

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Anglia Ruskin University
Name of programme(s)	MSc Occupational Therapy, Full time MSc Physiotherapy, Full time
Approval visit date	08 June 2021
Case reference	CAS-16875-K3J8L0

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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:

Rebecca Khanna	Occupational therapist
Kathryn Campbell	Physiotherapist
Rabie Sultan	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.

Esther Norton	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Anglia Ruskin University
Joanne Wood	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Anglia Ruskin University
Donna Wynne	Professional body representative	The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
Clare Gibson	External panel member	St. Mary's University Twickenham London

Beth Sidaway	External panel member	Sheffield Hallam University
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Occupational Therapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Occupational therapist
First intake	01 January 2022
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 24
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02318

Programme name	MSc Physiotherapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Physiotherapist
First intake	01 January 2022
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 24
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02319

We undertook this assessment of two new programmes 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	No	As these programmes have not yet commenced, this was not required

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider and HCPC 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	No	We decided it was unnecessary to meet with this group, as visitors were satisfied with the information provided in the documentary submission regarding learners' involvement.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	No	We decided it was unnecessary to meet with this group, as visitors were satisfied with the information provided in the documentary submission regarding service users and carer involvement
Facilities and resources	No	As the visit was virtual and the visitors were able to determine through the programme documentation that standards related to resources had been met, we decided it was unnecessary to have a virtual tour of the facilities and resources
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 30 July 2021.

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 to help them make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the relevant programme

Reason: For the proposed MSc Occupational Therapy and MSc Physiotherapy programmes, visitors reviewed the weblinks provided in the mapping document. The weblinks made reference to the education provider's various existing programmes but not the two proposed programmes. The education provider submitted additional documents before the visit containing information relating to the proposed programmes and confirmed that this information will be available to applicants on the website, once the programmes have been granted approval by the HCPC. Visitors noted that both versions of the Course Specification Form made reference to additional costs for each of the respective programmes. For example, there was mention of additional costs relating to criminal conviction checks, travel to placement and uniforms. However, it was not made clear what monetary value was related to the additional costs and who will be responsible for paying these costs.

It was stated by the programme team that learners on the proposed programmes will be required to travel between the two campuses, based in Cambridge and Chelmsford on very rare occasions. It was also stated during the same meeting that there is a video that will be made available to applicants, that will provide detailed information regarding the admissions process for the proposed programmes. As the visitors did not see any information regarding travel between the two sites within the documentation, they could not determine how this information will be conveyed to potential applicants. Additionally, as visitors have not seen the video that has been created to provide admissions information to applicants, they could not consider how useful it will be and what important information will be conveyed to applicants. As such, the visitors were unable to determine how important information would be appropriately communicated to prospective applicants for the proposed programmes. In particular, visitors were not clear how the education provider intends to communicate the following information to prospective applicants:

- up to date information regarding the monetary value of the additional costs , including clarity about whose responsibility is it to pay for these costs;
- relevant information regarding travel between the two campuses; and
- clarity about the content of the video that will be made available to potential applicants and how will it be made accessible to applicants, as part of the admissions process.

Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate and provide information regarding the above mentioned points. From this, the visitors will be able to determine whether applicants for the proposed programmes, will have the relevant information they need to

make an informed choice about taking up the offer of a place on the relevant programmes.

3.5 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure ongoing regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

Reason: The education provider stated within the mapping document “each clinical programme requires a minimum of one meeting each trimester between the course team and practice educators”. Additionally it was also stated “link tutor visits are conducted twice per trimester minimum, and practice educators attend regular meetings at the university”. From reviewing the various meeting agendas, minutes and summary notes provided as evidence for this standard, visitors noted that there is ongoing collaboration with the education provider and practice education providers for currently approved programmes such as the operating department practitioner profession. There was also notable information within the minutes that suggested discussions around placements, timetabling and forward planning for the proposed programmes. From this the visitors were clear there has been involvement from practice educators in the development of the proposed programmes, however visitors could not gather what the plans are to ensure future regular collaboration once the proposed programmes have commenced. For example, it was not clear whether the proposed trimester meeting will focus on the proposed programmes or whether it will continue as it is currently which involves an overall faculty based meeting, that will focus on any issues and action points. Whilst there are no issues with a faculty based approach to discuss all the programmes, the visitors were unclear if collaboration only took place at the time when a programme was being approved or when specific issues arose within practice-based learning, rather than at set, regular times during the year. As such, visitors could not determine how the collaboration arrangements for the proposed programmes will be regular and ongoing.

During the practice educators meeting, visitors were given verbal reassurances about intentions of regular collaboration with the education provider as per other professions, but the visitors did not clearly understand how regular this collaboration will be going forward. The visitors understood there has been collaboration between the education provider and practice educators until now. However based on the evidence submitted and discussions held at the visit, it was not clear what strategic agreements or arrangements will be in place to ensure there will be regular collaboration going forward for the proposed programmes. As such, the visitors could not be sure this represented an effective and continuous partnership between the practice education providers and education provider. As such, the education provider must demonstrate that there is a plan in place to address how they intend to maintain regular and effective collaboration with practice education providers.

3.9 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

3.10 Subject areas must be delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise.

The following condition applies to the above standards. For simplicity, as the issue spans several standards, the education provider should respond to this condition as one issue.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place across both campuses for the proposed programmes, with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise to deliver effective programmes.

Reason: For these two standards, the education provider provided the curriculum vitae of existing staff for the proposed programmes, information regarding their intention to recruit further staff and confirmation on whether the particular vacant posts have been advertised. In their pre-visit responses to the visitors' questions, the education provider provided a breakdown of the workload planning model in place which accounted for the breadth of staff duties. From reviewing the information provided the visitors determined that there were plans in place to recruit further staff for the proposed number of learners on the programmes, but could not gather what the timelines for fulfilling the vacant posts were. The visitors also noted that the workload planning model provided generic information regarding a breakdown of the number of hours related to teaching, management and practice related activities within the faculty. However, the information provided did not make reference to either of the proposed programmes nor the breakdown of responsibilities for teaching at the Cambridge and Chelmsford campuses. As such, it was not clear to the visitors which staff members - including the ones yet to be recruited - will be responsible for teaching at which campus for the programmes. Based on this, it was not possible to determine whether there will be an adequate number of staff in place to deliver effective programmes at each of the education provider's campuses.

At the visit, the senior team undertook a presentation providing updates on some of the teaching posts that have been filled across the proposed programmes, while acknowledging it has been a slow process due to COVID-19. Additionally, the senior team and programme team confirmed that practitioner lecturers, who are based within their practice education partners, will contribute to the teaching activities on the proposed programmes. However, the visitors were unclear what experience and knowledge was required of individuals working as practitioner lecturers for them to be suitable, so they are well-equipped to take part in teaching and to support learning in the subject areas they are involved in. As such, the visitors could not make a judgement on whether the practitioner lecturers are appropriately qualified and experienced.

From further conversations at the visit, the visitors were not clear what contingency plans were in place if the recruitment of the outstanding staff posts was not complete for a January 2022 start. Considering the above mentioned aspects, the visitors were unclear how many staff will be involved in teaching at each campus, what the timelines, including contingency plans, are for ensuring staff will be in place and what qualifications and experience the practitioner lecturers will possess. The visitors therefore considered these standards were not met, as they could not determine whether there are an appropriate number of staff who are able and equipped to deliver both the programmes effectively at across both the sites at Cambridge and Chelmsford, and that staff have the necessary knowledge and expertise to deliver their parts of the programmes effectively. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate:

- how they will ensure there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff in place to deliver the proposed programmes effectively for all learners at Cambridge and Chelmsford campuses, for a January 2022 start. This should include confirmation of the breakdown of occupational therapy and physiotherapy profession specific teaching staff posts that will be based at each campus;
- timelines, including any contingency plans, regarding the vacant teaching posts on the programmes to ensure there will be adequate support for learners; and the qualifications and experience which will be considered for utilising practitioner lecturers to teach on the relevant programmes, to ensure they have the relevant expertise and knowledge to deliver the programmes effectively

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

Condition: The education provider must evidence the effective process in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.

Reason: From reviewing the mapping document and evidence submitted, visitors noted the details provided regarding the importance of interaction, gaining consent and the rights of service users. In addition, it was stated in the mapping document “where role play or student participation is required, students are asked for verbal consent prior to the activity and confidentiality”. Visitors noted there were policies and information regarding how learners are made aware of their responsibilities of giving consent, but it was not clear how verbal consent was recorded and managed as part of obtaining appropriate consent. During the programme team meeting, visitors learnt that a new policy has recently been put together that will involve obtaining written consent from learners and service users. Without any further information and not having access to the new policy or the consent form, visitors were unable to make a judgement on the appropriateness of the policy. Based on this, visitors could not determine:

- what formal protocols will be in place for obtaining consent from learners and service users, including how records will be maintained;
- how learners and service users are informed about the requirement for them to participate by giving consent; and
- how the education provider manages situations whereby learners decline from participating as service users and what alternative learning arrangements will be put in place where individuals do not consent to participating as a service user.

Considering the above, the visitors were unable to determine whether the process to obtain appropriate consent was effective. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit evidence demonstrating their processes and policies across the proposed programmes, for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.

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 provide clarity regarding the rationale for the structure of practice-based learning and demonstrate how it supports the achievement of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency.

Reason: From reviewing the relevant student and placement handbook documents submitted as evidence for this standard, visitors noted the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning for the proposed programmes. Visitors understood that the structure of the programmes is largely weighted towards learners attending practice-based learning during the second year, whilst all of the relevant basic preparation for all placement types would have been completed in year one. Visitors were not clear how this will be achievable because, as per the proposed structure of the programmes, learners will still be undertaking the relevant 30 credit academic modules in each year two semester in addition to attending placement blocks during year two for the programmes. From querying the rationale behind this before the visit, the education provider stated this will allow learners to engage with diverse settings regardless of the order of their rotation and provide flexibility in accessing placement blocks. From this, the visitors were unclear about the reasons for the decision to focus practice-based learning in year two of the respective programmes and how will this help learners achieve the learning outcomes.

At the visit, the programme team mentioned that learners are able to carry forward no more than 30 academic module credits to the next semester which meant that learners should be able to manage their academic load and still attend the block placements during year two of the programmes. The practice educators stated this can be managed based on their experience of managing other profession programmes currently. Based on these discussions, and considering the evidence submitted, visitors remained unclear about the reasoning for structuring placements during year two of the programmes. As such, it was not clear how this decision is appropriate to the design and content of the proposed programmes and how the balance of attending academic modules and placement blocks during year two will be managed, to support the achievement of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency (SOPs). Therefore, the education provider must articulate the rationale for the structure of practice-based learning during year two of the respective programmes and demonstrate how will this ensure learners will be able meet the learning outcomes and SOPs.

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

6.4 Assessment policies must clearly specify requirements for progression and achievement within the programme.

The following condition applies to the above standards. For simplicity, as the issue spans several standards, the education provider should respond to this condition as one issue.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate and clarify practice-based learning progression requirements and how these will ensure an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were directed to the respective placement handbooks for the proposed programmes and a weblink for the education provider's academic regulations. From a review of the documentation the visitors understood that learners will not be given an opportunity to resit and will need to leave the programme, should they fail practice placements. However, visitors could not see detailed information regarding the academic regulations as the weblink provided was not accessible. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that as

part of the education provider's generic academic regulations, learners are given an opportunity to retake placements within a period of two weeks time immediately after their placements. Information and details regarding progression with resit opportunity during placements was not contained in the documentation and as such the visitors were unsure how this pertinent information will be communicated to learners, so that they can progress and achieve within the respective programmes. It was also not clear whether this will apply to learners failing a particular placement block or each time they failed any particular placement block first time. This also meant that visitors could not make a judgement on the overall objectivity, fairness and reliability of assessments during practice-based learning on the proposed programmes. Considering the evidence submitted and discussions held with the programme team, the visitors considered that these standards have not been met. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence clearly articulating how the assessment regulations, particularly information regarding practice-based learning resit opportunity on the programmes, will be communicated to learners. Based on this they will then be able to make a judgement on the objectivity, fairness and reliability of assessments during practice-based learning. In this way the visitors can make determinations regarding these two standards for the proposed programmes.

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 28 September 2021 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).