Performance review process report

University of Stirling, 2018 - 2021

Executive summary

- A 5-year monitoring period was advised by the visitors following their review. This education provider shall next go through Performance Review in academic year 2026-27.
- Visitors identified some areas of good practice and one area that required further investigation via a quality activity.
- The area requiring further investigation was the use of learner feedback to drive learner improvement
- The visitors considered that the education provider's response to the quality activities was good and that they did not have any further concerns or areas for further exploration.
- Areas of good practice identified by the visitors included the education provider's transparent and thorough portfolio; their response to the COVID-19 pandemic; their commitment to engagement with external bodies; and their service user and carer involvement.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This is because this performance review process was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be
Next steps	Subject to the Panel's decision, the education provider's next performance review will be in the 2026-27 academic year.

Included within this report

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.

Education 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 education 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
- Education provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Education 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:

Paul Bates	Lead visitor, Paramedic
Nicola Bowes	Lead visitor, Practitioner Psychologist, Forensic Psychologist
Catherine Rice	Service User Expert Advisor
Niall Gooch	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 5 HCPC-approved programmes across 2 professions and including 2 Prescribing programmes. It is a Higher Education provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2014.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The education 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	Paramedic	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2020
	Practitioner psychologist	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2018
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2021

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to education provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare education 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.

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	207	192	2022	This category is intended to give us an idea of whether recruitment levels match what would be expected. The numbers here are close enough that there are minimal concerns around this data, and the visitors did not consider that there were any issues around enrolment based on their portfolio review.

Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	4%	5%	2019-2020	This figure shows that the education provider had slightly more learners leaving the programmes without completing the qualification than might be expected. However, the visitors did not come across any indications that this reflected issues with the HCPC-approved programmes.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	94%	95%	2019-2020	This figure gives us information about how good the education provider is at preparing learners for further study or the workplace. The fact that the education provider is exceeding its target here suggests that they performed well in this respect during the review period.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A			TEF does not apply for Scottish institutions.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	76.5%	79.6%	2022	The NSS score indicates how learners feel about their experience over a number of areas. The education provider scored above their benchmark and the visitors' review did not raise any issues around learner experience or satisfaction.
HCPC performance review cycle length				N / A as Stirling have not previously been through the performance review process.

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.

<u>Quality theme 1 – evidence of use of learner feedback to drive continuous development</u>

Area for further exploration: The education provider presented examples of how they gather feedback from learners within their submission. These included both formal and formal mechanisms. For example, learners were able to feed back "in real time" during teaching and learning activities. Examples were given of learner feedback to certain changes made during the pandemic, and to other one-off changes

The visitors considered these were good evidence of how the education provider sought learner feedback about amendments to programmes. However, they were not clear from the information reviewed how the education provider ensured that more routine learner feedback about the normal functioning of programmes was translated into action where appropriate. They therefore decided to explore with the education provider how they made consistent use of learner feedback to develop programmes. They sought assurances the education provider is using learner feedback for effectively to ensure the quality of their programmes.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: The panel considered t the most effective way to explore this theme was through an email exchange with the education provider. The areas for exploration were such that additional documentation was sufficient to provide clarity, and additional or in-depth questioning was unlikely to be needed.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider gave further examples of how they have used specific feedback from learners to improve and develop programmes. For example, the paramedic programme made greater use of guest lecturers and subject specialists after learners revealed they had enjoyed the use of these., They had also amended the structure of the modules in a particular year so that learners going into placement had a stronger theoretical grounding.

The visitors looked through these examples and were satisfied that they demonstrated regular and careful responsiveness to learner concerns and feedback. They considered that the education provider had shown that it had a well thought-through and transparent approach to quality assurance for their programmes, because significant changes had been made across their provision during the review

period. This meant that the visitors were confident in the education provider's strong performance in this area.

Section 4: Summary of 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

<u>Quality theme: Institution self-reflection</u>

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability** –
  - The education provider has reflected on their visions to be recognised at an institution which addresses the needs of society. This objective was set out in their Strategic Plan for 2016-21, which covered the review period of 2018-21. The challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic forced to make amendments to their plan and as a result, they developed a new Strategic Plan for the period of 2021-2023.
  - They consider themselves to be in a transitional phase of dealing with the impact of Covid-19 pandemic while ensuring long sustainability. They implemented a plan which embedded requirements for individual programmes to plan carefully and to demonstrate to the education provider's central authorities that their programmes were sustainable. The strategic plan includes a financial modelling linked to ensuring suitability of their provisions and is applicable across all faculties. This informs individual faculty plans and the annual planning process.
  - The visitors reviewed the supporting evidence provided as part of this area. They considered that the plans were appropriately detailed to allow them to be confident that all the HCPC-approved provision at the education provider was sustainable. This was both in terms of finance and in terms of institutional support. The visitors are satisfied the education provider has performed well in this area. They have shown how they continuously plan and have adapted well to unforeseen changes to ensure ongoing stability.
- **Partnerships with other organisations** –
  - The education provider reflected on the criteria that they use for managing relationships with other organisations, and the way in which they manage risks associated with these partnerships. Their approach in this area is governed by the Curriculum Development and Management policy.
  - They note two examples of how their reflection on their approach has improved their delivery. First, their approach helped to ensure that practice hours on the paramedic programme were maintained at an appropriate level, despite problems caused by the COVID-19

pandemic. Second, they were commended by the Nursing and Midwifery Council for close working with relevant partners.

- o The portfolio additionally notes that there is an institutional policy in place to ensure effective working with practice education partners: the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport PLE Approval Audit Policy.
- o The visitors considered that taken together these arrangements had ensured good performance in collaboration during the review period, as they meant that all programmes would have constructive and enduring relationships with relevant partners.

- o **Academic and placement quality** –
- o The portfolio states that the education provider requires regular individual Learning and Teaching Reviews (LTRs) of programmes. A more thorough and outcome-based process is the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR), which took place during the 2020-21 academic year. Documentation of LTRs from the review period and of the 2021 ELIR was provided to the visitors.
- o The provider notes that these processes of internal reflection on their effectiveness have generated recommendations for improvements across the HCPC-regulated provision.
- o The education provider also gave examples of learner feedback on practice-based learning that had been received and were in the process of being actioned as a result of provider reflection.
- o The visitors considered that this constituted good evidence that the education provider had been actively engaged in continuous monitoring of quality on programmes. They considered that the provider's reflection on their performance was good. They were able to view some samples of agreements with practice education providers which supports this view.

- o **Interprofessional education** –
- o The education provider noted through the portfolio that interprofessional learning (IPE) is part of the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport Practice Learning Strategy. This policy requires programmes at the education provider to incorporate IPE. The provider noted that during the review period they had reflected on their approach and developed or implemented IPE in new ways. For example, the practitioner psychology programme was involved in collaborative research projects with local health settings featuring other health professionals. Learners on the paramedic programme had the opportunity to undertake IPE with learners and professionals from sports science. International opportunities for IPE were available through the education provider's participation in the University of Manchester Change Exchange.
- o The visitors considered that performance in this area was strong, as learners across the provision had the chance to learn with and from learners and professionals in other relevant professions.

- o **Service users and carers** –
- o The Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport (FHSS) has the policy, Partnership in Education: A Strategy for Involvement, which lays out how programmes are expected to involve service users and carers. Learners on all programmes are required to gain feedback from service users and carers on all practice-based learning modules.
- o The provider's reflections note that the COVID-19 pandemic created problems for service user and carer engagement. However, they confirmed that they were able to overcome these problems and during the review period service

users and carers were involved in the development of new programmes at the education provider. The provider noted that feedback on various aspects of the programme has been provided by service users and carers, and that an action plan has been created to turn this feedback into action.

- o The view of the service user expert advisor was that performance in this area was strong and that she did not wish to explore any areas in more detail. The visitors as a whole were satisfied that the education provider's approach would ensure appropriate input from service users and carers and that the provider has mechanisms in place for reviewing and reflecting on service user and carer involvement.
- o **Equality and diversity** –
- o Shortly before this review period began, following their reflections on institutional needs, the education provider created a position of Institutional Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This post was intended to bring together different aspects of the provider's reflections on EDI. For instance, monitoring of admissions takes place to identify areas for improvement in relation to EDI.
- o Examples of groups used to monitor EDI-related issues and to drive improvement, include a Tackling Gender Based Violence Steering Group, an Anti-Racism and Race Equality Group, and a Digital Accessibility Working Group. During the review period the education provider won an award related to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards.
- o From this information the visitors were able to conclude that the education provider has a effective and multifaceted approach to equality and diversity. The education provider performed well during the review period by reflecting effectively on how they could ensure that programmes were open to all as far as possible.
- o **Horizon scanning** –
- o In the portfolio the education provider focused on learning from the COVID-19 pandemic as their key consideration in this area. They noted particular goals and aims for the future that emerged from adaptations to the pandemic, in particular related to virtual learning and the possibility of making programme materials more easily available online.
- o During the review period they also developed policies designed to build learners' resilience and to maintain social interaction for learners. The portfolio makes clear that this was carried out as a response to reflection on their performance.
- o In light of this approach the visitors considered that they were performing well in this area, because they have a mechanism for gaining a clear idea of what issues are likely to arise in future and have shown consistent willingness to act on these issues once identified.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:
- o The service user expert advisor was particularly impressed with the approach to service user and carer involvement.

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Impact of COVID-19** –
- As noted in the 'Horizon scanning' section above, the education provider considered that the key challenge related to the pandemic was the need to develop virtual learning and to increase digital skills among both learners and staff. For staff, this included taking a SOLT Support Online Learning and Teaching (SOLT) module.
- The education provider's current position is that, subsequent to the pandemic, they have considered their approach and rolled out new virtual learning approaches, and in the portfolio they explained how they have made permanent many of the changes made to learning and teaching activities. Examples include the development of hybrid teaching spaces and greater use of online sessions.
- The visitors considered that overall the adaptation to the challenges of the pandemic had been good, with clear evidence provided of both initial mitigation and reflection on learning points, and that there were no concerns needing further exploration.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods** –
- The education provider noted that the main impetus for developments in their use of technology had been COVID-19.
- Modules were redesigned in 2020 to enable them to be more easily taught virtually, and feedback was sought from staff and learners on this process. They stated also that technology enabling closer collaboration was a priority. In practice-based learning, the education provider focused on development of simulation technology to enable learners to achieve and demonstrate practical skills and experience without being physically present.
- The visitors considered that performance in this area had been good, because the education provider had demonstrated commitment to constant improvement and development, and they had no further concerns.
- **Apprenticeships** –
- The education provider does not have any apprenticeship programmes at present and does not have any plans to develop any. This was discussed with the HCPC at the portfolio preparation process and the visitors were informed of this fact.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:
- The education provider had clearly adapted well to the challenges of COVID-19 and had engaged in appropriate and sustained reflection on what could be learned for the future.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- o **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education** –
- o In the portfolio the education provider set out how they have reflected on their need to meet the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (UKQCHE) by incorporating it into individual programmes' review processes, for example Learning and Teaching Reviews (LTRs) and Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews (ELIRs). Programmes undergo annual monitoring and the UKQCHE feeds into this monitoring process.
- o The portfolio notes several examples of recommendations for action and commendations of good practice that have been made to programmes through this annual monitoring process. The commendations include positive comments about the responsiveness of staff and the adaptations to COVID-19, and on the education provider's incorporation of UKQCHE requirements.
- o The visitors considered that performance in this area was good as the education provider has reflected closely on the need to integrate the UKQCHE into its internal quality processes.
- o **Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies** –
- o The main external body mentioned in this section was the Scottish Health Improvement Service (HIS). The requirements and recommendations related to this body are incorporated into the education provider's ways of working under the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport Exceptional Reporting Policy, which is designed to incorporate insights from external monitoring into the education provider's programmes.
- o The visitors considered that performance in this area was good as the education provider were frank about challenges but had a clear mechanism for responding to feedback and had considered carefully what kind of responses were needed.
- o **National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes** –
- o The education provider stated in the portfolio that they have a defined process for responding to feedback from the NSS. A specific model is in place to manage and implement feedback – the Stop / Start / Continue approach. Action plans are required to be generated by individual programmes when NSS feedback is generated, with resulting actions both prioritised and assigned to individual named people.
- o The visitors considered that this demonstrated a constructive approach to receiving feedback, which would ensure that necessary improvements were carried forward, and so they considered that performance in this area was good.
- o **Other professional regulators / professional bodies** –
- o The education provider note through this section of the portfolio that they have regular appropriate contact with the NMC quality assurance processes, and that all issues raised through this process are managed through defined processes. There are clear pathways for reflection on the matters raised by organisations such as the NMC, mainly the committees and forums identified above in 'Academic and placement quality'.
- o The visitors did not have any concerns about performance in this area, because of the reflection noted.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:
- The visitors considered that the education provider had a constructive and engaged attitude to engagement with external quality bodies.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Curriculum development** –
- The portfolio provided details of recent changes in the HCPC-approved provision. For example, there had been significant amendments to the prescribing programmes, incorporating a revalidation by the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC). The education provider noted the recommendations that had emerged from this process. They also gave information about a major change made to the paramedic programme through the HCPC process, and reflected on the first years of the new practitioner psychology programme, and how they had developed the curriculum in response to learner feedback.
- In all of these areas the visitors considered that performance was good, as there was a clear focus on regular updating of programmes in co-operation with relevant professional and regulatory bodies.
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance** –
- The education provider did note any specific examples of changes made to their provision to reflect changes in professional body guidance.
- However, they did note throughout the portfolio the processes in place for responding to various kinds of impetus for change, and in light of this the visitors were confident that where professional bodies did change their requirements the education provider would be able to respond appropriately.
- **Capacity of practice-based learning** –
- The main risks around capacity identified in the portfolio were associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. The education provider reflected that they had difficulties in placing learners in appropriate settings during that time and in some cases had to change the structure of placements, and to move to virtual placements or to the use of simulation. On the paramedic programme, for example, hours lost in certain placements at the height of the pandemic were made up in later placements. The education provider outlined their processes for monitoring capacity on an ongoing basis, and throughout the portfolio had demonstrated that they had ongoing relationships with relevant stakeholders.
- The visitors were therefore confident that the education provider had mechanisms for flagging capacity challenges, and for addressing them.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:
- The education provider's response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been well considered and has involved careful reflection on future learning.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Learners** –
- Examples were provided in the portfolio of how the education provider had responded to learner feedback and what mechanism had been used to gather and take action on that feedback.
- These included concerns about learners' dress requirements and their issues with funding arrangements, as well as their views on programme structure, module organisation, and specific changes to programmes. The opportunities for feedback were both formal and informal – learners had input to programme committees and gave regular module feedback, and had frequent contact with programme staff.
- The visitors were broadly satisfied with this area, although they did use [quality activity to explore how learner feedback was reliably turned into action](#). Following quality activity they considered that performance was good.
- **Practice placement educators** –
- The portfolio focused on some of the challenges faced around practice educators during the COVID-19 pandemic. These included difficulties around retention, lack of access to training and professional development, and the simple physical challenges of placing learners.
- The education provider responded to these challenges by providing additional training and support, development of a practice educator handbook, and a renewed focus on recruitment of practice educators.
- The visitors considered that this showed that the education provider valued its practice educators and took steps to maintain their effectiveness and morale, and therefore they considered that the education provider was performing well.
- **External examiners** –
- The portfolio sets out that external examiners are required to give both general annual reports and feedback on specific modules. Faculties at the education provider are required to produce an annual summary report compiling all external examiner responses, which in turn feeds into the university-level quality assurance process.
- Examples were given of external examiner feedback on all the HCPC-approved provision at the education provider, showing that external examiners were engaging well and giving appropriate comment.
- The visitors considered that these showed evidence of external examiners being expected to give high-quality input, and that input being turned into action by the education provider. They therefore regarded performance in this area as good.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:
- The visitors were particularly impressed by the education provider's steps to retain and develop their practice educators as noted above.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel: The HCPC panel did not have any specific concerns related to data points generated through the process. As noted above, none of the data points appeared to point to significant issues, especially when viewed in the broader context of the education provider submission.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: 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).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

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 2026-27 academic year

Reason for this recommendation: The visitors considered that this was a well-considered and thorough portfolio submission with considerable quantities of supporting evidence supplied. Evidence was seen of robust performance across the board. The education provider was transparent about challenges and difficulties faced, and their future plans, and gave a highly comprehensive response to the quality activity. The visitors considered that the education provider had structures in place to enable appropriate responses to any issues that might arise and so were satisfied to recommend a five year review period.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2020
Prescribing for Healthcare Professionals (Supplementary and Independent Prescribing)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/05/2021
Prescribing for Healthcare Professionals (Supplementary Prescribing Only)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/04/2021
Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Health psychologist		01/09/2018
Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology	PT (Part time)	Practitioner psychologist	Health psychologist		01/09/2018