



**The Society of Homeopaths**  
*representing professional homeopaths*

# **AIMING FOR EXCELLENCE**

## **HOMEOPATHY AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

The Society of Homeopaths  
Education Department  
2009

The Society of Homeopaths' Education Team is committed to the promotion of excellence. We believe that courses for professional homeopaths need to encompass the values and standards implicit at higher education levels 5 and 6.

This requires that students are educated with the attainment of the following objectives in mind:

- autonomy as an independent healthcare practitioner
- the ability to reflect and to make use of supervision
- the ability to select and choose appropriate case-taking methods, remedies, case management or referral
- confidence and communication skills
- independence and creativity within an accepted code of ethics and practice

In order to achieve this, Course Providers would have:

- clear policies and protocols detailing and explaining how ideas are conceptualised and then applied in practice
- examples of how teaching methods cater for a variety of learning styles
- evidence of assessment, achievement and progress using learning objectives and outcomes
- consideration of how the personal development of students is catered for and integrated within their professional development
- integrated academic learning and clinical education

In essence, students would be educated to a level that is broadly equivalent to a first degree (Higher Education Levels 5 and 6). The promotion of *critical awareness* and *research mindedness* would be crucial components.

Recent consultation with staff at our recognised courses revealed broad consensus that delivering a 'degree equivalent' standard of education is desirable and requires a minimum of three years (full-time) and four years (part-time) study.

## What does aiming for excellence in terms of ‘Degree Equivalence’ mean for your course?

This paper aims to clarify and inform, presenting criteria, guidelines and questions to help you find out where you are in the process and to help you make decisions about what you may need to do.

We know that many of you have already done this very well but the process is still a good one to go through to check the validity of what you are doing.

### A good place to start

is with the statement in the Accreditation Handbook of the Homeopathy Accreditation Board (HAB)<sup>1</sup> as this was derived from in depth consultation with all professional bodies representing homeopathy and a number of independent representatives, including education advisers.

#### ***“Criterion 3 The Educational Level of the Programme***

*The education level reached on the course should be the equivalent of first degree level study, to reflect the fact that registered homeopaths are independent professional health care practitioners.*

*This means that on completion of the programme the qualified homeopath should be:*

- Competent to assess and treat a diverse range of patients without supervision*
- Able to reflect on their practice utilising critically the dynamic and complex body of homeopathic knowledge, challenging their skills and continually seeking to develop their expertise as a practitioner*
- Able to appreciate uncertainty in health care situations, to work within their limits of competence and to refer to other practitioners and seek guidance as required*
- Able to communicate with patients and other practitioners clearly, with sensitivity, relevance, confidence and professionalism”*

This does not mean you would need to deliver a university course, with all that this entails. How each school or college responds to this criterion can be individual, as long as the evidence is clear and that teachers/lecturers are working with students to achieve this level of understanding and ability. It means that one course can be awarding a degree through a university whilst another can award its diploma knowing that each student achieves a similar standard and each qualified homeopath can practise with the same level of competence and skill.

### How can we do this?

We can do this by adopting a dual approach to curriculum and course development. We need to have a recognised and agreed set of criteria and a set of more adaptable guidelines, to give us both an accepted common framework and the flexibility to shape the course around the uniqueness of the school or college. These are not mutually exclusive but should operate symbiotically, even intuitively, to achieve your aims and philosophy.

There will then be **unity in agreed standards** which are generic, degree-level tools for the profession to value itself and to assist clients in their healthcare choices and **diversity** of choices for education providers within the tradition of educating homeopaths, recognising the individuality of every provider as well as every practitioner.

### What will Unity mean?

Typical **Unifying** standards at first degree, non-honours HE level 5, or honours level 6 would include:

- Knowledge and Understanding
- Cognitive/Intellectual skills
- Key/transferable skills
- Practical skills

These are initially expressed as generic descriptors in fairly formal language. (see Appendix for Credit Level Descriptors)

So what are descriptors?

One author describes them thus:

*“There are many different – but accepted ways of describing learning, so in different sets of descriptors there tend to be specific aspects of learning that are described. Sometimes this is because of an emphasis on different forms of learning in the qualification. Most descriptors, however, focus on the complexity of knowledge / understanding; cognitive skills (such as analysis, synthesis, evaluation) and other skills (variably named transferable, key, employability skills – or similar terms). Sometimes there is a statement about the level of responsibility that a learner at a particular level might take in a work or professional situation or in terms of personal management. Often embedded among the descriptors, there will be a reference to the autonomy of the learner as a learner and / or the amount of guidance required for the learner with regard to her learning.”<sup>2</sup>*

(See also Appendix 3 for information on how to work with Level Descriptors)

Clearly, even Level Descriptors are not stone tablets to be accepted unquestioningly. They are still just guidelines and can be modified or added to if we wish.

In principle there is no reason why we could not develop some descriptors for ourselves but as they are generic statements describing the characteristics and context of learning expected at each level it is as well to agree on common statements.

However, because these descriptors are context free they need to be rendered into more day to day language specific to the subject area and expressed in terms of Learning Outcomes.

Typically these could be:

*On completion of this course (unit?) the student should:*

- be able to recall the keynotes of 20 polychrest remedies;*
- have a broad understanding of the role of polychrest remedies in homeopathic prescribing;*
- be able to use the repertory and materia medica to research the appropriateness of a particular remedy;*
- demonstrate a critical understanding of the evolving knowledge and research on polychrest remedies (such as provings, published literature, lectures, case studies);*
- have experienced the energy of some remedies directly by taking, prescribing and/or meditating on them.<sup>3</sup>*

We have provided examples and activities related to this in our education workshops over the last 8 years. Some of these are available from our office – [georgie\\_freemantle@homeopathy-soh.org](mailto:georgie_freemantle@homeopathy-soh.org)

### **What about Diversity?**

To support the freedom of *Diversity* we can use guidelines which allow the development of a course and curriculum to reflect its individual ethos. Nicola Gale, former education adviser to the Homeopathy Accreditation Board, suggested the following:

- 1) *How does the course promote critical and reflective practice (thinking and action)? Do staff adopt these attitudes in their teaching practice as well as their homeopathic practice?*
- 2) *How does the course prepare students to be able to act responsibly and self-critically in independent practice? To what degree do students engage in self-managed learning?*
- 3) *How do students engage with the ethical issues in practice?*
- 4) *Are students encouraged to be aware of research practices in homeopathy and given the skills to be able to critique research findings? Are students equipped to be able to understand (and potentially engage in) the contemporary debates in the profession?*
- 5) *What teaching and learning techniques promote students' engagement with their subject? How does the course promote independent learning?*
- 6) *In what ways does assessment promote the development of students' knowledge, skills and attitudes? How are staff able to discern the quality of a student's theory and practice in homeopathy?*
- 7) *Within the staff team, is there sufficient diversity and expertise to offer students the opportunity to engage with a range of critical approaches to homeopathic knowledge and practice?*
- 8) *How does the course provider keep up-to-date with the recent developments in homeopathy and education? Does the course provider seek external input into their course content and delivery?*
- 9) *Can students produce a coherent and well-argued justification of their treatment programmes (including prescription)?*
- 10) *Are students able to honour the historical body of knowledge in homeopathy and assess its impact on contemporary debates and practice?*
- 11) *How does the course foster development of communication skills, including the students' ability to engage effectively in discussion and debate in a professional manner?<sup>4</sup>*

The Course Provider can use these guiding questions to give an account of how the school or college provides its own unique educational experience and also meets the degree level standards needed for recognition or accreditation of the course.

## Teaching and learning at degree level

In developing their provision, course providers should consider what sort of learning experience would be most beneficial to students in developing the necessary levels of understanding and skill in their homeopathic practice.

There are three key elements:

- curriculum content
- teaching style
- assessment.

How you implement and manage them is up to you. However, they must be of a form which will encourage reflection and be capable of including and demonstrating the accepted *unifying* processes we spoke about above. Equally, they must be capable of demonstrating *diversity*.

The education team has worked with course providers in a number of workshops to give some examples and guidelines about teaching and learning approaches.

The most recent workshop in October 2008 focused on Diversity in Teaching and Learning. This follows up the idea of *diversity* in course design we spoke about above.

The idea that our courses reflect the philosophy of each school or college should also encompass how the learning takes place. We would therefore encourage course providers to consider the most appropriate teaching and learning approaches, including learning styles, which foster the sort of learning a student homeopath deserves.

There is no single approach to how people learn just as there is no single approach to how homeopathy is taught. There needs to be a process at work which consciously recognizes this in how a course or curriculum operates.

## So how do we pull all this together?

We cannot tell you how to put your Level 5 or 6 course in place, but we can offer help in doing it.

The following points will help you:

1. Use the guidelines from the Accreditation Handbook.
2. Build on any course you may have developed with SoH through the ARCS process.
3. Involve your whole team and maybe students, in the development.
4. Start off by knowing about the market and the type of student you are aiming at.
5. Have a very well thought out statement about the values and aims of your school.
6. Know the sort of teaching and learning you want to be happening in your school.
7. Map your current course against the *Unity* criteria and *Diversity* guidelines.
8. Take account of all the necessary standards e.g. NOS, SoH Clinical Education Guidelines, Core Criteria for Homeopathic Practice.
9. Decide on course length and hours of study concomitant with success and qualification.
10. Take what you already have which matches this and celebrate.
11. Look critically at what does not seem to match and try to see why.
12. Put together a first draft.
13. Engage an external or independent agency to scrutinize what you have done.
14. Refer back at all stages to the statements in 5 above.
15. Identify the Unique Selling Points (horrible phrase) USP of your school.
16. Make sure that all your staff are on your wavelength and understand the course ethos.
17. Have a process of internal validation, involving an external adviser, to test out your design (or philosophy).
18. Seek external accreditation if possible.
19. Check back on your student market/target to see whether the USP really stands up.

## Finally

Remember “*Aiming for Excellence*” is the title of this paper. It encompasses the idea of first degree level but it is about more than this.

It is about the future of homeopathic education and the quality of the practitioners we are producing.

We cannot identify excellence with degree level only, because that is just one dimension. By far the most important identification is with establishing a professional level which cannot be challenged.

The Education Team is here to help you - because we are homeopaths too and because we are committed to the promotion of excellence within our profession.

## Appendix 1<sup>5</sup>

### How to work with level descriptors

There are some general guidelines for using level descriptors:

1. Level descriptors should be seen as helpful guides rather than dictates.
2. They are generic and may, therefore, contain sections that are not appropriate to a particular programme. It is reasonable, then to ignore or remove the section. For example, communication skills in level descriptors may not be developed in all modules.
3. Descriptors do not cover all possible learning that is relevant in a programme of study. There may be other types of learning that apply to a particular programme, and in which progression is demonstrable. These may be usefully added to the descriptors. One way of doing this in the SEEC descriptors is to elaborate the detail of the 'practical skills'. For example, graphic skills may be central to some programmes but is not specified in the generic descriptors.
4. In working with descriptors at a particular level in a programme look at equivalent descriptors for the previous and the next level. Descriptors work better when viewed in the context of progression – the words become more meaningful.
5. Look at the relationship between descriptors at the same level. Most learning described in level descriptors do not function independently of each other. For example, the ability to analyse at a particular level is meaningless in terms of level unless the complexity of the material of learning is taken into account. A child of five can analyse – what differs from analysis at level 2 is not just the analytical skill, but also the complexity of the material (knowledge and understanding) that the learner is analysing.
6. Use level descriptors to provide an appropriate vocabulary to describe learning. This can be useful in any form of description of a programme, in writing learning outcomes, programme outcomes and so on.

## Appendix 2<sup>6</sup>

### Level 5 Credit Level Descriptors

<b>Taxonomy category</b>	<b>The Learner</b>
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b> Knowledge base Ethical issues	Has a detailed knowledge of major theories of the discipline(s) and an awareness of the variety of ideas, contexts and frameworks. Is aware of the wider social and environmental implications of area(s) of study and is able to debate issues in relation to more general ethical perspectives.
<b>Cognitive/Intellectual skills</b> Analysis Synthesis Evaluation Application	Can analyse a range of information with minimum guidance using given classifications/principles and can compare alternative methods and techniques for obtaining data. Can reformat a range of ideas and information towards a given purpose. Can select appropriate techniques of evaluation and can evaluate the relevance and significance of the data collected. Can identify key elements of problems and choose appropriate methods for their resolution in a considered manner.
<b>Key/transferable skills</b> Group working Learning resources Self evaluation Management of information Autonomy: Communications Problem solving	Can interact effectively within a team/learning group, giving and receiving information and ideas and modifying responses where appropriate. Can manage learning using resources for the discipline. Can develop working relationships of a professional nature within the discipline(s). Can evaluate own strengths and weakness, challenge received opinion and develop own criteria and judgement. Can manage information; can select appropriate data from a range of sources and develop appropriate research strategies. Can take responsibility for own learning with minimum direction. Can communicate effectively in a manner appropriate to the discipline(s) and report practical procedures in a clear and concise manner in a variety of formats. Can identify key areas of problems and choose appropriate tools/methods for their resolution in a considered manner.
<b>Practical skills</b> Application Autonomy	Can operate in situations of varying complexity and predictability requiring application of a wide range of techniques. Is able to act with increasing autonomy, with reduced need for supervision and direction, within defined guidelines.

## Appendix 3<sup>7</sup>

### Level 6 Credit Level Descriptors

<b>Taxonomy category</b>	<b>The Learner</b>
<b>Knowledge and Understanding</b> Knowledge base Ethical issues	Has a comprehensive /detailed knowledge of a major discipline(s), with areas of specialisation in depth, and an awareness of the provisional nature of knowledge. Is aware of personal responsibility and professional codes of conduct and can incorporate a critical ethical dimension into a major piece of work.
<b>Cognitive/Intellectual skills</b> Analysis Synthesis Evaluation Application	Can analyse new and/or abstract data and situations without guidance, using a range of techniques appropriate to the subject. With minimum guidance can transform abstract data and concepts towards a given purpose and design novel solutions. Can critically evaluate evidence to support conclusions/ recommendations, reviewing its reliability, validity and significance. Can investigate contradictory information/identify reasons for contradictions. Is confident and flexible in identifying and defining complex problems and can apply appropriate knowledge and skills to their solution.
<b>Key/transferable skills</b> Group working Learning resources Self evaluation Management of information Autonomy: Communications Problem solving	Can interact effectively within team/learning/professional group, recognise, support or be proactive in leadership, negotiate in a professional context and manage conflict. With minimum guidance can manage own learning using full range of resources for the discipline(s). Can work professionally within the discipline. Is confident in application of own criteria of judgement and can challenge received opinion and reflect on action. Can seek and make use of feedback. Can select and manage information, competently undertaking reasonably straight-forward research tasks with minimum guidance. Can take responsibility for own work and can criticise it. Can engage effectively in debate in a professional manner and produce detailed and coherent project reports. Is confident and flexible in identifying and defining complex problems and the application of appropriate knowledge, tools/methods to their solution.
<b>Practical skills</b> Application Autonomy	Can operate in complex and unpredictable contexts, requiring selection and application from a wide range of innovative or standard techniques. Able to act autonomously, with minimal supervision or direction, within agreed guidelines.

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- 1 BHAB (2007) Accreditation Handbook
  - 2 J. Moon SEEC (2002) How to Use Level Descriptors
  - 3 **Gale**, Nicola K (2007) 'What does degree equivalence mean for homeopathic education?'  
Appendix to Accreditation Handbook, British Homeopathy Accreditation Board.
  - 4 *ibid*
  - 5 J. Moon SEEC (2002) How to Use Level Descriptors
  - 6 SEEC (2003) Credit Level Framework
  - 7 *ibid*

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