

HCPC approval process report

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| Education provider | University Centre South Devon |
| Validating body | South Devon College |
| Name of programme(s) | Hearing Aid Audiology Bridging Programme, Flexible |
| Approval visit date | 30 June 2020 |
| Case reference | CAS-16243-Z9P2J2 |

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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:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Elizabeth Ross | Hearing aid dispenser |
| Stephen Orchard | Hearing aid dispenser |
| Temilolu Odunaike | 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.

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|----------------------|--|---------------------|
| Carrie Piper | Independent chair (supplied by the education provider) | South Devon College |
| Frederique Moussaoui | Secretary (supplied by the education provider) | South Devon College |

Section 2: Programme details

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Programme name | Hearing Aid Audiology Bridging Programme |
| Mode of study | FLX (Flexible) |
| Profession | Hearing aid dispenser |
| Proposed First intake | 01 November 2020 |
| Maximum learner cohort | Up to 8 |
| Intakes per year | 1 |
| Assessment reference | APP02255 |

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.

There are important differences in this approval process that distinguish it from the normal HCPC approval process, and these should be noted. The Hearing Aid Audiology Bridging Programm is being treated as a new programme for HCPC regulatory purposes.

The Bridging Programme will provide an opportunity for graduates from the unapproved Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) to undertake additional studies to enhance their knowledge in order to apply for registration with the HCPC as a hearing aid dispenser, and is designed to be delivered in parallel to the existing approved Foundation Degree Hearing Aid Audiology.

The Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) is a competency based clinical programme in which learners opt to undertake specialist modules aligned to their clinical setting. The graduates from the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistance Practitioner) programme demonstrate the theoretical knowledge and clinical competencies required for an Assistant Practitioner working within an audiology setting.

The Hearing Aid Audiology Bridging Programme does not contain practice-based learning as applicants will have already undertaken practice-based learning elements before applying onto this programme. Therefore, the visitors did not assess SET 5: Practice-based learning as part of this approval process.

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 | Not Required | Programme does not have practice-based learning element. |
| Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme | Yes | |
| Internal quality monitoring documentation | Yes | Programme is new and has not run yet. |

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 | Not Required | As this was a virtual visit and, because the visitors did not have areas to address with this group, we decided that it was unnecessary to meet with them. |
| Service users and carers (and / or their representatives) | Not Required | As above |
| Facilities and resources | Not Required | As above |
| Senior staff | Yes | |
| Practice educators | Not Required | The HCPC did not meet with the practice educators as the nature of the programme means that applicants will have already undertaken their practice-based learning. |
| 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 25 August 2020.

4.5 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that theory and practice are effectively integrated to ensure learners are prepared and competent for practice.

Reason: Through their documentary review and discussions at the visit, the visitors understood that this programme has no practice-based learning element in it. The visitors also understood that the programme consists of three modules aimed to take learners who have successfully completed the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) on to a level where they would be eligible to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the HCPC. At the visit, the programme team were asked what the difference was in the level of working in clinical practice between the Associate Practitioner of the Foundation Degree programme and a hearing aid dispenser. The team stated that the difference was in the level of complexity of hearing aid fittings the learners may deal with and explained that the Bridging programme modules are designed to teach such complex skills. The visitors understood that such complex skills would be taught in theory on the programme, however, they were unclear about how these practical skills would be developed in an academic setting.

The visitors recognised that there are different ways learners could do this, however, they were unclear about how this will be done on this programme as this was not clearly articulated within the documentation nor explained at the visit. For example, the visitors noted the simulated activity within module UCSD2048 (Hearing Aid Technology and Assistive Listening Devices) but received no further information about what this entailed. Therefore, the visitors could not determine how learners will be able to link the knowledge gained in theory to practical skills in a way that is relevant and meaningful to ensure its effectiveness. As such, they could not determine that this standard was met and request that the education provider further demonstrate how they will ensure theory and practice are effectively integrated on the programme so as to ensure learners are prepared and competent for practice.

4.6 The learning and teaching methods used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate the learning and teaching methods used to deliver the practice skills for the programme, and demonstrate how these are appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

Reason: The education provider referred the visitors to the programme handbook as evidence for this standard. The SETs mapping document also stated that the

programme has been designed to “reflect on practice-based learning into the programme delivery and assessment.” It added that “the programme will use a variety of teaching and learning methods which reflect the skills and knowledge required for learners to effectively meet the learning outcomes.” From a review of the module descriptors, the visitors were satisfied that the programme would teach appropriate topics to demonstrate relevant learning outcomes. However, the visitors were unclear about the learning and teaching methods used to deliver the practical skills of the programme and how these are deemed to be appropriate in delivering the learning outcomes. For example, the visitors noted the simulated activity within module UCSD2048 (Hearing Aid Technology and Assistive Listening Devices) but received no further information about what this entailed or which learning outcomes it was designed to deliver.

As the visitors did not have a clear understanding of the learning and teaching methods used to deliver the practical skills, they were unable to determine whether the methods would be appropriate to effectively deliver the learning outcomes. Therefore, the education provider must provide further information on the specific learning and teaching methods used to deliver the practical skills and demonstrate how these are appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

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.

6.5 The assessment methods used must be appropriate to, and effective at, measuring the learning outcomes.

The following condition applies to the above standards. For simplicity, as the issue spans several standards, the education provider should respond to this condition as one issue.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the Bridging Programme meet the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers and that the assessment methods are appropriate in delivering the learning outcomes.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the standards of proficiency (SOPs) mapping and the programme handbook as evidence for these standards. From their review, the visitors noted the learning outcomes within the modules and how these were mapped against the SOPs. The visitors also understood through their review and from discussions at the visit that the programme does not have a practice-based learning element within it. The visitors noted that there was insufficient information provided on the assessment strategy and design and the assessment methods to be used to assess the practical skills of learners.

The visitors heard that the programme intends to use alternative methods, such as simulation and role plays, to assess these practical skills, however, there was insufficient information provided to demonstrate how these would be used to assess the learning outcomes at a threshold level. For example, the visitors noted in module UCSD2046 (Communication and Rehabilitation) that role play would be part of the summative assessment and in UCSD2048 (Hearing Aid Technology and Assistive Listening Devices), there would be a practical assessment of skills in simulation.

However, the visitors received no further information about how these assessment methods were designed or which learning outcomes these were due to assess. In particular, the visitors were unable to identify how the following SOPs would be assessed practically:

- 13.7 understand, in the context of hearing aid audiology:
 - acoustics, speech production and perception;
 - hearing aid and associated technologies including selection, fitting, programming and evaluation;
 - the measurement of hearing and of other auditory system function
- 14.4 be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system, performance settings and associated technologies for service users;
- 14.7 be able to safely and competently programme and physically fit hearing aids.
- 14.10 be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users.

As such, the visitors could not ascertain how the assessment strategy and design for the programme will ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers. Similarly, they could not determine how the methods identified to assess learners would appropriately and effectively measure the practical learning outcomes. Therefore, the visitors were unclear how the assessment strategies and methods will be used so that learners, who complete the programme successfully, would have the threshold level of knowledge, skills and understanding to practise safely and effectively as a hearing aid dispenser. They therefore require further evidence to show how the practical assessments ensure that learners are able to meet the SOPs to determine whether these standards 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.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the programme handbook to ensure all the information required for applicants to make an informed decision about the programme is available.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard was met at threshold as they saw all the information needed by applicants to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme, in the different documents submitted. Some of this included information about entry criteria, percentage of online and face-to-face delivery, and assessment. Upon request and prior to the visit, the visitors were presented with various documents containing this information. However, they noted the programme

handbook, which will be available to applicants, did not in itself contain all of this information. At the visit, the education provider mentioned that they will be redesigning the programme handbook to ensure that all the information required is contained there. Therefore, the visitors recommend that the education provider ensures the programme handbook is updated as agreed so applicants can have all the information they need to decide about taking up a place on the programme.

Section 5: Outcome from second review

Second response to conditions required

The education provider responded to the conditions set out in section 4. Following their consideration of this response, the visitors were not satisfied that the following conditions were met, for the reasons detailed below. Therefore, in order for the visitors to be satisfied that the following conditions are met, they require further evidence.

4.5 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that theory and practice are effectively integrated to ensure learners are prepared and competent for practice.

Reason condition not met at this time: In their response to this condition, the education provider explained that the UCSD2048 module will give learners the opportunity to expand on the knowledge and practice assessed within the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) by the completion of the Healthcare Practice Assessment Document (PAD). As evidence, the visitors reviewed the PAD and understood that learners would have been signed off as competent to practice at Assistant Practitioner level. The education provider stated further that “the assessments for UCSD2048 have been designed to enable students to demonstrate their level of knowledge and understanding of hearing aid via assessed coursework and an assessment of skills in simulation.” The visitors were made aware that, simulation assessments will provide learners with the opportunity to demonstrate and evidence how their skills have been enhanced since the completion of the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice PAD. However, as the visitors were not provided with what the simulation activities entailed, they were unable to determine how this will be linked to theory. The visitors considered that in order for them to be able to determine the relevance and meaningfulness of these practical parts of the programme and how they are linked to theory, they will require further details about the simulation activities. This way, they would be assured that learners are prepared and competent for practice and will be able to determine that this standard is met.

Suggested documentation: Understanding of the stimulation activities that learners will undertake while on the programme.

4.6 The learning and teaching methods used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate the learning and teaching methods used to deliver the practice skills for the programme, and demonstrate how these are appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

Reason condition not met at this time: In their response to this condition, the education provider mentioned that they have a suite of sound proof rooms which will allow learners to undertake audiology assessments. The visitors noted that the reasoning referred to in the condition mentioned the Hearing aid and Assistive Devices Module (UCSD2048) rather than any diagnostic tests. The visitors considered that soundproof rooms are usually used in diagnostic tests and as such, they were unable to determine from this information, how practical skills associated with this module are delivered through the programme.

The education provider also mentioned in their response that learners will be able to demonstrate their skills by completing a number of case studies which they said “may” include the involvement of representatives from their Patient, Carer and Service user group as part of the lived experience. This visitors noted that this is a possibility but there is no guarantee that it will be done. The education provider further stated that practical simulation sessions will require learners to build on the skills gained during the completion of the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner). However, as no further information was provided on the practical simulation activities, the visitors were unable to determine their appropriateness in achieving the learning outcomes. Therefore, the visitors require that the education provider provide further information around the learning and teaching methods that will be used to deliver the practical skills required for the programme, and demonstrate how these methods are appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

Suggested documentation: Further information about the learning and teaching methods, in particular the practical teaching. This could be information on the simulated activities or any other activities that evidence how the practical skills are taught.

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.

6.5 The assessment methods used must be appropriate to, and effective at, measuring the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the Bridging Programme meet the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers and that the assessment methods are appropriate in delivering the learning outcomes.

Reason condition not met at this time: In their response to this standard, the education provider stated that Sections 13.7; 14.4; 14.7 and 14.10 of the SOPs are assessed practically within the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) as part of Modules Soud2430 (Audiology I) and Soud2431 (Audiology II). In addition, by the completion of the PAD. They stated further that these skills are then revisited and assessed in simulation as part of UCSD2048, to ensure learners have the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding to practise safely and effectively as a hearing aid dispenser. From their review of the Assistant Practitioner PAD, the visitors were satisfied that assessments on the Foundation Degree Healthcare Practice (Assistant Practitioner) would have provided an opportunity for learners to demonstrate that the following SOPs are met:

- 13.7 understand, in the context of hearing aid audiology:

- acoustics, speech production and perception;
 - hearing aid and associated technologies including selection, fitting, programming and evaluation;
 - the measurement of hearing and of other auditory system function
- 14.7 be able to safely and competently programme and physically fit hearing aids.

However, the visitors considered that the PAD did not demonstrate the following SOPs:

- 14.4 be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system, performance settings and associated technologies for service users; and
- 14.10 be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users, will be met, they will need further details of the assessment strategy and methods that are used in the practical assessment.

The visitors considered that whilst it is possible for learners to have an understanding of the areas listed in SOPs 13.7 and 14.7, SOPs 14.4 and 14.10 will require learners to have an in depth understanding of the skills and knowledge required, and be able to demonstrate them at a level expected of a hearing aid dispenser. For example, both 14.4 and 14.10 require a learner to use their knowledge and experience to select an appropriate hearing aid system or provide appropriate advice to a service user. As the visitors received little or no information about the simulation activities that the practical assessments will entail, they were unable to determine how these will match the learning outcomes or the SOPs. The visitors therefore request further information on the simulation activities that would be used in practical assessment for them to be able to determine whether the learning outcomes and outstanding SOPs (14.4 and 14.0) can be met.

Suggested documentation: Further details of the simulated activities to demonstrate that the assessment strategy and design as well as the assessment methods are appropriate in delivering the learning outcomes and ensure learners meet the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers.

Section 6: 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 12 November 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](#).