

# Terms of reference: Professional Standards Committee (PSC)

## Purpose and scope of this document

To provide the terms of reference for the Professional Standards Committee of the Faculty of Physician Associates at the Royal College of Physicians (RCP).

## Objectives of the Professional Standards Committee

To set the professional standards for membership of the Faculty of Physician Associates and the Physician Associate Managed Voluntary Register (PAMVR), to include standards of professional competence, standards of conduct and character a code of conduct and standards of health.

To oversee the arrangements for the management of eligibility for membership of the PAMVR until such time that statutory regulation is in place for physician associates (PAs).

To oversee the application process and approve applications for membership of the Faculty of Physician Associates, which includes registration on the PAMVR.

To establish and publish clear and concise definitions of eligibility for the PAMVR. (It must be taken into consideration that decisions taken by the Professional Standards Committee may have a bearing on the eligibility of an individual PA for entry to the statutory register at the time of its inception.)

Until such time as statutory regulation is achieved to develop, maintain and monitor the PAMVR of full members who meet:

- standards of professional competence
- standards of conduct
- standards of health
- standards of the RCP.

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 PAMVR.

To advise the Faculty of Physician Associates and the RCP on fees for student and full membership of the Faculty of Physician Associates – this includes registration on the PAMVR.

To develop and maintain a process and procedure to adjudicate questions of conduct concerning members of the Faculty of Physician Associates.

To establish an appeal process for a person who is denied placement on the PAMVR; whose name is suspended or removed from the register; or whose registration is made subject to conditions.

## Composition of the Professional Standards Committee

The Professional Standards Committee will comprise:

- the chair (who will be a member of the Faculty of Physician Associates and on the Faculty of Physician Associates Board)
- the deputy chair (who will be a member of the Faculty of Physician Associates and on the Faculty of Physician Associates Board)
- the dean of the Faculty of Physician Associates (who may or may not also be the deputy chair of the Professional Standards Committee)
- at least four physician associates or practising clinicians with physician associate experience from the seven sub-specialties listed below:
  - surgery
  - emergency medicine
  - paediatrics and child health
  - psychiatry and mental health
  - general practice
  - obstetrics and gynaecology
  - general medicine
- a patient representative (either via Patients Association or the RCP Patient and Carer Network)
- regulated health professional representative
- HEI representative (via PA schools council)
- a co-optee where deemed necessary.

The Professional Standards Committee chair and deputy chair shall be appointed by the Faculty of Physician Associates Board and will sit for the duration of their term.

The deputy chair post will be responsible for liaising with the administrators to ensure the business of the Professional Standards Committee is appropriately documented and published.

The Professional Standards Committee may create other officer posts as deemed necessary for the proper function of the committee. The Professional Standards Committee may (with the approval of the faculty secretary) co-opt additional members, particularly to fulfil roles as members of the Conduct or Appeal Committees.

RCP staff may attend meetings of the Professional Standards Committee with the agreement of the committee chair.

## Method of appointment

Members are appointed for an initial term of 3 years (with the option to extend by agreement for a further 12 months). Appointments are by application to the Faculty of Physician Associates to ensure the correct depth and breadth of expertise required. All committee members must be in good standing with the Faculty of Physician Associates (or any respective college for doctors).

The position of a Professional Standards Committee member is unpaid, though the Faculty of Physician Associates may develop a budget whereby certain expenses incurred by members of the Professional Standards Committee may be recompensed.

Once the Professional Standards 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 committee as a whole for reasons of non-participation, civil malfeasance, or disreputable public behaviour.

Non-participation shall be defined as a Professional Standards Committee member who has more than two unexplained absences in succession from committee business.

## Role of Professional Standards Committee members

Committee members must be available to attend to the duties of the committee to which they have been appointed, which may include:

- agreeing entry requirements to the Faculty of Physician Associates and PAMVR and reviewing as required (including professional competence, conduct, good standing and health)
- agreeing and reviewing the application process for the Faculty of Physician Associates and PAMVR and reviewing as required, including fees. Documentation for such applications will consist of, but not be limited to, the following:
  - application form
  - proof of graduation from an approved physician associate programme
  - proof of passing of a national examination or equivalent
  - proof of an English language capability, if required
- self-disclosure of continuing professional development (CPD), health status, criminal activity and/or certificate of sponsorship or indefinite leave to remain if from outside the EU.
- reviewing applications to the Faculty of Physician Associates and PAMVR where the administrators are not minded to grant the application or in the event of an appeal
- receiving information from the continued professional development (post registration committee) to assist with monitoring compliance of members with professional standards
- monitoring member compliance with professional standards (until statutory regulation is achieved)
- operating, with the support of the administrators, procedures to adjudicate questions of conduct raised about Faculty of Physician Associates members, including any appeals as Conduct Committee members or as Appeals Panel members
- contributing to the reviewing and updating of the conduct procedures
- working with higher education institutes and PA course providers to maintain a Faculty of Physician Associates student member list, in respect of conduct and professional standing of student members.

All matters of professional governance have oversight from the RCP Council with delegation as appropriate to the FPA Board and through them to the Professional Standards Committee. Work supporting the hosting of the PAMVR is covered by RCP corporate indemnity.

## Committee logistics

The Professional Standards Committee chair shall be responsible for the general management of the Professional Standards Committee and shall cause meetings to be held regularly and to be conducted in accordance with any rules or procedures developed by, or applicable to, the committee. The deputy chair shall have charge of recording and will ensure that minutes of all meetings are kept. They shall maintain and conduct correspondence on behalf of the Professional Standards Committee and shall assume the role of chair should the chair be unable to attend or complete an established meeting.

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

Committee members must make every effort to participate in the responsibilities of the Professional Standards Committee 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 Committee, they must declare that conflict and recuse themselves from that business.

## **Quorum**

Subject to any specific provisions relating to determining registration or conduct matters, a quorum of the committee requires 50% of PAs from the committee, including the presence of the chair or deputy chair.

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

Committee meetings are held three times a year, typically at the RCP offices (but meetings may take place via telephone or video conferencing). An individual committee member is expected to attend two out of three meetings averaged over 2 consecutive years.