
Approval process report

University of Central Lancashire, Hearing aid dispenser, 2021-22

Executive summary

The assessment stage is now complete and the visitors have given their recommendation. This follows their assessment of both the stage 1 and the stage 2 submissions, and a stage 2 quality activity where some questions around the stage 2 submission were clarified with the education provider.

Visitors have recommended approval of the proposed programme with no conditions.

Next steps: this report will be submitted to the Education and Training Panel for their consideration.

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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 programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme(s) ongoing 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

Education providers 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 education provider level standards are met by the education provider 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 education provider 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:

Elizabeth Ross	Lead visitor, Hearing aid dispenser
Lindsay Moore	Lead visitor, Hearing aid dispenser
Niall Gooch	Education and Quality Officer
Tracey Samuel-Smith	Education Manager – oversaw first half of case

Section 2: Education provider-level assessment

The education provider context

The University of Central Lancashire is an HEI and an established HCPC provider. However, they have not previously run hearing aid dispenser programmes.

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 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Biomedical scientist	☒ Undergraduate	☐ Postgraduate	2014
	Dietitian	☒ Undergraduate	☒ Postgraduate	2022
	Occupational therapist	☒ Undergraduate	☐ Postgraduate	2018
	Operating Department Practitioner	☒ Undergraduate	☐ Postgraduate	2012
	Paramedic	☒ Undergraduate	☐ Postgraduate	2009
	Physiotherapist	☒ Undergraduate	☐ Postgraduate	2018
	Speech and language therapist	☒ Undergraduate	☒ Postgraduate	2020
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2006

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 programme(s).

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	451	456	16/09/2021	This data indicates that the education provider are recruiting appropriately to their approved numbers – there are unlikely to be concerns around this area.
Learners – Aggregation of	3%	4%	16/09/2021	The slight disparity here may be worth

percentage not continuing				taking into account if there are other reasons to be concerned about learner experience but probably does not indicate serious problems.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	94%	16/09/2021	The provider are exceeding expectations in this area – this suggests no problems.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	Silver		16/09/2021	Silver suggests that there are no serious problems with teaching but might indicate that there are areas of the standards relating to teaching where improvement is possible.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	74.5%	70.8%	16/09/2021	There is a disparity here so it may be worth reflecting on any part of the portfolio that indicates learner dissatisfaction or limited opportunities for learner feedback.
HCPC performance review cycle length				The institution has not yet completed a performance review cycle.

The route through stage 1

As noted above, UCLAN has a long record of HCPC-approved provision. However, this proposed programme was new provision so we decided to take the programme through the stage 1 process.

Stage 1 assessment – provider submission

The programme was new provision at the provider in a profession with which they had not previously been involved. We needed to make a judgement that they met education provider-level standards by directly assessing them through a visitor-led review.

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet education provider level standards. They supplied information about how each standard was met, including a rationale and links to supporting information via a mapping document.

Outcomes from stage 1

From their review of the documentary submission, and on exploring themes through quality activity, the visitors were satisfied that education provider-level standards are met, and that assessment should continue to stage 2 of the process.

Findings of the assessment panel:

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

Information for applicants – The education provider showed that appropriate information is made available to those considering the programme. They demonstrated the kind of places where they would be advertising and recruiting, and explained the application process. The visitors considered that this would enable applicants to have a clear understanding of the programme and to be able to make an informed decision.

Assessing English language, character, and health – The education provider showed clearly that appropriate policies were in place to support this new provision. The visitors saw the detail of these assessments and concluded they were appropriate.

Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) – The education provider explained they would not be offering APE / L on this programme because of its duration and structure. The visitors considered that this was appropriate.

Equality, diversity and inclusion – The education provider demonstrated an excellent institutional approach to EDI policies, with clear application at both programme and faculty level. The visitors were therefore satisfied that the standards in this area were met.

Management and governance – The education provider's description of the programme's integration with the faculty reassured the visitors that the programme would be sustainable. There was clear buy-in and support from the senior team. Ongoing relationships and monitoring arrangements involving the programme team and the senior team were clear from the evidence.

UCLAN have strong mechanisms and processes for oversight of individual programmes, and picking up problems, so the visitors considered that the relevant standards were met.

Effective staff management and development – In the documentation there was a clear description of the education provider's expectations for staff development. There was a section on the regular programme audit document for recording the

progress and current continuing professional development (CPD) status of programme staff. This document mentioned that individual staff members would be expected to have regular CPD reviews. Regular skills updating was also required of practice educators and visiting lecturers.

Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments – Detail of practice environments was provided in the documentation. A sample audit form for practice settings was viewed by the visitors and they were also able to view evidence of collaboration between the education provider and the placement providers, showing a clear ongoing relationship and the ability to develop and expand provision as necessary.

Learner involvement – The education provider submitted evidence showing that learner feedback would be sought regularly and in a structured way, with clear mechanisms for using that feedback to drive continuous improvement. The visitors considered that this would meet the relevant standards and enable learners to be closely involved.

Service user and carer involvement – The education provider indicated that they were planning for the programme to make full use of UCLAN's wider service user and carer groups. The visitors considered that this was an appropriate and effective way for the programme to build, maintain and develop its service user and carer involvement.

Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) – The visitors were satisfied with this area, in particular they were impressed by the education provider's reflections on who exactly the most appropriate and relevant professionals and learners were for IPL/E with hearing aid dispensers. They noted also that there were clear mechanisms for assessing whether IPL / E was functioning as planned within the broader programme review processes.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:

- The visitors were aware from the submission that those responsible for the programme had co-operated closely and carefully with the education provider in developing the most appropriate policies and approaches that would align with their approach.

Outstanding issues: None

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
FdSc Audiological Practice (Hearing Aid Dispenser)	Distance learning (DL)	Hearing aid dispensers	15 learners per cohort, once a year	September 2022

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.

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.

Quality theme 1 – Module weighting

Area for further exploration: The visitors wished to discuss why the education provider had decided to weight the modules of the programme in the way they had. The visitors considered initially that the weighing might lead to learners not fully understanding the importance of some topics.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We had a discussion with the education provider. A discussion was the best way to explore and resolve the issue quickly. The visitors wanted to improve their understanding of the modules so that they could make a full and informed decision about whether the standards related to this area were met.

Outcomes of exploration: this concern was ameliorated in the discussion, because the education provider clarified that even in the modules with fewer credits there would still be a strong emphasis on the importance of the subjects involved.

Quality theme 2 – Assessment

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted that the final assessments of the modules were very focused on essay writing and were concerned that this might not meet SET 6.3, which requires that assessment be fair to all learners.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We had a discussion with the education provider. The visitors had determined that a discussion was the best way to explore and resolve the issue quickly.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider took on board the visitors' concern but noted that a re-appraisal of assessment methods would form part of a formal review of the programme after its first cohort. The visitors considered that this would be an appropriate way of the education provider reflecting on whether they were too dependent on particular assessment modes.

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. The visitors' findings, including an explanation of 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 visitors considered that foundation degree was an appropriate level of qualification.

On this basis, the visitors considered that the education provider's approach to meeting this standard was appropriate to meet the standards.

SET 2: Programme admissions

The evidence supplied to the visitors included a document outlining the admissions procedures. These were very similar to the procedures and approaches used on the existing approved programmes at the education provider. Applicants were expected to have an A-level points score similar to other comparable programmes at the education provider, and to progress through a similar application process involving interviews. The monitoring of equality and diversity through this admissions process followed the university policy, which involved centralised collection of data fed back to individual programmes, with necessary actions taken subsequently.

These processes had already been considered and approved by previous HCPC processes. With the information supplied, and with the knowledge that these procedures and approaches were currently in use, the visitors considered that they were appropriate when applied to the existing programmes, and so that the new programmes met the standards.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership

A programme description and handbook for the programme was included in the submission. The visitors considered that the management structures, the rationale and senior support for the programme, and the organisation of the programme set out in this evidence was appropriate. As noted above, they were closely akin to those already in place for the other programmes in the education provider. Curriculum vitae were provided for staff and these individuals and their time commitments were considered to be appropriate for the delivery of the programmes. The visitors were also aware that the education provider was an experienced provider of HCPC-approved programmes.

Therefore, we were satisfied that standards are met in this area. On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 4: Programme design and delivery

Discussions with the programme team prior to the stage 2 submission established that the design and delivery of the programmes was closely aligned with existing HCPC-approved provision at the provider.

From their review, the visitors considered that the structure and approaches of the programmes were appropriate, and that the learning outcomes were appropriately aligned with the standards of proficiency and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. They were satisfied that the curriculum content and the inter-professional education would prepare learners appropriately for practice. In the quality activity

they received assurances about the regular updating that the programme would undergo to ensure clinical currency.

Therefore, we were satisfied that standards are met in this area, and there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 5: Practice-based learning

As part of the stage 2 standards of education and training mapping, the education provider cited the programme handbooks, correspondence with practice partners and staff CVs. This was as evidence to show that they were able to provide a good structure, duration and range of practice-based learning, and that the practice educators in place were appropriate and sufficient in number. They also noted that the practice-based learning for this programme would be integrated into existing approved education provider frameworks.

In their quality activity, the visitors asked for clarification around two issues related to SET 5: how the education provider maintained standards in placement, and how they would ensure appropriate breadth of experience in placements. The education answered these queries, showing they had a specific process for keeping track of assessing placement suitability, and for regular review of how practice-based learning was helping meet learning outcomes related to breadth of practice. The visitors were satisfied that the standards were met.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 6: Assessment

Stage 2 documentation gave the visitors a clear understanding of how assessment would work on the programme, and indicated that it would be modelled on the existing approved approaches in other HCPC-approved programmes. The visitors had a clear understanding from the programme leaders' handbooks of how assessment would enable learners to meet the SOPs and the SCPEs and to progress through the programme. They were satisfied that the assessment would be effective, based on the diverse range and spacing of the assessments.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:

- The education provider had a particularly good understanding of the importance of a strong team of staff with appropriate expertise to deliver the standards.
- The education provider had undertaken a long and thorough process of programme development.

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).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

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 the programmes should be approved subject to the conditions being met.

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

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
Advanced Certificate Non Medical Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/10/2006
Advanced Certificate Non Medical Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/01/2014
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2014
BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2012
BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice	WBL (Work based learning)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	PT (Part time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2005
Dip HE Paramedic Practice	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2009
MSc Dietetics (pre-registration)	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Dietitian			01/01/2022
MSc Occupational Therapy	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Occupational therapist			01/08/2018

MSc Physiotherapy	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Physiotherapist			01/08/2018
MSc Speech and Language Therapy	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Speech and language therapist			01/09/2020

