

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	The Smae Institute
Validating body	Queen Margaret University
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Podiatry, Distance learning
Approval visit date	11 November 2020
Case reference	CAS-15919-P3S0K0

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.....	7

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:

Emma Supple	Chiropodist / podiatrist
Angela Duxbury	Radiographer - Therapeutic radiographer
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

Initially the visitors for this visit were Emma Supple and David Houliston. David withdrew from the visit at short notice and we were not able to replace him. The visit therefore went ahead with an HCPC panel of Niall Gooch and Emma Supple. Angela Duxbury, an experienced educationalist, was appointed subsequent to the visit on the understanding that she would review the documentation and consult with the HCPC Panel who had been present at the visit, so that we had input from both a professional specialist and an educational specialist.

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.

Christine Raffaelli	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University – validating body
Dawn Martin	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University – validating body

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Podiatry
Mode of study	DL (Distance learning)
Profession	Chiropodist / podiatrist
Entitlement	Prescription only medicines – administration Prescription only medicines – sale / supply
First intake	01 August 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02217

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	Not Required	Only requested if the programme (or a previous version) is currently running
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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	Before the visit we determined that an assessment of learner involvement was possible without a specific learner meeting.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	Before the visit we determined that an assessment of learner involvement was possible without a specific service user and carer meeting.
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 05 February 2021.

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

Condition: The education provider must clarify how they will take account of the prior learning and experience of applicants who are coming on to the programme who have not been through the education provider's own Level 4 and Level 5 programmes.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the programme documentation that there were two "internal" routes on to the programme. Firstly, entry into year one was possible via the Level 4 Foot Health Diploma (FHD). Entry to year 1 allows learners to accrue the remainder of their year 1, Level 4 credits. Secondly, learners who have completed the education provider's DipHE Assistant Practitioner – Podiatry (Level 5) can enter the programme in year three. They would then be prepared for the further learning and practice which would enable them to be awarded the full BSc (Hons). The visitors were aware that the education provider was prepared for how to assess such applicants' prior learning and experience in an appropriate and effective way.

However, they also noted that the education provider anticipated that some applicants might not be coming from the education provider's own programmes, but might nevertheless be suitable for the programme. The visitors were unclear what process the education provider would use to assess the prior learning and experience of these applicants. From discussions at the visit, they understood that such applications would be considered on a case-by-case basis, but they considered that it would be necessary to have a formal process by which this was done, to ensure fairness in the process. They therefore require further evidence demonstrating that the prior learning and experience of these applicants will be assessed in an appropriate and effective way, and that the nature of this assessment will be appropriately communicated to applicants.

3.8 Learners must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how learners will be involved in the programme.

Reason: To evidence this standard, the education provider referred to the Validation document, the student handbook, and the DipHE review document (from the Foot Health Diploma). These documents showed that learners from the Foot Health Diploma had been involved in developing the new programme and they also showed that the education provider had plans to involve learners in the new BSc programme on an ongoing basis once it was running. However, the visitors were not clear from this evidence exactly how learners would be enabled to feed into the ongoing development and continuous improvement of the programme, and so they were not able to determine if the standard was met. This matter was discussed with the programme team at the visit and the education provider gave verbal assurances about their plans, but the detail was still not fully developed. The visitors therefore require further evidence to show how learners will feed into areas such as the design, delivery or review of the programme.

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 provide further evidence relating to how they will ensure the availability of appropriate online resources and facilities for all learners.

Reason: As this is a distance learning programme, the visitors were aware that the accessibility and functioning of the online facilities, and the suitability of the online resources, were extremely important to the effective functioning of the programme. The documentation outlined the education provider's plans for using virtual learning environments (VLEs) to deliver the programme. At the visit the visitors discussed with the programme team how these plans would be put into practice. Following these discussions the visitors remained unclear about the details of what VLEs would be used, and how they would be used. They were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence relating to how VLEs will be used to effectively deliver the teaching, learning and assessment activities of the programme.

5.7 Practice educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that practice educators have regular access to appropriate training.

Reason: The education provider cited as evidence for this standard the Validation document and the review document for the Foot Health Diploma (FHD). These documents did contain some broad outlines of what the education provider currently provided in the way of training for FHD practice educators, and what they planned to do for this programme. However, from the level of detail provided, the visitors were not clear about the specifics of the planned training – for example, how the education provider would determine training needs, and how they would ensure that practice educators attended the training. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence relating to the detail of the planned practice educator training.

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.

5.2 The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing how they intend to ensure that the practice components of the programme will be relevant to the whole range of current practice in the profession.

Reason: The visitors considered that the standard was met, because there were appropriate placements for the learners to achieve the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency. However, they did note that there were certain aspects of podiatry practice that were important to understand in order to practise safely and effectively, but might not be encountered frequently in private practice. This was raised at the visit and the education provider suggested that they would liaise very closely with

their practice partners to ensure that learners were getting a suitable exposure. The visitors recommend that the education provider make sure they continue this liaison to ensure that all learners continue to access the range of clinical experiences required.

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 16 March 2021 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).