

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	The Robert Gordon University
Name of programme(s)	BSc Paramedic Practice, Full time
Approval visit date	27 May 2020
Case reference	CAS-14956-K6R0G8

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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:

Gordon Pollard	Paramedic
Kenneth Street	Paramedic
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.

Donald Cairns	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Robert Gordon University
Jo Tait	Internal panel member	Robert Gordon University
Kim Brodie	Student member	Robert Gordon University
Lucy Jack	Quality assurance	Robert Gordon University
Tom Davidson	External panel member	University of Cumbria
Martin Berry	External panel member	Oxford Brookes University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc Paramedic Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 September 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 70
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02147

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	The programme is new and has not 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	Yes	As the programme has not run, the panel met with learners from the education provider's nursing and midwifery programme.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	
Facilities and resources	Not Required	
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 10 July 2020.

3.17 There must be an effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that learners are able to raise concerns and to ensure action is taken in response to those concerns.

Reason: To meet this standard, the visitors were informed the education provider offers ongoing support for students to raise any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users through the escalating concern process. Learners are encouraged to raise any concerns through this process and processes in practice with their practice educators and academic tutors. However, in the meeting with learners, the visitors were informed there was no mechanism for learners to raise concerns while in practice out of hours. The visitors therefore could not be sure there was an effective mechanism for learners to raise concerns so they could be sure action could be taken in this situation. The visitors need to see further information to demonstrate there is an effective process for learners to raise concerns in the practice-based learning setting outside of the practice hours.

5.6 Practice educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, must be on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider needs to submit further evidence of how they ensure practice educators have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to be able to assess practice-based learning in relation to the learning outcomes of the programme.

Reason: The visitors were informed that to meet this standard, the education provider's audit process identifies practice educators with the required knowledge, skills and experience. The visitors were also informed that learner progression and achievement of practice learning experiences will be assessed by the practice educator. The Practice Assessment Document set out the learning outcomes for each module with no explanation of what needs to be seen for each learning outcome to be met. Although the visitors were able to see examples of the circumstances in which practice educators assess, they were not able to see details of what the practice educators were asked to assess. The visitors considered they had not seen evidence that the practice educators have the specific theoretical knowledge or guidance in order to carry out these assessments to measure academic-focussed subjects objectively. The visitors therefore were unsure whether practice educators are suitable and are able to support and develop learners in a safe and effective way. The visitors need to see further evidence of how the education provider ensures practice educators have the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to be able to support safe and effective practice-based learning in relation to the learning outcomes of the programme.

6.3 Assessments must provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to show the assessments in practice-based learning are able to deliver a valid and accurate picture of a learner's progression and achievement, and are effective at deciding whether a learner is fit to practice by the end of the programme.

Reason: To meet this standard, the visitors were informed the education provider has a process in place for managing assessments and marking guidelines. The visitors were made aware learners are assessed throughout the programme, both in practice-based learning and academic settings. The visitors were also informed that learner progression and achievement of practice learning experiences will be assessed by the practice educator. The visitors were informed guidance had been provided to support practice educators with this role. The Practice Assessment Document sets out the learning outcomes for each module with no explanation of what needs to be seen for each learning outcome to be met. Although the visitors were able to see examples of the circumstances in which practice educators assess, they were not able to see details of what the practice educators were asked to assess. The visitors considered they had not seen evidence that the practice educators have the specific theoretical knowledge or guidance in order to carry out these assessments to measure academic-focussed subjects objectively. The visitors therefore were unsure whether the assessments in practice-based learning can truly be an accurate picture of a learner's progression and achievement, and are effective at deciding whether a learner is fit to practice by the end of the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that all assessments in practice-based learning are appropriate in assessing the learning outcomes.

Reason: From the documentation received prior to the visit, the visitors were informed the education provider uses different strategies and technologies to support the needs of adult learners. The visitors were also informed that learner progression and achievement of practice learning experiences will be assessed by the practice educator. The visitors were informed guidance had been provided to support practice educators with this role. The Practice Assessment Document sets out the learning outcomes for each module with no explanation of what needs to be seen for each learning outcome to be met. Although the visitors were able to see examples of the circumstances in which practice educators assess, they were not able to see details of what the practice educators were asked to assess. The visitors were also provided with information about the criteria that practice educators would use to make these judgements. However, the visitors were unclear how the education provider supports and enables practice educators to make judgements about learner competence based on these criteria. The visitors also considered they had not seen evidence that the practice educators have the specific theoretical knowledge or guidance in order to carry out these assessments to measure academic-focussed subjects objectively. The visitors considered that this approach could cause a conflict of opinion between the education provider and the practice educators, and could result in learners being marked as not competent in something that they have previously passed. They therefore require the education provider to show how they will ensure that all the assessment methods used on the programme are appropriate to measure the learning outcomes.

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 20 August 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](#).