

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Aston University
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology), Part time BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology), Work based learning
Approval visit date	19-20 June 2018
Case reference	CAS-13134-Q4Y1F2

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Executive Summary

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

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

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

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

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

How we make our decisions

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

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

HCPC panel

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

David Houlston	Biomedical scientist
Richard Sykes	Hearing aid dispenser
Christine Morgan	Lay
Amal Hussein	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	The chair was unable to attend the visit due to personal reasons.
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of study	PT (Part time)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 35 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01912

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 35 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01913

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

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

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

Required documentation	Submitted	Reason(s) for non-submission
Programme specification	Yes	
Module descriptor(s)	Yes	
Handbook for learners	Yes	
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes	
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes	
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes	
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	Not Required	As this is not yet an approved programme, the education provider was not required to submit this.

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	As this is not yet an approved programme, we met with learners from the existing BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology).
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

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

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 03 August 2018.

2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the required information about the programme is available to potential applicants, so that they can make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on a programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors could not determine how the education provider would ensure that certain information would be communicated to potential applicants allowing them to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme. From the documentation, the visitors understood that the responsibility of ensuring the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or health requirements was the responsibility of the employer. However, in discussions with the programme team, the visitors heard that the education provider would assess the criminal convictions checks with the other admission checks, before the learner starts

the programme. Due to the difference in the information provided, the visitors could not see how applicants will be made aware of the process for assessing the DBS and health checks or who will be responsible for making those assessments. As such, the education provider will need to ensure that the information provided to potential applicants regarding DBS and health checks is accurate so they can make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

The visitors were unable to see how the education provider intends to communicate the following information to prospective applicants:

- the process associated with any Disclosure and Barring Service or health requirements and any associated costs to the learner;
- the selection and entry requirements; and
- the attendance requirements of the programme in the academic setting.

Therefore, the visitors require further information, which demonstrates that applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about taking up an offer of a place on the programme.

2.2 The selection and entry criteria must include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate selection and entry criteria for the programmes, and ensure that it includes the appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, in particular the website and advertising materials, the visitors noted the selection and entry criteria for the existing BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology) programme. However, the visitors were unable to determine the selection and entry criteria for the degree apprenticeship route. As such, the visitors were unable to determine the relevant academic and professional entry standards for the programme and could not make a decision about whether the criteria is appropriate for the level and content of the programme. The education provider must clearly articulate selection and entry criteria for the programmes and ensure that it includes the appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

2.3 The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the criteria used to assess applicants have a good command of English.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation submitted prior to the visit, the visitors could not determine how the education provider ensures that learners are able to use language at the level necessary to communicate effectively with service users and carers, educators and others, and to complete the programme successfully. In discussions with the programme team, it was highlighted that each applicant is subject to interview and that this is how English skills are assessed. However, from the evidence provided and discussions, the visitors were unable to determine, whether the applicants' command of English will be tested beyond the verbal communication skills. The visitors could not determine if, how or when the applicants, written, listening and reading English language will be tested. Furthermore, the visitors were unclear what criteria will be used to assess applicants command of English, how the criteria will be

applied consistently and how applicants will be informed of English language requirements prior to the interview. The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate how applicants' command of English will be assessed, what criteria will be used and how applicants will be informed about the English requirements.

2.6 There must be an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants' prior learning and experience.

Condition: The education provider must clarify whether applicant's prior leaning and experience will be considered for this programme.

Reason: To evidence this standard, the visitors were directed to the education provider's "General Regulations for Undergraduate and Integrated Master's Programmes include information on APEL [accreditation of prior (experiential) learning] requirements". In assessing the regulation the visitors understood that learners who are eligible for AP(E)L will be able to access it for this programme. However, during the meeting with the programme team, the visitors learnt that AP(E)L will not be made available for applicants and learners. Due to the disparity in the information provided, the visitors were unclear whether applicants and learners are able to AP(E)L any elements of the programme, and if so, the process that would be used to determine whether to exempt individuals from elements of the programme. As such, the education provider must confirm whether applicants' prior learning and experience will be considered for this programme.

3.3 The education provider must ensure that the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the process in place for identifying and appointing an appropriately qualified and experienced person to hold overall professional responsibility for the programmes is appropriate.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were directed to the staff curriculum vitae. From the documentation and discussions with the senior team, the visitors were aware of the individuals who will have overall professional responsibility for the programmes. The visitors noted that the staff identified were appropriately qualified and experienced and, on the relevant part of the Register. In the senior team meeting, the visitors were informed that there is a process in place to ensure that they identify and appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme. The visitors were informed that this process includes sending out an expression of interest and that there are a set of prescribed qualifications and particular criteria including HCPC registration for undertaking the role. However, the visitors were not given the process, and therefore could not determine that it is appropriate to ensure that the education provider will continue to appoint a suitable person and, if it becomes necessary, a suitable replacement. As such, the visitors require the education provider to demonstrate that they have an effective process for ensuring that the person with overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced.

3.5 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there is regular and effective collaboration with practice education providers.

Reason: In the standards mapping document, the education provider referred to an 'audit form', which gives a narrative of how practice-based learning settings are approved. The visitors considered that this did not provide evidence of regular and effective collaboration itself. At the visit, the visitors were able to discuss the existing arrangements for collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers. The visitors were given verbal reassurances by the programme team that collaboration has taken place for this programme, but from the evidence provided the visitors could not determine the nature or extent of this collaboration. In discussions with practice education providers, the visitors were informed that some practice educators considered that collaboration with the education provider was informal. The visitors understood that such collaboration tended to be driven by existing relationships between individuals rather than by a formal process, and that it tended to be reactive. It was not clear to the visitors whether formal records were kept of meetings and communication between the education provider and practice education providers. The visitors were also unable to determine, the level of input that practice education providers had had into the development of the new programme. The education provider must therefore demonstrate how they will ensure that there is regular and effective collaboration with practice education providers.

3.17 There must be an effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there is a formal and effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about safety and wellbeing of service users.

Reason: The visitors noted the documentation provided to evidence this standard, in particular the pathway for positive discipline, raising concerns and placement information file. From this information, the visitors were unable to determine the formal process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about safety and wellbeing of service users. At the visit, the visitors heard that there is a 'pathway for positive discipline and raising concerns' policy. The visitors were unsure how the education provider's policies ensure that learners are able to recognise situations where service users may be at risk, support them in raising any concerns and ensure action is taken in response to those concerns. As such, the visitors were unable to determine a clear, definitive, formal process. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence that there is an effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about safety and wellbeing of service users.

4.11 The education provider must identify and communicate to learners the parts of the programme where attendance is mandatory, and must have associated monitoring processes in place.

Condition: The education provider must define where attendance is mandatory and demonstrate that there are associated monitoring processes in place, along with how these requirements will be communicated to learners.

Reason: From review of the documentation, the visitors were unclear on the parts of the programme where attendance is mandatory, or what the consequences would be for learners that do not attend these parts of the programme. In discussions with the existing BSc (Hons) Health Science (Audiology) learners, the visitors heard that attendance is not mandatory for programmes at the education provider and as such, there is no minimum requirement of attendance required of them. From the evidence and discussions with the programme team, the visitors were not clear where attendance is mandatory. The visitors noted that this is important so all learners who complete the programme are supported to meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for hearing aid dispensers, by being fully involved in the parts of the programme which are essential to achieving them. The visitors require the education provider to define where attendance is mandatory, and demonstrate that associated monitoring processes are in place, along with how these requirements are communicated to learners on the programme.

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

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

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were referred to the curriculum vitae of the external examiner. The visitors noted that the external examiner identified was appropriately qualified and experienced and, on the HCPC Register. In the programme team meeting, the visitors were informed that there is a process in place to ensure that they identify and appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced external examiner for the programme. The programme team mentioned that this process includes the criteria for appointing the external examiner, and that there will be two external examiners for the programme, one with an academic background and the other with a clinical background. The education provider also highlighted that they are currently in the process of recruiting the second external examiner for the programme. However, the visitors were not given the process, and therefore could not determine that it is appropriate to ensure that the education provider will continue to appoint a suitable person and, if it becomes necessary, a suitable replacement. As such, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate that there will be at least one external examiner for the programme, who is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, and the request for further evidence set out in section 5, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 23 August 2018 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).