

Approval process quality report

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| Education provider | University of Essex |
| Name of programme(s) | BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Apprenticeship) BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Apprenticeship) |
| Date Assessment commenced | 03/11/2021 |
| Visitor recommendation made | 16/03/2022 |
| Case reference | CAS-01033-Y1Z3B9 |

Summary of findings from this assessment

This is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programmes detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

The outcomes of this process were as follows:

- Further Stage 1 assessment was not required based on the new programmes being proposed for delivery.
- The visitors recommended the programmes be approved as all programme level standards were met through their Stage 2 assessment.

The Education and Training Committee will now meet to consider the visitors recommendations and make a decision regarding programme approval.

The areas we cover in this report

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Section 1: Background information

Who we are

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.

Our standards

We approve institutions 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 standards are divided into two levels based on their relevance to the institution and programme(s). The following considerations were made when splitting standards between institution and programme level:

- Where accountability best sits, with either the accountable person for the institution or programme
- How the standard is worded, with references to the education provider and processes often best sitting at the institution level, and references to the programme or profession often best sitting at the programme level
- We have preferred seeking assurance at the institution level, to fit with our intention to put the institution at the centre of our quality assurance model.

Our approach to quality assuring education

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of institution 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
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards

Institutions 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

We take a staged approach to quality assurance, as we need to understand practices which will support delivery of all programmes within an institution, prior to assessing the programme level detail. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we assess to be assured 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 process we will initially review the proposal and then design our assessment based on the issues we find. As such the assessment methods will be different based on the issues which arise in each case.

How we make 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 of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make 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 meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

Section 2: Our assessment

Stage 1 assessment: The institution

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|--------------------|---------------------|
| Education provider | University of Essex |
| Key contact | Chris Green |

This institution is well established with HCPC and currently delivers approved programmes in:

- Occupational therapy
- Practitioner psychology (clinical)
- Physiotherapy
- Biomedical science
- Speech and language therapy
- Supplementary / independent prescribing

As part of the provider's definition of their institution, they have defined the policies, procedures and processes that apply to the programmes delivered within it. These relate to the institution level standards we set which ensure the following areas are managed effectively:

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| Admissions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information for applicants• Assessing English language, character, and health• Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)• Equality, diversity and inclusion |
| Governance, leadership and management | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective programme delivery• Effective staff management• Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level |
| Quality, monitoring and evaluation | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic components, including how curricula are kept up to date• Practice components, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments• Learner involvement• Service user and carer involvement |
| Learners | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support• Ongoing professional suitability• Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)• Equality, diversity and inclusion |
| Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Objectivity• Progression and achievement• Appeals |

Assurance that institution level standards are met

As part of this stage we considered how the proposed programmes fit into the named institution by considering any notable changes to the policies, procedures and processes related to the areas above.

We considered how the proposed programmes are assimilated with the management of existing approved programmes in the institution. We determined the proposed programmes would be managed in way that was consistent with the definition of their institution. On this basis, we were satisfied it is appropriate for the programme to sit as part of the University of Essex and take assurance the institution level standards will continue to be met by its introduction.

Stage 2 assessment: The programmes

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|---|---|
| Education provider | University of Essex |
| Accountable person (for the programmes) | Daniel Underdown |
| Programmes | BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Apprenticeship) |
| Profession | Speech and language therapist |
| Mode of study | Part-time |
| Learner numbers | 30 |
| Type of programme | Bachelor of Science |
| Qualification level | Undergraduate |
| Start date | October 2023 |

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|---|--|
| Education provider | University of Essex |
| Accountable person (for the programmes) | Nikki Williamson |
| Programmes | BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Apprenticeship) |
| Profession | Occupational therapist |
| Mode of study | Part-time |
| Learner numbers | 30 |
| Type of programme | Bachelor of Science |
| Qualification level | Undergraduate |
| Start date | October 2022 |

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.

We also considered data regarding the institution. We did not receive information from the professional body.

| Performance area | Data point / comparison | Benchmark | Data | Score |
|---------------------------------|--|-----------|-------|-------------|
| Performance indicator | Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers | 320 | 293 | -0.01 |
| Performance indicator | Aggregation of percentage not continuing | 7.7 | 8.3 | -0.01 |
| Performance indicator | Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study | 91.4 | 92.3 | 0.01 |
| Teaching quality | TEF award | N/A | Gold | 0.0 |
| Learner / graduate satisfaction | NSS overall satisfaction score (Q27) | 83.68 | 80.38 | -0.05 |
| Total | | | | 0.95 |

Visitors appointed to undertake this assessment

We appointed the following panel to assess the above information against our programme level standards:

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|---------------------|--|
| Registrant visitors | Caroline Sykes – Speech and language therapist |
| | Patricia McClure – Occupational therapist |
| Education Officer | Niall Gooch |

Assessment of the proposal

Initial review:

- The visitors reviewed the education provider's submission and considered their approach to each standard.
- The visitors communicated that they had certain questions to explore through a quality activity.
- Following the finalisation of areas to explore, we determined the most appropriate quality activity to undertake this investigation.

Quality activity:

We design our assessment to be proportionate and appropriate to the issues identified and to seek input from relevant stakeholders when necessary.

We sent an email to the education provider. This was judged to be the most appropriate level of quality activity because the issues being clarified were not complex and could be resolved by the provision of a narrative. We requested further information around the following areas:

- Capacity in practice-based learning:
 - Has confirmation of sufficient placement offers been secured to ensure the apprentices will have a diverse range of placement experiences? This was because the visitors did not see evidence relating to the specific issue of breadth of experience in placement. This is related to SET 5.2, concerning the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning.
- Resources for learners:
 - How are the resources supporting assessments accessed by learners? The visitors did not fully understand how the education provider would ensure that all necessary information was in place for learners for assessment purposes. This was related to SET 6.5, which requires education providers to ensure that assessment methods measure the learning outcomes appropriately.
- Adequate staff in practice-based learning:
 - How do you confirm the number of appropriate qualified and experienced staff in practice-based learning? The visitors were not clear on how the education provider would check that the processes in place for ensuring sufficient suitable staff were working effectively. This was linked to SET 5.5, which focuses on adequate numbers of staff in placement settings.

Summary of visitor findings

SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register

The visitors considered that Level 6 was an appropriate level of qualification.

On this basis, the visitors considered that the education provider's approach to meeting this standard was appropriate to meet the standards.

SET 2: Programme admissions

The evidence supplied to the visitors included a document outlining the admissions procedures. These were very similar to the procedures and approaches used on the existing approved programmes at the education provider. Applicants were expected to have an A-level points score similar to other comparable programmes at the

education provider, and to progress through a similar application process involving interviews. The monitoring of equality and diversity through this admissions process followed the university policy, which involved centralised collection of data fed back to individual programmes, with necessary actions taken subsequently.

These processes had already been considered and approved by previous HCPC processes. With the information supplied, and with the knowledge that these procedures and approaches were currently in use, the visitors considered that they were appropriate when applied to the existing programmes, and so that the new programmes met the standards.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership

A programme description and handbook for each programme were included in the submission. The visitors considered that the management structures, the rationale and senior support for the programmes, and the organisation of the programmes set out in this evidence was appropriate. As noted above, they were closely akin to those already in place for the other programmes in the institution. Curriculum vitae's were provided for staff and these individuals and their time commitments were considered to be appropriate for the delivery of the programmes. The visitors were also aware that the education provider was an experienced provider of HCPC-approved programmes.

Therefore, we were satisfied that standards are met in this area. On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 4: Programme design and delivery

Discussions with the programme team prior to the stage 2 submission established that the design and delivery of the programmes was closely aligned with existing HCPC-approved provision at the provider.

From their review, the visitors considered that the structure and approaches of the programmes were appropriate, and that the learning outcomes were appropriately aligned with the standards of proficiency and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. They were satisfied that the curriculum content and the inter-professional education would prepare learners appropriately for practice.

Therefore, we were satisfied that standards are met in this area, and there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 5: Practice-based learning

As part of the stage 2 standards of education and training mapping, the education provider cited the programmes' handbooks, correspondence with practice partners and staff CVs. This was as evidence to show that they were able to provide a good structure, duration and range of practice-based learning, and that the practice educators in place were appropriate and sufficient in number. They also noted that the practice-based learning for this programme would be integrated into existing approved institution frameworks.

In their quality activity, the visitors asked for clarification over email around two issues: how the education provider ensured appropriate coverage of practice educators, and how they made sure that placements were broad enough in the subjects covered. The education provider submitted answers to these queries, showing they had a specific process for keeping track of practice educator numbers and suitability, and for regular review of how practice-based learning was aligned with learning outcomes. The visitors were satisfied that the standards were met.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 6: Assessment

Stage 2 documentation gave the visitors a clear understanding of how assessment would work on the programmes, and indicated that it would be modelled on the existing approved approaches. The visitors had a clear understanding from the programme leaders' handbooks of how assessment would enable learners to meet the SOPs and the SCPEs and to progress through the programme. They were satisfied that the assessment would be effective, based on the diverse range and spacing of the assessments.

In a quality activity, via email, the visitors queried how the education provider ensured that the learners had all the necessary access to materials that would support them in completing their assessment. The education provider sent a narrative explaining how all learners were supported in this area, which the visitors considered met their concerns.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

Section 3: The visitors' recommendations

Based on these findings the visitors made the following recommendations to the Education and Training Committee:

Programme approval

The programmes are recommended for approval, without conditions.

Section 4: Committee decision on approval

- We will record the decision of the Education and Training Committee here following their meeting on 31 March 2022.