

## HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Wiltshire College & University Centre
Validating body	Oxford Brookes University
Name of programme(s)	BA (Honours) Social Work, Full time
Approval visit date	25-26 April 2019
Case reference	CAS-14338-X9X3B3

### Contents

Section 1: Our regulatory approach.....	2
Section 2: Programme details.....	3
Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment.....	3
Section 4: Outcome from first review.....	4
Section 5: Visitors’ recommendation.....	9

### 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 Childs	Social worker
Luke Tibbits	Social worker
Joanne Watchman	Lay
Niall Gooch	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.

Dominic Corrywright	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Wiltshire College
Ailsa Clarke	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Wiltshire College
Maxine Fletcher	Internal panel member	Wiltshire College
Lucy Turner	Internal panel member	Wiltshire College

## Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BA (Honours) Social Work
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
Proposed first intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02048

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	The programme is new so external examiner reports were not available.

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

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	The programme is new so we met with learners from the education provider's previous HCPC-approved social work programme, which is no longer admitting learners.

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 28 June 2019.

#### **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 demonstrate how they will ensure that applicants understand that they will be required to pay for their own DBS check.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including information about the admissions process and materials that would be available to applicants. From this information the visitors were aware that applicants would be expected to pay for their own Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check. However, it was not clear to the visitors where this would be communicated to applicants. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that this would be communicated at an induction day, by means of a slide in a PowerPoint presentation. However, they considered that this might not ensure that all applicants were fully aware of the arrangements around funding of DBS checks, and that the information was not being provided early enough in the process to ensure that applicants were able to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants have access to information about the funding of DBS checking as early as possible in the process.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify how they define relevant experience in their entry requirements, and how such experience is assessed.

**Reason:** The visitors were aware from their review of documentation that the entry criteria for the programme included a requirement for “relevant experience”. The visitors were not clear from the documentation how the education provider would determine what would constitute relevant experience for an applicant to the programme, and how they would ensure that all applicants were treated equitably in this process. In discussions with the programme team they were informed that this would be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, if necessary in consultation with practice-based learning partners, but the visitors were not able to view evidence demonstrating that there was a clear process which could ensure equity. They were therefore unable to determine whether the selection and entry criteria included appropriate academic and professional entry standards, and require further evidence demonstrating that the education provider meets this standard.

## **2.4 The admissions process must assess the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify how they will proceed if an applicant is found to have a criminal record, and must demonstrate that this process is suitable.

**Reason:** The visitors were aware from their review of documentation that the education provider required criminal conviction checks for all learners coming on to the programme. It was not clear from this documentation what steps the education provider would take if a DBS check highlighted past criminal convictions. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that such cases would be dealt with via a discussion among the programme team, and if necessary liaison with local authorities. However, the visitors considered that the arrangements appeared to be informal, and were not set out anywhere. As a result, they could not determine that an appropriate process was in place, and require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider will assess the suitability of applicants with criminal convictions, including how they will ensure that this is done equitably.

## **2.5 The admissions process must ensure that applicants are aware of and comply with any health requirements.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify how they will proceed if an applicant has a health issue that may affect their participation in the programme, and must demonstrate that this process is suitable.

**Reason:** The visitors were aware from their review of documentation that the education provider required health and wellbeing checks for all learners coming on to the programme. It was not clear from this documentation what steps the education provider would take if these checks flagged issues that may affect participation in the programme. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that such cases would be dealt with via a discussion among the programme team, and if necessary, liaison with local authorities. However, the visitors considered that the arrangements appeared to be informal, and were not set out anywhere. As a result,

they could not determine that an appropriate process was in place, and require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider will proceed if health checks raise issues that may affect participation in the programme, including how they will ensure that this is done equitably.

### **3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that the programme is sustainable.

**Reason:** From their documentary review, the visitors were aware that there was a strategic plan in place for Wiltshire College. From this document and from discussions at the visit they understood that the education provider had plans to expand its higher education (HE) provision, and that this programme was one of the first parts of that planning. However, they were not provided with evidence showing that there were measures in place specifically to ensure the sustainability of the BA (Hons) Social Work. They were therefore unable to make a judgment about the sustainability of the programme. They were given verbal reassurances in the senior team meeting that the programme would be supported at a high level but were not shown specific evidence relating to this. They require the education provider to demonstrate that the programme would be sustainable.

### **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 for identifying and appointing an appropriately qualified and experienced person to hold overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriate.

**Reason:** For this standard, the visitors were directed to the curriculum vitae of the current programme leader for the programme, and her HCPC registration details. From the information provided, the visitors were aware of the individual who will have overall professional responsibility of the programme. The visitors noted that the staff member identified was appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the relevant part of the 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 person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme. However, the visitors did not see documentary evidence of 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 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 appropriate agreements are in place with their practice education partners.

**Reason:** The visitors viewed documents relating to the Programme Management Committee (PMC), which gives programme stakeholders the opportunity to feed into the programme. They considered that this was a useful and appropriate mechanism for collaboration between the education provider and the stakeholders. However, they also noted that the education provider used Memoranda of Co-operation (MoCs) to define their relationships with the local authorities in Somerset and Wiltshire. The MoCs they had seen in the documentation dated from 2012, when the education provider was running a different social work programme validated by Bath Spa University. In discussions with the senior team the visitors heard about high-level discussions with local authorities, but considered that they needed to see further evidence relating to the outcomes of such discussions. The visitors considered that given the time that had elapsed, and the fact that a new programme was being approved, there was a risk that these MoCs were no longer fit for purpose, and that therefore the collaboration between the education provider and practice-based learning partners would no longer be regular and effective. They require the education provider to submit evidence showing how they will ensure regular and effective collaboration.

### **3.10 Subject areas must be delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, including curriculum vitae for the Programme Leader and a Lecturer, who are planned to deliver the programme for its first two years. They understood that further recruitment of staff would take place in time for the third year of the new programme, that is, for the 2021-22 academic year. From the documentation the visitors noted that Lorraine Simpson, the programme leader, was scheduled to be the module lead for eight modules. This appeared to them to be a lot for one person to cover, especially if that individual also had programme leader responsibilities. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were given assurances that other individuals would be given the responsibility for some of the modules, but these individuals had not yet been confirmed. They were therefore not able to determine whether subject areas would be delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise and require further evidence demonstrating that this will be the case.

### **3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that there is adequate appropriate teaching space available for the programme.

**Reason:** During a tour of the education provider's facilities, the visitors viewed a number of rooms and spaces that would be available for teaching and learning. However, it was not clear to the visitors from the conversations they had with staff that there would be sufficient space set aside for the exclusive use of social work learners to ensure that the programme was fit for purpose. By the time of the third year of this programme there might be as many as sixty learners needing space and it was not clear to the visitors that this number could be accommodated. They were given

conflicting information on how often one room was used by other staff and learners. The visitors were shown another space that was open to the college's main reception and stairway and so was likely to be very noisy for large parts of the working day. The programme team gave the visitors assurances that there had been discussions with the college leadership about acquiring more teaching and learning spaces, but the visitors were not shown records or outcomes of these discussions. They therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that sufficient learning and teaching spaces would be available for the programme.

### **3.16 There must be thorough and effective processes in place for ensuring the ongoing suitability of learners' conduct, character and health.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate that they have a process in place for ensuring that learners on the programme retain their fitness to practice.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard and asked the programme team about how they would ensure that learners on the programme met HCPC standards for registration and expectations of professional behaviour. From the documentation it was not clear that there was a process for ensuring that learners' conduct, character and health continued to be suitable. The visitors saw a generic fitness to study policy, but this did not cover the same areas as the standard requires. It did not, for example, cover learners' understanding of their professional responsibilities or of the specific conduct requirements of their profession. The programme team informed the visitors that there was a fitness to practice policy, but the visitors did not see a copy. In the meeting with learners, the learners did not appear to be aware of this policy. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence to demonstrate that there are thorough and effective processes in place for ensuring learners' conduct, character and health.

### **4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, and asked the programme team about their plans for interprofessional education (IPE). The documentation supplied a very brief narrative of the kind of IPE activities that the education provider anticipated providing in various modules. However, the visitors could not see evidence of how the education provider would ensure that all learners had appropriate opportunities to learn with, and from, other learners and professionals. They could also not determine how the education provider had made decisions about designing and delivering IPE to make it as relevant as possible. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were told about some IPE activities that had previously taken place, but it was not clear whether these activities were routine and whether all learners had access to them. They were therefore unable to determine that the standard was met and require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider will ensure access to appropriate IPE for all learners.



#### **4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that both learners and service users give informed consent where it is appropriate that they do so.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including the Practice Education Handbook (PEH). In this document it states to learners that appropriate consent must be obtained before their practice is observed. However, the visitors were not clear how the education provider could ensure that such consent was obtained. For example, it was not clear whether there was a mechanism for recording that consent had been given. It was also unclear how the education provider would ensure that this consent was fully informed. In discussions, the practice educators appeared to be unclear about how this process worked. The visitors therefore could not be satisfied that the process was effective. In addition they were not provided with evidence about how learners were enabled to give consent where appropriate, and the programme team were not able to clarify this in discussion. The visitors therefore require further evidence demonstrating how learners and service users are enabled to give informed consent where appropriate.

#### **Section 5: Visitors' recommendation**

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, 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 04 July 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).