

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Sheffield Hallam University
Name of programme(s)	MSc Dietetics, Full time
Approval visit date	11 – 12 September 2018
Case reference	CAS-13257-T6S6R3

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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:

Paul Blakeman	Chiropodist / podiatrist
Pauline Douglas	Dietitian
Niall Gooch	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.

Bee Yee Gan	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Sheffield Hallam University
Helen Garner	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Sheffield Hallam University
Jacki Bishop	Assessor	British Dietetic Association
Jane Wilson	Assessor	British Dietetic Association
Meena Wyn-Wright	Policy Officer	British Dietetic Association
Neil Cross	Internal panel member	Sheffield Hallam University

Karen Vernon-Parry	Internal panel member	Sheffield Hallam University
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Dietetics
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Dietitian
First intake	01 January 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01945

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 15 November 2018.

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 that there is a service level agreement (SLA) in place for practice-based learning.

Reason: The visitors reviewed evidence provided for this standard, including a rationale document and records of collaborations with various stakeholders. They considered that the general arrangements for ensuring the sustainability and fitness of the programme were appropriate overall. They viewed draft copies of service-level agreements with some providers of practice-based learning. However, they were not able to view final versions of these agreements, or other evidence showing that agreements were in place with all providers of practice-based learning. Therefore they were not able to be satisfied that an effective process was in place to ensure availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners. The visitors require the education provider to demonstrate that they can ensure access to appropriate practice-based learning for all learners.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that all areas of the programme will be taught by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, including a staffing strategy and copies of staff curriculum vitae (CVs). They also discussed

staffing with the programme team. The programme team gave verbal reassurances that there were detailed plans in place to cover all parts of the programme appropriately. However, the visitors were not able to view a detailed breakdown of which staff would be allocated to which parts of the programme. They were therefore unable to be satisfied that all subject areas would be delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise. They considered that this was particularly important in light of the programme structure, which has modules running all through the academic year and so has potential to place strain on workload planning. They require the education provider to submit further evidence showing that all subject areas will be taught by staff with appropriate expertise and knowledge.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that the obtaining of consent from learners has been recorded appropriately.

Reason: The visitors reviewed evidence provided for this standard, including learner protocols and a placement strategy document. They also discussed the issue with learners and the programme team. They were satisfied that there were appropriate procedures for obtaining consent from service users who came into contact with learners on the programme. The programme team and learners indicated that there was a procedure for obtaining consent from learners for activities such as role-play early in the programme. However, the visitors were not clear how this consent was recorded, and what information the learners have available to help them understand consent fully. They were not, for example, able to see a completed consent form. They were therefore unable to be clear that the process for obtaining consent was effective and appropriate. They require the education provider to submit further evidence showing how they obtain appropriate consent.

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 submit further evidence demonstrating that an appropriately qualified and experienced external examiner will be appointed.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard. They were satisfied that an appropriate process was in place for appointing an external examiner, but they were aware that one had not yet been appointed. Therefore they were not able to be satisfied that there will be relevant professional input in the external review of the assessment process. They require the education provider to demonstrate that a suitable external examiner will be appointed.

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.

3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider developing service user and carer involvement on the programme to obtain more input from users of dietetic services.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that the standard was met at threshold, as service users and carers did have input. Their involvement was appropriate to the programme and was planned and systematic, helping learners to understand patient experiences and perspectives. However they were aware from the meeting with the service users and carers that there did not seem to be many service users and carers involved with the programme who had direct experience of accessing dietetics services. They considered that this might create a risk that in future the service user and carer involvement would no longer be appropriate and relevant to the programme, if those service users and carers who did have experience of dietetics could no longer work with the programme and were not replaced. The visitors suggest therefore that the service user and carer involvement be re-examined with a view to involving more dietetics service users and carers.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing their staffing needs if the programme expands as intended, and contact the HCPC if significant expansion is planned.

Reason: The visitors considered that the standard was met at threshold as the staff numbers were appropriate for the current cohort size (15). However, they were aware from discussions with the senior team that they were considering a significant expansion of the programme in future years, up to 25 or 30. The visitors considered that this increase, if taken forward, would require an increase in the number of programme staff to ensure that the programme could still be delivered effectively. If more staff were not recruited following such an increase, there was a risk that the standard would no longer be met. They therefore suggest that, in the event of a programme expansion, the education provider review staffing requirements. They also note that the HCPC usually expects education providers to notify us of increases in learner numbers that are likely to affect the programme's ability to meet all the standards of education and training.

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