

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	AECC University College
Name of programme(s)	MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration), Full time
Approval visit date	02-03 September 2020
Case reference	CAS-16040-W5D3S3

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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:

Carol Rowe	Physiotherapist
Jo Jackson	Physiotherapist
Patrick Armsby	HCPC executive

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Physiotherapist
First intake	01 January 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02250

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence

and a virtual 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 ask for 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.

Type of evidence	Submitted	Comments
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes	
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes	
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes	
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes	
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes	
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes	
Internal quality monitoring documentation	N/A	Only requested if the programme (or a previous version) is currently running

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	Met with learners from BSc (Hons) Clinical Exercise and Rehabilitation.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Facilities and resources	No	As the visit was conducted virtually the visitors included discussions around facilities and resources in the meetings with other groups.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	
Programme team	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 virtual 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 16 October 2020.

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 ensure that the reading lists are appropriate and effective to the delivery of the programme.

Reason: In their review of the documentation, the visitors reviewed the module descriptors. In this review the visitors considered the reading lists for each module which were listed under a section titled indicative learning resources. The visitors noted that one of the books listed in the indicative learning resources have been superseded by more contemporary and evidence-based texts. This was raised around the module titled Developing physiotherapy practice skills 1 and 2 for the Neurological Physiotherapy textbook. As the practice of neurological physiotherapy has developed since the publication of this textbook the visitors considered that the textbook would not effectively support learners to be prepared to practice in this area. In the programme team meeting the visitors enquired about the reading lists and how the older book would be suitable to support the delivery of the programme. The visitors were told that the reading lists in the module descriptors are not finalised. They confirmed that these are finalised after the modules are validated and they would review the reading lists at this point. The current reading lists for Developing physiotherapy practice skills 1 and 2 show texts that the visitors considered to be out of date and the education provider has indicated they will be reviewing these texts. Therefore the visitors currently were unable to see appropriate texts to support learners in this area. The education provider must ensure appropriate texts are included in the reading lists to effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must show that the assessment strategy and design will ensure that all learners who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for physiotherapists.

Reason: To evidence this standard the education provider highlighted the standards of proficiency (SOPs) mapping document. The visitors were therefore able to see how the programme would teach and assess the relevant areas for learners. The visitors were satisfied that the SOPs were appropriately mapped to the content of the programme. However, they were unclear on the requirements for progressing in the programme. Prior to the visit the education provider was informed that this would be an area that the visitors would be exploring at the visit in their discussions. The education provider submitted a response to this before the event which stated that learners would be required to achieve a “minimum mark of 46% in all assessed elements of a unit with an overall minimum mark of 50% to pass the unit”. This suggested to the visitors that learners would be able to pass the module overall with some assessed elements that have been failed. As such they were unsure that the assessment design would ensure that learners have to meet all of the SOPs mapped to the modules.

In the programme team meeting the visitors questioned this approach to progression. The programme team stated that they would ensure learners met all of the SOPs and would be requesting exemptions from the academic regulations to ensure that learners are required to meet them. Furthermore, they indicated this would require changes to how learners would resit if any elements were failed. As this has not been finalised the visitors could not confirm that all learners will meet the standards of proficiency for physiotherapists in the initial assessment or through the potential resit. In particular the visitors raised this issue around the practice modules titled Physiotherapy practice 1 and 2 as these modules have a large number of SOPs mapped to them and so the visitors were unclear that learners would be required to meet them all to progress.

Furthermore, for the modules titled Developing physiotherapy practice skills 2 (PHY706) and Developing physiotherapy practice skills 1 (PHY705) the module descriptors stated the assessments as a practical skills assessment. The programme team confirmed these will be objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) but, as with the other assessments, the visitors were unclear how the current progression requirements would apply to these OSCEs. Therefore, they were unsure how the design would ensure that learners are meeting all of the mapped SOPs and how learners will be expected to resit these elements.

Currently the visitors noted there is a risk of learners completing the programme with some SOPs having not been met. The education provider did acknowledge this at the visit. The visitors would therefore need to see how the final design of the assessments will ensure that all learners meet the SOPs. Furthermore, they must indicate how the resit strategy will ensure that the appropriate SOPs are met.

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. Recommendations do

not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Recommendation: The education provider should review the content of the mental health module to ensure it is relevant to current physiotherapy practice.

Reason: Upon their review of the modules, the visitors noted a module titled Mental health that is shared with learners from other programmes at the education provider. The visitors reviewed the module and its application to current physiotherapy practice. The visitors considered dementia a particularly relevant area related to mental health for current practice. However, they could not see that it would be covered in the module. In the programme team meeting the visitors enquired about how this module would be contextualised for physiotherapy practice and if dementia would be covered in the teaching for physiotherapy learners. The programme team stated that dementia would be covered in this module and the module descriptor did not accurately reflect this. The visitors were therefore satisfied that the Mental health module would reflect current physiotherapy practice in this area. However, the visitors recommend that the education provider includes this information formally in the module descriptor to ensure it is relevant to current physiotherapy practice.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to develop other opportunities for how learners are prepared to work with other professionals and across professions in the academic setting.

Reason: In the documentation for this module, the visitors were able to see plans made for learners to carry out interprofessional education (IPE). At the visit they followed up in the meetings around the progress in implementing the plans. The programme team confirmed that plans were still ongoing for implementing IPE in the theoretical setting but confirmed that learners would have opportunities in the practice setting. Learners would be required to reflect on IPE with learners and professionals in the practice portfolio and so the visitors considered this standard to be met. However, they recommend that the education provider continues to develop interprofessional education opportunities in the academic setting to ensure that all learners have a consistency of experience to ensure they are appropriately prepared to work with other professionals for the benefit of service users and carers.

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 03 December 2020 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).