

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Leeds Beckett University
Name of programme(s)	BA (Hons) Social Work, Work based learning
Approval visit date	11 - 12 December 2018
Case reference	CAS-13304-M7K2Z3

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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
Dorothy Smith	Social worker
Mohammed Jeewa	Lay
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive
Tracey Samuel-Smith	HCPC executive (observer)

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.

Zoe McClelland	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Leeds Beckett University
Claire Eatough	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Leeds Beckett University
Janet Walker	External panel member	University of Lincoln

Linda Asquith	Internal panel member	Leeds Beckett University
Paul Mackreth	Internal panel member	Leeds Beckett University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of study	WBL (Work based learning)
Profession	Social worker in England
Proposed first intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01957

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	Yes

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

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	The programme has not yet started so we met with learners from the existing HCPC-approved social work programmes: BA (Hons) Social Work and MA Social Work
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 12 February 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 demonstrate how they will ensure that applicants are aware of any possible impact on their employment status when accepting a place on the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including a programme handbook, and discussed admissions with the senior team. From these discussions the visitors clarified that the programme would only be open to individuals already employed in social work settings, for example as social work support staff. They asked the senior team whether it was possible that failure to successfully complete the programme for any reason could have an adverse effect on these individuals' employment status, and how applicants would be fully informed of any possible changes to their status resulting from entry to the programme. The senior team stated that different local authorities were going to handle the provision of this information differently, and that they did not have a way of monitoring what applicants would be told, or a way of ensuring that applicants were given full information. The visitors were therefore not clear that the education provider was, at present, able to give applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme. They require the education provider to submit evidence showing how they will ensure that all learners are fully aware of any possible impact on their employment of their failing to complete the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure Disclosure and Barring Service checks are carried out for all learners.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including the programme specification and an Apprenticeship Commitment Statement. They also discussed admissions with the senior team. From this evidence and from the discussions the visitors were aware that the education provider was relying on employers to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, and did not appear to have a mechanism for ensuring that this had been undertaken for all learners. The visitors considered that this arrangement did not meet the standard as the education provider currently cannot assure themselves that these checks have been undertaken. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how they will ensure DBS checks are carried out on all learners.

3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have an appropriate finalised version of the agreement with programme partners in place, which will enable the programme to proceed on a sustainable basis.

Reason: The evidence submitted for this standard included a draft agreement between the education provider and the various members of the local Social Work Teaching Partnership, whose employees would be eligible for admission to the programme. The visitors considered that this agreement was appropriate as it stood, and demonstrated appropriate support for the programme from partners. However, they also noted that it had not yet been signed by all parties and so might still be amended. The visitors considered that this possibility of amendment meant that they could not yet regard the agreement as definitive evidence. The senior team stated in discussion that the parties would not be able to sign the agreement until HCPC approval was given to the programme. The visitors understood this and still considered it would be reasonable for the education provider to submit evidence demonstrating an unsigned but finalised agreement, ready for the programme to start, was in place before a recommendation of approval could be made. They reminded the education provider that the version of the agreement seen by visitors as part of the HCPC approval process would be regarded as the final agreement, and that further amendments may have to be reviewed through the HCPC major change process. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing that the final version of the agreement with employers will enable the programme to be sustainable and fit for purpose.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the learning outcomes ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the standards of proficiency (SOPs) mapping and the placement handbook. They also discussed the modules and their learning outcomes with the programme team. From the documentation and from these discussions, it was not clear to the visitors how the

programme learning outcomes were aligned to specific SOPs in practice-based learning and clinical skills modules. In the practice placement handbook, on page 15, learners are directed to read the SOPs but it was not clear to the visitors how this would ensure that they met the SOPs, as it did not link to the learning outcomes. The visitors were therefore unable to be clear how the learning outcomes would ensure that learners met the SOPs. They require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating that all the SOPs are appropriately aligned to programme learning outcomes.

4.2 The learning outcomes must ensure that learners understand and are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the learning outcomes ensure that learners understand and are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including module specifications. They also discussed the modules and their learning outcomes with the programme team. From the documentation and from these discussions, it was not clear to the visitors how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) were integrated throughout the programme to ensure that they had a prominent and structured role. The SCPEs were mentioned in some of the modules but the visitors could not see how this would mean that learners were enabled to understand the nature and importance of the SCPEs. They were therefore unable to be clear how the learning outcomes would ensure that learners met the SCPEs, and require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating that the SCPEs are appropriately addressed throughout the programme.

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.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the assessment strategy and design ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the standards of proficiency (SOPs) mapping and the programme specification. They also discussed assessment with the programme team. From the documentation and from these discussions, the visitors were not clear how learners would be enabled to understand how to meet the SOPs in their practice-based learning. The learning outcomes were mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) but the visitors considered that it might not be clear to learners how the PCF differed from the SOPs, and what they would be expected to do to meet the SOPs. They require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating that assessment of learning outcomes in practice-based learning will ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

6.2 Assessment throughout the programme must ensure that learners demonstrate they are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how assessment in all parts of the programme will ensure that learners are able to demonstrate that they meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including module specifications and placement handbook. They also discussed assessment of professional expectations with the programme team. From the documentation and from these discussions, it was not clear to the visitors how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) were assessed throughout the programme. The SCPEs were mentioned in some of the modules, but without more detail the visitors could not see how the learners would be given a clear idea of what they needed to demonstrate. They were therefore unable to be clear how assessment throughout the programme would ensure that learners met the SCPEs, and require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating that learners' ability to meet the expectations of behaviour, including SCPEs, is appropriately assessed throughout the programme.

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 24 April 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](#).