

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Leeds
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology), Full time
Approval visit date	21 - 22 February 2019
Case reference	CAS-13641-R5R0M2

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Executive Summary

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The following is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as 'our standards'). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Elizabeth Ross	Hearing aid dispenser
Manoj Mistry	Lay
David Houlston	Biomedical scientist
John Archibald	HCPC executive
Patrick Armsby	HCPC executive (observer)

Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Janet Holt	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Leeds
Josie Mellor	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Leeds

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02019

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

Although we are considering this as a new programme for the purposes of regulatory approval, the education provider has been running it since 2012. Successful completion of the current iteration of the programme does not lead to HCPC registration for current learners. Only learners starting following approval of the programme will be eligible to apply for HCPC registration.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we require certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Required documentation	Submitted
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	Yes

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	This is a programme which is seeking approval for the first time. The panel met with learners from the currently unapproved BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology) programme.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 05 April 2019.

2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that applicants are given appropriate, clear and consistent information that enables them to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

Reason: From their review of the programme documentation, the visitors considered some of the information available to applicants was not clear or not correct. The documentation referred to "accreditation from the HCPC". The HCPC approves, and does not accredit, programmes. Reference was made in the student handbook to the programme being based in the School of Healthcare. Other documents stated the programme was based in the School of Medicine and, in the senior team meeting, the visitors were given assurances the programme sat in the School of Medicine. The visitors were not able to determine whether the information provided was accurate to

enable applicants to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme. They therefore require the education provider to review all relevant materials to ensure that accurate and complete information about the programme is provided to applicants.

3.3 The education provider must ensure that the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the process for identifying and appointing an appropriately qualified and experienced person to hold overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriate.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were directed to the curricula vitae of the programme leader and the audiology group lead. From the information provided, the visitors were aware of the individuals who have overall professional responsibility of the programme. The visitors noted the staff identified were appropriately qualified and experienced. In the programme team meeting, the visitors were informed there is a process in place to ensure they identify and appoint an appropriately qualified and experienced person to hold overall professional responsibility for the programme. The visitors were informed this process includes selecting a programme leader based on a role description, and the role is recruited to on a rotating basis for a term of three years and a maximum of five years. However, the visitors were not provided with the process, and therefore could not determine that it is appropriate to ensure the education provider will continue to appoint a suitable person and, if necessary, a suitable replacement. As such, the visitors require the education provider to demonstrate they have an effective process for ensuring the person with overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced.

3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme documentation to ensure that the resources to support learning is accurate and appropriate to deliver an effective programme.

Reason: From their review of the programme documentation, the visitors were made aware that information is provided during induction sessions on the programme. The visitors noted information was to be added to the programme handbook if the programme was to be approved by HCPC. The programme handbook is made available by the education provider during the induction sessions for learners registered on the programme. This additional information proposed to state graduates from the programmes will be “eligible for HCPC registration”. This statement could be misleading for learners, as learners are only “eligible to apply for registration” with HCPC. The visitors were not able to determine whether accurate and complete information about the programme is provided to learners. They therefore require the education provider to review the programme documentation to ensure the resources to support learning are accurate and appropriate to deliver an effective programme.

3.18 The education provider must ensure learners, educators and others are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must ensure learners, educators and others are aware that exit awards do not lead to eligibility to apply for admission to the Register.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors noted that learners have the option to exit the programme with a named award. These exit awards were a Certificate of Higher Education and a Diploma of Higher Education. The programme handbook stated neither awards are “recognised as professional audiological qualifications”. From the information provided, the visitors were unsure what the names of these exit awards were as there were no programme titles attached to the award, and it was not unambiguously clear whether these exit awards would lead to eligibility to apply for entry onto the Register. From reviewing the documentation, the visitors could not determine whether learners would be aware of their eligibility to apply for admission to the Register if they did not complete the approved programme and received an exit award. As such, the visitors require the education provider to amend the documentation relating to the exit awards to ensure learners, educators and others are aware these exit awards do not lead to eligibility to apply for registration with HCPC.

6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the process for appointing an external examiner for the programme.

Reason: From their review of programme documentation, the visitors were made aware of the role of the external examiner. During meetings at the visit, the visitors were made aware the education provider’s plans to appoint an external examiner. However, the visitors were not clear from the documentation or discussions what the process was for appointing one and were not able to see evidence relating to the specific requirements for an external examiner for this particular programme. The visitors were therefore not able to be satisfied at least one external examiner for the programme would be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, a registered hearing aid dispenser. They require the education provider to submit evidence clarifying the appointment process and requirements for the role, including information about how it is ensured external examiners from a different professional background are suitable.

Section 5: Visitors’ recommendation

Considering the education provider’s response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 24 April 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC’s decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).