

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Birkbeck, University of London
Name of programme(s)	MRes Professional Practice Occupational Psychology, Full time MRes Professional Practice Occupational Psychology, Part time
Approval visit date	24-25 September 2020
Case reference	CAS-16034-X0T6Z7

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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:

Stephen Fisher	Practitioner psychologist - Occupational psychologist
Keren Cohen	Practitioner psychologist - Counselling psychologist
John Archibald	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit

There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Pam Yeow	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Birkbeck, University of London
Alyse Carney	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Birkbeck, University of London

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MRes Professional Practice Occupational Psychology
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Practitioner psychologist
Modality	Occupational psychologist
Proposed first intake	01 January 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02260

Programme name	MRes Professional Practice Occupational Psychology
Mode of study	PT (Part time)
Profession	Practitioner psychologist
Modality	Occupational psychologist
Proposed first intake	01 January 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02261

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
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	Not required, as the programme has not yet run

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	No	The visitors did not have any issues they wanted to explore with learners, so we decided not to meet with them.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	No	The visitors did not have any issues they wanted to explore with service users and carers, so we decided not to meet with them
Facilities and resources	Yes	
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 06 November 2020.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they work in partnership with those who provide practice-based learning as a way of ensuring they provide ongoing quality and effectiveness.

Reason: To meet this standard, the visitors were informed in the mapping document that learners are required to be in employment which offers the opportunity for practice-based learning. Through the admissions process the education provider receives detailed information about practice-based learning site. However, the visitors were also informed that the education provider does not have direct access to the practice education provider, so they aim to connect with practice education providers through

later meetings. In the meeting with the practice education providers and from discussion with the programme team, the visitors were informed the plan is to have meetings between the programme team and practice educators to share experience and fine-tune approaches.

The visitors considered there was limited confirmed contact and collaboration between the education provider and the practice education providers, and that it did not reflect true partnership working between the two stakeholders. This partnership would provide information about the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme. The visitors therefore require further information about how the education provider works in partnership with those who provide practice-based learning, such as meetings, asking for feedback or other methods of communication, so it is effective for continuously improving the programme.

5.4 Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the level of supervision which learners have provides for a safe environment.

Reason: To demonstrate how they meet this standard, the visitors were made aware learners are required to be in employment prior to joining the programme that offers the opportunity for practice-based learning. The visitors were also informed the education provider proposed for learners to have a form of communication with practice educators, once a month as a minimum. In the programme team meeting, the visitors were told this form of communication could be flexible, taking the form of a face to face meeting or an email, as examples. The visitors were informed learners would be able to contact the practice educators to request a meeting in the interim if they wished to do so.

The visitors considered supervision during practice-based learning to be an integral part of learning to ensure that practice-based learning did not cause a risk to service users. The visitors also considered the potential level of supervision of the learner in practice education to be of email once a month as a minimum to not provide an appropriate quality of supervision to ensure practice-based learning is safe and supportive. The visitors therefore require further information on how the programme will demonstrate how it ensures learners' supervision, will ensure a safe practice-based learning environment is provided on this programme.

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](#).