
Approval process report

The University of Northampton, Chiropody / podiatry, 2023-24

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve a podiatry programme at the University of Northampton. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) are fit to practice.

We have

- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area
- Reviewed the programme(s) against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programme(s) should be approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
 - The education provider has not fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme. As these relationships have not been fully finalised, the visitors recommended that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake, to:
 - determine which employer(s) are involved in the delivery of the programme;
 - understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities, based upon confirmation of the education provider and employer relationship; and
 - if so, consider how the changes may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.
- The programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration

Not applicable. This approval process was not referred from another process.

Decision

The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide:

- whether the programme(s) is / are approved
- whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how

Next steps

Outline next steps / future case work with the provider:

- The provider's next performance review will be in the 2028-29 academic year
 - Subject to the Panel's decision, we will undertake further investigations as per section 5
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Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment	4
About us	4
Our standards	4
Our regulatory approach	4
The approval process	4
How we make our decisions	5
The assessment panel for this review	5
Section 2: Institution-level assessment	5
The education provider context	5
Practice areas delivered by the education provider	6
Institution performance data	7
The route through stage 1	9
Admissions	10
Management and governance	12
Quality, monitoring, and evaluation	15
Learners	17
Outcomes from stage 1	21
Section 3: Programme-level assessment	21
Programmes considered through this assessment	21
Stage 2 assessment – provider submission	22
Data / intelligence considered	22
Quality themes identified for further exploration	22
Quality theme 1 – how the education provider ensures learners who complete the programme are able to meet the SOPs for podiatry	22
Quality theme 2 – how the education provider ensures training for practice educators means they are prepared to work with, and support, learners	23
Section 4: Findings	24
Conditions	24
Overall findings on how standards are met	24
Section 5: Referrals	30
Recommendations	30
Referrals to the focused review process	30
Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes	31
Assessment panel recommendation	31
Appendix 1 – summary report	32
Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution	34

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 approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme(s) approval / 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 approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme(s)

- Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme

Through the approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

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

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 this review:

Sharon Wiener-Ogilvie	Lead visitor, chiropodist / podiatrist
Wendy Smith	Lead visitor, chiropodist / podiatrist
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers seven HCPC-approved programmes across four professions. It is a higher education institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2002. This includes one post-registration programme for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations.

Learners from the proposed programme will be taught alongside those from the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme.

Where a new apprenticeship programme is being developed, the programme team and central apprenticeship team gain informal agreement of support. The employer will attend the validation process if and where suitable. Once a programme is internally validated, the education provider formally begins discussions for the programme and the application process, and formal contracts are signed. The education provider informed us the internal validation of the programme took place on 28 February 2025. They added they have had positive engagement and interest from various Trusts and the formal stage to sign up to the programme cannot yet be completed as it is not yet internally validated.

The education provider runs a HCPC-approved occupational therapy degree apprenticeship programme. This programme started in September 2019.

The education provider interacted with the performance review process for the first time in the 2023-24 academic year. The visitors were satisfied with their performance and recommended a five-year review period for the education provider's next interaction with performance review.

The education provider's last engagement in the legacy model of quality assurance was in 2019 when they engaged with the annual monitoring assessment process. There were no referrals from this.

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	2002
	Occupational therapy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2002
	Paramedic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2006
	Physiotherapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2016

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 programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programme(s).

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	230	234	2024 / 25	<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 is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision.</p> <p>We reviewed the information submitted by the education provider and were satisfied the resources provided are effective for the delivery of the programme.</p>
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	5%	2020-21	<p>This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests</p>

				<p>the provider is performing below sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has been maintained.</p> <p>We reviewed learner's experience on programmes and potential factors for not continuing and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
<p>Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study</p>	<p>93%</p>	<p>92%</p>	<p>2020-21</p>	<p>This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has been maintained.</p> <p>We reviewed learner's experience on programmes and potential for progression and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
<p>Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Silver</p>	<p>2023</p>	<p>The definition of a Silver TEF award is "Provision is of high quality, and significantly and consistently exceeds the baseline quality threshold expected of UK Higher Education."</p>

				We reviewed learner's experience on programmes and the quality of teaching and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.
Learner satisfaction	79.2%	82.4%	2024	<p>This data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 12.6%.</p> <p>We reviewed the learner experience at the education provider and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
HCPC performance review cycle length	n/a	2028-29	2023-24	The education provider's next interaction with the performance review process is in five years' time. This decision was made in 2023-24.

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programme(s), the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants –**
 - The education provider has an Admissions process and marketing guidelines. There is an education provider approach with regards to open days, school and college liaison teams, admission support and events. Learner support teams help with the admissions process, such as accommodation.
 - The education provider undertakes a full year of marketing and support for applicants before programmes start.
 - Applicants are given information about the programme and careers through all the policies and processes in place. They are also provided with access to social media platforms which have information about the campus and learner life.
 - If applicants meet the entry criteria, they are offered an interview. This allows the programme team and applicant to determine their suitability for the programme. It also allows them to make an informed decision about studying with the education provider.
 - The education provider runs an HCPC-approved apprenticeship programme. The proposed programme aligns with the existing apprenticeship programme. The programme team works with organisations through stakeholder consultations to identify sources of apprenticeship applications. The employer / client contract will stipulate admissions requirements.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**
 - The education provider sets out the English language requirements within the Admissions policy. This applies to all allied health professions (AHP) programmes. These requirements can be found in the programme specification, the programme-specific webpage, and the prospectus.
 - The education provider sets out the English language requirements within the institutional admissions policy which applies to all programmes. The requirement for the proposed programme is International English Language Testing System (IELTS) 6.5 or equivalent, with a minimum of 6.5 in all bands, as outlined in the HCPC standards of proficiency.
 - As part of the admissions policy, applicants undertake a disclosure and barring service (DBS) check to ensure good character.
 - As part of the Admissions policy, applicants undertake an occupational health check. This is to ensure good individual health and wellbeing.

- The placement team and programme team monitors, and checks compliance related to these, as well as mandatory training. All requirements are checked throughout the admissions and post-enrolment processes. Learners are required to sign an honorary contract at the point of enrolment and agree to uphold and adhere to education provider and professional body ethical and professional requirements. All requirements are checked throughout the admissions and post-enrolment processes.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**
 - The Accreditation of Prior Learning (AP(E)L) and Credit Transfer policy highlights the requirements and process of transfer of credits. Information also appears in the learner handbook and programme specification document.
 - Applicants meet with the programme lead to discuss AP(E)L options. The programme lead ensures prior learning maps to the current programme learning outcomes. The outcome of this process determines whether, and at what point on a programme, the applicant will be able to AP(E)L onto.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) –**
 - The education provider is committed to providing a learning environment that values equality, diversity, and inclusion.
 - Equality and diversity activity is managed through committees such as Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) and the Access and Participation Plan implementation group. These ensure processes are monitored and are informed by the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and implemented via formal policies, guidance, and plans. The responsibility of equality and diversity extends beyond the education provider to also include all collaborative partnerships and stakeholders.
 - Programmes are committed to providing an inclusive environment from the point of application through to alumni.
 - Faculty activities are reflected in the access and participation plan and EDI plan. These are monitored through the faculty executive team and the University Access and Participation lead. This is to ensure action plans are monitored and supported for successful learner progression and completion.
 - The programme team collaborate with practice-based learning providers to ensure learners have an equal experience throughout their practice-based learning. They have practice education debrief sessions

and learner voice meetings, and personal academic tutor support, to allow for discussion about EDI.

- The faculty Practice Learning Forum (PLF) is attended by and has representation from all AHP programmes. This forum is used to discuss, and problem-solve relevant EDI actions. The learner experience committees at faculty- and education provider-level ensure actions are monitored and actioned appropriately.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹ –**
 - The education provider's Quality Assurance Framework monitors, reviews and enhances academic standards and the quality of teaching and learning. This is informed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) UK Quality code.
 - There are a range of committees, such as Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) who work to implement the quality assurance framework. There are also processes such as Quality Improvement Plan (QulP) to ensure the delivery of provision is validated and is maintained at the expected level.
 - Quality checks happen through the external examiner. There is a process in place for a response and action plan from the programme team to the external examiner if required. Further feedback is gathered from service user and carer involvement, as well as learner and partner feedback.
 - The Northampton Quality Assurance Framework ensures that only those who successfully complete the programme are eligible to join the HCPC register. Quality assurance processes ensure the standards of awards given are appropriate, learners have suitable opportunities to meet the threshold standards, and the expectations of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) are met. The quality assurance process includes validations and periodic subject reviews which are overseen by PSRBs. The education provider's degree outcomes statement, in response to the UK Standing Committees for

¹ This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

Quality Assessment, provides assurance they meet its ongoing conditions for registration.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Sustainability of provision –**

- Long-term sustainability is considered through the validation process, and a budget is set. This considers staffing and resource requirements against the planned curriculum and anticipated learner numbers. Learner numbers and programme viability are considered through business planning with Development Approval Forms (DAF) submitted to the leadership team prior to programme development and approval.
- Faculty annual portfolio reviews evaluate programmes' ongoing sustainability. Any recommendations are actioned as required.
- The programme team collaborate with practice-based learning partners to develop and promote a wide variety of practice-based learning opportunities.
- The education provider formally begins discussions with employers once the programme has been internally validated.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Effective programme delivery –**

- The programme is managed through the Governance and Management process. This ensures the financial and resource sustainability of each programme is monitored through a range of reviews, for example, annual portfolio reviews.
- The Line Management process ensures the person holding full responsibility for the programme is sufficiently qualified and experienced to ensure the quality of the programme required. Teaching staff must be registered with the HCPC.
- In terms of the proposed programme, the education provider collaborates with stakeholders in areas such as programme structure. They obtain stakeholder feedback to inform and refine programme design and delivery. The education provider also learns from best practice.
- The annual Personal Development Review (PDR) process identifies key objectives based on individual and faculty priorities and includes actions to support this. Additional staff development is required to support apprenticeship provision, mainly regarding systems, regulations and processes. The education provider has support for this from the Apprenticeship Manager and the wider team, the knowledge and expertise of the faculty's Deputy Dean, and peer support.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Effective staff management and development –**
 - All academics are expected to engage in continuous professional development (CPD) appropriate to their programme and are allocated 25 days of scholarly activity.
 - The education provider has an internal CPD programme, which supports academic staff. The Annual Personal Development Review process identifies key objectives based on individual and faculty priorities, with actions to support this. Staff are supported to engage with CPD required to maintain their registration. A process is in place for staff to request and attend both internal and external CPD opportunities.
 - Academics on the programme team have either the fellowship of the higher education academy or are working towards this.
 - The induction and probation process ensures new staff are supported within the institution. They are set objectives in line with the programme requirements to manage and identify training needs. The programme team has an in-service training and supervision process to maintain effective staff development.
 - Additional staff development will be provided to support the requirements of apprenticeship provision.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
 - Partnerships are evaluated and monitored for fit for purpose through the institutional audit process every two years. Learner, partner, and External Examiner feedback is captured through evaluation mechanisms and action plans are developed from this. The education provider uses the Faculty Escalation process where immediate action needs to be addressed.
 - The education provider holds regular meetings with organisations such as practice-based learning partners, integrated care systems, and NHS England.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality –**
 - Regular and effective monitoring and evaluation of programmes follow the education provider's quality and standard mechanisms. They are conducted through processes such as External Examiner reporting. They are evaluated through committees such as Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC).
 - Internal scrutiny of External Examiner applications ensures they have the appropriate qualifications and experience to ensure the quality of programmes.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
 - The Faculty Escalation process allows learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. This process is completed with the Practice Escalation process, where all incidents are recorded so they can be monitored. Actions are put in place where required. Governance processes monitor actions at faculty level through the Faculty Placement Committee.
 - The faculty has an audit system for approving and ensuring quality within practice-based learning. All practice-based learning environments are evaluated and monitored through this system. The audit system includes an initial audit of the learning environment. The education provider also uses External Examiner feedback and communication with stakeholders through partnership meetings and placement steering group meetings to ensure quality assurance. The system applies for degree apprenticeship programmes and direct entry programmes.
 - The programme team ensure Practice Educator training is provided to all Practice Educators. The training provides them with the knowledge and understanding of quality assurance processes, practice assessment processes and learning outcomes. Practice Educators have access to Pebblepad, the system the programme uses for practice assessment information, and APTM, an apprenticeship management system. Key documents such as Placement Handbook are kept on this site. The system applies for degree apprenticeship programmes and direct entry programmes.
 - Practice educators will be offered additional CPD by the programme team twice yearly. This training is informed via surveys, discussion at placement forums and feedback from learners. All Practice Educators

will be provided with bespoke training to ensure they have the knowledge and understanding of the new programme.

- Before practice-based learning, information is shared between the practice organisation, Practice Educator and the learner in a timely manner. This is so all parties have adequate information to support and prepare them for practice-based learning. The system applies for degree apprenticeship programmes and direct entry programmes.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Learner involvement –**

- Learners are involved in the development of programmes. They co-create new programmes and are involved in amending existing programmes through the Creating Aligned Interactive Educational Resource Opportunities (CAIeRO) process.
- Ongoing learner involvement includes mid-module evaluations and end of year programme assessment. These highlight areas of satisfaction and areas for development. These are actioned by the programme. Student Voice meetings allow learners to work with the programme team on improvements to the programme. There are cross-cohort Student Voice meetings to capture feedback and discuss issues between all cohorts studying a programme.
- Learners feedback through the National Student Survey (NSS). Actions are monitored through Quality Improvement plans at programme, faculty, and institution level.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Service user and carer involvement –**

- Service users and carers are involved throughout the quality assurance process. This includes the development of new and existing programmes through the CAIeRO process. This process is a team approach to programme design through meetings and workshops. The purpose of the CAIeRO process is to provide an environment in which the programme team are supported to design and implement a programme which has a focus on active, participative and collaborative learning.
- Involvement includes the delivery of programme sessions, and assessment.
- Service users and carers feedback throughout the year, share good practice and identify areas for personal development.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.

- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support –**
 - The education provider ensures there are effective services in place to support the wellbeing and learning needs of all learners. For example, Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services Team (ASSIST), who provide disability and additional needs support, mental health and wellbeing support, study assistance, mentoring and advice. Learners who engage with the ASSIST team receive an Academic Inclusion Report (AIR) which details the requirements for the learner and monitors the effectiveness of the support. The academic team then works with the learner to ensure appropriate adjustments are made.
 - Other elements of support for learners include:
 - Programme Leader support
 - Student Union support
 - Academic Advisors
 - Pastoral and faith support
 - In addition, the degree apprenticeship programme has a dedicated academic contact for learner support.
 - Learners are supported to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users, by following the Escalation process. Concerns through this process are received by programme teams who action, respond and support as appropriate.
 - Learners complete consent training which provides them with knowledge and understanding about acquiring verbal consent from service users prior to any intervention.
 - Learners can make complaints by following the education provider's Complaints Policy. These are dealt with through the Student Conduct, Complaints and Appeal team (SCCA).
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
 - All learners must complete an annual self-declaration to ensure their fitness to study and suitability of character to the programme.
 - Ongoing suitability is assessed through practice-based learning, using the Common Placement Assessment form, and Practice Educator and service user feedback. Learner's conduct is monitored through ongoing assessment within the programmes' taught sessions.

- The learner's role and responsibilities in relation to character, health, and suitability whilst studying are captured through the Honorary Contract all learners must sign.
- The emerging concerns process can be used to raise concerns about a learner's conduct, character, and health. If escalation is required, concerns are considered through the fitness to study and practice processes.
- The degree apprenticeship programme will have an additional employer / learner contract to ensure that responsibilities are being met by all involved. The education provider noted this will be similar to current contracts already used in the Faculty but has been made specific to podiatry apprentices.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**
 - The Interprofessional Education Strategy outlines the education provider's approach to IPL/E. IPL/E is embedded at all levels throughout programmes. Programmes have shared modules within the curriculum.
 - The IPL/E lead for the faculty evaluates sessions from the perspectives of a learner, tutor and service user for quality improvement and enhancement. Feedback is also requested at programme level through Student Voice meetings and session evaluations.
 - Learning outcomes relating to IPL/E are embedded at all levels and are identified within module specifications. IPL/E takes place on campus and in practice-based learning.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
 - The Quality Assurance framework monitors all activity to ensure it is informed by the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion.
 - Programme teams are given the skills and knowledge through EDI training, to ensure all learners have equal opportunity to have a positive learning experience and are supported to progress and complete their programmes.
 - The Business Intelligence Management Information (BIMI) unit collects programme data in relation to protected characteristics. This identifies any disparities between groups of learners, which are addressed through actions and any impact monitored through quality processes.
 - Programme teams encourage learner involvement in professional body representative groups who focus on EDI principles in practice.

- The system applies to degree apprenticeship programmes and direct entry programmes.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity –**
 - The education provider's Quality Assurance framework ensures assessments provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learner's progression and achievement. All assessment practices are monitored to ensure objectivity. For example, by internal and external panel members at validation and revalidation events.
 - Internal quality assurance mechanisms such as assessment moderation and standardisation meetings monitor the objectivity of the assessment process. This ensures learners are supported to achieve module and programme learning outcomes. Within the programme design processes, feedback is gained from multiple stakeholders to ensure assessments are appropriate and effective and to ensure inclusive practice.
 - Exam boards monitor learner progress and completion of programmes. This is overseen by External Examiners. Advice offered by External Examiners to enhance the assessment and feedback process for all assessments, including placements, are responded to by programme teams and monitored at faculty level.
 - Practice educators receive training to ensure an objective, reliable and fair measure of learner progression and achievement within practice-based learning. During practice-based learning, a Visiting Tutor will meet the Practice Educator and learner to ensure the expectations and marking criteria are being implemented. The Visiting Tutor can provide help to ensure there are adequate learning opportunities and action plans for development of the learner in place. The Visiting Tutor also moderates learner evidence.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Progression and achievement –**
 - The education provider's external and internal quality assurance mechanisms are used to ensure learners' eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

- Learners sign an honorary contract which states their mandatory attendance requirements. This is monitored by programme teams and recorded in the 'My Engagement' online application. Learners who are not engaging are supported and reminded about mandatory attendance to meet required competencies. This is conducted through the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) support system. PATs also signpost learners to the support mechanisms, for example, library and learning support.
- The Student Handbook and Programme Handbook identify the requirements which must be met to enable learners to apply for HCPC registration. Learners are made aware of all supplementary regulations and PSRBs in the Programme Handbook, so they are aware of the requirements for progression and completion.
- The Programme Leader or the Academic Tutor analyse learner data, such as successful module completion, to ensure all required competencies are achieved. The Programme Specification and Student Handbook specify the requirement for progression and achievement throughout the programme. Data such as progression, achievement, engagement, and module evaluations are used to inform the programme team of common themes to be addressed to support progression and completion. The programme team respond to feedback and this data to implement appropriate strategies to support progression and achievement.
- For the degree apprenticeship, progression and achievement monitoring will be a key component for discussion and review at tri-partite meetings. Progression and achievement monitoring will be a key component for discussion and review at these meetings.
- The End Point Assessment (EPA) requirements are integrated throughout the programme. The EPA will begin when the learner passes the EPA gateway. This is expected to be reached on completion of the final module of the programme and before the Universities examination board.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Appeals –**
 - The Complaints and Appeals policy allows learners to appeal. These arrangements are in line with the QAA code of practice.
 - Information relating to the process is made available to learners through the education provider's website and NILE. Appeals are monitored through the Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) and the Undergraduate Reflective Board.
 - Actions to mitigate and reduce appeals are monitored and reflected upon at these committees. Actions are also monitored by External Examiners to ensure processes are robust.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1, due to the clear alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- Staffing
 - Programme team, eg Senior Lecturers
 - Senior leadership team, eg Head of Subject
 - Administrative support, eg Faculty Managers
- The education provider has considered workload planners to ensure there are academic staff in place to support both the proposed programme and the already approved direct entry programme.
- Physical resources, such as the Podiatry clinic, lecture rooms, simulation spaces, and library. These are already in place.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Section 3: Programme-level assessment

Programmes considered through this assessment

Programme name	Mode of study	Profession (including modality) / entitlement	Proposed learner number, and frequency	Proposed start date
BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Apprenticeship Route)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist	Four learners, one cohort	29/09/2025

Stage 2 assessment – provider submission

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet programme level standards for each programme. They supplied information about how each standard was met, including a rationale and links to supporting information via a mapping document.

Data / intelligence considered

We also considered intelligence from others (eg prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England (Midlands) – we did not receive information which we considered would impact on this assessment.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their submission. 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 met our standards.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the [Findings section](#).

Quality theme 1 – how the education provider ensures learners who complete the programme are able to meet the SOPs for podiatry

Area for further exploration: The education provider informed us in the SOPs mapping document, modules Advancing Clinical Practice and Sports Podiatry, ensured SOP 7.2 will be met through teaching and assessment. SOP 7.2 dealt with English language requirements:

- At the point of registration, chiropodists / podiatrists must be able to: communicate in English to the required standard for their profession (equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5).

However, the visitors were unsure how the learning outcomes of these modules ensured this SOP would be met. They considered it was unclear how the learning outcomes in the two modules addressed the requirements to meet SOP 7.2. They were subsequently unsure whether learners would meet all the SOPs on completion of the programme and be able to practice safely and effectively once they enter the profession. They therefore sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the

most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us they had revised the SOPs mapping document to accurately reflect where English language is taught and assessed. The mapping document showed SOP 7.2 is met through learning outcomes in four modules at level 6: The Foot At Risk, Paediatric Podiatry, Advancing Clinical Practice and Sports Podiatry.

They stated learners receive structured feedback on verbal and written communication during clinical sessions, simulation, case-based discussions and reflective practice. They also receive feedback from peers and tutors in small group teaching. The education provider informed us this enables learners to amend their professional language and interpersonal skills.

The visitors understood small group teaching and blended learning enabled interactive learning and discussions, to support how to articulate clinical reasoning. Communication was assessed in practice-based learning through observation, practice educator feedback and reflection.

The education provider informed us within module Advancing Clinical Practice only, learners complete a reflective portfolio / clinical workbook. They added communication competencies are met as learners document professional interactions, patient consultation and reflection.

Within modules The Foot At Risk and Advancing Clinical Practice, learners are assessed through written exams on factors such as academic writing and case study analysis to ensure professional and technical use of language. The education provider informed us three of the four modules involved learners undertaking a spoken viva as part of their assessments.

The visitors were satisfied the evidence demonstrated how the education provider ensures learners meet SOP 7.2. They had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.

Quality theme 2 – how the education provider ensures training for practice educators means they are prepared to work with, and support, learners

Area for further exploration: The education provider informed us all employers were required to sign an agreement which outlined the requirements for the effective education of learners. Audit processes and tripartite meetings ensured there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff. As part of the audit process, the programme team checked practice educators are registered and have been appropriately trained to support learners. However, the visitors could not find information about the training the education provider expected practice educators to undertake to work with and support learners. They therefore sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us practice educators are expected to complete the Royal College of Podiatry's (RCP) Practice Educator Module or the E-learning for Health training. This training is verified by the programme lead. The education provider also provided apprenticeship mentorship training for practice educators. This covered the knowledge and understanding of working with learners in practice-based learning. We were informed further practice educator training is provided every quarter of the year. The education provider informed us any training needs for practice educators is identified in quarterly tripartite meetings. These are then addressed in meetings between the education provider and practice educators.

The visitors were satisfied the evidence demonstrated how practice educators are prepared to work with and support learners. They had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** – this standard is covered through institution-level assessment
- **SET 2: Programme admissions** –
 - Learners must undertake a disclosure and barring service and occupational health clearance through the education provider, as part of the admissions procedure. Levels of English language requirements adhere to the standard required at point of completion of studies. The academic requirements are set at a level to ensure appropriate prior learning and achievement is evident. Employers will be involved in the admissions and a joint interview process is undertaken to ensure the applicant meets the criteria of the programme.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
 - Meetings between practice and employer partners and the education provider are held quarterly. Minutes are shared with all practice and employer partners to ensure those unable to attend are kept up to date and have an opportunity to comment. As part of the meetings, the programme team provide updates on topics such as changes and initiatives. Practice-based learning partners and employer partners can comment, ask questions and provide feedback. Tripartite meetings provide opportunities for employer and education provider collaboration and discussion with quarterly meetings.
 - The education provider works with employers to agree the expectations of practice-based learning capacity. This includes whether there is effective provision for an appropriate range of practice-based learning experiences. The audit process also captures the capacity for placing relating to qualified supervision, learning and support.
 - The programme team has a diverse skill set and range of backgrounds. The education provider undertakes workload capacity reviews via workload planners, to ensure appropriate workloads and staffing against programme demands. Scholarly hours are allocated to ensure staff can participate in CPD and remain up to date with current research and practice. There is administrative support within the education provider and faculty to support the proposed programme.
 - The programme team consists of subject specialists, for example in musculoskeletal podiatry and skin surgery. The education provider has a visiting professor for Podiatric Surgical Theory who enhances the undergraduate curriculum to prepare them for postgraduate study and / or employment.
 - Learners will have access to the University suite of learner support across various departments. This includes IT, learning development and library services. The programme has a range of facilities such as simulation facilities and clinical resources. Learners will have access to equipment such as anatomical models and an ultrasound scanner.

- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
 - The education provider has mapped to ensure learning outcomes meet both HCPC standards of proficiency and apprenticeship standards. They have sought external employer feedback. The programme team designed the programme through the CAleRO process. This process helps programme teams design effective, blended learning which addresses the needs of learners and employers and aligns with academic regulations and quality approval processes. This process was undertaken to ensure the curriculum was appropriate. This included stakeholder engagement. Discussions included topics such as delivery model, integrations with existing modules, and learner experience. Knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) were mapped to ensure learners met the standards of proficiency. As discussed in [quality theme 1](#), the education provider demonstrated SOP 7.2 is taught through learning outcomes in modules The Foot At Risk, Paediatric Podiatry, Advancing Clinical Practice and Sports Podiatry.
 - Professional behaviours and the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics have been mapped against the curriculum learning outcomes. For example, module Clinical Reasoning and Professional Issues focuses on these Standards with learning outcomes. Learning outcome two of this module is 'Identify and employ leadership and communication skills appropriately'.
 - The programme team follows curriculum guidance set out by the RCP. They are also involved within the RCP's education committee and the updating of core curriculum. The programme has been mapped against the apprenticeship KSBs and SOPs.
 - The programme team undertake regular CPD as part of their practice and HCPC registration, to ensure they stay up to date with current practice. The education provider holds meetings with practice partners to gain feedback to ensure the needs of current practice are being met. The education provider's internal quality and standards and review processes, such as periodic subject review, ensure the curriculum is reviewed and updated if needed.
 - The education provider has integrated practice and theory through the curriculum design, throughout the programme. This is to ensure development to support the achievement of the learning outcomes. The programme has a mix of theory and practice modules where the theory aligns to practical application. At all levels of the programme, the education provider teaches theory alongside practice. This enables theory taught sessions to be put into practice contemporaneously in a clinical setting. The apprenticeship route will have a split of on the job and off the job hours enabling theory taught to be put into practice on the job, each week. This is a part of the employer agreement so the education provider is teaching the theory, and the employer can offer the practice-based learning required to meet module and programme

level outcomes. Where employers cannot, the education provider will have an agreement for them to be released to the education provider's teaching clinic to ensure theory is integrated with practice.

- Specific learning and teaching strategies are outlined within the programme handbook and specification documents, to ensure effective achievement of learning outcomes so learners meet the SOPs upon graduating. For example, multi-professional team working, tutorials / workshops, and independent study. The proposed programme has been designed with apprenticeship learners on the job and off the job commitments in mind. Theory is timetabled for two days, so learners are not disadvantaged and can benefit from the same face to face learning activities and opportunities as learners on the direct entry programme.
 - The programme has a blended learning pedagogy to support learners in being active participants in their studies. Autonomous and reflective thinking are core principles of the programme's mission statement and learning outcomes. The programme's teaching and structure promotes case-based problem solving. Practical modules have increasing autonomy within practice settings as learners progress. This is reflected within the assessment strategy with reflective case-based vivas, unseen patient assessment and case-based examinations.
 - Evidence based practice is a key thread within the programme's mission statement, learning outcomes and modules. Practice-based learning modules are underpinned by evidence-based practice, which is also reflected within the theory taught modules. The programme has specific research focused modules at all levels of the programme.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**
 - Practice-based learning settings are reviewed every two years by the programme team. If concerns are raised by learners, or if there are significant changes to staffing or the trust, this may result in a review sooner than the two-year period.
 - Practice-based learning is central to the proposed programme. It is embedded across all levels of study and ensures learners gain the necessary skills and competencies. Employers support elements of on-the-job practice-based learning, so will receive guidance, via programme handbooks and module specifications, and training to support their role as workplace supervisors. Monitoring will include quarterly employer visits, audits of practice settings, and formal tripartite reviews involving the learner, employer, and academic tutor. These ensure the programme meets quality standards and there is consistency in practice opportunities.
 - To manage variations in the scope of practice across different employment settings, the education provider requires employers to sign an agreement which ensures learners access the full range of competencies outlined in the apprenticeship standard. Learners

maintain a practice portfolio which is verified by their employer and academic tutor. This demonstrates progression and competence across all required domains.

- The apprenticeship programme will have a wide and varied set of practice-based learning opportunities. It will offer weekly opportunities for practice-based learning and integration of theory into practice. Practice-based modules ensure exposure to the full breadth of patient demographics required as a podiatrist, including general care, paediatric and nail surgery cases.
- The education provider will review existing competency to provide individualised learning plans for learners. Suitable settings are provided by the employer and are agreed within the education provider's apprenticeship services agreement. If the full scope cannot be fulfilled by the employer, learners receive additional supervised practice-based learning in the education provider's specialist teaching clinics.
- All employers are required to sign the apprenticeship services agreement. This outlines the requirements for effective education of the learner. As part of it, the agreement identifies whether there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff available to support learners. There will be an initial review the outcomes of which will then be monitored via ongoing audit processes and tripartite meetings. Through ongoing stakeholder meetings, the programme team are assured of any changes in Trust / partner workforce and qualified supervisors to ensure learners are appropriately supported.
- The apprenticeship services agreement ensures staff involved in practice-based learning are appropriately qualified. This is monitored via ongoing audit processes and tripartite meetings. As part of the audit process, the programme team check practice educators are on the Register and have been appropriately trained to support learners. As detailed in [quality theme 2](#), practice educators are expected to complete the RCP's Practice Educator Module or the E-learning for Health training. The education provider also provided apprenticeship mentorship training for practice educators. We were informed further practice educator training is provided every quarter of the year.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

SET 6: Assessment –

- The assessment strategy and design has been aligned to the SOPs through the CAeIRO process which helped construct learning outcomes at a programme and modular level. SOPs mapping and module descriptors show us how learners meet learning outcomes and the SOPs. Quality assurance processes ensure assessments are relevant, rigorous and robust. As an integrated apprenticeship the programme requires learners to meet the end point assessment and the same requirements as the existing curriculum and direct entry learners, as approved and ratified by the module board process. As

discussed in [quality theme 1](#), the education provider demonstrated SOP 7.2 is assessed through learning outcomes in modules The Foot At Risk, Paediatric Podiatry, Advancing Clinical Practice and Sports Podiatry.

- Learners are assessed on professional behaviour throughout the programme. The assessment strategy ensures this through research-based modules that require criticality of ethical processes and standards. Practice modules assess professionalism, conduct, and ethical patient management.
- Assessment types include critical reflections, vivas, presentations, exams and case-based examinations. Practice-based learning will be assessed through a combination of workplace-based assessments such as direct observation, and academic assignments which integrate practical experiences. Assessment design has been designed with the education provider's learning development team. The education provider has ensured assessment methods are suitable to measure the learning outcomes by mapping programme level outcomes to the SOPs, and apprenticeship KSBs to module level outcomes.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: Across the assessment, the visitors noted the standards of education and training were met at a threshold level and as such, recommend the programme is approved. However, they also recognised the education provider had not yet fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme.

The visitors recognised the education provider runs a HCPC-approved degree apprenticeship programme, and there is evidence of policies and processes in place. We also recognised the education provider formally began discussions with employers once the programme was validated internally.

As employers are fundamental to the design, sustainability and delivery of a degree apprenticeship programme, it is important for us to understand this relationship. Through our model, education providers retain overall responsibility, however the nature of degree apprenticeships means there is a much greater role played by the employer than in traditional models of delivery.

As these relationships had not been fully finalised, the visitors also recommend that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake to the programme, to:

- determine which employer(s) are formally involved in the delivery of the programme.
- understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities of the education provider or employer(s), based upon confirmation of the formal relationship.

- if changes have occurred, consider how they may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.

Section 5: Referrals

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

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Referrals to the focused review process

Summary of issue: Across the assessment, the visitors noted the standards of education and training were met at a threshold level and as such, recommend the programme is approved. However, they also recognised the education provider had not yet fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme.

The visitors recognised the education provider runs a HCPC-approved degree apprenticeship programme, and there is evidence of policies and processes in place. We also recognised the education provider can formally begin discussions with employers once the programme is validated.

As employers are fundamental to the design, sustainability and delivery of a degree apprenticeship programme, it is important for us to understand this relationship. Through our model, education providers retain overall responsibility, however the nature of degree apprenticeships means there is a much greater role played by the employer than in traditional models of delivery.

As these relationships had not been fully finalised, the visitors also recommend that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake to the programme, to:

- determine which employer(s) are formally involved in the delivery of the programme.
- understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities of the education provider or employer(s), based upon confirmation of the formal relationship.

- if changes have occurred, consider how they may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

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

- All standards are met, and therefore the programme should be approved
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this 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 approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	The University of Northampton		
Case reference	CAS-01581-D7S0X5	Lead visitors	Sharon Wiener-Ogilvie and Wendy Smith
Quality of provision			
Through this assessment, we have noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The education provider has not fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme. As these relationships have not been fully finalised, the visitors recommended that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake, to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ determine which employer(s) are involved in the delivery of the programme;▪ understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities, based upon confirmation of the education provider and employer relationship; and▪ if so, consider how the changes may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.• The programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.			
Facilities provided			
Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staffing<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Programme team, eg Senior Lecturers○ Senior leadership team, eg Head of Subject○ Administrative support, eg Faculty Managers• The education provider has considered workload planners to ensure there are academic staff in place to support both the proposed programme and the already approved direct entry programme.• Physical resources, such as the Podiatry clinic, lecture rooms, simulation spaces, and library. These are already in place.			
Programmes			

Programme name	Mode of study	First intake date	Nature of provision
BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Apprenticeship Route)	FT (Full time)	29/09/2025	Apprenticeship

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Podiatry	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/01/2002
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2002
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	PT (Part time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2002
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy - Apprenticeship Route	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2015
MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/01/2021
Supplementary and Independent Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/08/2016