

Scope of Practice Research Report – For Publication

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Type of business	For decision
For Council only:	Public session
Issue	The Council is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve the publication of the Scope of Practice Review Research report (Appendix 1) and • Approve the GDC’s Communications and Engagement Plan (Appendix 2).
Recommendation	Following the recommendations of the SLT and the PRB (via correspondence), the Council is asked to approve the publication of the Scope of Practice Review research report (Appendix 1) in accordance with the outlined plan (Appendix 2).

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 This research was commissioned to inform the Scope of Practice (SOP) review. The review commenced in 2019 and comprises two stages:

- Stage One involves building an evidence base about how the guidance is used by registrants, the GDC and stakeholders, identifying intended and unintended impacts and outcomes of the guidance, and gathering views on the future of the guidance.
- Stage Two will take the form of a policy review of the SOP guidance. The evidence from Stage One will be drawn upon to inform any potential changes to the guidance.

1.2 The review is being conducted because the guidance was last updated in 2013, and we have a responsibility to maintain its currency and relevance. However, given the significant shifts in the GDC’s focus in recent years, we have used this as an opportunity to conduct a wider review. Within this new context, the GDC’s approach to providing guidance for the SOP must be fit for purpose, in line with our strategic agenda, and compatible with other upstream measures we plan to implement, such as the principles of professionalism.

2. Publication

- 2.1 The SLT recommended the publication of the report at Appendix 1 in full on 4 February 2020. The report was circulated to the Policy and Research Board (PRB) on 13 February 2020 via correspondence and the Board subsequently recommended its publication to the Council. The PRB recommended that the research should be published now, while it is current and whilst there is external interest in the outcome, following significant registrant and stakeholder involvement in the research itself.
- 2.2 Stage Two of the work, which we are currently scoping, will fully determine our organisational response to the work, so we propose to publish the research now, accompanied by an outline of the next phase of the work, rather than postponing publication until we have completed the next stage. This will demonstrate that we are being transparent with the findings and that there is momentum for the review.

3. Scope of Practice Research

- 3.1 Stage One of the review involved the GDC commissioning IFF Research (an independent research agency) to conduct a mixed methods review of the SOP guidance to inform and underpin future development, improvement and/or amendments to the Scope of Practice for the dental team. The objectives for the research were to gather evidence about:
 - a. Awareness and understanding of the roles within the dental team.
 - b. Use and perceptions of the SOP guidance document.
 - c. Impacts of the SOP guidance document, both intended and unintended.
 - d. The future of the SOP guidance document
- 3.2 A final report was submitted in January 2020, following the completion of IFF's research fieldwork which took place between December 2018 and October 2019 and comprised:
 - a. A scoping phase including interviews with stakeholders, a literature review and analysis of GDC data about the SOP.
 - b. A workshop with internal and external stakeholders to discuss the key findings from the scoping stage.
 - c. Focus groups and interviews with dental professionals, patients and the public and stakeholders and questions in the 2019 GDC Dental Professional survey.

4. Key Findings

- 4.1 The findings from the report are set out on pages 4-7 of the research report (Appendix 1). The key findings are:
 - a. The SOP guidance document is generally not being used for the purposes or audiences for which it was designed.
 - b. Dental professionals have high awareness and understanding of their own scope, which is gained mostly through their education, colleagues and peers, and not from the document.
 - c. DCPs, in general, were more familiar with the document than dentists. Hygienists, therapists and orthodontic therapists were the most familiar.
 - d. Patients and the public have no awareness of the document and do not feel it is relevant and necessary for them to have this kind of information, nor do they feel it designed for them.

- e. Stakeholders including education providers, employers, professional bodies and indemnifiers, and GDC internal teams are currently the primary audience for the document.
- f. When asked about potential substantial changes to the SOP guidance issued by the GDC, professionals and stakeholders were concerned because they feared it would lead to professionals acting out of scope and the demarcation between the professions would be less clear. These groups felt the document should be updated more regularly and with increased detail.

5. Implications for GDC

- 5.1 The research has produced some revealing findings about the current uses and audiences of the SOP guidance document. The views and preferences of registrants and stakeholders expressed in the research may not align with the GDC's agenda and approach to increase reliance on professional judgment rather than offering detailed guidance, and we are mindful that we will need to carefully consider how we approach the review in light of the evidence.
- 5.2 As GDC's initial response to accompany publication, we have developed messaging on our planned next steps (see Appendix 2).

6. Next steps

- 6.1 If the Council approve publication, it is hoped the report will be published in April, accompanied by GDC's initial response which outlines next steps.
- 6.2 Stage Two of the review has commenced. Initial internal workshops are being held in January 2020 amongst Strategy, Legal, clinical and PMO colleagues to discuss the research findings and potential ways forward. This will assist in developing a more comprehensive plan, including putting in place future research.
- 6.3 Alongside this, an analysis (quantitative and qualitative) of scope of practice FtP cases is being undertaken, to understand the type of cases appearing across each of the DCP titles, and the context surrounding case outcomes and decision making, including how patient harm is considered.
- 6.4 The approach to developing the GDC's policy for the SOP will need considerable deliberation, informed by various sources of evidence and other interlinking projects.
- 6.5 The SLT, the Council and relevant Committees will be updated and kept informed about the next steps for Stage Two as it becomes clearer what direction will be taken, what options are available, and corresponding timeframes.

7. Communication and Engagement

- 7.1 See communication and engagement plan (Appendix 2)

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Scope of Practice Review: Final Report. IFF Research

Appendix 2 - Communications and Engagement plan

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25 February 2020