To consider

Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Strategy

1. A proposed approach for developing and implementing a Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Strategy.

Recommendations

2. The Performance and Resources Board is asked to approve:

   a. The proposed approach to the development and implementation of a Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Strategy.

   b. A process maturity assessment of our key processes.

   c. An assessment of our Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement capability.

   d. The establishment of a Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group.
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Strategy

Issue
3 At its meeting on 9 September 2013, the Performance and Resources Board approved the recruitment of a Head of Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement. This was to provide a central resource to coordinate our Quality Assurance (QA) and Continuous Improvement (CI) programme across the organisation.

Approach
4 In order to develop and deliver our QACI Strategy, we need to carefully consider the QA and CI knowledge and experience that is currently held within each of our directorates. In some areas of the business QA and CI is relatively well established, whereas in other areas there are little or no formal arrangements.

5 Building on established systems and investing time in understanding what has worked and what hasn’t, is an aim which is consistent with our core value of Collaboration – we are a listening and learning organisation.

6 Communication of the Strategy will also be critical to success and it is important that we reinforce the message that QACI is a journey, rather than a traditional project with a fixed end point and a set deliverable.

Aims
7 The QACI Strategy will provide the GMC with a sustainable quality assurance and continuous improvement framework that enables us to improve and adapt to the changing demands of our key interests and our financial constraints.

Key deliverables
8 Three deliverables have been identified. The main deliverable will be the development of a quality management system (QMS). However, in order to deliver the QMS we also need to undertake two enabling activities. These are an understanding of our organisational QA and CI capabilities, and an assessment of our process maturity.

Organisational capability
9 We will undertake a capability assessment to develop a consolidated view of our organisational capabilities to deliver and support QA and CI. This information will help inform the development of the QMS and will provide a high level understanding of any potential knowledge/resource gaps.
Process maturity assessment

10 As well as understanding the capability of the organisation, it is also important to understand the maturity of our processes. Process maturity assessments (PMA) will help us to prioritise QA and improvement activities. The assessments will capture information such as whether processes are mapped, document controlled and quality assured, as well as whether they have been subject to improvement.

11 We plan to pilot the assessments and use feedback to refine the questions before rolling out across the organisation. The assessment process will be facilitated by existing Resources and Quality Assurance directorate staff. Further information on process maturity assessments is at Annex A.

Quality management system

12 It is important that we establish a common understanding of what a QMS is. The description should be as simple as possible and should help to bring the project vision to life. In describing the ISO 9001 QMS, British Standards states that:

“A management system is simply a way an organisation manages its processes, people and its other resources so that its products or services meet their objective and customer requirements.”

13 Some benefits highlighted by British Standards of implementing a QMS include:

a More efficient ways of working will save time, money and resources.

b Motivate and engage staff with more efficient internal processes.

QMS structure

14 One of our key working principles is to minimise reinvention, so we propose to adopt the QMS principles set out in British Standards ISO 9001 and follow their recommendation that the QMS system is adapted to meet the needs of the organisation.

15 Although we are not initially seeking ISO accreditation, by following their structure we are providing flexibility for the organisation to follow the accreditation route in the future. ISO 9001 QMS is based around eight principles:

a Principle 1 - customer focus.

b Principle 2 - leadership.

c Principle 3 - Involvement of people.

d Principle 4 - process approach.
e Principle 5 – system approach to management.

f Principle 6 – continual improvement.

g Principle 7 – factual approach to decision making.

h Principle 8 – mutually beneficial supplier relationships.

More details of the eight principles and the associated activities we would expect to undertake are at Annex B.

Start up and governance

Support

In addition to support from the Senior Management Team, we also require a Business Champion or Champions for QACI from within each of the directorates. These people will:

a Be the leaders for QACI in their directorates.

b Have significant influence in the development of the QMS.

c Together provide the support necessary to build and sustain a successful QMS.

Governance

We propose the establishment of a QACI Working Group. This will operate along similar lines to the Information Security Working Group and the Business Continuity Working Group and will oversee the implementation of the QACI Strategy. The Group will be chaired by the Director of Resources and Quality Assurance and its members will be the QACI Business Champions and other key interests. The Group will meet on a monthly basis, with the sub-groups meeting on a more regular basis. A draft Statement of Purpose is at Annex C.

The QACI Working Group would report to the Performance and Resources Board. Given the role that the QMS will play in the Assurance Framework which the Audit and Risk Committee relies upon, it seems reasonable to assume that periodic updates to the Committee may also be appropriate.

Phasing

The first two activities, the Organisational Capability Assessment and the Process Maturity Assessment, will be completed by the end of 2014. The QMS will be developed in parallel throughout the rest of 2014 and 2015.
Supporting information

How this issue relates to the corporate strategy and business plan

21 Strategic aim 5: Work better together to improve our overall effectiveness, our responsiveness and the delivery of our regulatory functions.

If you have any questions about this paper please contact: Sunil Kapur, Head of Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement, skapur@gmc-uk.org, 0161 923 6654.
Process Maturity Assessment

1. As well as understanding the capability of the organisation, it is also important to understand the maturity of our processes. Process maturity assessments (PMA) generally provide a ranked descriptive assessment of a process’s maturity. An example of the assessment levels is shown below:

   a. Level 1 – Initial (chaotic).
   b. Level 2 - Repeatable.
   c. Level 3 – Defined.
   d. Level 4 – Managed.
   e. Level 5 – Optimised.

2. A challenge of implementing a descriptive based ranking is the subjectivity of the assessments and the difficulty in delivering a like-for-like comparison across the business. Therefore, the approach we will take involves a simple assessment to capture the main attributes of a standard PMA for our key processes. These will centre around identifying whether:

   a. Processes are mapped or business rules are documented.
   b. Process maps or business rules are document controlled.
   c. Processes are deemed as fit for purpose.
   d. Process performance is measured and reported.
   e. Process Service Level Agreements (SLAs) are achieved.
   f. Key interests are identified and their requirements captured. This includes direct customers and suppliers.
   g. Key interests’ requirements are met.
h Processes are quality assured and results reported.

i Continuous improvement activities have been (or are in the process of being) applied to the processes.

3 During the initial assessment we will just record yes or no against the questions we ask. We will not seek to collect evidence. It is expected that evidence will be provided as a result of further engagement with each of the process areas.

4 Collecting just yes and no answers will minimise the time it takes to collate a baseline view of the organisation and will provide the Quality Assurance team, Senior Management Team and individual directorates with some of the information they require to prioritise future Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement activities.

5 An accepted risk of this ‘light touch’ approach means it is possible that the results collated may be less reliable, as they aren’t evidenced and the assessment may be subject to misinterpretation.

6 To negate this risk, the collection of the PMA information would be facilitated centrally by existing members of the QA team. This supportive approach should help ensure consistency of data collection. The collection form and process will also be piloted in a number of operational areas before being rolled out across the organisation.
Quality Management System

Quality Management System structure

1. As stated in the main paper, we propose the adoption of the Quality Management System (QMS) principles as set out in British Standards ISO 9001.

2. Set out below are the eight principles of the ISO 9001 QMS. The purpose of each principle is described below, along with suggested activities that will support the development of our QMS. Activities will be approved by the QA & CI Working Group.

Principle 1 - customer focus

3. We must maintain an understanding of our customers’ current and future requirements. The objectives of the organisation (and processes) should meet customers’ requirements.

4. We should measure customer satisfaction and act on the results, striking a balance between satisfying customers and other stakeholders.

5. We will seek to:
   
   a. Undertake a high level review, via the Process Maturity Assessments (PMAs), of customers’ views about our processes.
   
   b. Engage with our Strategy and Communication directorate to further understand our stakeholder feedback strategy, and identify how its development and findings can be incorporated into our overall QMS. We will also seek to identify any potential gaps in our understanding of our stakeholders’ requirements.
Principle 2 - leadership

6 Leaders are responsible for defining the organisation’s goals and objectives, and maintaining an environment where people can operate effectively. Leaders should establish trust and promote transparency, whilst providing people with the required resources, training and freedom to act with responsibility and accountability.

7 We will seek to:

a Engage with the Senior Management Team (SMT) to seek approval for developing and implementing the Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement (QACI) Strategy.

b Regularly report back to SMT on progress, success and challenges we face.

c Prepare general communications to support our objectives.

d Offer training to management and sponsors on the principles of QA and CI.

e Offer training to management and sponsors on the role of a sponsor.

Principle 3 - Involvement of people

8 Everyone in the organisation has a part to play in developing and implementing the QMS. Full engagement, where possible, helps to maximise the benefits for the individual and the organisation.

9 People need to understand the importance of their contribution to the organisation and be willing to accept ownership of problems and responsibility for solving them.

10 We will seek to:

a Capture information on who has been involved in QA or CI activities, as part of the organisational capability assessment. We will also capture information on who has attended CI training.

b Develop communications materials that will set out our QACI Strategy and will explain how people can become involved.

c As mentioned under Principle 2, we will offer training to management and sponsors on the principles of QA and CI.

d Create forums where people who have worked on QA and CI can share their experiences.

e Work with the Valued Award organisers to investigate how we celebrate contributions to QA and CI.
Create an organisational wide mentoring and support network for people undertaking or preparing to undertake QA or CI.

Create new QA and CI web pages on the intranet that will attempt to bring to life the positive aspects of QA and CI.

**Principle 4 – process approach**

11 Activities are seen, understood, managed and delivered through clear business processes, and therefore objectives are more likely to be achieved.

12 We understand the activities necessary to obtain a desired result and identify the interfaces between processes across the organisation.

13 We will seek to:
   
   a Identify where we have mapped our business processes or business rules, as part of the PMA.
   
   b Identify where we measure our process performance and understand our process capability, as part of the PMA.
   
   c Identify where we quality assure our processes and understand how our approaches across the organisation may vary, as part of the PMA.
   
   d Review our existing performance reporting mechanisms and identify how they can support the development of our QMS.
   
   e Work with existing improvement teams to identify the optimal process mapping and document control approach.

**Principle 5 – system approach to management**

14 End to end systems are designed to achieve the organisation’s objectives in the most efficient and effective way. This requires a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities necessary for achieving common objectives, and therefore reducing cross-functional barriers.

15 We will seek to identify processes that cross organisational functions. This activity will use the customer and supplier information captured as part of the PMA process and this information will be used as part of the governance system for prioritising process improvements.

16 Although this is set out as a separate principle from the ‘process approach’ principle (4), it may be easy to form a combined principle that incorporates both 4 and 5.
Principle 6 – continual improvement

17 Continual improvement should be a permanent objective of the organisation and enables us to improve over time and to react to future changes.

18 A consistent organisational wide approach to continuous improvement is developed and training is provided. We establish goals for improvement, tracking and celebrating success.

19 We will seek to:

a Collect information on improvement tools used by the organisation as part of the organisational capability review.

b Deliver lessons learnt sessions, where we collect feedback from users on their experiences of using our existing improvement tools.

c Define the improvement process or processes to be used within the organisation, including identification of the appropriate tracking and approval steps within the improvement process. If there is no initial justification to adopt one CI model then the project will seek to monitor the varying approaches to evaluate their ongoing effectiveness.

d Define a set of tools to be used within the improvement process.

e Develop and provide training on the delivery of continuous improvement and the usage of individual improvement tools.

f Develop and provide training on the delivery of quality assurance and the usage of individual QA tools.

g Review existing CI tracking processes and define a single tracking approach. The tracker should include cost benefit analysis.

h Create updated intranet web pages to promote and maintain interest in CI work across the organisation.

Principle 7 – factual approach to decision making

20 Effective decisions are based on the understanding of accurate data that is accessible to those who need it. Data analysis and reporting skills are established within the organisation.

21 We will seek to:

a Undertake a ‘lessons learnt’ review of our current improvement process data analysis capabilities, identifying any gaps and opportunities for improvements.
b Input into the data strategy review to ensure that the internal data analysis skills required to support QA and CI are considered and catered for.

c Engage with improvement teams to document their lessons learnt with regards to the availability and usage of data in the improvement process.

Principle 8 – mutually beneficial supplier relationships

22 Our suppliers are key to our organisational success and it’s important to work closely with them in a mutually beneficial way to create value for both organisations.

23 We should establish joint development and improvement activities with our suppliers.

24 We will seek to:

a Identify process suppliers through the PMA.

b Review, document and promote examples of productive supplier relationships from across the organisation. These may relate to areas such as:

i Procurement of materials and resources.

ii Development of policy, working with organisations such as the Department of Health.

iii Supplier process improvement activities, such as the provision of CI support to medical Royal Colleges for the processing of applications for specialist registration.

c Establish what work has been undertaken to understand and document key supplier relationships that have been identified as key to the delivery of our organisational goals.
Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement Working Group Terms of Reference
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Purpose
1. The Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement (QACI) Working Group supports the development of the organisation's quality management system.

Objectives
2. To provide expert input and advice on the development of the quality management system (QMS).
3. To coordinate the development and implementation of the QMS.
4. To identify, monitor and seek to mitigate any risks associated with implementing the QMS.
5. To set development and implementation prioritises, and to advise on change management issues.
6. To identify any issues associated with implementing the QMS.

Membership
7. Membership of the QACI Working Group to comprise:
   a. Director Resources and Quality Assurance - Chair.
   c. Nominated quality assurance and continuous improvement directorate specialists.
   d. Members of the Resources and Quality Assurance directorate Quality Assurance team.
   e. Information Systems representative.
   f. Finance representative.
   g. Human Resources representative.
   h. Internal Communications representative.
Meetings

8 The QACI Working Group will initially meet once a month, but may review this as the Group’s work progresses.

9 Agenda and papers will be circulated in advance of each meeting.

10 A substitution system will be in place for attending meetings.

11 Sub-groups may be set up by the Working Group to address specific issues that arise during the development of the QMS.

Working practice

12 The QACI Working Group will be chaired by the Director Resources and Quality Assurance.

13 All meeting papers and minutes will be held in Livelink.

14 The minutes of the meeting shall be circulated to QACI Working Group members following each meeting and agreed at the subsequent meeting.

15 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually; they may be amended at any time with agreement from the Performance and Resources Board.

Reporting and accountability

16 The QACI Working Group is accountable to the Performance and Resources Board.

17 The QACI Working Group shall present a progress report to the Performance and Resources Board on a quarterly basis.

18 Any significant risks identified as part of the QACI Working Group's work will be referred to the Performance and Resources Board to consider and advise.