

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Sheffield
Name of programme(s)	BA (Hons) Social Work (Degree Apprenticeship), FT (Full time)
Approval visit date	25-26 September 2018
Case reference	CAS-13266-V2P2M5

Contents

Section 1: Our regulatory approach.....	2
Section 2: Programme details.....	2
Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment.....	3
Section 4: Outcome from first review.....	3

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:

David Ward	Social worker in England
Sheila Skelton	Social worker (Approved mental health professional)
Ismini Tsikaderi	HCPC executive
Brendon Edmonds	HCPC executive (observer)

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work (Degree Apprenticeship)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 January 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01946

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
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 05 December 2018.

3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that employers intend to support the programme, to ensure it remains sustainable and fit for purposes for the foreseeable future.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that the education provider was engaging with two local authorities who were interested in providing apprentices to undertake the programme. It was the education provider's intention to offer up to 30 places in year one, but it was currently unclear how many places they would be contracted to deliver. In this regard, the education provider also explained that a minimum number of learners were needed to make the programme viable and sustainable. The education provider also discussed the possibility of partnering with other local authorities within the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership (SYTP) in future years. Whilst the intention of the education provider is to partner only with local authorities within the SYTP on a closed contract basis, the visitors received limited evidence that there was clear support for the programme, beyond discussions held with representatives at the senior team meeting.

Given the funding for apprentices and the provision of placement opportunities on this programme will come directly from local authorities, and the competitive environment within which degree apprenticeships operate, the visitors require further evidence to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require further documentary evidence which demonstrates that partner organisations are committed to providing learners and resources to the programme, and that the programme will be financially sustainable as a result.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that the Apprenticeship Steering Board is suitably defined and positioned to provide effective oversight to the management of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that the Apprenticeship Steering Board is a key element to the management of the programme. The education provider explained that the Board would be constituted with representatives from the education provider, local authorities and learners. The Board would provide strategic oversight and direction to the management and further development of the programme. The visitors understood that this Board will be important to support apprenticeship model, whereby education providers and employers are envisaged to partner closely around the delivery of the programme and progression of apprentices. However, whilst its importance was understood by the visitors, they received only limited documented information 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 Apprenticeship Steering Board and how it will operate to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role and remit of the Board, how it will be formally operated, and how it fits into the overall management of the programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that the role of Practice Consultant is suitably defined to ensure there is effective management of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted the introduction of the Practice Consultant role which will support teaching and learning activities with apprentices. In particular, the visitors understood that this new role would be responsible for directing the academic and practice-based learning of apprentices, given a higher proportion of time will be spent learning in the workplace, in comparison to a traditional full time undergraduate route. In this regard, the role was viewed as an integral part of the programme team. The visitors also noted that the Practice Consultant would provide formal support to apprentices for up to 4 hours per month, and would work with four to five apprentices at a time as a group and, where needed, also individually. This role would be funded by the education provider, but the individuals fulfilling this role would be contracted by their local authority.

However, the visitors noted that there was limited documented information available about how the Practice Consultant role would work in practice. In particular, the visitors did not receive any information setting out the role brief for the Practice Consultant, areas of the programme this role would be formally responsible for, and the agreements in place with local authorities which ensure the role is clearly supported, and that its operation within the practice environment is understood. On this basis, the visitors were unclear around how the role would operate to effectively support the management of the programme.

Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence regarding the role of the Practice Consultant to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role in detail, the criteria to fulfil the role, the areas of responsibility the role has regarding the management and delivery of the programme, and how the role will operate within the practice environment to direct and support apprentice learning.

3.4 The programme must have regular and effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which demonstrates how the Apprentice Steering Board will operate to provide effective oversight to the monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that the newly introduced Apprenticeship Steering Board is a key element to the quality assurance arrangements of the programme. The education provider explained that the Board will be constituted by representatives from the education provider, local authorities and learners. The Board will provide oversight to the effective monitoring

and evaluation of the programme and lead on identifying and addressing issues, making changes and further developing the programme strategically and operationally. The visitors understood that the Board will be important to support apprenticeship model, whereby education providers and employers are envisaged to partner closely around the delivery of the programme and progression of apprentices. However, whilst its importance was understood by the visitors, they received only limited documented information regarding how the Board will be established and governed, and how it will fit into the overall quality assurance processes 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 Board and how it will operate to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role and remit of the Board, how it will be formally operated, and how it fits into the overall quality assurance of the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of effective collaboration with practice education providers which ensures all practice educators are prepared to support apprentice learning.

Reason: The visitors received minutes from the Practice Placement Development Group (PPDG), and noted the ongoing relationship the education provider has with the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership (SYTP) to support the delivery of practice-based learning across the region. In their discussions with practice educators, the visitors also noted that this group of stakeholders had yet to receive any information related to the degree apprenticeship programme. The education provider clarified that they intended to hold a joint meeting with practice placement educators to commence the planning required to support the delivery of this new model of training. As such, the visitors were unclear about the preparedness of the practice educators to support this new model of training.

Based on these findings, the visitors require further evidence of collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers in relation to the development of this programme. In particular, the visitors require evidence regarding the plans in place to ensure practice educators understand the requirements of the apprenticeship programme and how their role will work alongside the Practice Consultant role to support apprentices in any teaching and learning activities.

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 provide further evidence which ensures the programme has sufficient capacity of practice placements for learners.

Reason: Based on the findings set out in relation to standards 3.1 and 3.5, the visitors note that formal partnerships with two local authorities are still to be agreed around the number of apprentices to be funded and the availability of a suitable number of practice-based learning settings. Whilst the visitors noted that the education provider is seeking to support up to 30 apprentices per cohort, they also understood that the local authorities are yet to decide on the number of apprentice places they will be able to

offer the programme. In addition, the visitors also note that further discussions are still to be held within the South Yorkshire Teaching Partnership Practice Placement Development Group around placement allocations and how this programme may fit into provision of placements more broadly across the region.

Given the funding for apprentices and the provision of placement opportunities on this programme will come directly from local authorities, and the competitive environment within which degree apprenticeships operate, the visitors require further evidence to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require further documentary evidence which demonstrates that partner organisations are committed to providing sufficient numbers of practice placements to support the planned cohort size. Any evidence provided should also clarify how any such capacity to this programme has been considered in the context of practice based learning already in operation throughout the region.

3.8 Learners must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the mechanisms used to collect feedback from learners are effective and will contribute to the development of the programme.

Reason: From the discussion held with students on the approved Masters programme, the visitors noted it was not always clear how learner feedback was managed and acted on by the education provider. The visitors also noted the introduction of an Apprenticeship Steering Board for this programme would mean learner feedback was handled in a different way. In discussions with the programme team, it was acknowledged that the way the education provider deals with learner feedback required further development. In particular it was noted that the education provider needs to further consider how learner feedback will be gathered from apprentices, and how the current arrangements may require further adaptation to ensure they are fit for purpose. In this regard, the education provider discussed the implementation of an Annual Reflection process.

Given these findings, the education must provide further evidence of how learner feedback will be gathered, considered, and how any actions taken will be effectively fed back to apprentices. In particular, further clarity should be provided around the role of the Board in provide oversight to any mechanisms being relied upon.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the current and projected staffing levels required to ensure the effective delivery of the programme.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation and in discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that the education provider was seeking approval to deliver the programme for up to 30 apprentices per cohort, with one cohort commencing per year. The education provider also discussed how this would be managed alongside the delivery of the existing Master programme. In order to meet the demands for year one of the programme, the education provider plans to recruit an additional Senior Lecturer post. In addition, it is anticipated that approximately four to five Practice Consultants need to be in post to support student learning. Towards the end of year one, further analysis

will be needed to ascertain further staffing requirements to support the following two years, which would provide up to a maximum of 90 students on the programme at any given time. Whilst this information was discussed at the visit, the visitors did not receive any evidence for how staff resources will be utilised to support the effective delivery of the programme.

Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence of the resourcing plan for the apprenticeship programme. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly articulates how many staff will be available to deliver the programme in year one, and how this in with the programme timetable. Clarity is also required around how these plans compliment the delivery of the existing Masters programme. The visitors also require further clarity around how the Practice Consultant role is, if at all, factored into the programme team resources required to deliver elements of the programme. Finally, the visitors would also expect to receive more information about the projected learner numbers of the programme, over three years, and how this may impact on further resourcing requirements for the programme team. This information should be provided in the context of filling up to the maximum number of places approval is being sought for.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that individuals fulfilling the role of Practice Consultant are suitable to support the delivery of teaching and learning on the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted the introduction of a Practice Consultant who would play an important role in supporting teaching and learning activities with apprentices. In particular, the visitors understood that this new role would be responsible for directing the academic and practice-based learning of apprentices, given a higher proportion of time will be spent learning in the workplace, in comparison to a traditional full time undergraduate route. In this regard, the role was viewed as an integral part of the programme team. The visitors also noted that the Practice Consultant would provide formal support to apprenticeships for up to 4 hours per month, and would work with four to five apprentices at a time as a group and, where needed, also individually. This role would be funded by the education provider, but the individuals fulfilling this role would be contracted by their local authority.

However, the visitors noted that there was limited documented information available about how the Practice Consultant role would work in practice. In particular, the visitors did not receive any information setting out the role brief for the Practice Consultant, areas of the programme this role would be formally responsible for, and the agreements in place with local authorities which ensure the role is clearly supported, and that its operation within the practice environment is understood. On this basis, the visitors were unclear around how individuals fulfilling this role would be suitable to support the delivery of any specialist subject areas they may be responsible for.

Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence regarding the role of the Practice Consultant to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role in detail, the criteria to fulfil the role, the areas of responsibility the role has regarding the delivery of the programme, and how the role

will operate within the practice environment to direct and support student learning. Where Practice Consultants are involved in supporting particular subject areas, clarity should be provided for how individuals fulfilling this role will be suitably experienced to support apprentice learning.

4.3 The programme must reflect the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in any relevant curriculum guidance.

Condition: The education provider must provide demonstrate how the learning hours required for the undergraduate degree are achievable within the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through further discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that the programme has been structured to support an apprenticeship learning model, whereby smaller 20 credit modules are delivered alongside larger, year-long, 40 credit modules, the latter of which are primarily completed within the practice-based setting. The education provider explained that this means around a third of the programme would be delivered within the academic setting, with a proportion of the time allocated to face to face teaching and learning. The visitors noted the reliance on self-directed and work-based learning to ensure individuals could reasonably fulfil the learning hours required for an undergraduate degree. The visitors also noted the programme had been validated by the education provider on this basis.

Based on this information, the visitors were unclear how an individual could reasonably fulfil the learning hours, considering the amount of self-directed and work-based learning required, and that this will need to be achieved alongside the apprentice also fulfilling their responsibilities as an employee. Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence of the rationale underpinning the achievement of the learning hours to ensure this standard is met.

5.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that there will be an appropriate number of suitable Practice Consultants in place to support practice-based learning.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted the introduction of the Practice Consultant role which will play an important role in supporting teaching and learning activities for apprentices. In particular, the visitors understood that this new role would be responsible for directing the academic and practice-based learning of apprentices, given a higher proportion of time will be spent learning in the workplace, in comparison to a traditional full time undergraduate route. In this regard, the role was viewed as an integral part of the programme team, but in the context of this standard, would be based within the practice environment. The visitors also noted that the Practice Consultant would provide formal support to apprenticeships for up to 4 hours per month, and would work with four to five apprentices at a time as a group and, where needed, also individually. This role would be funded by the education provider, but that the individuals fulfilling this role would be contracted by their local authority.

However, the visitors noted that there was limited documented information available about how the Practice Consultant role would work in practice. In particular, the visitors did not receive any information setting out the role brief for the Practice Consultant, areas of the programme this role would be formally responsible for, and the agreements in place with local authorities which ensure the role is clearly supported, and that its operation within the practice environment is understood. On this basis, the visitors were unclear around how the role would operate to effectively support the delivery of this programme. Furthermore, they could not ascertain whether the proposed number of Practice Consultants would be adequate to support the delivery of the programme.

To ensure this standard is met, the visitors require further evidence regarding the role of the Practice Consultant and how the proposed numbers fulfilling this role will be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role in detail, the criteria to fulfil the role, the areas of responsibility the role has regarding the delivery of the programme, and how the role will operate within the practice environment to direct and support student learning. In addition to this, the visitors also require further information around how the proposed number of four to five Practice Consultants will be appropriate to support practice-based learning.

5.6 Practice educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, must be on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that individuals fulfilling the role of Practice Consultant are suitable to support safe and effective practice based learning.

Reason: Similarly to 5.5, the visitors noted that the newly introduced role of Practice Consultant is key to delivery of the programme. However, the visitors noted that there was limited documented information available about how the Practice Consultant role would work in practice. In particular, the visitors did not receive any information setting out the role brief for the Practice Consultant, areas of the programme this role would be formally responsible for, and the agreements in place with local authorities which ensure the role is clearly supported, and that its operation within the practice environment is understood. On this basis, the visitors were unclear around how the individuals fulfilling this role will have the necessary experience to effectively support safe and effective learning in practice-based settings.

Given these findings, the visitors require further evidence regarding the role of the Practice Consultant to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require evidence which clearly explains the role in detail, the criteria to fulfil the role, the areas of responsibility the role has regarding the delivery of the programme, and how the role will operate within the practice environment to direct and support student learning.

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.

3.11 An effective programme must be in place to ensure the continuing professional and academic development of educators, appropriate to their role in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider continuing to work closely with local authorities to support continuing professional and academic development of the Practice Consultants.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted the introduction of the Practice Consultant role which will play an important role in supporting teaching and learning activities with apprentices. In particular, the visitors understood that this new role will be responsible for directing the academic and practice-based learning of apprentices, given a higher proportion of time will be spent learning in the workplace, in comparison to a traditional full time undergraduate route. In this regard, the role was viewed as an integral part of the programme team.

Whilst the visitors are satisfied this standard is met, they recommend the education provider continues to work closely with local authorities to secure dedicated time for individuals fulfilling this role to undertake appropriate professional and academic professional development. This will ensure the role and the individuals fulfilling it continue to remain suitably qualified and experienced to effectively support apprentice learning.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the process for obtaining appropriate consent from learners.

Reason: The visitors noted in their discussions at the visit that learner consent was gained at the commencement of the programme. Whilst they were satisfied that there are effective processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners, the visitors recommend the education provider consider developing more mechanisms to gain consent from learners at further points, where appropriate, as they progress through the programme.

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.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the current and projected staffing levels required to ensure the effective delivery of the programme.

Reason condition not met at this time: The education provider has noted that new roles have been allocated to staff members within the social work team. The visitors noted there is evidence on the time allocation and the workload of the practice consultant role in the degree apprenticeship programme in the conditions response. Although the education provider has shown the time allocation for the practice consultant role, the visitors are not clear how this is mapped against the contact and delivery model. In the reasoning for the condition, the visitors requested evidence of a resourcing plan and clarity as to how these plans complement the delivery of the existing Masters programme. From the response, the visitors were not clear how current and projected staffing levels will ensure the effective delivery of the programme. In particular, the visitors were unclear how different roles can be undertaken by individuals, and that these individuals will be able to allocate their working time while both programmes are running. Therefore, the visitors require clarity around how these plans compliment the delivery of the existing MSc Social Work programme, to ensure effective delivery of the programmes.

Suggested documentation: Further clarity around how time allocation for the practice consultant role is mapped against the contact and delivery model on the degree apprenticeship programme. Information detailing staff allocation specific to their roles on the new programme, alongside the existing MSc Social Work programme.