

## HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Winchester
Name of programme(s)	BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship), Full time
Approval visit date	30 April – 1 May 2019
Case reference	CAS-13327-L7G8B1

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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:

Gary Dicken	Social worker in England
Kate Johnson	Social worker in England
Mohammed Jeewa	Lay
Rabie Sultan	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.

Gary Jones	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Winchester
Sabrina Higgins	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Winchester

## Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01984

We undertook this assessment of a new programme 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	Not Required

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

Group	Met
Learners	Yes
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 24 June 2019.

#### **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.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that appropriate, clear and consistent information is available to applicants and the education provider, which enables them to make an informed choice about whether to offer or take up a place on the programme.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that the entry requirements, programme information and admissions procedure for the BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship) were contained within the submission document. The visitors also reviewed the weblink provided in the mapping document leading to the education provider's website. However, the content was related to the current BSc (Hons) Social Work programme only and there was no information available regarding the proposed BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship) programme. The visitors were unclear how applicants would have access to the submission document.

In discussions with the programme team, the visitors learned that there is a referral process in place for the degree apprenticeship route, whereby the employer refers a social work employee to the programme. The nominated applicant is then screened by the education provider and referred to the assessment centre for a written test and interview. The visitors were told that the information regarding this process is available on the intranet portal of the local authorities with whom they have a partnership. The visitors could not see how learners and the education provider are made aware of this process. As this content was not available for review by the visitors, they were unable to determine whether the information provided to applicants regarding the admissions process will be sufficient for them to make an informed decision about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme. Therefore, the education provider must provide evidence that shows the information that is available to potential applicants and must demonstrate that it is sufficient for applicants and the education provider to make a considered choice about whether to offer or accept a place on the programme

## **2.2 The selection and entry criteria must include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the academic entry standards for the BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship) programme.

**Reason:** From their review of the programme's documentation, the visitors were made aware of the academic and professional entry criteria requirements for the BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship). However, at the visit during the senior team meeting, the visitors were made aware that the academic criteria requirements did not exist and are yet to be agreed. The visitors were therefore not clear what the academic entry criteria requirements will be for this programme and how will this be clearly demonstrated to the applicants. The education provider must provide evidence of the academic entry requirements agreed between them and the employer, and demonstrate how they will this information be conveyed to learners.

## **2.4 The admissions process must assess the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate that there is a process in place for assessing the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.

**Reason:** From the information provided in the programme handbook, the visitors understood that as part of the admissions process, all learners must complete the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) paperwork prior to the commencement of the programme. It was also noted in the programme handbook that the education provider cannot accept a previous DBS Disclosure form from learners; no matter how recent it was, as it is not applicable to the programme the learners will enrol onto. However, in discussions with the programme team, the visitors were told that the education provider will not need a new DBS as it is done through the employer, and any learners without a DBS will not necessarily have to provide one until the end of year one on the programme. Due to the disparity in the information provided, the visitors were unclear what the process is for dealing with applicants' criminal convictions checks and who would be responsible for assessing applicants' suitability. Therefore, the visitors require further clarification as to the process in place for assessing the suitability of applicants regarding criminal conviction checks, and who is responsible for ensuring that the process is completed.

## **3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide information regarding the partnership board structure clarifying the roles and responsibilities including the working relationship between them and the local authorities.

**Reason:** The visitors were aware from programme documentation that the proposed BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship) programme will be a partnership between the education provider and their local authority partners. The visitors noted that the documentation demonstrated sufficient information about university management structures and lines of responsibility that exist internally. However, from reviewing the documentation, the visitors were unclear about who will manage what aspects of the programme in the collaborative partnership between the education provider and local authorities.

At the visit, the education provider explained that a partnership board structure would be constituted with representatives from the education provider and local authorities. This board would provide strategic oversight and direction to the management and further development of the programme. However, whilst the visitors understood its importance, they received no evidence regarding how the board will be established and governed, and how it fits into the overall management of the programme. The education provider acknowledged that further detail in this area was still to be determined. Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence regarding the partnership board structure and how it will operate. In particular, the visitors require evidence that clearly explains the role and remit of the board members, how it will be formally operated and who will control what aspects 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 clarifying what information will be contained in the final version of the programme and practice learning handbook.

**Reason:** The visitors reviewed the programme handbook and practice-based learning handbook submitted as part of the visit documentation. At the visit, the programme team confirmed that both the handbooks seen by the visitors were draft versions and the final content had not yet been finalised. The programme team also confirmed that the final version of both handbooks would be finalised in collaboration with the practice educators. The visitors considered that both these handbooks were an important resource to support learning, and the lack of clarity about their contents meant that it was not possible to determine if this standard has been met. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing what information will be provided in the programme handbook and practice-based learning handbook, and how this information effectively supports learning in all settings for educators and learners.

### **4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide up-to-date module descriptors and programme handbook to demonstrate how the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

**Reason:** On review of the documentation provided, the visitors noted some of the module descriptors were not up-to-date and contained some inaccuracies. For example, the indicative reading section of module SW1004 contains no published updates since 2015, and there is a reference to the College of Social Work, which does not currently exist, on page 160. The programme team said that the module descriptors will need updating and are currently work in progress. Additionally, as mentioned above under standard 3.12, the programme team confirmed that the programme handbook provided is not the final version and will need updating as the final content is yet to be finalised. As the visitors have not seen the final version of the module descriptors and programme handbook for the proposed programme, the visitors could not determine if the programme curriculum is relevant to current practice. Therefore, the education provider must provide updated module descriptors and programme handbook in order for the visitors to determine if the standard is met.

#### **4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence of the formal process in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users.

**Reason:** In the SETs mapping document, the education provider referred to the consent form for student/service user participation document, under appendix 1 to evidence this standard. The title of the form does suggest it is for service users and learners, but the content and wording of the form refers to learners only. In a review of the evidence, the visitors were unable to determine how the form constitutes as a consent form for service users. The form spoke about how learners are encouraged to engage in all aspects of the programme and the option of them opting out, should they wish to but there was no guidance or relevant information regarding service users. As such, the visitors were not clear how service users would be enabled to give appropriate consent and noted that having the word 'service users' in the title of the form could be misleading. The visitors therefore require the education provider to demonstrate the process regarding how they will get appropriate consent from service users who interact with learners, including consent gained in practice-based learning environments.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the structure of practice-based learning, to demonstrate that it supports the achievement of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

**Reason:** In a review of the documentation, the visitors were unable to see information regarding the structure of the programme. At the visit, the programme team informed the visitors that the final version of the practice-learning handbook is yet to be finalised. As such, the visitors were unable to determine how learners would have access to the practice-based learning element of the programme, which supports the achievement of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers. Additionally, the visitors could also not determine what the structure of the practice based learning for this programme will be, in particular in relation to the placement in the first year and how will learners progress during year one and the following years. Therefore, the education provider must provide evidence demonstrating the structure of practice-based learning, how learners will progress during practice-based learning and how will this support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the SOPs.

#### **5.8 Learners and practice educators must have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will provide information to learners and practice educators, to prepare them for practice-based learning.

**Reason:** The evidence provided for this standard was a weblink to the practice partner's information portal consisting electronic handbooks, assessment templates and practice timetables for various programmes. From reviewing the evidence, the visitors could not find any information regarding the BA (Hons) Social Work (Apprenticeship)

programme. Linked to the condition for SET 3.12, the visitors were informed that the practice learning handbook final version is yet to be finalised in collaboration with the practice educators. Due to this, the visitors were unclear how the education provider will prepare learners and practice educators with the information they need for practice-based learning. To ensure this standard is met, the visitors require further evidence demonstrating when practice-based learning will be delivered to learners and practice educators, and how the information will be appropriate to prepare all parties for practice-based learning.

**6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the process and criteria for appointing an external examiner.

**Reason:** The visitors were not able to find any relevant information regarding external examiner appointments, as there was no mention of this standard nor any evidence found in the documentation provided. At the visit, the programme team confirmed that an external examiner has been recruited, but cannot formally be offered the position until the programme is validated by the university in May. They also explained that the person being nominated for the external examiner position is an experienced social work academic at Kingston University and is on the HCPC register. However, the visitors were not able to see evidence relating to the process of appointing a suitable external examiner for the programme, for example a person specification or job description, and so were not able to be certain that the standard was met. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence demonstrating the policy in place to appoint an external examiner and how the education provider can ensure that an appropriate person is selected for this position.

**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.

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

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider strengthening how they ensure learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that there were examples of interprofessional learning where learners can learn with and from others and therefore this standard was met at threshold level. However, to ensure that the programme continues to ensure learners benefit from learning with and from others in relevant professions, the visitors recommend that the education provider consider how they can develop and explore further opportunities for interprofessional learning.



## 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 the conditions for several of the standards were met. However, they 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.

### **2.4 The admissions process must assess the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate that there is a process in place for assessing the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** In response to this condition, the education provider referenced the programme handbook and information selection guidance document. From reviewing the information on page 31 of the programme handbook, the visitors noted the education provider stating that apprentices need to demonstrate a satisfactory criminal record check prior to registration, as part of their enrolment process. There is also mention of all learners being required to complete a new DBS (Disclosure Barring Service) check, unless an existing DBS is accepted. The visitors were not clear regarding a statement in the third sentence of the second paragraph, which might cause confusion for applicants. The statement mentions the education provider being unable to accept a previous DBS Disclosure form. From reviewing the statements, the visitors were not clear whether the education provider would ever accept an existing DBS from an applicant, and what steps should be taken by an applicant without a DBS when that individual comes to the criminal conviction checks process. Additionally, the visitors considered that it was not clear who will deal with this process, who pays for the DBS if a new one is required, and what is meant by an “up to date” DBS. Therefore, the education provider must clarify and demonstrate how criminal conviction checks will be assessed, as part of the admissions process.

### **Suggested documentation:**

- Evidence to clarify what will be regarded as an up to date DBS check,
- Information clarifying whether all applicants will require a new DBS, whether or not they have an existing one.
- Evidence to clarify who will overlook and take responsibility for this process.

## 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](#).