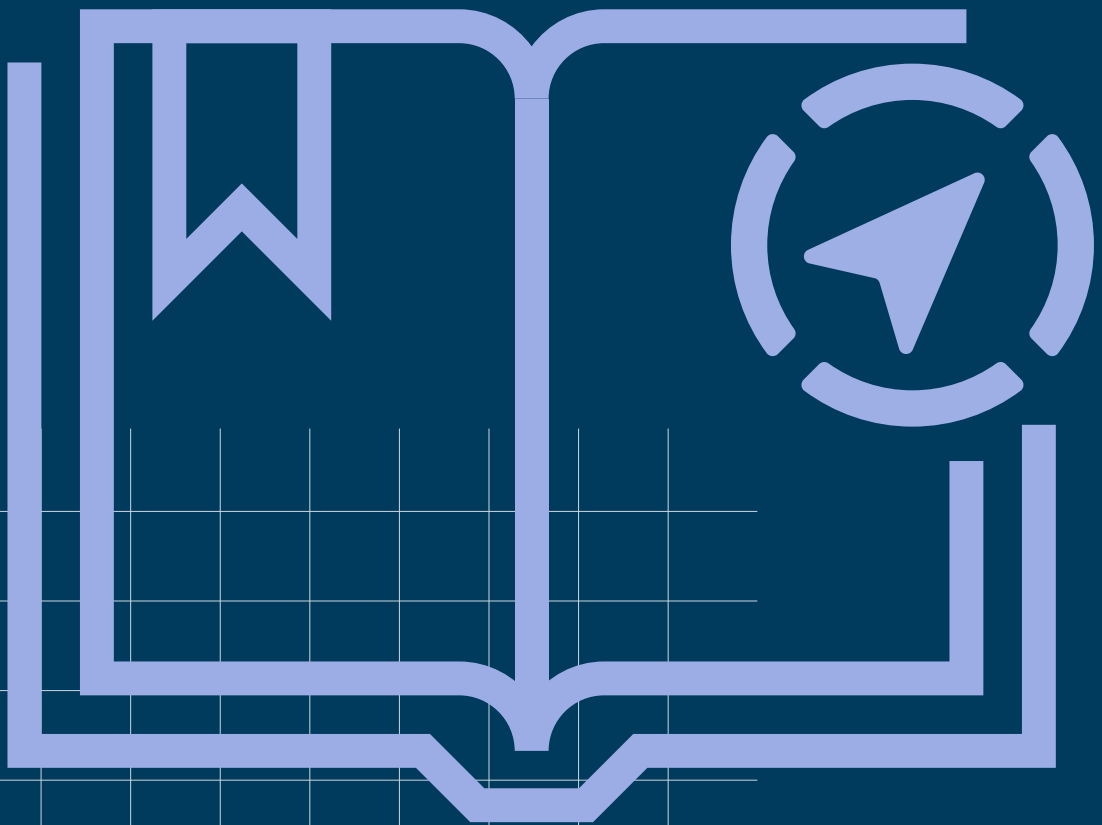
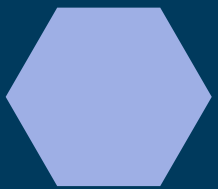
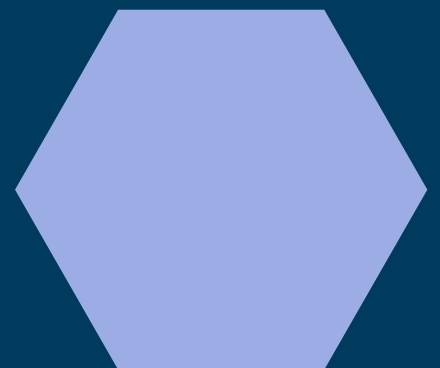


General Chiropractic Council Education Standards

How the Education Standards are used



Standards



About chiropractic education

Musculoskeletal conditions are the leading contributor to disability worldwide, contributing significantly to lower levels of well-being and reduced ability to participate in society. The number of people living with musculoskeletal conditions and associated functional limitations is rapidly increasing¹. Chiropractors are well placed to address these issues and thereby contribute significantly to population health.

Chiropractors are qualified healthcare professionals who can assess, diagnose and treat a wide range of mechanical musculoskeletal conditions or problems. Chiropractors can relieve symptoms of pain and discomfort and can also improve mobility and reduce disability associated with musculoskeletal problems, in addition to promoting musculoskeletal health. Chiropractors are trained to use a range of techniques when treating their patients. They are best known for using manual methods of care, including spinal and joint manipulation, but may also use other approaches, including exercises, advice and strategies to manage musculoskeletal problems².

Chiropractic education must equip new chiropractors with the knowledge and skills needed to provide the care that patients wish to receive and to address the global burden of musculoskeletal conditions. Education programmes in the United Kingdom are to Master's degree level. Learning includes the basic sciences and knowledge, progressing to learning how to care for patients, how to fulfil their duties as a regulated healthcare professional and how to keep their knowledge and skills up to date in line with new research evidence throughout their professional life. It is also important that new chiropractors understand the wider healthcare system and can collaborate with other healthcare professionals for the benefit of their patients.

The GCC regulates chiropractic education

The General Chiropractic Council (GCC) has a statutory duty to set the standards of chiropractic education, conduct and practice. The GCC has powers to recognise chiropractic degree programmes, whether they are delivered in the UK or elsewhere. These powers are documented in the Chiropractors Act of 1994³, which sets out the duties for the Council, including the provision to recognise qualifications with the approval of Privy Council.

The GCC must ensure that graduates of chiropractic degree programmes have reached the required standard of proficiency and are thereby able to meet all the requirements set out in The Code⁴ for the competent and safe practice of chiropractic. Graduation from a recognised programme demonstrates that the new graduate meets the required standard of proficiency and is eligible to apply to join the professional register.

With respect to professional education, the primary regulatory objective of the General Chiropractic Council is to ensure that it only recognises chiropractic degree programmes that equip their graduates to meet the requirements of The Code.

The Education Standards have been developed to ensure that new graduates of recognised programmes are fit to practise. That is, they provide the regulatory framework against which chiropractic education programmes are evaluated and recognised. Every Standard must be met, for a programme to be recognised.

The design of the Education Standards

The Education Standards were designed with input from key stakeholders. The views of patients are of primary importance to the GCC. Patients were asked what they expected of the care that a new chiropractor would be able to provide. They reported that they expect proficient manual care skills but that they also valued being given rehabilitation exercises and being supported to self-manage their musculoskeletal conditions. They placed great emphasis on communication and wanted to 'be heard, not just listened to', ensuring that their needs were understood and placed first and foremost. Patients also said that they felt that it was important for new chiropractors to understand and implement the best evidence into their care and 'took this as given'.

The Education Standards are also informed by *Outcomes for Chiropractic Graduates (2022)*⁵, produced by the Forum of Deans and published by the Royal College of Chiropractors, that define the requirements of the profession for contemporary chiropractic practice in the UK. These outcomes include manual therapies and the different manipulative, and soft tissue techniques widely taught and practised. They also include competencies in clinical practice; patient-centred care; working within the health and care system; critically appraising scientific and

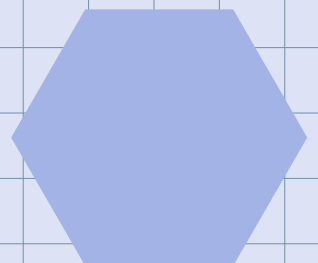
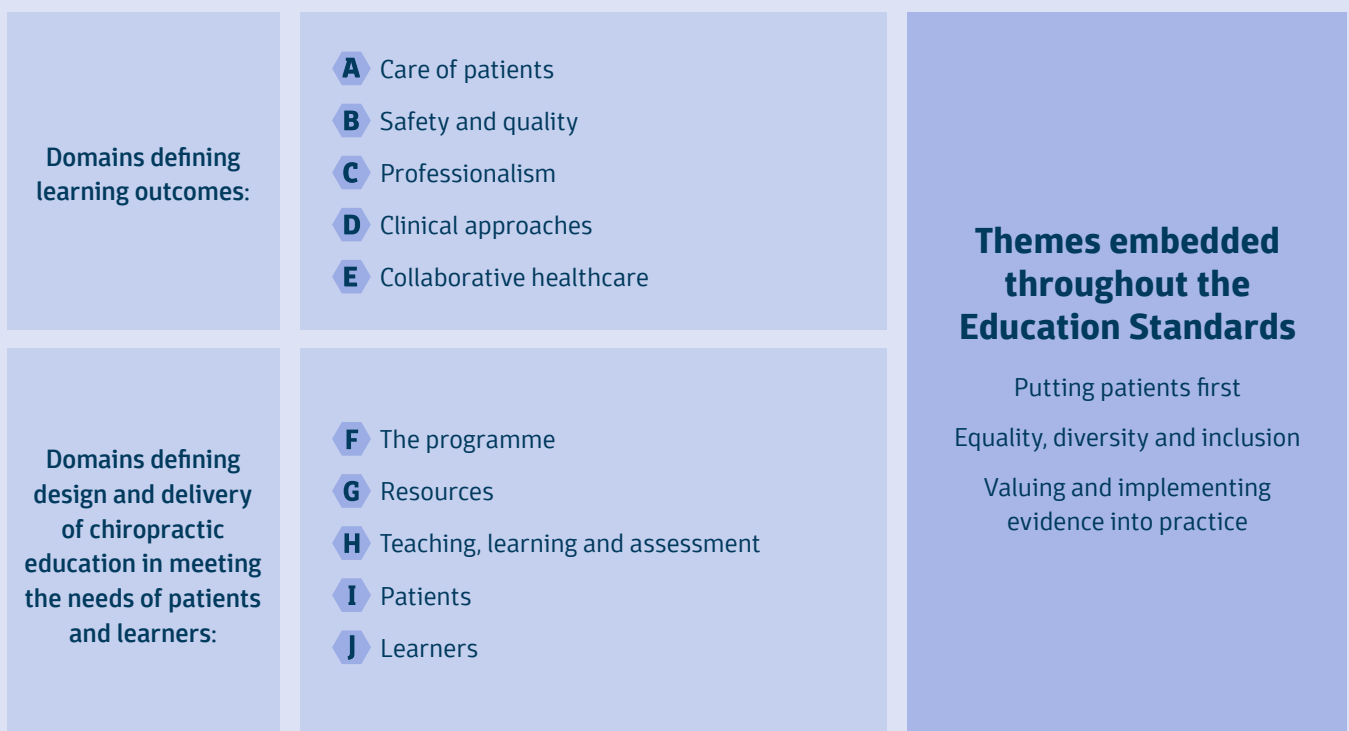


clinical evidence to inform their practice, underpinned by communication tailored to the patient's individual needs.

As a regulated healthcare profession, it is also important that the Education Standards align with contemporary healthcare regulation and practice and developments, to protect patients and the public, ensuring that chiropractic care provided is of a high quality consistent with other professions.

Accordingly, the Education Standards are organised into ten key domains representing the priority areas identified by the GCC. Three themes are also embedded through the Education Standards. The domains and themes are illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The key domains and themes of the Education Standards





The key themes embedded through the Education Standards

Patients and their safety are at the heart of the Education Standards and the domains. Putting patients first and at the centre of their care is the first theme.

The second theme promotes principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The services provided to patients must be fair and accessible to everyone. Patients must receive the best care, irrespective of any protected characteristics or backgrounds, including age, sex, race, disability, religion, marriage or civil partnership status, pregnancy, gender reassignment or sexual orientation. The GCC wants to see an environment that recognises, respects and celebrates differences, empowers a culture of creativity and innovation, and one where everyone feels welcomed and valued.

The third theme emphasises the integration of critically appraised evidence into practice, ensuring that new chiropractors have the proper knowledge and skills to independently appraise and use evidence to support their professional practice.

In short, patients must experience care provided by a professional that places the care of patients at the centre of their practice and is respectful of patient differences while delivering high-quality, evidence-based modern care.

Organisation of the Education Standards

The Education Standards are organised into two sections. In Section One, Standards address curriculum content, setting out the learning outcomes required of a programme to achieve recognition by the GCC. Each learning outcome of the Education Standards must be demonstrably included, and appropriately assessed, within the educational programme, for the programme to be recognised.

In Section Two, Standards represent requirements for the way in which a programme is designed, delivered, assessed and monitored. These Standards ensure that students on chiropractic degree programmes receive a high-quality education to enable their development towards becoming safe, competent and effective primary healthcare practitioners.

The GCC takes an approach to its Education Standards whereby each Standard is broad in nature, supplemented by more detailed points within the Expectations for each Standard. This enables compliance with each Standard to be demonstrated through the broad learning outcomes of the programme.

For a programme to be recognised, it must meet all of the Standards. The use of 'must' indicates that each standard represents an overriding duty or principle.

Expectations section in the Education Standards

A set of Expectations accompany each Standard. These signal what the GCC believes should be included for each Standard to be met. The Expectations indicate to providers how they may demonstrate that they have met each Standard. 'Should' is used when explaining how the overriding duty will be met. 'Should' is also used where the duty or principle will not apply in all situations or circumstances, or where factors outside the provider's control affect whether or how it can meet the Expectations.

Evidence provided will be evaluated during the recognition and quality assurance checks by the GCC and does not automatically confer compliance with a Standard.

In Section One, the Expectations are set out as the content of learning that should be included within the programme in relation to each Standard. The GCC does not expect providers to specify the learning outcomes of a programme to this level of detail. However, providers must be able to demonstrate that the programme includes this content of learning or set out why it varies, supported by an acceptable rationale.

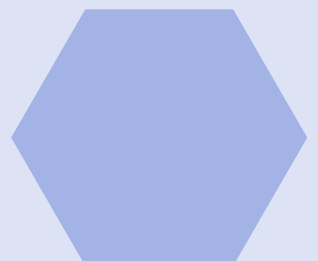
In Section Two, the Expectations are set out as an explanation of the purpose and focus of the Standards and the required characteristics of the provider; the programme; and how it is delivered.



The layout of the Education Standards

The layout of each domain of the Education Standards is illustrated in Figure two.

Figure 2: The layout of each domain





The Education Standards, programme content and delivery

The Education Standards set out a framework for a curriculum. A provider designs the curriculum and must decide how their chiropractic degree programme meets the required learning outcomes set out in Section One. They must also decide how they will assess the performance of students.

In doing so, providers must ensure that a student achieves each learning outcome. They must also decide how they will meet the Standards in Section Two - A programme structure with a curriculum giving students an effective learning experience within a supportive learning environment and culture.

The number of Standards in each domain varies; some have fewer than others. The number of Standards; their order within a domain; the number of Expectations and the level of their detail are not indicators of the weight nor volume of assessment and teaching required to meet the Standard. The quantity or detail within Expectations reflects areas that are mapped to specific reference sources or is where the requirements for a Standard are substantively changed, to provide more detailed indication of the expectation.

The GCC is not in a position to determine core aspects of clinical practice, for example, manual techniques within chiropractic. References within a relevant standard will be broad and with a lower level of detail set out in the Expectations. This acknowledges the expertise within the profession to determine what is taught and enables providers choice in determining their distinctive curriculum.

It is recognised that programmes may contain optional aspects and extra outcomes of learning. However, these options and additional outcomes must not compromise the achievement of the core chiropractic learning outcomes specified by the GCC.

Recognition and Quality Assurance

By law, the GCC must ensure that graduates from a recognised chiropractic degree programme are fit to practise and can register as chiropractors.

Recognition of a programme shows that the requirements of the Education Standards are met. Once approved, the GCC carries out quality assurance checks of the providers delivering chiropractic degree programmes to ensure a programme is, and remains, fit to deliver the qualification awarded at the end of the degree.

Details on the quality assurance arrangements and recognition process are provided in the *GCC Quality Assurance Handbook*.

The basis of GCC programme approval

The GCC aims to develop and regulate the chiropractic profession and protect the health and safety of the public by, among other things, setting standards. These Education Standards are those we expect providers of undergraduate programmes to meet. Provision is made for some flexibility and a plurality of means of delivery, as appropriate. An overly prescriptive set of requirements established by the regulator leading to uniformity will serve neither patients, prospective students, the institutions, nor the profession.

The Education Standards provide clarity on what the GCC expects of graduates practising in the UK and equips chiropractic students, at the point of graduation, for the demands of independent practice or employment in various roles or settings. We expect students to be taught evidence-based practice: integrating individual clinical expertise, the best available evidence from current and credible clinical research, and the values and preferences of patients. Chiropractors are important members of a patient's healthcare team, and interprofessional approaches enable the best outcomes.

We expect programmes that meet these Standards to teach ethical, professional care and produce competent healthcare professionals who can serve the needs of patients in a primary contact setting and, importantly, interact and co-operate with other healthcare professionals as a member of the wider health and social care community.



We recognise that chiropractic is practised and taught across the world and that there will be variations in chiropractic education as well as regulations regarding chiropractic practice. However, we are clear that only practices that meet the GCC Code, relevant clinical guidelines, and are consistent with rigorous scientific published evidence, are suitable and acceptable.

These Standards have to be consistent with what is expected of a UK-regulated healthcare profession in delivering care to patients that is consistent, safe and effective. Practices perceived as 'alternative' or 'complementary' harm the acceptance of chiropractic and risk its continued legitimacy as a regulated profession in the UK.

Education providers have the flexibility within their curriculum to include content on the history, development and traditional philosophical underpinnings of the chiropractic profession. However, traditional explanatory frameworks such as life force, vitalism and a belief that manipulating the spine to remove restrictions or "chiropractic subluxations" cannot be taught except as concepts which historically shaped the profession. This is because these frameworks no longer meet the standards of evidence-based practice and may not be used in clinical practice.

How the Education Standards relate to other professional standards and frameworks

The Education Standards set out principles that a programme must meet to develop the ability of new chiropractors to address regulatory requirements. They are informed by *Outcomes for Chiropractic Graduates*. While the focus of *Outcomes for Chiropractic Graduates* is on the newly qualified chiropractor; the requirements of the Education Standards are of the programme and the provider.

The Education Standards map to relevant contemporary education standards set by other healthcare regulators. These Education Standards are updated in line with developments in regulation and in healthcare. They ensure the comparability of education, and its outcomes for chiropractors, with those of other regulated healthcare professionals that a chiropractor may be working alongside.

Several other professional frameworks also inform these Standards. These include alignment with the *Musculoskeletal Core Capabilities Framework for first point of contact practitioners*⁶ developed by Health Education England and NHS England, that includes requisite capabilities for practitioners managing musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions in primary care; the *IFOMPT Education Standards*⁷ and the World Federation of Chiropractic *Rehabilitation Competency Framework*⁸. Where Standards and the Expectations refer to other frameworks, this will relate to the cited reference, or any subsequently updated and published version of this.

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