
Performance review process report

The SMAE Institute, 2021-23

Executive summary

This is a report of the process to review the performance of The SMAE Institute. This report captures the process we have undertaken to consider the performance of the institution in delivering HCPC-approved programmes. This enables us to make risk-based decisions about how to engage with this provider in the future, and to consider if there is any impact on our standards being met.

We have

- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission against quality themes and found that we needed to undertake further exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission to consider which themes needed to be explored through quality activities
- Undertaken quality activities to arrive at our judgement on performance, including when the institution should next be reviewed
- Recommended when the institution should next be reviewed
- Decided when the institution should next be reviewed

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
 - Visitors considered the challenges experienced with managing and maintaining distance learning placements. Through this quality activity the education provider outlined how the placement opportunities had expanded geographically, which had resulted in learners having access to varied opportunities. They also explained how these placement opportunities were maintained and the support learners were provided with during placements.
 - Through a quality activity we explored the processes the education provider had in place to support academic and placement quality. The effectiveness of these processes was noted and provided visitors with insight into the areas where improvements had been made through the examples provided
 - Through a quality activity we explored the interprofessional education opportunities available within placements. It was noted there were elements of interprofessional education within the programme, however there were no reflections of learners, across different professions, learning with and from one another. This area has therefore been referred to the next performance review for further review.
 - The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
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- Visitors were not satisfied with the information provided in relation to interprofessional education. They acknowledged there were elements of interprofessional education within the programme, however there were no reflections of learners across different professions learning from one another. Visitors therefore recommended interprofessional education should be referred to the next performance review for further review.
 - The provider must next engage with monitoring in two years, the 2025-26 academic year, because:
 - Due to the lack of established data points. As detailed in [Data and reflections](#) we shall work with the education provider to develop the required data. This data will then be available to be used at their next performance review (2025-26).

Previous consideration	Not applicable. The performance review process was not referred from another process.
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Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be● whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how
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Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Subject to the Panel's decision, the provider's next performance review will be in the 2025-26 academic year● Subject to the Panel's decision, we will undertake further investigations as per section 5
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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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.

This is a report on the performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) ongoing approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which 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.

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

The performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible, and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

Thematic areas reviewed

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

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 design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the 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 takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support a review of this education provider:

Nicholas Haddington	Lead visitor, Independent Prescribing
Paul Blakeman	Lead visitor, Chiropodist/Podiatrist, POM – Administration
Ann Johnson	Service User Expert Advisor
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer
Emma Supple	Advisory visitor, Chiropodist/Podiatrist, POM – Administration, POM – sale/supply CH

We encourage reflections through portfolios to be made at the institution level wherever possible. The performance review process does not always require profession level scrutiny which requires all professionals to be represented in the assessment panel. Rather, the process considers how the education provider has performed at institution level, linked to the themes defined in section 1. Lead visitors have the option to appoint additional advisory partners where this will benefit the assessment, and / or where they are not able to make judgements based on their own professional knowledge.

In this assessment, we considered we required professional expertise across all professional areas delivered by the education provider. We considered this because there were areas within the portfolio which the lead visitors could not make judgements on with their professional knowledge or expertise. These areas were reflections in the clinical scientist profession.

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers three HCPC-approved programmes across one profession plus two post-registration programmes. It is a specialist provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2012. Their key distinctive approach is that they have their own podiatry clinics, where 14,000 patients are seen every year. They are therefore not dependent on external partners to provide practice-based learning, however it is noted that they have started to use external placements for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme.

The BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme is delivered in partnership with Queen Margaret University (QMU) who are the validating body for the programme. QMU also credit the Foot Health Professional Diploma at the education provider, which demonstrates there are strong links with the validating body.

The education provider last undertook the Performance Review process in 2018-2021 and there were no referrals to any other process. The Education and Training Panel approved the performance review period of two years in March 2023.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Chiropodist / podiatrist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
	Prescription Only Medicine – Administration			2012

Post-registration	Prescription Only Medicine – Sale / Supply	2013
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Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes¹.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date of data point	Commentary
Numbers of learners	60	25	2023-24	<p>The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure was presented by the education provider through this submission.</p> <p>The education provider is recruiting learners below the benchmark.</p> <p>We explored this further through the Data and reflections section</p>
Learner non continuation	3%	Null	2020-21	<p>There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment. Further information about the outcome of establishing data</p>

¹ An explanation of the data we use, and how we use this data, is available [here](#)

				reporting is available in section 4 Data and reflections
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	93%	Null	2020-21	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment. Further information about the outcome of establishing data reporting is available in section 4 Data and reflections
Learner satisfaction	N/A	N/A	N/A	There is no data available for this data point. We asked the education provider to consider if they wanted to establish ongoing data reporting for this and other data points through this performance review assessment. Further information about the outcome of establishing data reporting is available in section 4 Data and reflections

Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes

referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider was performing well against our standards.

Quality theme 1 – Challenges experienced with managing distance learning placements for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme.

Area for further exploration: The education provider acknowledged the challenges and opportunities the distance learning nature of the programme presented regarding practice-based learning. However, the visitors noted how the education provider had started to expand clinical placements beyond their internally offered placements. This was to incorporate additional hours in diverse external placement environments to enhance the learning experience for learners on the programme. Visitors recognised the spread of learners across a large geographical area would create some complexities with managing placements to ensure learners had access to appropriate clinical experiences. However, in the narrative provided, it was not clear how these challenges had been managed or reflected upon, by the education provider. Visitors therefore sought further reflections on how the relationships with the placement providers had been managed and how learners were supported whilst on placement.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through email clarification and additional evidence as we considered this the most appropriate and proportionate way to address the concerns.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider explained how previously they had relied on existing networks for placements. However, this network gradually expanded through connections learners made with clinics independently and individual clinics expressing interest directly. This resulted in the education provider having a large network of placement opportunities across the United Kingdom, which ensured accessibility for all learners. However, maintaining these networks presented some challenges, which they recognised could be managed if learners were willing to travel. The programme lead managed these challenges and worked closely with the placement providers to ensure they could accommodate learners. With regards to support, the programme team provided all learners with support and were accessible for advice when needed.

Visitors were satisfied with the information provided. It was clear placement opportunities had expanded geographically and as a result of this had provided learners with varied opportunities. They also acknowledged the support that was available to learners throughout their placement from the programme team.

Quality theme 2 – Improvements in academic and placement quality across all three programmes

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted the reflections provided in both the academic and placement quality sections for the post registration and BSc (Hons) Podiatry programmes was limited. For example, the education provider had not considered or reflected upon the effectiveness of their processes to drive continuous improvement of teaching and assessment in the academic and practice-based learning elements. Visitors therefore requested reflections on the process of

continuous improvement of teaching and assessment for the programmes including the education providers experiences with its effectiveness.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through email clarification and additional evidence as we considered this the most appropriate and proportionate way to address the concerns.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider outlined the processes they used to ensure they were continuously improving and maintaining high standards on the programmes. These processes included the programme review meetings, Joint Board of Studies meeting with the validating body and feedback from learners and external examiners. They explained how through these processes specific improvements had been made. For example, changing the assignment briefs in the evidence-based healthcare module to improve assessment performance and updating module content in response to professional guidelines.

They also reflected on how helpful the feedback they received from the external examiners was and how quickly they were able to respond to it through detailed conversations with them. In response to this feedback, actions included redesigning the marking grids and incorporating more formative feedback earlier into some modules. Overall, these processes ensured and maintained the quality of programmes and enabled the education provider to identify any issues.

Reflecting on the placement provision, they outlined how the placements were quality assured through regular feedback, review and site visits. Learners were also well supported through the portfolio documentation, which guided their clinical experiences and enhanced their overall learning

Visitors were satisfied with the information provided. The education provider reflected on the processes in place to support academic and placement quality and supported this with examples.

Quality theme 3 – Interprofessional education opportunities with other relevant learners

Area for further exploration: The education provider noted they had experienced challenges in enabling appropriate learning opportunities for IPE due to the distance learning nature of the programmes. They also noted for the two post registration programmes, the education provider delivered and relied upon the in-house clinic model for practice-based learning. Visitors were unable to identify reflections from the education provider about how IPE had performed and therefore, how they were addressing the challenges noted.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through email clarification and additional evidence as we considered this the most appropriate and proportionate way to address the concerns.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider appeared to focus on the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree and explained how they involved a range of professions, which included General Practitioners, nurses, radiographers,

consultant dermatologists and podiatric surgeons. It was noted learners normally completed their placements in multidisciplinary clinics, however this was not always possible. The education provider also explained that modules included content on the role of podiatry in collaboration with other health professionals. In addition to this, rotations with the podiatric surgeon provided learners with insights into multidisciplinary teamwork, as they worked with a range of medical professionals. The visitors recognised the IPE learning reflected upon was with other relevant professionals. However, the education provider did not reflect upon how learners learnt, with and from, other relevant learners.

The visitors acknowledged there were elements of interprofessional education within the programmes, however there were no reflections of learners, across different professions, learning with and from one another. This has therefore been referred to the next performance review for further review.

Section 4: Findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Overall findings on performance

Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
 - The education provider reflected on the low learner numbers on the post-registration programmes. These programmes therefore did not significantly contribute to the education providers financial budget, however it was noted the programmes were well resourced.
 - In contrast to this, the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme recruited between 15-25 learners and generated a consistent income for the education provider. It was noted how the cost to run the programme was low due to the hybrid approach used to deliver the programme.
 - In addition to this the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree was recognised as the first independent, distance-learning degree in the United Kingdom (UK) and therefore generated a lot of interest. This contributed significantly to strengthening the education provider's financial position.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Partnerships with other organisations –**
 - There was clear evidence of how the partnership with Queen Margaret University had strengthened over the years. It was recognised how the collaboration on the Foot Health Diploma, Diploma in Higher Education - Assistant Practitioner (Podiatry) programme and the BSc (Hons)

Podiatry degree contributed to this and enabled the partnership to grow further.

- Through this partnership, the education provider was able to secure external placements for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree with the NHS and other clinical practices, which further enhanced the learner experience. However, there were some challenges with this in relation to quality assuring the external placements, as historically all placements had been provided internally. To address this issue, the education provider worked with Queen Margaret University and adopted some of their policies, such as the quality assuring of practice education providers and applied them through the processes they had developed.
- The support from Queen Margaret University enabled the growth of the external placements and resulted in them having 23 formal contracts with NHS trusts, including clinical practices such as charities. This helped increase the education providers profile and generated interest from other NHS trusts.
- Through [Quality theme 1](#) we explored the challenges the education provider experienced with managing placements geographically across the country. These challenges were managed with learner's being willing to travel and through the programme lead effectively liaising with placement providers to ensure they could accommodate learners.
- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Academic quality –**
 - The education provider reflected on the challenges they experienced with ensuring the content for the programmes was current and relevant. They addressed this issue through the recruitment of more experienced and knowledgeable staff, which included external examiners. This ensured high teaching standards were maintained, which resulted in positive feedback from the external examiners.
 - Through [Quality theme 2](#) we explored how the education provider assessed academic quality and what improvements had been made in this area. It was clear the education provider had made several changes to the provision based on the feedback they had received. These changes ensured the quality of the programmes was being maintained.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Placement quality –**
 - The programmes delivered by the education provider were different, particularly in relation to placements. It was noted the placements for the Diploma in Local Anaesthesia for Podiatry Practice programme were sourced in-house and the Diploma in Prescription Only Medicines for Podiatric Practice programme 'had no clinical practical elements to them and therefore there was not a need for placement provision'. Whereas the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree used a combination of both in-house and external placements.

- Despite the increased use of external placements, there were a number of challenges experienced with placements. These mainly related to ensuring there were a range of placements to reflect current clinical practice and maintaining standards and consistency with placements and assessments, particularly with the external placements. For the post-registration programmes, these were addressed through the increased use of the in-house clinic. For the external placements, the education provider ensured all clinical examinations were conducted in-house and not at the external placement site to ensure appropriate assessments were undertaken.
- Reflections were provided on the high volume of patients the in-house clinics engaged with and how the learners benefitted from these interactions. The benefits of the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree were acknowledged, as this enabled the clinic to grow and provided them with the ability to manage complex cases. It was noted how this growth had enhanced practical experiences for learners but had also alleviated the pressure on the NHS and other local clinics.
- Through [Quality theme 2](#) we explored how the education provider assessed placement quality and what improvements had been made in this area. It was clear the education provider had responded to feedback and through site visits had ensured the quality of the placements had been maintained.
- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Interprofessional education –**
 - Due to the nature of the education providers provision some challenges were experienced in facilitating interprofessional education. They recognise the importance of interprofessional education and therefore attempted to overcome these challenges by incorporating it into the modules through the assessments and providing placements in multi-disciplinary clinics.
 - This approach enabled learners to understand and consider the role of other professionals across professions such as nursing, physiotherapy, and medical doctors.
 - Through [Quality theme 3](#) we explored the interprofessional education opportunities available to learners. They acknowledged there were elements of interprofessional education within the programme, however there were no reflections of learners, across different professions learning with and from one another. This area should therefore be referred to the next performance review for further review.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Service users and carers –**
 - Service users and carers have been involved with learner interviews, providing feedback to learners on their practice and through their assessments.
 - They also provided feedback as a patient focus group, however the education provider acknowledged this had been challenging in

comparison to obtaining learner feedback. Much of this was due to the pandemic where they experienced some difficulties with arranging patient focus groups. During this period attempts were made to arrange meetings virtually, however the engagement with this was low. As a result of this, the education provider is reviewing service user and carer involvement to increase this across the provision.

- Through clarification, we noted service users and carers were also involved with curriculum development. Additionally, we noted there were plans to appoint a liaison officer who would be responsible for coordinating service user and carer involvement and monitoring their involvement.
- We recognised the high levels of satisfaction that had been reported by service users and carers through various feedback mechanisms.
- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Equality and diversity –**
 - The education provider is committed to being inclusive and prioritising equality and diversity across all aspects of its provision. This included recruitment, teaching, progression and retention of learners.
 - It was noted how despite the low applicant numbers for the post-registration programmes, they continued to offer places to all those who meet the entry criteria. This demonstrates how they ensure their equality and diversity policies are applied. The commitment to these policies is further strengthened through their partnership with Queen Margaret University, which enables them to ‘share best practices’.
 - Through clarification, we noted the education provider supports learners who are failing, through various support mechanisms, such as academic support and individualised learning plans (ILPs) which are specifically for learners with learning needs. These support mechanisms are integrated within the QMUs Learning Support Framework but are used by the education provider and have received positive feedback from QMU on how the support system is applied.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Horizon scanning –**
 - They reflected on the challenges the Podiatry profession is experiencing, which is mainly a lack of interest in the profession. As a profession it has been highlighted as ‘at risk’ by NHS England and to address this issue the Foot Health Consortium has been created. This is clearly a concern for the profession, and they recognise this lack of interest could potentially impact the sustainability of the Podiatry programmes.
 - The education provider plans to address some of these issues through their BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree. The aim of the degree is to be accessible to Foot Health Professionals (FHPs), which enables them to progress their careers further. Since this degree was introduced, they have seen positive enrolment and graduation rates and this is expected to grow due to the increased interest in health related programmes.

They recognise this growth is positive, which could address some of the challenges within the Podiatry profession.

- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: Interprofessional education - The visitors acknowledged there were elements of interprofessional education within the programme, however there were no reflections of learners, across different professions, learning with and from one another. This area has therefore been referred to the next performance review for further review.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Embedding the revised Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) –**
 - To ensure the revised SOPs were embedded, a thorough review of the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme and a mapping exercise were completed. Through this process the education provider confirmed the revised SOPs had already been embedded and the programme was compliant. It was noted how the programme was demonstrating the revised SOPs, however this process formalised the approach the education provider had taken with embedding the SOPs.
 - Through this process some enhancements were made to the 'professional issues' and 'clinical' modules to ensure the revised SOPs were covered appropriately. It was noted how these changes did not impact clinical practice, however they did ensure the revised SOPs were covered thoroughly throughout the curriculum. This highlighted the education providers commitment to maintaining high standards and making continuous improvements to the curriculum to ensure it was meeting professional requirements.
 - Through clarification, we noted the emphasis on clinical and practical skills. This ensured learners demonstrated the required behaviours and qualities, and the promotion of public health, as a theme across various modules.
 - There was a clear commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, which was evident through their approach to teaching about clinical presentations in diverse populations.
 - It was noted the programme focussed on patient centred care and modules such as the developing electronic resources module, focused on this and continued to contribute to improvements in line with the revised SOPs.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**

- Reflections were provided on the increased use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how this posed a risk of academic misconduct. To address these concerns and reduce the risk of academic misconduct, the education provider purchased AI detection technology and updated their academic misconduct policy to address the usage of AI.
- A range of technology was used by learners as part of their learning, which included interactive lectures, podcasts and video conferencing. It was noted how the developing electronic resources module enabled learners to be creative with technology to produce patient education materials.
- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Apprenticeships in England –**
 - As noted in the Horizon Scanning section of this report, the Podiatry profession is at risk. The education provider therefore considers the development of apprenticeship routes into the profession as positive, as it provides an alternative route for learners to access the profession.
 - Reflecting on the impact apprenticeships may have on the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree, it was noted this would be minimal. This was due to the fact that the degree tended to attract learners who were already working in private practice and were Level 4 Foot Health Practitioners (FHPs). The degree would therefore not compete with any apprenticeship routes.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education –**
 - The education provider acknowledged that despite not having Higher Education Institution (HEI) status, their approach to quality assurance aligned with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The programmes therefore adhered to the twelve themes and guiding principles of the Code.
 - It was noted Queen Margaret University (QMU) were the awarding body for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree and had been assessed against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Annual reviews of the degree were therefore conducted by QMU to ensure high educational standards were being maintained and quality benchmarks were being met.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Office for Students (OfS) –**
 - Due to the nature of the education provider provision, they were not registered with the Office for Students, as they were not a Higher Education Institution (HEI).
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies –**
 - The education provider reflected on the programmes they offer, which clearly focus on podiatry. Due to this being the main professional body they liaise with is the British Chiropody and Podiatry Association. They undertake this to ensure any updates or developments are incorporated into the teaching and training programmes.
 - Through clarification, we noted the education provider have also collaborated with the Royal College of Podiatry and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Curriculum development –**
 - The education provider reflected upon their commitment to maintaining high standards and how they made continuous improvements to the programmes to ensure they met professional requirements.
 - This included the process undertaken to embed the revised SOPs. As outlined below, the education provider also reflected upon changes to the curriculum due to updated professional body guidance.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
 - The education provider is closely associated with the British Chiropody and Podiatry Association and incorporate any new policy developments into the teaching and training accordingly.
 - For example, developments incorporated included the revised maximum safe dosage (MSD) calculations for local anaesthetics. This clearly demonstrated their commitment to responding to professional body guidance and incorporating relevant updates.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Capacity of practice-based learning (programme / profession level) –**

- The combination of both in-house clinics and external placements provided learners with an enhanced placement experience with access to a range of opportunities.
- The education provider highlighted the additional capacity the in-house clinics are able to offer learners, which means there are sufficient clinical hours if capacity with the external placements was to reduce. It was noted how this placed the education provider in a different position whereby they were not reliant on other resources externally to support their learners with clinical practice.
- The education provider recognised there was a need to support external placement providers to ensure these placements continue to be available in future. Financial remuneration was therefore offered to cover any costs linked to offering a placement and they regularly met with placement providers to discuss any issues and address them. In addition to this, they were committed to training and developing clinical staff, which is extended to the external placement providers. This approach enhances the clinical placement opportunities for learners.
- Through clarification, we noted the system for clinical placement provision is designed to be flexible and to manage capacity. There are structured placement requirements for different levels to ensure the experiences learners gain are diverse. The advantage with these placements is that they can be split between multiple providers, which makes it easier to address any issues with capacity.
- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Learners –**
 - Reflecting on the feedback mechanisms for the post registration and BSc (Hons) Podiatry programmes, it was clear learner satisfaction was high. There was a low response rate for the post registration programmes, however those who did respond confirmed they were satisfied with the programmes.
 - For the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree feedback was gathered through various methods, which included staff-student liaison meetings and anonymous comments from learner representatives. QMU also undertook the Partner Organisation Student Survey (POSS) and used the learner feedback to benchmark it against the National Student Survey (NSS).
 - In general, they acknowledged the learner feedback received was positive. However, the feedback did identify a need to improve the interactivity of some parts of the programme, which the education provider has taken action on. This highlighted how they are

continuously improving the provision based on learner feedback to enhance the learner experience.

- Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **Practice placement educators –**
 - The feedback received from placement providers was positive and enabled the education provider to improve the placement experience based on this feedback. The suggested improvements included streamlining the paperwork linked to the learner's placement and to provide detailed expectations of the learners practice requirements, which were both actioned.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **External examiners –**
 - Despite small cohorts, the feedback received from the external examiners for the post registration programmes was positive. This reflected the importance of the programmes for professional development and the relevance and appropriateness of the course content and assessment to the profession.
 - The BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree also received positive feedback from the external examiner and although some areas required improvements, overall the quality of the work provided by learners was comparable to other programmes. They acknowledged how the feedback received enabled them to work closely with the external examiner to address their comments and make improvements to the provision.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Learner non continuation:**
 - It is clear the small number of learners on the programmes means that even a few learners choosing not to continue could significantly impact the overall rate.
 - The education provider recognised learners on the post registration programmes were self-funded and in full time employment and therefore due to personal reasons may not have the option to continue with the programmes. This highlighted the importance of understanding the reasons for this rate being low and recognising how resilient learners, who balance education with other commitments, are.

- Learner non continuation rates are also monitored by the validating body as part of their partner monitoring processes and they acknowledged these rates were comparable to other programmes and did not raise any concerns.
- The visitors were satisfied with the education providers performance in this area and acknowledged they were engaging with the HCPC to develop a regular supply of data points.
- **Outcomes for those who complete programmes:**
 - All learners on the post registration programmes at the education provider are in employment when they start. Therefore, any data gathered in relation to employment would not provide a true reflection of how the programmes supported learners with securing employment.
 - The education provider acknowledges their programmes act as a form of professional development for learners and expand their scope of practice.
 - The visitors were satisfied with the education providers performance in this area and acknowledged they were engaging with the HCPC to develop a regular supply of data points.
- **Learner satisfaction:**
 - Reflecting on the Patient Outcome Satisfaction Survey (POSS) results for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree, it was clear they offered a detailed overview of learner satisfaction across various metrics. These results are benchmarked against the validating body's equivalent programmes, which provided valuable context.
 - Overall, the data was positive. However, it is noted how, due to the low numbers, each response significantly impacts the percentage points, which highlights the importance of each learner's feedback.
 - The visitors were satisfied with the education providers performance in this area and acknowledged they were engaging with the HCPC to develop a regular supply of data points.
- **Programme level data:**
 - The data provided captures the learner numbers of the programmes the education provider delivers. It is noted how these learner numbers were low, however this was not concerning as these numbers are in line with the education providers forecasting.
 - The visitors were satisfied with the education providers performance in this area and acknowledged they were engaging with the HCPC to develop a regular supply of data points.

Proposal for supplying data points to the HCPC: The education provider has confirmed they will continue to work with the HCPC to develop a regular supply of data points. The new updated guidance for establishing data points will be used, as this guidance has been designed to support education providers in this position where data is not captured through the same sources as HEIs due to the nature of their provision.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Section 5: Issues identified for further review

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval or focused review process).

Referrals to next scheduled performance review

Interprofessional education

Programme(s) applicable to:

- BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree
 - **Summary of issue:** The visitors acknowledged there were elements of interprofessional education within the programme, however there were no reflections of learners, across different professions, learning with and from one another. This area has therefore been referred to the next performance review for further review.

Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2025-26 academic year
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report

Reason for next engagement recommendation

- Internal stakeholder engagement
 - The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were learners, service users, practice educators, partner organisations, external examiners.
- External input into quality assurance and enhancement
 - The education provider engaged with one professional body. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision
 - The education provider did not engage with any other relevant professional or system regulator(s) (eg NMC, OfS)].
 - The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way.
- Data supply
 - Through this review, the education provider has not established how they will supply quality and performance data points which are equivalent to those in external supplies available for other organisations. Where data is not regularly supplied, we need to

- understand risks by engaging with the education provider on a frequent basis (a maximum of once every two years)
- The education provider is willing to work with the HCPC in accordance with our guidance on establishing data points. This data will then be available to be used at their next performance review (2025-26).
 - In summary, the reason for the recommendation of a two year monitoring period is:
 - Due to the lack of established data points. As detailed above we shall work with the education provider to develop the required data. This data will then be available to be used at their next performance review (2025-26).
 - Interprofessional education has been referred to the next performance review to be considered, as outlined above in Section 5.

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2025-26 academic year
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out through the next performance review process.

Reason for this decision: The Panel agreed with the visitors' recommended monitoring period, for the reasons noted through the report.

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on the next steps for the provider. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation (including their reasons) and any referrals.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Review period recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Referrals
The SMAE Institute	CAS-01389-N4G1F8	Nicholas Haddington Paul Blakeman	Two years	<p>In summary, the reason for the recommendation of a two year monitoring period is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the lack of established data points. As detailed above we shall work with the education provider to develop the required data. This data will then be available to be used at their next performance review (2025-26). • Interprofessional education has been referred to the next performance review to be considered, as outlined above in Section 5. 	Interprofessional education – referred to next performance review.

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Podiatry	DL (Distance learning)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/08/2021
Diploma in Local Anaesthesia for Podiatry Practice	DL (Distance learning)			POM - Administration	01/09/2012
Diploma In Prescription Only Medicines for Podiatric Practice	PT (Part time)			POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/09/2013