

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Essex
Name of programme(s)	PgDip Social Work (exit route), Full time MA Social Work, Full time
Approval visit date	21-22 May 2019
Case reference	CAS-13642-J5F0H2

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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:

Anne Gribbens	Social worker
Richard Barker	Social worker
Ismini Tsikaderi	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Guy Shennan	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Independent Trainer in Social Work
Sophie Walters	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Essex

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	PgDip Social Work (exit route)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 October 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02020

Programme name	MA Social Work
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 October 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02021

We undertook this assessment of two new programmes proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite 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 require 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.

Required documentation	Submitted
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	No

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	The programmes are new, so we met with learners on the currently approved BA (Hons) Social Work programme.

Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	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 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 18 July 2019.

3.6 There must be an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate they have secured partnership agreements, to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors noted the memoranda of cooperation, which demonstrate partnerships with three local authorities and the British Red Cross for the provision of practice-based learning (PBL). During discussions at the visit, the visitors understood there are ongoing partnership arrangements with three local authorities within the region, which provide the majority of PBL for learners. However, the visitors noted that the memorandum of cooperation with the Essex County Council is only valid until June 2019. The visitors were unclear whether the current partnership agreements ensure availability and capacity of PBL going forward. As the visitors have not seen up to date arrangements, they could not determine whether there is an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of PBL for all learners. The visitors require further evidence about how the education provider will ensure they have up to date or renewed partnership arrangement, which will ensure learners have access to PBL on the proposed programmes.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how learners will be able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

Reason: In the submission, the education provider referred to two modules through which shared learning with other professions takes place. During discussions at the visit, the visitors understood that interprofessional learning (IPL) for learners on the proposed programmes is planned to occur with other learners and professionals in the School of Law. However, the visitors were unclear what the structure and elements of IPL is, or how the education provider intends to deliver IPL. Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine how learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions. The visitors require further evidence about the structure and delivery of IPL to determine whether this standard is 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 providing clarity on the information provided to applicants in relation to the optional pathways on the proposed MA Social Work programme.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that the standard was met at threshold, as all the appropriate information about admission to the proposed programmes are detailed during an open day event and on the programme's webpage. However, the visitors considered it was unclear for applicants about when they would have to choose which pathway to follow between the two optional pathways on the MA Social Work programme. Although the documentation highlights to learners that they will be required to choose among optional modules on the programme, the visitors note that is unclear to applicants and learners when they will be required to make their choice in relation to the pathway. Therefore, the visitors recommend that the education provider informs applicants about when they are required to choose which pathway to follow.

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 satisfied that one of the conditions for the standards was met. However, they were not satisfied that the following condition was 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.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how learners will be able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

Reason condition not met at this time: From a review of the conditions response, the visitors noted the cooperation with the Law Clinics where interprofessional learning (IPL) will take place. As part of their initial assessment, the visitors were unable to locate information around the structure and specific elements of IPL. In the conditions response, the education provider mentions opportunities for collaborative teaching between social work and the law school in modules HS651, HS656 and HS659. The visitors were unable to identify what other collaborative activity is planned to occur apart from the Law Clinics. The visitors were unable to determine along which other professions the learners will be able to learn from. The education provider must provide further evidence around other professions being involved in IPL activities on the MA Social Work programme.

Suggested documentation: Further evidence around IPL activities with other professionals or learners from other professions.

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 22 August 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).