Approval process report

Health Sciences University, Dietetics / Occupational therapy 2025-26

Executive Summary

This is a report of the ongoing process to approve the dietetics and occupational therapy programmes at Health Sciences University to be delivered in association with Portobello Institute in Dublin. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programmes against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programmes are fit to practice.

We have

- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area.
- Reviewed the programmes against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities.
- Decided all standards are met, and that the programmes should be approved.

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
    - Quality activity 1 – we recognised the programme is delivered in Dublin and we considered the overall resourcing and sustainability of the proposed programmes, including the anticipated demand and how the education provider plans to support its delivery over time.
    - Quality activity 2 – we sought assurance that there would be sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to support the delivery of the programme.
    - Quality activity 3 – we were unclear on how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understood the responsibilities of all involved and would work together to deliver the programmes effectively. This included how the UK based education provider would deliver the proposed programmes and manage them and there was a sufficient number of staff to support practice-based learning.
    - Quality activity 4 - we considered the education provider approach to placement capacity and examined the processes in place to ensure sufficient availability of placements for learners. The education provider outlined how placement capacity was planned, monitored, and maintained over time to support the delivery of practice-based learning and meet programme requirements. In addition to this we also considered how the proposed programme may impact other programmes within the region.
    - Quality activity 5 – we explored how learners progressed through their placements given they were assessed at level 6. The education provider

confirmed this was normal practice across all programmes and provided details of progression.
    - Quality activity 6 – we received confirmation on the academic criteria for admissions and the need for applicants to only demonstrate knowledge in Biochemistry and not Chemistry.
    - Quality activity 7 – we explored the physical resources that would be available to support the delivery of the programmes and available for learners to access.
- The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
    - There are plans to develop an on-site clinic to deliver services to the local community, which could create additional placement opportunities for learners. However, there was limited information available regarding the proposed staffing and resourcing of the clinic, including arrangements for learner supervision, support and practice education. Visitors also noted that the proposed on-site clinic would not be used for placements until it had successfully been quality assurance. Initially, we will have a conversation with the education provider to establish the anticipated timeframe for the development of the clinic. Once these arrangements and timescales are clear, a focused review will be undertaken to determine whether the clinic is suitable for use as a placement setting.
- The programmes meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This approval was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programmes are approved, and • whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • The provider's next performance review will be in the 2028-29 academic year • Subject to the Panel's decision, we will undertake further investigations as per section 5 • The programmes have been approved and will be delivered by the education provider from November 2026.

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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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.

This is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programmes detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programmes approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers 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 regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters 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; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are approved on an open-ended basis, subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed on our website.

The approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we take assurance 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 approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

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 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. 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 takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view on our website.

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support this review:

Julie-Anne Lowe	Lead visitor, Occupational therapist
Susan Lennie	Lead visitor, Dietitian
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 15 HCPC-approved programmes across six professions and includes one post-registration programme for the independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations. The chiropodist / podiatrist programme has the POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH) annotations.

It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2022.

The education provider is made up of four schools and one centre. The HCPC approved programmes are based in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. The proposed programmes will be delivered in Dublin in partnership with the Portobello Institute. The Portobello Institute are a small specialist education provider who have access to placement opportunities for learners based in Dublin. The education provider already work in partnership with the Portobello Institute to deliver the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme, which was approved in August 2024 and MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration) programme, which was approved in November 2025.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process in 2023-24 and received a four year monitoring period. They will therefore next engage in the performance review process in 2028-29.

The education provider engaged with the approval review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021. The review covered the MSc Occupational Therapy, MSc Speech and Language Therapy, MSc Dietetics, and MSc Podiatry programmes. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards were met, and the programmes were approved by the Education and Training Committee in 2022 for delivery in Bournemouth.

The education provider recently engaged with the approval process to seek approval for the BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography, BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Podiatry and BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy degree apprenticeship programmes. These were approved in August 2025 and the start date was September 2025.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Chiropodist / podiatrist	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Dietitian	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Occupational therapy	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Physiotherapist	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023

	Radiographer	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2022
	Speech and language therapist	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2025

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programmes.

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Learner number capacity	334	394	2026	The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision. The value is above the benchmark; however, this figure includes the additional learners for the proposed programmes. The currently enrolled numbers, therefore, meet the benchmark. We should explore if there are

				sufficient resources for the proposed programmes.
Learner non-continuation	7%	6%	2021-22	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 4%. We will not explore this data point through this assessment because there is no impact on SETs considered.
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	92%	100%	2021-22	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 7%. We will not explore this data point through this assessment because there

				was no impact on SETs considered.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Bronze	2023	The definition of a Bronze TEF award is “Provision is of satisfactory quality.” We will not explore this data point through this assessment because there was no impact on SETs considered.
Learner satisfaction	80.9%	69.2%	2025	This data was sourced at the summary. This means the data is the provider-level public data. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. When compared to the previous year’s data point, the education provider’s performance has improved by 4%. We will not explore this data point through this assessment because this was considered through the focused review process where we referred it for further consideration through the performance review process.
HCPC performance review cycle length	N/A	4 years	2028-29	The education provider has engaged with the HCPC previously and a four-year review period was agreed.

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new

programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programmes align with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programmes, the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants** –
    - The Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy outlines the education providers policies and processes for recruiting selecting and admitting applicants onto the programmes. The policy applies to all applicants and is set at institution level. It provides information relating to the admissions process, which includes information for applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom (UK).
    - There is programme-specific documentation available on the programme specific webpages. The information provided on these webpages includes an overview of the programme and entry requirements and also provides information relating to fees and qualifications. Information is also available through other channels, such as the education providers prospectus and their open days.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** –
    - The Recruitment, Selection and Admission regulations and the Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy and Procedure documents provide information relating to the English language proficiency. To meet the requirements, applicants are required to provide evidence of the level of their English language, at a minimum of GCSE grade 4, as part of the application process. Additional information can be found on the programme specific webpages.
    - The programme webpages and information packs provide details of the health requirements for all applicants. This includes any vaccinations that may be required and occupational health assessments.
    - All applicants are required to present a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate as part of the admissions process. Applicants living outside of the UK will be required to present a National Police Certificate. This is to ensure they are safe to work with vulnerable adults and children.
    - The education provider also applies the Criminal Convictions Procedure to all programmes. This ensures all applicants with criminal convictions are assessed appropriately to mitigate any risks and ensure the safety of other learners and staff.

    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** –
    - Information on this area is outlined in the education provider's 'Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy' document and in the 'Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)' document. These policies allow applicants prior learning and experience to be considered as part of their application form.
    - All applicants are required to undergo a thorough initial assessment. If applicants are able to demonstrate skills and learning these will be considered through these processes and exemptions will be applied.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
    - The education provider has an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy which outlines their commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture where all learners are treated fairly and equally. This is demonstrated through the recruitment process where they select applicants with the abilities to undertake the programme. As part of this, they ensure applicants are not discriminated against and treated fairly. The education provider also ensures all characteristics are considered, which include age, disability, race and gender.
    - The Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy and Procedure document outlines a commitment to supporting learners with disabilities and additional support needs.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

<u>Management and governance</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Sustainability of provision** –
    - The Course Consideration and Periodic Review Policy applies to all programmes. As part of this process, a business plan will be considered by the University College's Senior Management Group where programme sustainability will be considered and approved internally. In addition to this the Periodic Review Process ensures the curriculum is current and programmes are fit for purpose and sustainable.
    - There is an increasing demand for expanding entry routes into the occupational therapy and dietetics professions in Ireland. This is based on a combination of demographic trends, policy developments, and workforce pressures, which are contributing to an increased requirement for occupational therapy and dietetics services across all

age groups. The education provider recognises this demand and works collaboratively with the integrated care systems (ICS) to support the expansion and development of the workforce.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes. For the proposed programmes, we need to understand how the UK based education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to manage the proposed programmes and ensure they are sustainable both from a resourcing and financial perspective. We will assess this further through stage 2 of the process.
- **Effective programme delivery** –
    - The education provider uses their Course and Unit Monitoring Policy and periodic review process to monitor and evaluate the effective delivery of programmes. All programmes have steering groups who meet regularly to discuss, develop and deliver the programme action plan. There is also an annual monitoring and reporting process for individual programmes.
    - Each programme sits within a specific academic School where Course Leaders are line managed by the Head of that School. The Head sits on the Institution's Senior Management Team and reports directly to the Board of Governors.
    - Appropriate qualifications and experience are articulated as essential criteria in the job description for all academic staff appointed to programmes. This includes being registered with the HCPC and a member of the relevant professional body.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - Given the proposed programmes will be delivered in Dublin, it is unclear what processes and policies are in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. This includes understanding who is responsible for managing any processes and policies. We will need to assess this through stage 2 of the process.
    - At the institutional level, we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not. We will need to assess this through stage 2 of the process.
    - At the institutional level, it is not clear if the education provider requires the person holding overall professional responsibility for a programme to be appropriately qualified and experienced and registered on the relevant part of the Register. As such, we will refer this to stage 2 for further exploration.
    - At the institution level, we will require assurance on how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understand their responsibilities and work together to deliver an effective programme. Alongside this we will also need to understand how the UK based education provider will deliver the proposed programmes and manage them. We will need to

assess these as part of stage 2 (SETs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) of the approval process.

- **Effective staff management and development** –
    - The education provider has a 'Staff Development Policy' which sets out their approach to staff management. This contributes to effective management and development of staff.
    - The education provider explained how staff development includes all policies, practices, and procedures to support and develop the capabilities of staff. These include induction, probation period, mentoring, peer observations and online learning. This aims to improve the quality of their work and to ensure success of the programmes. It is an ongoing process, closely linked to their annual appraisal process.
    - To ensure that learners are taught and guided in their learning by appropriately qualified staff, all non-clinical academic staff are expected to have, or be working towards, a PhD or other doctoral qualification. All clinical staff must have full registration with the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) and conform to the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of the relevant regulator or professional body.
    - New staff without teaching experience are encouraged to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching or equivalent, with support for achieving recognition as a Fellow of Advance HE.
    - Staff involved with delivery and management of the proposed programmes will be existing staff with plans approved to appoint further profession specific staff for delivery of the proposed programmes in Dublin.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - As the programmes will be delivered in Dublin, it was unclear how the education provider ensured and supported staff, sessional or visiting lecturers and practice educators to keep their professional and academic skills up to date. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.11) of the approval process.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** –
    - The education provider has an institution wide 'Placement Policy' that outlines the process for the identification, approval, and ongoing monitoring of practice placements. All practice-based learning activity is overseen by the Practice Learning Development and Management Group, a sub-committee of the University's Academic Board responsible for academic governance.
    - Placement provider partnerships and agreements are coordinated by the University College Executive Team and signed off by the Vice-Chancellor. All placements are monitored and reviewed by the Placement Coordinator to ensure capacity and suitability.
    - The education provider currently works in partnership with the Portobello Institute to deliver two programmes and have access to

placement opportunities within Dublin. The education provider therefore plans to develop the proposed programmes and deliver them in Dublin and access these additional placement opportunities.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - At the institution level, we will require assurance on how the 'Placement Policy' will apply, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SETs 3.1 and 3.2) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: We will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.1 – we need to understand how the UK based education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to manage the proposed programmes and ensure they are sustainable both from a resourcing and financial perspective. This will include us considering how the 'Placement Policy' will apply to the proposed programmes, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin.
- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understand the responsibilities of all involved, and will work together to deliver effective programmes. This includes how the UK based education provider will deliver the proposed programmes and manage them.
- SET 3.3 – we must ensure the person holding overall professional responsibility for the proposed programmes is appropriately qualified and experienced and registered on the relevant part of the Register. We will need to understand how the existing staff will be used for the proposed programmes and where they will be based. Additionally, we will also need to understand if the new staff being appointed for the proposed programmes will be based in Dublin or elsewhere.
- SET 3.11 - from the information provided it is unclear how the education provider ensures and supports staff, sessional or visiting lecturers and practice educators to keep their professional and academic skills up to date.
- SET 3.17 - The education provider and Portobello Institute will have specific policies and processes in place to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. We need to understand these policies and processes and clarify who will be responsible for them. (SET 3.17).
- SET 3.18 - we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not.

<u>Quality, monitoring, and evaluation</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality** –

- The education provider has several policies and mechanisms in place to manage and monitor academic quality. These include their ‘Course Design Framework’ policy and the ‘Education Strategy.’ Academic quality monitoring is an ongoing process and is key to the continuous enhancement of learners’ experiences of their programmes.
- The baseline document states that all programmes undergo continuous monitoring and Course Leaders complete an annual monitoring report form and Course Action Plan (CAP) which records all actions and changes. The forms are considered through an internal review process and received by Academic Standards and Quality Committee, which is a committee of Academic Board. Annual monitoring leads to the development of a course action plan that is monitored by the relevant Couse Steering Committee throughout the year.
- All programmes are reviewed every six years. The procedure is the same as for new programmes but also includes consideration of a range of qualitative and quantitative monitoring data.
- Changes to programmes between reviews are managed through the institutional ‘Course and Unit Modification’ policy. To ensure institutional oversight, any changes to programmes approved at programme level are reported to the institutional Academic Standards and Quality Committee.
- The External Examining Policy outlines the process for external examiner appointments. Course Leaders nominate candidates based on their qualifications and experience, ensuring they are HCPC registered. The appointments are then approved by the Central Academic Standards and Quality Committee.
- These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- At the institution level, we will need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will monitor and evaluate the quality of the proposed programmes and how the processes will be applied, given the programmes will be delivered in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.4) of the approval process.

- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** –
  - The education provider uses their 'Placement Policy' to outline the requirements and expectations for course teams involved in the organisation, approval, and ongoing management of placement learning. This ensures a positive learning experience for learners.
  - The education provider’s institutional 'Placement Policy' sets out arrangements for learner concerns and whistleblowing, emphasising its importance, and the need to support learners. At the programme level, specific arrangements covering 'whistleblowing,' etc., are included in each Placement Handbook. Guidance on conduct and ethics is embedded in the curriculum, which focuses on expectations regarding reporting concerns. Raising concerns is also covered in the Placement Handbook.

- The education provider outlines the specific role and responsibilities of the Practice Educator, including their level of experience and qualification in the Practice Educator Handbook. The provider has also stated that they run training and continuing professional development (CPD) for Practice Educators to further ensure the required knowledge, skills, and experience are developed in Practice Educators working with learners.
- The education provider states the Portobello Institute have a long-established placement provision for a number of the current programmes delivered by the Portobello Institute.
- These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- There will be specific policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. We will need to understand which policies apply in which situation (SET 4.10).
- The proposed programmes will be delivered in Ireland, we will need to consider how the education provider ensures practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes (SET 5.7); and learners and practice educators have the information they require to be prepared before going into the practice environment (SET 5.8).
- The education provider will have overall responsibility for the proposed programmes. We will need to review how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 (SET 3.4) of the process.
- At the institution level, we will need to understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the quality of the practice environment and how the Portobello Institute is involved (SET 5.3). This includes ensuring there is a safe and supportive environment for learners and service users (SET 5.4).

- **Learner involvement** –
  - The education provider refers to their 'Course and Unit Monitoring Policy' and the 'Student Engagement Policy' to demonstrate learner involvement in programmes. Learners at both mid and end points of individual units of study provide feedback on their programmes. All course years of study have at least one learner representative who sits on the Course Steering Group and the university-wide Student Experience Committee.
  - The 'Course Design Framework' and 'Course Consideration Policy' include the institutional expectation that learners are involved in the design process for new programmes. Groups of learners are invited to meet with the Course Consideration Panel to give feedback on the learning experience.
  - Student representatives for each programme are members of the Course Steering Committee. The remit of the Committee is to maintain the academic standards of the programme and to ensure that it

operates in accordance with the approved program specification. The Committee also seeks to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities, ensuring that issues requiring improvement are addressed, and good practice shared.
    - There is learner representation on all committees of the Academic Board and on the Board of Governors. The Student Experience Committee has the specific remit to promote and facilitate a two-way channel of communication between learners and staff. This relates to learner experience and enhancement, support services, and learner engagement in academic governance.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - For the proposed programmes, it is unclear how learner involvement will be facilitated in Dublin. We will need to understand how this will be coordinated and how the learners based in Dublin will be involved with the proposed programmes. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.8) of the approval process.
- **Service user and carer involvement** –
    - The education provider uses their 'Sharing Patient and Community Experience' (SPaCE) Group, along with other groups that contribute to this area, to demonstrate service user and carer involvement. The 'Friends of the Clinic' group of service users provides regular feedback and input into the delivery of services in the University College Clinic. The clinic provides some placements for learners on HCPC approved programmes. This feedback is reported directly to a Clinical Governance Group. In the clinic, the patient voice is also collected through annual questionnaires and comment cards. We understand this is a UK model and therefore need to understand what arrangements there will be in place to involve service users and carers with the proposed programmes in Dublin.
    - The education provider has stated that by working with service users and carers, they can provide outstanding person-centred care to patients in the local community and deliver first-class education to healthcare learners.
    - Service users and carers are involved in programme design, governance and admissions recruitment. They also provide learners undertaking practice based learning with feedback on their experience.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - For the proposed programmes, it is unclear how service user and carer involvement will be facilitated in Dublin. We will need to understand how this will be coordinated and how service users and carers will be involved with the proposed programmes in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.7) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programmes.
- SET 3.7 – how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate service user and carer involvement for the proposed programmes.
- SET 3.8 – how the education provider will work the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate learner involvement for the proposed programmes.
- SET 4.10 - the policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. This is because the education provider and the Portobello Institute may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment with the Portobello Institute.
- SET 5.4 - the processes to make sure practice-based learning takes place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.
- SET 5.7 - the processes to ensure practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes.
  SET 5.8 - how learners and practice educators are provided with the required information in order to be prepared for practice-based learning, such as how placement details, timing and length of practice-based learning and practical details were shared.

<u>Learners</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support** –
  - The education provider offers a range of support services through their Student Services Team. This includes well-being guidance, counselling services and support with study skills. Learners can also seek pastoral support from their assigned Personal Tutor.
  - The 'Student Complaints Policy and Procedure' is set at the institutional level and applies to learners on all programmes. The policy considers the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice guidance. Learners are encouraged to raise and resolve complaints informally in the first instance. If this does not address their concerns, there is a three-stage complaints procedure. At the end of the process, learners may take a complaint to the OIA.
  - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
  - For the proposed programmes, it is unclear how the support provided and available to learners through the UK education provider will be

made available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programmes. (SET 3.13)
    - We will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for managing this. (SET 3.15)
    - We will need to assess these areas as part of stage 2 of the approval process.
- **Ongoing suitability** –
    - The education provider has several mechanisms in place to determine learners' ongoing suitability. This includes the 'Fitness to Study' and the 'Fitness to Practice' (FtP) policies, as well as the 'Student Disciplinary Policy.' Any concerns relating to the ongoing suitability of learners' conduct, character, and health will be addressed institutionally through these policies.
    - The education provider has an established Student Monitoring and Wellbeing Group that meets regularly for each programme. They consider matters related to individual learner progress, including academic performance, skills attainment, attendance requirements, and well-being issues. This group considers and helps to identify learners who perform below the required standard or are in danger of doing so, makes recommendations, and monitors outcomes.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - We will need to consider how the education provider will ensure the ongoing suitability of learners conduct, character and health and understand who will be responsible for managing this. In addition to this, it is unclear if the Student Monitoring and Wellbeing Group will be involved with the programmes being delivered at the Portobello Institute. (SET 3.16)
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** –
    - Placement Handbooks and unit descriptors are utilised to introduce learners to concepts of interprofessional learning and interprofessional practice at the start of all programmes. There is joint delivery of units across health profession-focused programmes to foster interprofessional education, and interprofessional learning forms a core part of the placement experiences of learners. Learners on the proposed programmes will have the opportunity to collaborate with learners on the MSc Physiotherapy and MSc Speech and Language Therapy programmes that are currently being delivered in Dublin. In addition to this they will have opportunities to work with other professionals through their clinical experiences.
    - The education provider has referred to the School’s Guidance document, which outlines the School of Health and Rehabilitation Services approach to interprofessional learning. This involves shared learning with other relevant healthcare profession-focused programmes.

    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
    - The Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy highlights the education providers commitment to providing all learners with a diverse and inclusive environment to learn in. This ensures all learners are treated fairly and equally and have access to all opportunities available.
    - Changing the Culture working group is a joint University/College Students Union group who lead on cultural change and undertake activities to promote an inclusive culture and environment. This includes initiatives related to Black Lives Matter, disability, LGBTQ+, mental health, and well-being.
    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - For the proposed programmes, it is unclear how the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will apply to the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for these. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure these policies are applied and monitored throughout the programme and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.14) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.13 - it is unclear how the support available to learners through the UK education provider will be made available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programmes. We will need to understand which policies apply in each situation and how learners know about these.
- SET 3.14 - it is unclear how the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will apply to the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for these. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure these policies are applied and monitored throughout the programme and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided.
- SET 3.15 - we will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for managing this.
- SET 3.16 - we will need to consider how the education provider will ensure the ongoing suitability of learners conduct, character and health and understand who will be responsible for managing this. In addition to this, it is unclear if the Student Monitoring and Wellbeing Group will be involved with the programmes being delivered at the Portobello Institute.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity** –
  - To ensure objectivity in assessments, the provider has existing policies, procedures, and regulations in place, including the 'Course Design Framework' policy, 'Assessment Criteria' policy, and 'Academic Misconduct' policy. The education provider asserts that all assessments align with these policies, as well as with the 'Assessment Regulations' and the 'Marking and Moderation Policy,' which are institutional-wide policies.
  - The institutional 'Setting and Scrutiny of Assessments Policy and Procedure,' guides the scrutiny of assessments to ensure validity, reliability, and accurate assessment documentation. Implementation occurs at the School level, where all assessments have clear criteria objectively mapped to institutional generic assessment criteria.
  - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
- **Progression and achievement** –
  - The education provider has confirmed that assessment regulations operate institutionally, outlining requirements for progression and awards. If necessary, specific regulations for individual programmes are approved separately. Learner progression aligns with the Assessment Regulations and the Marking and Moderation policy.
  - Course Specifications and the University College Student Handbook direct learners to approved assessment regulations for details on progression and achievement.
  - The Course Handbook conveys information on programmes with specific minimum attendance requirements. Failure to meet these requirements impacts the learner's ability to pass the unit and proceed with their studies.
  - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
  - At the institution level, we need to understand how the requirements regarding attendance are managed and monitored and how the Portobello Institute are involved. In addition to this, we need to know how the requirements are communicated to the learners (SET 4.11).
- **Appeals** –
  - The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (Taught Awards) and Disciplinary Policy outline the process for appeals across the institution.
  - Appeals follow a two-stage process: stage 1 involves an informal discussion, and stage 2 includes a panel review. At the end of this process, learners may escalate a complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

    - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programmes.
    - Given the proposed programmes will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 6.6) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 4.11 - we need to understand how the requirements regarding attendance are managed and monitored and how the Portobello Institute are involved. In addition to this, we need to know how the requirements are communicated to the learners.
- SET 6.6 – we will need to understand how academic appeals will be considered. Given the proposed programmes will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1. As noted through the previous section, there are areas to take forward into stage 2. These are outlined below.

- SET 3.1 – we need to understand how the UK based education provider will manage the proposed programmes and ensure they are sustainable both from a resourcing and financial perspective. This will include us considering how the 'Placement Policy' will apply to the proposed programmes, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin.
- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understand the responsibilities of all involved, and will work together to deliver effective programmes.
- SET 3.3 – we must ensure the person holding overall professional responsibility for the proposed programmes is appropriately qualified and experienced and registered on the relevant part of the Register. We will need to understand how the existing staff will be used for the proposed programmes and where they will be based. Additionally, we will also need to understand if the new staff being appointed for the proposed programmes will be based in Dublin or elsewhere.
- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme.
- SET 3.7 – how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate service user and carer involvement for the proposed programmes.

- SET 3.8 – how the education provider will work the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate learner involvement for the proposed programmes.
- SET 3.11 - From the information provided it was not clear how the education provider ensured and supported staff, sessional or visiting lecturers and practice educators to keep their professional and academic skills up to date.
- SET 3.13 - it is not clear how the support provided and available to learners through the UK education provider will be made available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programmes. We will need to understand which policies apply in each situation and how learners know about these.
- SET 3.14 - it is not clear how the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will apply to the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for these. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure these policies are applied and monitored throughout the programmes and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided
- SET 3.15 - We will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programmes and who will be responsible for managing this.
- SET 3.16 - We will need to consider how the education provider will ensure the ongoing suitability of learners conduct, character and health and understand who will be responsible for managing this. In addition to this, it is unclear if the Student Monitoring and Wellbeing Group will be involved with the programmes being delivered at the Portobello Institute.
- SET 3.17 - It is unclear what processes and policies are in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users.
- SET 3.18 - Given the proposed programmes will be delivered in Dublin, we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not.
- SET 4.10 - the policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. This is because the education provider and the Portobello Institute may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.
- SET 4.11 - we need to understand how the requirements regarding attendance are managed and monitored and how the Portobello Institute are involved. In addition to this, we need to know how the requirements are communicated to the learners.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment with the Portobello Institute.
- SET 5.4 - the processes to make sure practice-based learning takes place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.
- SET 5.7 - the processes to ensure practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes.
- SET 5.8 - how learners and practice educators are provided with the required information in order to be prepared for practice-based learning. We could not

see a clear process where names and details of learners or practice educators were provided, placement details, timing and length of practice-based learning and practical details such as location of practice-based learning.
- SET 6.6 – we will need to understand how academic appeals will be considered. Given the proposed programmes will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- The education provider currently have staff to deliver the proposed programmes, however they will be appointing additional staff for the delivery of both programmes in Dublin.
- The education provider will be delivering the programmes in partnership with the Portobello Institute in Dublin. The Portobello Institute are based in the centre of Dublin and have two buildings, which offer offices, classrooms, a library, an on-site clinic, clinical skills laboratories and learner rest rooms. The location of the buildings also provides good transport links, which provides learners and staff with easy access.
- The Portobello Institute are also developing another campus which will support the delivery of the proposed programmes from 2027-28. The new campus will be purpose built and will offer shared facilities to learners on the Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Physiotherapy and Speech and Language Therapy programmes.

Section 3: Programme-level assessment

Programmes considered through this assessment

Programme name	Mode of study	Profession (including modality) / entitlement	Proposed learner number, and frequency	Proposed start date
MSc Dietetics (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	Dietitian	15 learners, 2 cohorts per year	05/11/2026
MSc Occupational Therapy (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	Occupational Therapist	15 learners, 2 cohorts per year	05/11/2026

Stage 2 assessment – provider submission

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.

Data / intelligence considered

We also considered intelligence from others (e.g. prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England (South West) – we did not receive information which we considered would impact on this assessment.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their submission. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider met our standards.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the Findings section.

Quality theme 1 – Sustainability and demand for the programme

Area for further exploration: There was insufficient evidence provided to enable the visitors to make a judgement on the sustainability of the programme. They therefore requested a clear recruitment plan, which provided details of how the programme would be resourced and information on the placement provision plans. Alongside this they also requested to see evidence of some analysis on the demand for the programme and the planned learner numbers.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification and documentation from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to understand the demand for the programmes and plans on how the programmes will be resourced.

Outcomes of exploration: Through exploration, we reviewed the business cases, operational placement documents and supporting workforce planning information provided for both programmes. The documentation demonstrated the work undertaken to establish programme demand, determine planned learner numbers, and identify the staffing and resources required to support delivery. We noted that the staffing overview and recruitment plans outlined the roles, qualifications and practice experience required, while the placement planning documentation evidenced progress in securing the necessary placement capacity. Information regarding teaching facilities, equipment and learning resources was also provided,

which confirmed the education provider had considered the resources required to support the delivery of the programme.

We also considered the supporting evidence from Health Education Authority Ireland (HEA), which demonstrated demand for the programmes. We noted that the need to expand education and clinical training capacity within dietetics and occupational therapy had been recognised as a national priority. We further noted the education provider and Portobello Institute had been involved in the expression of interest process and that this had been acknowledged for consideration in the next phase of the initiative.

The evidence reviewed also provided assurance regarding demand for the proposed programmes through the data that had been gathered. This indicated interest in both programmes, with 451 enquiries for the MSc Occupational Therapy programme and 202 for the MSc Dietetics programme. By the end of August, the education provider had made 35 offers on the MSc Occupational Therapy programme and 22 offers on the MSc Dietetics programme. When considered alongside the market demand information provided, this evidence further supported the rationale for developing these programmes.

Quality activity 2
Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the additional evidence provided, which offered further detail regarding business planning, staffing arrangements, and placement capacity. While this information was helpful, the visitors remain concerned about the long-term sustainability of the proposed programmes.

The visitors noted the current proposal for both programmes was to take up to 84 learners on each programme. This was outlined in the ‘HSU PI MSc OT Business Case Proposal Form’ and ‘HSU PI MSc Dietetics Business Case Proposal Form’. However, this figure differed from the information provided on the approval request, which stated one, potentially two cohorts of 15 learners. Clarification was therefore required regarding the proposed learner numbers for this approval. In considering the proposed learner numbers, visitors also reflected on the information provided regarding workforce challenges and staff shortages within Ireland. As a result, they remained unclear about the rationale used to determine the proposed learner numbers and how these aligned to regional workforce demand and available resources.

The visitors also noted the letter from the Higher Education Authority Ireland acknowledging the education provider's expression of interest. However, they were unable to determine from the evidence provided how the proposed learner numbers had been mapped to workforce demand, staffing capacity, and placement availability in a way that would support the sustainable delivery of the programmes over time. Furthermore, whilst the visitors recognised that stakeholder engagement and external support may contribute to the development of the programmes, it remained unclear how the support referenced from the Higher Education Authority Ireland

relates to programmes that are owned and awarded by Health Sciences University as the letter only referenced the Portobello Institute. Visitors were therefore unable to fully understand the role of Higher Education Authority Ireland in informing learner number projections and the long-term viability of the proposed provision.

Given these considerations, the visitors were unable to determine whether the proposed programmes were sustainable. They therefore required further information to demonstrate how workforce need, placement capacity, academic staffing resources and stakeholder engagement had been considered in relation to the proposed programmes and how these factors would support the sustainable delivery of the programmes in the longer term.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider recognised some of the information they had provided previously was inaccurate and had caused some confusion. They therefore updated the documentation and shared this with us.

The education provider confirmed there would be two intakes of 15 learners for both programmes. Visitors acknowledged the explanation the education provider supplied in relation to the 84 learners that was quoted in the business case. They understood this was used for business and financial planning purposes and that this was not the proposed cohort size for the programmes. They also noted how the sustainability model linked directly to recruitment and acknowledged enrolment, staffing, placement capacity, facilities and specialist resources would be reviewed by the Joint Steering Group before a new intake comes in. In cases where there was insufficient capacity recruitment would be capped or deferred.

Visitors acknowledged the HEA correspondence was provided as evidence of regional demand for the proposed programmes. They noted that this correspondence was not directly linked to the programme approval process. Visitors also received confirmation that the education provider would remain the awarding body for the programmes and retain responsibility for academic standards, while the Portobello Institute would act as the delivery site. Visitors were therefore satisfied with the response received and confirmed the standards in this area were met.

<u>Quality theme 2 – Ensuring an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved with the delivery of the programmes</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors identified a need for further exploration of the proposed staffing arrangements for both programmes to gain assurance that there will be sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to support delivery of the programmes. In particular, visitors sought further information regarding the staff who would contribute to the programmes, including their qualifications, relevant professional experience and the intended locations.

Visitors also requested further details on the overall staffing strategy, including workforce planning, resource allocation and how staffing capacity had been aligned

to the proposed learner numbers. A more comprehensive overview of the staffing strategy, including workforce planning and resource allocation, was also requested to gain a better understanding of how the programmes would be effectively delivered and supported. Other evidence requested, was details of any plans for the future recruitment of staff to ensure the ongoing capacity and sustainability of the programmes.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification and documentation from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to ensure the education provider had an adequate number of staff to deliver and support the programmes.

Outcomes of exploration: Through exploration, visitors acknowledged that appropriate arrangements were in place to support the delivery and sustainability of both programmes. Visitors reviewed the Staffing Overview and Staff Recruitment Plan documents, which provided clarity on the staffing structure for each programme and the processes for recruiting academic staff, including guest lecturers. The information demonstrated that staff appointed to the programmes would be appropriately qualified, experienced and professionally registered to deliver profession-specific subject areas. Visitors also noted the education provider's commitment to regularly reviewing staffing levels and workloads in line with learner numbers and undertaking recruitment where required. This ensured the programmes would be resourced to support planned growth in learner numbers and maintain their long-term sustainability.

Quality activity 2
Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the additional evidence provided regarding the staffing arrangements for the proposed programmes. However, they remained concerned that the size of the core academic team appeared to be limited when considered alongside the proposed cohort size and delivery requirements. Although guest lecturers have been presented as an additional resource to the academic team, the visitors considered the evidence indicated a reliance on guest lecturers to support programme delivery. As a result, they were not assured there was sufficient capacity within the core academic team to provide continuous teaching, academic leadership, learner support and quality assurance should guest lecturers become unavailable.

They also noted that limited information had been provided regarding the recruitment, induction, preparation and quality monitoring of guest lecturers and how many hours of teaching would be delivered by them. The documentation indicated that guest lecturers would be overseen by Unit Leads, however the visitors noted that some Unit Lead roles appeared to be undertaken by guest lecturers themselves. Consequently, the visitors were unable to clearly determine how academic oversight, subject leadership and accountability would operate in practice.

The visitors further noted that a number of posts identified within the MSc Dietetics and MSc Occupational Therapy staff recruitment plans remained vacant. Whilst recruitment plans had been provided, there was limited information regarding recruitment timescales, the current status of the vacant posts and who was responsible for recruitment and employing the staff – Health Sciences University or Portobello Institute. Without this information, the visitors were unable to gain assurance that the required staffing levels would be in place in a timely manner to support programme commencement and ongoing delivery. Further information was therefore requested regarding the current status of the vacant posts, who is responsible for recruiting the staff and who will they be employed by - Health Sciences University or Portobello Institute.

In considering staffing levels, the visitors noted the occupational therapy programme was currently supported by two qualified occupational therapists employed on a part-time basis. Similarly, the visitors noted that the dietetics programme was supported by a single qualified dietitian. The allocated workload for this individual included teaching hours across their modules in addition to course leader responsibilities, resulting in a commitment that appeared to exceed 1.0 FTE. Visitors were concerned that this workload may not be realistic or sustainable. Based on the information available, the visitors were not assured that these staffing levels were sufficient to support the effective delivery of the proposed programmes. They therefore required further information regarding the final staffing structure, recruitment plans and the governance arrangements in relation to the use of guest lecturers to provide assurance that the programmes would be adequately resourced and supported.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors noted that the education provider had acknowledged that some previously submitted information was inaccurate and had led to confusion. In response, updated staffing plans for both programmes were provided, outlining staffing positions, contractual arrangements, FTE allocations, and leadership responsibilities.

Visitors also noted that, going forward, the education provider would use the term associate lecturer rather than guest lecturer for individuals involved in programme delivery. They were assured that all associate lecturers would be approved by the education provider and that the education provider would be involved in the recruitment process. Through this process, qualifications, professional registration, experience and specialist expertise would be reviewed against module requirements, with successful appointees receiving appropriate induction and access to relevant staff development. Visitors further noted that associate lecturers would be overseen by the programme leader and course coordinator, providing appropriate academic and operational oversight of programme delivery.

Based on the information provided and the clarification received, visitors were satisfied that appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure suitably qualified

and experienced staff would be recruited, supported and effectively overseen in the delivery of the programmes.

Quality theme 3 – Management of the programmes

Area for further exploration: Visitors were unclear on how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understood the responsibilities of all involved and would work together to deliver the programmes effectively. This included how the UK based education provider would deliver the proposed programmes and manage them.

Visitors also noted that the individuals with overall responsibility for the proposed programmes were not registered with the HCPC. While the visitors recognised that, in certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for a programme to be led by an individual who is not registered on the relevant part of the Register, they sought further clarification on how the education provider assured itself that these individuals possessed the necessary expertise, oversight, and access to profession-specific information and resources required to effectively undertake the role.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to understand how the education provider would ensure the programmes were managed appropriately.

Outcomes of exploration: Through exploration, the visitors reviewed the Course Operations Manual and HSU Policy for Consideration and Approval of Partnerships documents, which provided further clarity regarding the partnership arrangements between the education provider and Portobello Institute. The documentation outlined the responsibilities of each organisation in relation to teaching, assessment, marking, quality assurance and monitoring, placement planning, and learner support. Visitors noted that annual course monitoring reports and associated action plans would be completed by the Portobello Institute Course Leader in collaboration with the education provider's Course Coordinator. These reports would subsequently be reviewed through the HSU Academic Standards and Quality Committee, providing oversight of programme monitoring and quality assurance processes.

Visitors gained further assurance regarding the management and oversight of the programmes delivered through the partnership arrangement. They noted that the programmes were delivered jointly by the education provider and Portobello Institute, with clear institutional and partnership responsibilities in place. Visitors recognised the role of the HCPC-registered Course Coordinator based in Bournemouth, who worked closely with the Course Leader in Dublin to support programme delivery. This collaborative approach provided direct involvement from staff already delivering the programmes in Bournemouth, helping to ensure consistency between both sites and supporting the quality and alignment of the learner experience.

Quality activity 2

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the information provided, however further confirmation was requested to understand the programme leadership arrangements. Our previous understanding was that the Bournemouth-based Course Leader was HCPC registered and worked closely with the Dublin-based Course Leader. To ensure effective oversight of programme delivery, it was understood that a Dublin-based Course Leader was employed and worked closely with the Bournemouth-based Course Coordinator. The staff also teaching on the programmes were primarily based in Dublin and were CORU registered. All staff teaching on the course would have contracts with both HSU and Portobello institute.

Based on the information provided, visitors noted each programme had a Dublin-based Course Lead who worked closely with the relevant HSU Course Coordinator, however, it was not clear how the Bournemouth-based Course Lead was involved. We therefore requested further clarification on the respective roles and responsibilities of the Bournemouth-based Course Lead, the Dublin-based Course Lead, and the Bournemouth-based Course Coordinator, including how accountability, operational responsibilities, and programme oversight are distributed across these roles.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors reviewed the HSU organisational structure chart and noted that it clearly outlined the programme leadership and management arrangements for the Dublin-based programmes. Visitors were satisfied that the education provider retained overall accountability for the programmes, while the Dublin-based course leader was responsible for the day-to-day delivery of the programmes in Dublin.

Visitors noted that the Dublin based course leader was required to hold CORU registration and received confirmation that the education provider had committed to ensuring this course leader would also be HCPC registered, with this expected to be achieved by the 2026–27 academic year. Visitors further noted that the Bournemouth-based course leader worked closely with the Dublin-based course leader and met regularly with them to ensure that programme delivery in Dublin remained aligned with the education provider's requirements. They also noted that the course coordinator based in Bournemouth had oversight of the partnership and worked collaboratively with both course leaders to ensure consistency and alignment between the programmes delivered at both sites.

Based on the information provided, visitors were satisfied that clear leadership, accountability and oversight arrangements were in place to support the effective delivery and governance of the programmes.

<u>Quality theme 4 – Ensuring sufficient practice-based learning capacity and resources</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors identified insufficient evidence demonstrating effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers. They therefore requested further information and supporting evidence to demonstrate how partnership working and consultation arrangements operate in

practice, including how placement capacity, learner support, and programme delivery are jointly planned, managed and reviewed. Visitors particularly wanted to explore how these partnership arrangements were formalised and whether they were sufficiently robust to support the sustainable and effective delivery of the proposed programmes.

Visitors also sought further clarification regarding the potential impact of the proposed programmes on other provision within the same geographical area. In particular, they wished to understand what consideration had been given to placement and educational capacity across the region.

In addition, there was insufficient evidence available to demonstrate existing placement capacity for the proposed programmes. Visitors therefore requested further information on the processes that would be used to secure, monitor and maintain an adequate number of placements. This included evidence of engagement and collaboration with placement providers and other stakeholders, a proposed timeline for securing placement opportunities, and details of any contingency arrangements should sufficient placement capacity not be available.

Visitors also wished to explore how the education provider had determined there would be a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to support practice-based learning. Further information was requested regarding the mechanisms used to ensure practice educators and assessors are suitably qualified and competent to support learning and assessment, together with the processes used to monitor and maintain these arrangements on an ongoing basis.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to understand how the education provider would ensure there was sufficient practice-based learning and adequate resources to support it.

Outcomes of exploration: Through exploration, visitors reviewed the Placement Development Templates, HSU Placement Learning Policy, Placement Planning document, Placement QA Procedure and Forms and Portobello Institute Allied Health Practice Educator Induction Training and Support Framework. The information provided demonstrated the progress made in developing placement partnerships and securing placement capacity to support programme delivery. Visitors also noted that clear placement arrangements had been established and that the operational infrastructure included dedicated placement support roles, including a placement coordinator, placement administrator and link tutors, to provide ongoing support for learners and practice educators.

Visitors acknowledged the education provider and Portobello Institute had considered the potential impact of the proposed programmes on placement capacity within Dublin. They demonstrated engagement with other education providers to compare academic calendars and placement provision, helping to minimise overlap,

avoid competition for placement opportunities and manage associated risks. Visitors noted that this collaborative approach had supported the development of additional placement capacity across small clinics, private practice services and schools. Visitors also noted plans to establish an on-site clinic to provide dietetic and occupational therapy services to the local community, which may further enhance placement opportunities. Through discussion, it was evident that the education provider and Portobello Institute had recognised that existing regional provision mainly used hospital-based placements and would therefore be looking to use a range of community-based and other non-traditional placement settings.

Through the Placement Planning Template documents, we saw evidence of engagement with placement providers, which had resulted in securing placements for both programmes. It was noted these arrangements would be formalised when the programmes have been approved by the HCPC. The placement planning cycle starts a year in advance which included sourcing, quality assurance and allocation of placements. This ensured placements were ready and available for learners.

Visitors noted that placement capacity would be monitored through a capacity record, providing oversight of available placement opportunities, practice educators and overall placement capacity. This information would be reviewed regularly to support effective placement planning and management. Through discussion, visitors also noted that a staged contingency process was in place should placement capacity fall below required levels. This included accessing a reserve list of placement providers, re-engaging previously approved providers and developing additional placement opportunities where required.

Overall, this provided assurance that there were structured processes in place to secure and maintain sufficient practice-based learning capacity. Visitors also noted the education provider's arrangements to ensure practice education coordinators and practice educators were appropriately qualified, experienced and professionally registered, supporting the effective supervision, assessment and learning of students in practice-based learning settings.

Quality activity 2
Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the additional information provided outlining the process to source and allocate placements. However, they remained concerned that there was insufficient detail about the collaborative approach used to plan, monitor and manage placement capacity with practice education providers and how these arrangements would be formalised to support the sustainable delivery of the programmes. Visitors were therefore unable to determine the extent to which practice education providers were engaged in the development and ongoing oversight of placement provision.

Visitors remained concerned about whether the range and breadth of practice-based learning opportunities would provide learners with sufficient exposure to the full scope of dietetic and occupational therapy practice, particularly within acute hospital settings. Visitors noted the education provider intended to use non-traditional and

private practice settings, however it was not clear how this approach alone would ensure learners would gain sufficient exposure to key areas of occupational therapy and dietetic practice. Visitors therefore requested further clarification on how the proposed placement model would ensure learners gain appropriate exposure to the breadth of occupational therapy and dietetic practice, including experiences commonly associated with acute hospital settings.

In particular, the visitors noted the proposed development of an onsite occupational therapy clinic but found limited information regarding how the clinic would be staffed and resourced, including the arrangements for learner supervision and support. Without further detail, they were unable to determine whether the clinic would provide a suitable learning environment and whether appropriately qualified practice educators would be available to support learners. In addition to this they also wanted to understand how the education provider ensured placement environments were capable of supporting learners to achieve the required learning outcomes and standards of proficiency.

Similarly, the visitors noted that several of the proposed dietetics placement providers appeared to focus primarily on exercise, wellbeing and lifestyle services. Whilst these settings may offer valuable learning opportunities, the visitors were not assured that they would provide access to the range and breadth of dietetic practice or to appropriately qualified and experienced dietetic staff.

Visitors therefore requested further information to demonstrate how placement provision across both programmes would ensure learners have access to a diverse range of practice settings and were supported by appropriately qualified and experienced staff. In addition to this they also wanted to understand how the education provider ensured placement environments were capable of supporting learners to achieve the required learning outcomes and standards of proficiency.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors reviewed the education providers Placement Learning Policy and Procedures, which provided assurance of placement processes. They also considered the placement plans for both programmes, which had been updated to reflect real time placement planning.

Visitors noted the education provider did not intend to rely on any single setting or sector to meet placement requirements. Instead, practice-based learning would be delivered through a diverse portfolio of experiences across a range of settings, including acute, community, primary care, private and independent practice, voluntary organisations, role-emerging placements, simulated learning, and interprofessional learning opportunities. Visitors noted that non-traditional settings would only be used where they could provide appropriate learning opportunities and experiences required to achieve the full breadth of professional practice.

Visitors also acknowledged the arrangements in place to support placement development, capacity management and quality assurance. Placement providers would be involved in placement planning, capacity reviews, practice educator

preparation, and ongoing evaluation processes. The education provider demonstrated how a placement capacity tracker would be used to monitor placement availability and support workforce planning. In addition, visitors noted the establishment of a Practice Learning Development and Management Subcommittee, which included the education provider and Dublin placement leads, who have responsibility for overseeing placement capacity, quality, assessment and risk management across the partnership.

Visitors noted the education provider had developed a structured approach to placement allocation to ensure learners gained an appropriate breadth of practice-based learning experiences. For Dietetics, visitors were assured that placements would provide learners with exposure to a range of practice areas, including clinical and medical nutrition therapy, community and public health, food service and interprofessional practice. They also noted that lifestyle and wellbeing settings would only be used where suitable learning opportunities, supervision and assessment arrangements could be demonstrated and would form part of a learner's placement experience. Similarly, for Occupational Therapy, visitors noted placement allocations would provide learners with experience across a range of physical health, mental health, community, social care and role-emerging settings. These experiences would support the development of core professional skills, including assessment, intervention, risk management, multidisciplinary working, and discharge and transition planning. Visitors further noted that acute care learning would be achieved through dedicated acute placements. Visitors also noted that the proposed onsite clinic will not be used for placements until it has completed the same approval and quality assurance processes required of external placement providers and can demonstrate that it meets all necessary requirements for learner support and supervision.

Based on the information provided, visitors were satisfied that the proposed placement model would enable learners to achieve the required range and breadth of practice-based learning to support safe and effective professional practice. Visitors were also satisfied that appropriate structures and processes were in place to support the sustainable delivery, quality assurance and oversight of practice-based learning.

<u>Quality theme 5 – Progression through placements</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors commented that the assessment levels for the Occupational Therapy programme were not clear. They noted that practice placements all appear to be assessed using Level 6 criteria. As a result, visitors were unable to identify how assessment expectations and learner performance requirements progress across the different levels of the programme. Further clarification was therefore requested to understand how progression is demonstrated and assessed throughout the programme.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered

this would be the most effective approach to understand how learner progression was assessed through the programme.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors noted the education provider's clarification regarding assessment levels across the programme. It was confirmed that all taught modules would be assessed at level 7, while the two practice-based learning modules would be assessed at level 6. Visitors acknowledged this information, which helped them gain an understanding of the assessment strategy and the academic levels assigned to different components of the programme.

Quality activity 2
Area for further exploration: Visitors were not satisfied with the information received and noted that the placement structure did not demonstrate clear progression across practice-based learning experiences, with placements being delivered and assessed at Level 6 throughout. As a result, visitors were unable to see how expectations, learning outcomes, and assessment requirements increased in complexity as learners progressed through the programme. Alongside this, it was also unclear how the placement model differentiated between learners at the beginning of their studies and those approaching completion of the programme, and how it supported the development of increasingly complex professional practice. As a result, they requested further information to demonstrate how the structure of the programme supported learners to progress through the programme and achieve the programme learning outcomes to prepare them for practice.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors received confirmation that all practice-based learning placements were assessed at level 6, consistent with the education provider's approach across all programmes. Visitors noted that progression was supported through the sequencing of taught content, practice-based learning experiences and assessment requirements. They acknowledged that learners were initially expected to apply foundational knowledge and skills within practice under closer supervision and as they progressed through the programme, were required to demonstrate increasing autonomy, professional judgement and the ability to manage more complex situations. Visitors were satisfied that the programme provided a clear and structured approach to learner progression within practice-based learning.

<u>Quality theme 6 – Academic entry criteria</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the programme had set admissions criteria and an interview process. We noted non-science graduates were required to evidence biological sciences, behavioural sciences or other health-related education. Visitors highlighted there was a significant difference between the contents of each of these educational backgrounds.

The documentation (DIET9, page 4) also advised that "Applicants must either complete an introductory chemistry course offered by Portobello Institute or provide evidence that they have successfully completed a higher education module in chemistry within the past five years". Elsewhere (page 20) it is stated, "Applicants

must either complete an introductory biochemistry course offered by Portobello Institute or provide evidence that they have successfully completed a higher education module in biochemistry." It was not clear whether the requirement was for biochemistry studies, or general chemistry, or if these were different requirements. It was therefore not clear whether a time limit for educational currency was in place and visitors requested further clarification.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to confirm the academic entry requirements.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider confirmed the requirement was Biochemistry and not Chemistry. The references to "introductory chemistry" and "within the past five years" in DIET9 were inaccurate and have been corrected in the admissions information.

Visitors noted that applicants were required to hold a relevant first degree and demonstrate an understanding of science. Where applicants had not completed sufficient biochemistry study, applicants were required to successfully complete the Portobello Institute introductory biochemistry course before enrolment. Visitors also noted that admissions were managed in accordance with the University Recruitment, Selection and Admission Regulations, and Portobello Institute were responsible for processing applications and the education provider were responsible for admissions decisions for non-standard applications. Visitors were satisfied that appropriate admissions arrangements and oversight processes were in place.

<u>Quality theme 7 – Adequate physical resources to support the delivery of the programmes</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors requested further information regarding the physical resources that would be available to support the delivery of the proposed programmes. Whilst it was noted that there were plans to secure additional teaching spaces and simulation equipment, the evidence provided was insufficient to enable visitors to fully evaluate the suitability, adequacy, and availability of these resources in relation to the proposed programmes. Consequently, visitors requested further details regarding the progress made in securing the additional teaching space and simulation equipment, including confirmation of the current status of these arrangements and the anticipated timescales for implementation and availability.

Furthermore, visitors requested clarification regarding access to the proposed teaching facilities and simulation equipment. They requested further information outlining who would have access to these resources, the arrangements that would be in place to manage and facilitate access, and how learners would be able to utilise these facilities throughout the duration of their studies. This information would assist visitors in determining whether the resources available would be sufficient to support the effective delivery of the programmes.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective approach to ensure there will be adequate physical resources to support the delivery of the programmes.

Outcomes of exploration: Visitors noted the Portobello Institute had undertaken a review of their teaching facilities, which enabled them to confirm there was sufficient capacity to support the delivery of the programmes. This was further supported by the Teaching Space Allocation Plans that had been provided for both programmes which provided details of the rooms and the specialist teaching areas. For example, for the occupation therapy programme there was the on-campus Living Suite, which provided learners with simulated learning and for the dietetics programme there was a teaching kitchen that was located near the campus. Further details of the teaching kitchen were outlined in the Teaching Kitchen Rental document.

Visitors noted that the programmes will use a blended approach to simulation, combining supervised practice experiences with digital simulation. Occupational Therapy will utilise SimuCase, while Dietetics will use the Nutritics Education Package to support the development of profession-specific knowledge and skills. Visitors noted that learners will have access to the teaching facilities, specialist equipment and digital resources required for the programmes. Access will be managed through timetabling and scheduled teaching activities, ensuring facilities are used safely, with appropriate staff support, and that learners have equal access to practical learning opportunities. Visitors were satisfied that appropriate facilities and simulation resources had been identified to support learning across both programmes.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register**
  - The education provider clarified that the programme leads to an postgraduate qualification and fully meets the requirements for professional registration. The curriculum has been mapped against the HCPC Standards of Education and Training and the Standards of Proficiency for Occupational Therapy and Dietetics, providing assurance that learners will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and professional behaviours required for safe and effective practice on registration.
  - The visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 2: Programme admissions**
  - Visitors confirmed the selection and entry criteria were clear and set at an appropriate level for the proposed programme. The entry criteria was available on the education provider's website and accessible to applicants.
  - Through Quality theme 6, we acknowledged the education provider had corrected the admissions information. They also confirmed applicants were required to hold a relevant first degree and demonstrate an understanding of science. We also noted applicants who had not completed sufficient biochemistry study, were required to complete the Portobello Institute introductory biochemistry course before enrolment. This clarified learners were only required to demonstrate evidence of having completed biochemistry.
  - The visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership**
  - There was initially insufficient evidence to demonstrate how the education provider collaborated with practice education providers in the development and delivery of the programme. Through Quality theme 1, visitors considered the arrangements in place for partnership working with practice education providers, including their role in the joint delivery of the programme. Visitors also explored the potential impact of the proposed programmes on existing provision within the geographical area. This exploration provided additional assurance regarding the education provider's engagement with practice education providers and consideration of regional workforce and placement capacity.

- The process to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning was not clear to the visitors. We therefore explored this further through Quality theme 4 and noted the education provider had processes in place to identify, secure and monitor the capacity of practice-based learning and a contingency plan to manage any placement shortages. This included the Practice Learning Development and Management Sub-Committee' to oversee operational delivery, management, development and implementation of placements.
- Staffing arrangements for the proposed programmes were not initially clear to the visitors. Through Quality theme 2, visitors reviewed the Staffing Overview and Staff Recruitment Plan, which provided greater clarity regarding the staffing structures for each programme and the processes in place for recruiting academic staff, including guest lecturers.
- There was initially insufficient detail regarding how the education provider ensured the knowledge and expertise of educators and the arrangements for overseeing guest lecturers. Through Quality theme 2, the education provider clarified that guest lecturers were overseen by the programme leader and course coordinator, who provide appropriate academic and operational oversight of programme delivery. This provided assurance that mechanisms were in place to monitor and support the quality of teaching delivered across the programme.
- Visitors noted the education provider's intention to further develop physical resources and the potential to utilise dietetic laboratory facilities. We explored this further through Quality theme 7 and noted that learners would have access to the facilities, specialist equipment and resources required to support the delivery of the programmes and practical learning activities.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the sustainability of the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.1). A range of supporting documents were submitted, including the business cases, operational placement documents and supporting workforce planning information provided for both programmes. We explored this further through Quality theme 1.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the programme being managed effectively (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.2). They acknowledged the education providers partnership with Portobello Institute and noted the responsibilities of both institutions were outlined in the Course Operations Manual. Alongside this both programmes would be subject to the education providers academic quality assurance processes, which included annual monitoring.
- Visitors acknowledged the additional information provided relating to the education provider ensuring the person holding overall responsibility for the programme was appropriately qualified and

experienced (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.3). Visitors noted that the Occupational Therapy and Dietetic areas were led by HCPC registered staff. A Dublin based Course Lead for both programmes, who is CORU registered and academically qualified, would work closely with the Bournemouth based Course Lead and Course Coordinator to support the programmes. We explored this further through Quality theme 3.

- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.4). The education providers Operations Manual provided details of the Educational Partnerships, which outlined the Portobello Institutes responsibilities in relation to the delivery of the proposed programmes. We noted all programmes would be quality assured though the annual monitoring process and action plans would be completed by the Course Leads in Dublin in collaboration with the relevant Course Leads and Course Coordinator in Bournemouth.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to service user and carer involvement on the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.7). Visitors found that service users and carers contribute to both programme delivery and practice-based learning. Visitors also noted that the Portobello Institute had established arrangements in place to support this involvement, which aligned with the education provider's policies and quality assurance and academic oversight processes.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the learners being involved with the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.8). We noted there were a range of mechanisms through which learners could be involved with the programmes, such as programme governance, evaluation and enhancement through representation structures, feedback mechanisms and participation in quality assurance processes.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to continuing professional and academic development of educators appropriate to their role on the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.11). The Portobello Institute had structured in-house training, with additional access to training, courses and conferences. In addition to this, staff involved in delivery and practice education for these programmes would also benefit from the professional development opportunities offered by the education provider via shared workshops.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the arrangements in place to support the wellbeing and learning needs of learners (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.13). Visitors noted all learners in Dublin had access to a range of support services which were provided by the education provider and the Portobello Institute. We acknowledged there was a Student Liaison

Officer based at Portobello Institute who focused on promoting learner engagement and well-being, with additional support being coordinated by the academic team. The Portobello Institute has a “By Your Side Student Well-being Strategy,” which includes in-house counselling, online resources, and staff training. Alongside this learning support was provided by academic staff.

- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the equality and diversity policies (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.14). Visitors received confirmation that the Portobello Institute’s Equality Policy would apply with oversight from the education provider. We acknowledged the purpose of the policy was to create an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all staff and learners. It was noted the education provider and Portobello Institute were committed to ensuring all learners had access to all opportunities, which included reasonable adjustments for those learners with protected characteristics.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process for receiving and responding to learner complaints (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.15). We noted the education provider and Portobello Institute had undertaken a review of their complaints policy to ensure all policies and procedures aligned and concerns were managed consistently and effectively. Visitors acknowledged that Portobello Institute was responsible for investigating complaints and, where appropriate, notifying the education provider and liaising with the relevant teams to ensure concerns were managed in line with established processes.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process in place for ensuring the ongoing suitability of learners’ conduct, character and health (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.16). We noted there was a structured process to monitor this, which included admissions, placement clearance and monitoring through the programmes. The Portobello Institute were responsible for managing learner conduct, health and compliance with institutional policies, and the education provider had oversight through its quality assurance framework.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.17). We received confirmation that the Portobello Institute will act as the main contact point for learners to raise concerns while the education provider will have overall responsibility for quality assurance and oversight of procedures. We noted appropriate processes and policies were in place at Portobello Institute to manage academic and non-academic concerns, including safeguarding, complaints, misconduct, and appeals.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process to ensure learners, educators and others were aware that only

successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.18). We noted this information was outlined in the course specification and learner handbook. It was also clearly stated on the website to ensure all learners, educators and members of the public were aware of this.
    - Visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery**
    - The learning outcomes are mapped against the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) in the mapping document and outlined in the module descriptors. The structure of the modules ensures learners are able to meet the SOPs. Through clarification, we noted learners would be taught about 'the structure and function of health and social care in the UK' to meet HCPC SOP requirements. Similarly, learners on the Dublin-based course will also study 'the structure and function of health and social care in Ireland' to ensure they are appropriately prepared for practice in Ireland.
    - Professional behaviours and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics are embedded throughout the programmes to ensure learners understand the expectations. This detail is outlined in the programme handbook and module specifications. It was noted module MDT7005 Professionalism and Social Responsibility in Healthcare was closely linked to professional behaviours and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
    - The philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base of the profession are clearly articulated in the structure and delivery of the programme, which is evidenced through the module descriptors. Visitors recognised the education provider had an awareness of the professional body requirements for the programme and showed evidence of having considered relevant curriculum guidance in their development and engagement with the British Dietetic Association (BDA) and the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT).
    - Visitors noted there were a range of processes to review and update the curriculum to ensure it remained up to date and relevant. This included annual programme review, engagement with placement providers and external examiners. These processes introduced a level of flexibility within the curriculum, enabling the education provider to implement regulatory changes efficiently and respond to learner needs and make improvements.
    - Visitors acknowledged there is clear evidence within the module descriptors that theory and practice are integrated across the programmes. This integration is achieved through simulated practice, clinical placements and case-based learning activities. In addition, the programme is structured to support the ongoing integration of theory and practice by embedding practice-based learning throughout the programme.

    - There is evidence of a range of learning and teaching methods being used to deliver the learning outcomes. These are outlined in the module descriptors and consist of lectures, practical classes and workshops, placements and independent study. Visitors consider these teaching methods are appropriate to ensure the learning outcomes are achievable.
    - Visitors recognised the design of the programme enable learners to meet learning outcomes and develop their autonomous and reflective thinking skills throughout the programme. This is evidenced through the module descriptors and course specification.
    - The structure of the curriculum ensures evidence-based practice is embedded throughout the programme. This is demonstrated through the module specifications where the learning outcomes are embedded across a range of modules.
    - Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to obtaining consent (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 4.10). We received clarification on the process the education provider had in place to enable learners to gain consent to work with service users. Alongside this they also provided details of the process they had to gain consent from learners participating as service users. The placement handbooks were updated to reflect this and it was made clear that participation was optional.
    - Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the attendance requirements of the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 4.11). We noted the Portobello Institute would be responsible for managing and monitoring attendance requirements and the course coordinator would oversee this in line with the education providers guidance outlined in the programme and practice handbook.
    - Visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning**
    - Visitors acknowledged the information supplied in the placement handbooks and the programme chart where it was clear practice-based learning was embedded throughout the programmes. Learners were therefore required to complete two level 6 practice-based learning modules, Occupational Therapy OCC6001 Practice Placement 1 and OCC6002 Practice Placement 2; for Dietetics MDT6004 Clinical Placement 1 and MDT6008 Clinical Placement 2. Learners could then apply this learning to their academic modules.
    - Visitors highlighted some concerns relating to the structure, duration and range of placements. The was explored further through Quality theme 4 where we received further information about the range of practice-based learning opportunities learners would have access to.
    - Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the quality of practice-based learning (in relation to the referral from Stage 1

regarding SET 5.3). We noted the education provider and Portobello Institute had a structured approach to monitoring practice environments, which was outlined in the HSU Placement Learning Policy and the HSU–PI Operations Handbook. Portobello Institute were responsible for sourcing placements and the education provider were responsible for the quality and regulatory compliance of the placement.

- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to practice based learning taking place in a safe and supportive environment (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.4). We noted the appointment of a Practice Education Coordinator and adherence to the education providers placement policies, such as the Placement Learning Policy and the Practice-Based Education Policy would ensure that practice-based learning was delivered in a safe and supportive environment. In addition to this all placements were audited and visited to ensure they meet the education providers requirements for practice-based learning.
- Visitors acknowledged all staff supporting learners are required to be professionally registered. The programmes will be delivered in Ireland and therefore the practice educators supporting learners on these programmes will also be required to be registered with CORU, the Irish health professions regulator. Visitors noted all practice educators are checked for suitability by the Practice Education Coordinator, who will check their CVs, complete reference checks and interview them. This information is then saved on the placement database and updated before each placement period. To further support them with the role, they are also required to complete the mandatory Practice Educator Training programme.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to training for practice educators (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.7). We received confirmation of the training that would be offered to practice educators. We noted the initial induction session would be delivered online, however, an optional in person session would be available on campus in Dublin. We recognised this training was mandatory for all practice educators to complete before the placement commenced. In addition to this, there was also a recorded video series available to provide further support for practice educators, which had been developed by both the education provider and Portobello Institute. This series covered topics such as, placement planning, supervision, assessment and support for learners. Alongside this there is also the education providers CPD training that will be accessible to the Dublin based practice educators.
- Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to learners and practice educators receiving information in preparation for practice based learning (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.8). Both learners and practice educators receive a structured induction which enables them to prepare for practice-based learning. This induction is delivered by Portobello Institute through workshops

and simulated activities, which focus on placement. Further information to prepare learners and practice educators for practice-based learning is available in the Student Placement Handbook and the Practice Educator Handbook. This information then ensures learners and practice educators have information relating to learning outcomes, assessment tools, supervision expectations, roles and responsibilities and documentation requirements.
    - Visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment**
    - Visitors noted the programme documentation demonstrated alignment between the learning outcomes and the Standards of Proficiency. However, DIET10 appeared to indicate that practice-based learning was assessed through a percentage grade for competence. Through clarification, the education provider confirmed that the practice-based learning modules were competency-based and assessed on a pass/fail basis. The education provider also confirmed that the documentation had been updated accordingly, which addressed the visitors' concern.
    - Professional behaviours, including adherence to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics, are embedded within various assessments across the programme. The OCC7003 Introduction to Professional Practice and MDT7005 Professionalism and Social Responsibility modules have a specific learning outcome where learners are required to demonstrate an understanding of this. Through clarification, we also noted the education provider had created a new fitness to practice flow diagram to make the process clearer in terms of what practice educators needed to do when they had concerns regarding learners conduct, behaviour and performance and how this would be managed.
    - Assessment methods were appropriate and were outlined in the module specifications for the occupational therapy programme. Through clarification, we noted the education provider had reviewed the module specifications for the dietetics programme and updated them to ensure the assessment information was consistent. The assessment strategy combined practical demonstration, oral explanation, written analysis, case-based work, portfolios, reflection and research activity.
    - Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the academic appeals process (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 6.6). We received confirmation that the Operations Manual outlined the process for academic appeals. In addition to this, it was also made clear that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) would be accessible to learners on the proposed programme, as the awarding body for the programme was based in England.
    - Visitors are satisfied with the information provided and consider the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance:

Section 5: Referrals

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval, focused review, or performance review process).

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. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Referrals to the focused review process

Development of on-site clinic

Summary of issue: Visitors noted the education provider's plans to establish an on-site clinic to deliver services to the local community, which could create additional placement opportunities for learners. However, there was limited information available regarding the proposed staffing and resourcing of the clinic, including arrangements for learner supervision, support and practice education. As a result, visitors were unable to determine whether the clinic would provide an appropriate learning environment or whether suitably qualified practice educators would be available to support learners.

Visitors also noted that the proposed on-site clinic would not be used for placements until it had successfully completed the same approval and quality assurance processes required of external placement providers and could demonstrate that all requirements relating to learner support, supervision and placement quality had been met.

Initially, we will have a conversation with the education provider to establish the anticipated timeframe for the development of the clinic. Once these arrangements and timescales are clear, a focused review will be undertaken to determine whether the clinic is suitable for use as a placement setting.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- All standards are met, and therefore the programmes should be approved.
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report.

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The programmes are approved
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out through the focused review process.

Reason for this decision: The Education and Training Committee Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the programmes should receive approval and that the referral to the focused review process be taken forward.

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	Health Sciences University		
Case reference	CAS-02014-R2Y1F5	**Lead visitors**	Susan Lennie & Julie-Anne Lowe
Quality of provision			

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
    - Quality activity 1 – we recognised the programme is delivered in Dublin and we considered the overall resourcing and sustainability of the proposed programmes, including the anticipated demand and how the education provider plans to support its delivery over time.
    - Quality activity 2 – we sought assurance that there would be sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to support the delivery of the programme.
    - Quality activity 3 – we were unclear on how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understood the responsibilities of all involved and would work together to deliver the programmes effectively. This included how the UK based education provider would deliver the proposed programmes and manage them and there was a sufficient number of staff to support practice-based learning.
    - Quality activity 4 - we considered the education provider approach to placement capacity and examined the processes in place to ensure sufficient availability of placements for learners. The education provider outlined how placement capacity was planned, monitored, and maintained over time to support the delivery of practice-based learning and meet programme requirements. In addition to this we also considered how the proposed programme may impact other programmes within the region.
    - Quality activity 5 – we explored how learners progressed through their placements given they were assessed at level 6. The education provider confirmed this was normal practice across all programmes and provided details of progression.
    - Quality activity 6 – we received confirmation on the academic criteria for admissions and the need for applicants to only demonstrate knowledge in Biochemistry and not Chemistry.

- Quality activity 7 – we explored the physical resources that would be available to support the delivery of the programmes and available for learners to access.

- The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
  - There are plans to develop an on-site clinic to deliver services to the local community, which could create additional placement opportunities for learners. However, there was limited information available regarding the proposed staffing and resourcing of the clinic, including arrangements for learner supervision, support and practice education. Visitors also noted that the proposed on-site clinic would not be used for placements until it had successfully been quality assurance. Initially, we will have a conversation with the education provider to establish the anticipated timeframe for the development of the clinic. Once these arrangements and timescales are clear, a focused review will be undertaken to determine whether the clinic is suitable for use as a placement setting.

The programmes meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Facilities provided

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- The education provider currently have staff to deliver the proposed programmes, however they will be appointing additional staff for the delivery of both programmes in Dublin.
- The education provider will be delivering the programmes in partnership with the Portobello Institute in Dublin. The Portobello Institute are based in the centre of Dublin and have two buildings, which offer offices, classrooms, a library, an on-site clinic, clinical skills laboratories and learner rest rooms. The location of the buildings also provides good transport links, which provides learners and staff with easy access.
- The Portobello Institute are also developing another campus where they plan to deliver the proposed programmes. The education provider will want to see evidence of the new location having appropriate resources in place prior to approving the programmes for delivery. We will need to seek assurance that the new location has been developed and has the appropriate resources to deliver the proposed programmes. The education provider has confirmed that if the new location is not ready by November 2026, the programmes will not commence.

Programmes

Programme name	Mode of study	First intake date	Nature of provision
MSc Dietetics (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	05/10/2026	Taught (HEI)
MSc Occupational Therapy (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	05/10/2026	Taught (HEI)

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		08/09/2025
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			08/09/2025
BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist			08/09/2025
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2022
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Radiotherapy and Oncology)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer		01/09/2022
BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist			08/09/2025
Independent and Supplementary Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	13/01/2025
MSc Dietetics (Integrated Degree apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			23/09/2024
MSc Dietetics (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			16/01/2023
MSc Occupational Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			09/01/2023
MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			09/01/2023
MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) (Dublin)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			16/09/2024
MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	16/01/2023

MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist		09/01/2023
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist		06/01/2026