# Approval process quality report

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| Education provider | Boots Hearingcare |
| Name of programme(s) | Boots HearingCare Qualification in Hearing Aid Dispensing |
| Date Assessment commenced | 17 March 2021 |
| Visitor recommendation made | 13 August 2021 |
| Case reference | CAS-01048-N4R9G0 |

## Summary of findings from this assessment

This a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that

* Boots Hearingcare meets institution-level standards of education and training
* the Boots HearingCare Qualification in Hearing Aid Dispensing programme meets programme level standards of education and training

The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding approval and next steps.

The recommended visitor outcomes of this process were as follows:

* The provider met institution-level standards through visitor-led stage 1 assessment, meaning the institution is properly organised to deliver HCPC-approved education and training
* The programme should be approved as all programme level standards were met through stage 2 assessment
* The institution should next be engaged with the performance review process in two years (2022-23 academic year)

The Education and Training Committee will now meet to consider the visitors recommendations and make a decision regarding institution and programme approval, and next steps.

The areas we cover in this report

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# Section 1: Background information

## Who we are

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.

## Our standards

We approve institutions and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which 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.

Our standards are divided into two levels based on their relevance to the institution and programme(s). The following considerations were made when splitting standards between the institution and programme level:

* Where accountability best sits, with either the accountable person for the institution or programme
* How the standard is worded, with references to the education provider and processes often best sitting at the institution level, and references to the programme or profession often best sitting at the programme level
* We have preferred seeking assurance at the institution level, to fit with our intention to put the institution at the centre of our quality assurance model.

## Our approach to quality assuring education

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of institutions and programmes. Through our processes, we:

* enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers
* use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making
* engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards

Institutions and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmes/register/).

## The approval process

We take a staged approach to quality assurance, as we need to understand practices which will support delivery of all programmes within an institution, prior to assessing the programme level detail. The approval process is formed of two stages:

* Stage 1 – we assess to be assured that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme(s)
* Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme

Through the process we will initially review the proposal and then design our assessment based on the issues we find. As such the assessment methods will be different based on the issues which arise in each case.

## How we make 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](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/partners/) to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. 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 the 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](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/educationandtrainingpanel/).

# Section 2: Our assessment

## Stage 1 assessment: The institution

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| Institution | Boots Hearingcare |
| Accountable person | Karen Shepherd |

Boots Hearingcare is a new institution to the HCPC. This means that we did not have any direct historical context or information to support whether institution level standards were met. Therefore, through this stage, we undertook partner-led assessment of the institution to consider whether institution level standards are met.

**Evidence considered**

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet institution-level standards. They supplied information about how each standard was met, including a rationale and links to supporting information via a mapping document.

For Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), we use external sources of data to arrive at an institution performance score. External data points are not available for Boots Hearingcare, and therefore, we were not able to consider performance data through this exercise. We sought insight from the professional body, but we received no usable intelligence or insight from them.

**Visitors appointed to undertake this assessment**

We appointed the following panel to assess the provider’s submission against our institution level standards:

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| Registrant visitors | Jo Jackson - physiotherapist |
| Joanna Lemanska – hearing aid dispenser |
| Robert MacKinnon – hearing aid dispenser |

**Assessment of the institution**

* The visitors reviewed the education provider’s submission and considered their approach to each standard
* The visitors considered at there were no data points which we could use to as a basis for institution-level performance monitoring
* This first review culminated in a virtual HCPC meeting in which the visitors discussed and made decisions around the standards they considered to be met and the areas they required further information on
* The visitors requested further information, and on considering this information were satisfied the institution level standards are met at a threshold level

Further information about why the visitors were satisfied with each area is included as part of the [Summary of visitor findings](#_Summary_of_visitor) section of this report.

## Stage 2 assessment: The programmes

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| Education provider | Boots Hearingcare |
| Accountable person (for the programmes) | Karen Shepherd |
| Programmes | Boots HearingCare Qualification in Hearing Aid Dispensing |
| Profession | Hearing aid dispensers |
| Mode of study | Work based learning |
| Type of programme | Pre-registration |
| Qualification level | Certificate |
| Start date | 1 September 2021 |
| Intended learner numbers | 20, one cohort per year |

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet programme level standards for each programme. They supplied information about how each standard was met, including a rationale and links to supporting information via a mapping document.

**Assessment of the proposed programmes**

Initial review:

* The visitors reviewed the education provider’s submission and considered their approach to each standard.
* This first review culminated in a virtual HCPC meeting in which the visitors discussed and made decisions around the standards they considered to be met and the areas they required further information around.
* Following the finalisation of areas to explore the visitors discussed and finalised the most appropriate quality activity to undertake this investigation.

Quality activity

We design our assessment to be proportionate and appropriate to the issues identified and to seek input from relevant stakeholders when necessary. We considered that it was appropriate and proportionate to request additional documentary evidence to address the issue that was outstanding prior to the quality activity. The theme we explored is as follows:

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| **Theme** | **Reason for additional evidence** |
| Ensuring that educators have the necessary knowledge and expertise to deliver their parts of the programme effectively | The visitors were unclear how the education provider ensures that the educators who will be delivering the content covering scientific theory have the necessary knowledge and expertise to deliver their parts of the programme effectively. |

From their detailed documentary review of the additional evidence submitted, the visitors were satisfied with the clarification provided to address the theme identified above. As such, they were able to recommend approval of the institution and the programmes considered.

## Summary of visitor findings

**SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register**

The visitors were satisfied that the programme aligns with the level of qualification expected for entry onto the Register as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors were satisfied that the education provider had designed the programme using the QAA Foundation Degree benchmark framework, and was set up to ensure the quality of an award equivalent to this level. The visitors considered this appropriate to meet this standard.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

**SET 2: Programme admissions**

The visitors noted that there was clear information provided about the academic and professional entry and selection criteria onto the programme. They were confident that the entry criteria laid out are appropriate to the level and content of the programme and were assured that learners who complete the programme would be able to meet our standards for registration.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

**SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership**

The education provider demonstrated that appropriate resources are provided to all learners, including access to online materials and hardware, and IT support. They saw that there is an adequate number of staff in place and clear processes in place to promote the role of practice educator to support students. The visitors considered the education provider had clear processes in place to address placement capacity. The education provider showed that there is effective collaboration between themselves and practice education providers.

The education provider demonstrated that subject areas will be delivered by educators with relevant knowledge.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

**SET 4: Programme design and delivery**

The evidence submitted by the education provider demonstrated how the curriculum delivers the standards of proficiency (SOPs). As such, the visitors were satisfied that learners who successfully complete the programme would be equipped with the necessary skills to practice as autonomous professionals.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

**SET 5: Practice-based learning**

The visitors could see how well practice-based learning was integrated into the programme and the learning outcomes would be delivered through the range of practice based learning opportunities. There was sufficient evidence in the documentation to demonstrate to the visitors there is a clear process for ensuring an adequate number of staff, and that they have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency. This was showed together with a well-developed administration and teaching structure.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

**SET 6: Assessment**

The visitors were able to see that the assessment strategy is clear and ensures that effectively assess the learning outcomes are effectively assessed so learners who successfully complete the programme meet the SOPs.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

# Section 3: The visitors’ recommendations

Based on these findings the visitors made the following recommendations to the Education and Training Committee:

**Institution and programme approval**

* The education provider has demonstrated that all standards of education and training are met through this exercise. This means that the institution and the programme should be approved, without conditions.

## Future interaction with the performance review process

* The visitors were satisfied that the institution meets our standards at a threshold level
* The visitors recognised we are unable to source performance data points externally, and equivalent data points were not established through this exercise
* The visitors considered there to be no other known risks with the institution’s ability to run professional programmes
* To take continued assurance at an institution level, we need data points that show how an institution is performing. Monitoring these data points allows us to apply a bespoke approach to interacting with providers, including when we ask them to engage with the performance review process
* Without these data points to monitor, the maximum reasonable length between submissions is two years. This is equivalent to the gaps between active submission in the previous quality assurance model, which did not use data to inform decision making in a structured way
* Therefore, the visitors recommend that the institution should interact with our performance review process after two years, that is in the academic year 2023-24
* This allows for two full years of the programme running, which can be reflected on through their portfolio submission
* If the education provider would like to achieve a longer period between monitoring submission beyond this, the visitors recommend that they work with the HCPC to establish equivalent performance data points.

# Section 4: Committee decision on approval

* At their meeting on 28 September 2021, the Education and Training Committee (Panel) made the decision that the programme is approved.
* The Panel agreed that it was appropriate that a two-year review period be set, so that the provider can establish ongoing data reporting with the HCPC.