

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Cumbria
Name of programme(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS), Work based learning • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - Isle of Wight (IoW), University of Cumbria, Work based learning • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - London Ambulance Service (LAS), Work based learning • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South Western Ambulance Service (SWAS), Work based learning • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB), Work based learning • BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), Flexible
Approval visit date	03 June 2020
Case reference	CAS-15932-B6J9C0

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Executive Summary

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The following is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as 'our standards'). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Robert Fellows	Paramedic
Glyn Harding	Paramedic
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit

There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Steven Ogden	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Cumbria
Caron Jackson	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Cumbria
Sharon Hardwick	External panel member	Birmingham City University
Alex Leek	Internal panel member	University of Cumbria
Mike Toyn	Internal panel member	University of Cumbria

Peter Train	Apprenticeship development manager	University of Cumbria
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 October 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	3
Assessment reference	APP02222

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - Isle of Wight (IoW)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 October 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 10
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP02223

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - London Ambulance Service (LAS)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 October 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 40
Intakes per year	3
Assessment reference	APP02224

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South Western Ambulance Service (SWAS)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 October 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 40
Intakes per year	3
Assessment reference	APP02225

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - South East Coast Ambulance Service (SECAMB)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 February 2021

Maximum learner cohort	Up to 40
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP02226

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science - North West Ambulance Service (NWAS)
Mode of study	FLX (Flexible)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 October 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 40
Intakes per year	3
Assessment reference	APP02227

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual approval visit, to consider whether the programmes meet our standards for the first time.

Although this is conceived as one single degree apprenticeship programme, we are recording it as six separate programmes. This is because it is being delivered by five different ambulance services – learners from IWAS, the Isle of Wight Ambulance Service, will be under the aegis of South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS).

This approach to recording means maximal clarity for the HCPC list of approved programmes, and because it will enable a more granular approach to annual monitoring audits, during which we may need to pick up different issues at different locations where the programme is delivered.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we ask for certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Type of evidence	Submitted
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes

Internal quality monitoring documentation	Yes
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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HCPC and the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Not Required	As it was a virtual visit and the HCPC panel had determined from documentation that they did not have specific concerns about learner involvement, we decided not to have a meeting specifically with learners.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	As it was a virtual visit and the HCPC panel had determined from documentation that they did not have specific concerns about service user and carer involvement, we decided not to have a meeting specifically with service users and carers.
Facilities and resources	Not Required	We discussed facilities and resources with the programme team, rather than having a specific meeting. See the condition under SET 3.12 below.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	A meeting was held with those involved with ambulance services, but these individuals were senior managers rather than operational-level educators. It was therefore difficult for the visitors to get a clear understanding of the operational-level picture.
Programme team	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the virtual approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However,

the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 14 August 2020.

This visitors' report was discussed at the meeting of the Education and Training Panel on 20 August 2020. Prior to this discussion it included additional conditions under SETs 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

The education provider submitted observations on the report and there had been correspondence, prior to the meeting of the ETP, between the HCPC and the education provider about the issues highlighted in these observations. The education provider expressed concern about the visitors' requirement, as laid out in the conditions under SETs 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, that the programme ensure that learners have access to non-ambulance based placements. They considered that this was disproportionate and unreasonable given the HCPC's remit, the wording of the standards of education and training, and the content of the standards of proficiency for paramedics.

The ETP decision was that it was not within the remit of the HCPC to require non-ambulance placements, and that this was more properly a concern for the professional body. The relevant conditions have therefore been removed, after the meeting of ETP on 20 August 2020, to reflect this decision.

3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that suitable resources are available for the delivery of the programme in ambulance services.

Reason: In their evidence for these standards the education provider submitted staffing plans, correspondence with librarians, and information about placement audit. However, the visitors noted that there was likely to be significant variance in approach because of the geographical dispersal of the programme. This issue was discussed during the visit and the programme team gave verbal assurances that learners would be able to access University of Cumbria online resources appropriately, but it was not clear what specific process there was in place for them to ensure that individual ambulance services were able to provide appropriate resourcing, especially during practice-based learning. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider will ensure access to effective and appropriate resources.

4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that opportunities for learners to learn with and from learners and professionals in other relevant professions are formally integrated into the programme.

Reason: The education provider sought to meet this standard by providing documents including the programme handbook, the staffing plan, and sample ambulance service audits. The visitors understood that their intention was for the standard to be met principally by learners encountering other professionals and learners through their practice-based learning. They considered that this would certainly help some learners. However, they could not see how the education provider would ensure that all learners would have access to appropriate practice-based learning of the kind required by the standard, that was formally integrated into the programme and delivered in a structured and quantifiable way. For example, they could not see how all learners would be enabled to work in true multi-disciplinary teams. This was a particular issue because of the uncertainty over non-ambulance learning (see conditions above).

They noted also that the education provider did not need to deliver inter-professional education (IPE) only through practice-based learning, and that in their conditions response the education provider may wish to consider showing how IPE is delivered through other parts of the programme, such as those facilitated by the University of Cumbria. They therefore require further evidence demonstrating that learners will be able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions, both in the taught parts of the programme **and** in the practice-based learning.

5.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

5.6 Practice educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, must be on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that the practice educators are adequately available for the delivery of the programme in ambulance services are sufficient in number, and how they will ensure that they are appropriately skilled, qualified and experienced.

Reason: In their evidence for these standards the education provider submitted staffing plans, information about placement audit and information about how assessment and supervision in placement would work. However, the visitors were not able to see from this evidence how the education provider intended to ensure that there would be a sufficient number of suitable practice educators available. This issue was discussed during the visit and the programme team gave verbal assurances that enough practice educators would be available. However, the visitors were not clear what mechanism the the education provider had for ensuring that this was carried out appropriately. They were able to see audits for placement but these did not make it clear how the education provider would satisfy themselves that suitable practice educators would be available for all learners in placement. They therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this can be done.

6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that the external examiner role is appropriately filled across the five ambulance service locations selected for training delivery.

Reason: The education provider submitted evidence showing the responsibilities of the external examiner and how the generic external examiner recruitment process would work, as well as generic regulations relating to external examiners. However, the visitors could not see, from this evidence, how the education provider intended to manage the challenges that would arise for external examiners given the structure of the programme. It was not clear, either from evidence or from discussions at the visit, whether the education provider intended to appoint an external examiner per ambulance service, or whether a small number of external examiners would work across different ambulance services. The visitors were also not clear from the answers given by the programme team about how they would ensure equity in the external examiners' approach. They therefore cannot determine that the standard is met and require further evidence about how the external examiners will be used on the programme, and the timescales for their recruitment.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 25 September 2020 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).