Regulatory response to digital health
- Advance reform of the Pharmacy Act
- Implementation of the recommendations of the Workforce Intelligence Report.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

The Committee noted the project health cards.

Agenda Item J – RPP Committee annual self-evaluation

Issue

The Committee was asked to discuss items to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness.

Information

In December 2024, the Committee completed a self-evaluation survey, the outputs of which had been discussed by the Committee in February.

The Chair then asked the Committee to further reflect on and identify items which they felt were a priority for the Committee to enhance its efficiency and effectiveness in 2025 and to share these with fellow Committee members by email prior to its April meeting.

Considering this feedback, Committee members agreed that it would be helpful if documentation were provided one week in advance wherever possible.

The Committee discussed whether the minutes of the meeting could be provided in a more timely manner. It was agreed by the Executive that the minutes be shared with Committee members within two weeks of the meeting taking place.

The Committee was also in agreement with the current approach of the Committee meeting in person on at least two occasions per year.

Finally, the Committee discussed tracking agenda items against the Committee Workplan to ensure that the Committee remains within scope. Committee members and the Executive were supportive of this measure going forward.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

None.

Agenda Item K – Any other business

Issue

No other business was discussed.

Information

None.

Decision Approved and/or Action Requested

None.

The meeting concluded at 11:52 am.

Signed by:

Chair

Date