

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Central Lancashire
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice – Full time BSc (Hons) Paramedic Practice – Full time
Approval visit date	19 - 21 September 2017
Case reference	CAS-11873-P4J4Q6

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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.

Through undertaking this process, we have noted areas that may need to be considered as part of future HCPC assessment processes in section 5 of this report.

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:

John Donaghy	Paramedic
Penny Joyce	Operating department practitioner
Roseann Connolly	Lay
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive
Shaista Ahmad	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.

Jane Anthony	Chair	University of Central Lancashire
Jagori Bandyopadhyay	Secretary	University of Central Lancashire
Kartina Choong	Internal panel member	University of Central Lancashire

Kevin Boles	Internal panel member	University of Central Lancashire
Andi Sambrook	External advisor	University of Surrey
Neil Larman	Visitor	College of Paramedics
Samantha McCabe-Hogan	Visitor	College of Paramedics

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Operating department practitioner
First intake	01 September 2012
Maximum student cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01699

We undertook this assessment via the approval process, which involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme continues to meet our standards. We decided to assess the programme via the approval process as changes were being made to curriculum structure, assessment strategy and programme management.

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed first intake	01 September 2018
Maximum student cohort	Up to 50
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01700

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. There is an existing DipHE Paramedic Practice at the education provider.

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	The paramedic programme is new so we met with learners from the existing DipHE Paramedic Practice. For the existing BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice we met with current learners.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers and educators	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. Unless otherwise noted, the following conditions apply to both programmes mentioned in section 2 of this report.

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 46 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 17 November 2017

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 appropriate, clear and consistent information, that enables applicants to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme, is available to applicants.

Reason: From their review of the programmes' documentation, the visitors considered that some of the information available to applicants was not clear or was not correct. For example, reference was made to graduates from the programmes being "eligible to register" with the HCPC rather than "eligible to apply for registration". There were also references to the 2004 edition of the HCPC standards of proficiency rather than to the most recent revision, a reference to the HPC rather than the HCPC, and a reference to there being a part-time pathway for the programmes, even though neither has a part-time pathway available. The visitors also noted that the webpages for applicants to the paramedic programme were not yet live, and therefore they were not able to determine whether the information provided on those pages was sufficient 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 both programmes is provided to applicants. This includes making the website available for the visitors to review.

2.7 The education provider must ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.

Condition: For the operating department practitioner programme, the education provider must ensure that there is equity regarding questions asked in the interview process.

Reason: During their review of programme documentation for the operating department practitioner programme, the visitors noted that in the guidance for interviewers it was stated that not all applicants needed to be asked all questions. They noted that in the "Admissions Policy Statement" provided as part of the programme documentation, the education provider states as an aim that "the procedures for the admission of students are non-discriminatory and espouse the university's commitment to equal opportunities". The visitors considered that not asking all applicants all questions created a risk that applicants would not be treated in a non-discriminatory way, or that they would not have equal opportunities to demonstrate their suitability for the programme, and that therefore relevant equality and diversity policies were not being implemented. The visitors therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants are considered equally in interviews.

3.6 There must be an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Condition: For the paramedic programme, the education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that sufficient practice-based learning is available for all learners.

Reason: In their review of programme documentation, the visitors were not able to see a breakdown of the practice based learning schedule showing the details of placement blocks. In particular, they were not able to see which placements were ambulance based and which were non-ambulance based, or the type of locations where learners would be based. The visitors noted that once the BSc (Hons) Paramedic Practice had begun, the total number of learners on paramedic programmes at the education provider would increase from 100 at present to over 150 by the 2020-21 academic year. From discussion with placement educators and the programme team, the visitors were aware that placement capacity was a concern, due to high regional demand for placements from other education providers. Under these circumstances, they considered that it might be difficult for the education provider to find enough placements for all learners given the increase in numbers across paramedic provision. They received verbal reassurances that the programme team were confident that they could find placements for all learners. However, they were unable to determine whether an effective process was in place to ensure availability and capacity, because they did not have a formal plan to ensure availability and capacity. The visitors therefore require the education provider to demonstrate that they have an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

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 demonstrate that the HCPC standards of proficiency, and HCPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics, are referenced in all module descriptors and reading lists.

Reason: In their review of programme documentation, the visitors were not able to see that the HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs), and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs), were consistently referenced in reading lists and module descriptors. In discussions with educators the visitors received verbal reassurances that the SOPs and the SCPEs were threaded throughout the programme, and the learners seemed to be familiar with both sets of standards. However, the visitors considered that in order for the standard to be met the education provider needed to ensure that the SOPs and SCPEs were clearly referenced in the descriptors and reading lists of all modules. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that all learners have access to relevant HCPC standards throughout the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that all learners are aware of the process for withdrawing consent when taking part as service users in clinical and practical teaching.

Reason: The visitors asked learners about their awareness of how consent policies worked in situations where they were taking part as service users in practical and clinical teaching. From these discussions, they noted that learners were not aware that

they were entitled to withdraw consent if they felt uncomfortable in such situations, and that they did not know what the process was for doing so. It did not appear that they had opportunities to reflect upon or discuss consent. As a result, the visitors were unable to determine whether the processes for obtaining appropriate consent from learners were effective. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that all learners are aware both that they can withdraw consent, and how they can do so.

5.7 Practice educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that all practice educators are appropriately trained.

Reason: The visitors were able to review programme documentation relating to training of practice educators, and discuss it with learners, the programme team and practice placement providers. Some of the learners reported that there had been occasions when learners were placed with mentors who had not been appropriately trained. These situations had been resolved by the programme team, but the visitors considered that there should be a robust process for ensuring that these situations did not occur, i.e. that no learner was placed with a mentor who was not appropriately trained. They were not able to determine from review of the documentation whether such a process was in place. In discussion with educators, the visitors were given verbal assurances that practice-based learning providers had processes in place to ensure that all practice educators had received appropriate training. They were able to review documentation relating to audit and monitoring of practice-based learning, but they were not able to determine how the education provider was able to ensure that all practice educators across all placement locations had received appropriate training. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they ensure that all practice educators have had such training.

6.3 Assessments must provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

Condition: For the paramedic programme, the education provider must demonstrate that the Practice Assessment Record ensures that assessment of competence is made at an appropriate academic level.

Reason: In the programme documentation, the visitors were able to review the Practice Assessment Record (PAR). In this document, there were marking criteria for practice based learning educators to use in their assessment of learners. Learners could be classified on a range from "fail" to "excellent". However, the visitors were not able to see guidance for educators as to how they should apply these criteria appropriately across the three years of the programme. They considered that a level of competence that could be considered "excellent" for a learner at Level 4 might not be "excellent" for a learner at Level 6, and they were therefore unable to determine whether learners' progression within the programme was being reliably assessed. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that the Practice Assessment Record guides educators appropriately to assess learners at different stages of the programme.

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. Recommendations do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes. Unless otherwise noted, the following recommendations apply to both programmes mentioned in section 2 of this report.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should review its processes for communicating the outcome of monitoring and evaluation to stakeholders.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard was met overall, as they had seen evidence of the audit process and had discussed its workings with learners and educators. However, from discussions, the visitors were aware that some learners and service users felt they had not been appropriately informed when their input into monitoring and evaluation processes had been acted upon. The visitors considered that if stakeholders do not feel that their participation is valued and acted upon, they may stop engaging with the process, and that therefore there could be a risk to the effectiveness of this process. The visitors therefore suggest that the education provider keep under review how action taken in response to stakeholder feedback is communicated.

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.

Recommendation: For the operating department practitioner programme, the education provider should ensure that their equipment continues to be as accessible and up to date as possible.

Reason: The visitors were able to view some of the facilities and resources available to learners, and discuss resourcing with the programme team and senior team. They were satisfied that the standard was met. There were enough accessible resources for the proposed numbers of learners, which would enable the learners to meet the learning outcomes. However, they noted that some of the equipment available was older than the equipment with which learners would be expected to be familiar on their practice-based learning. This was also raised as a concern by some learners. In addition, a few learners reported that they did not have access to clinical skills labs as often as they would have liked. These issues did not appear to be affecting learners' ability to meet the standards of proficiency, but the visitors considered that there was a risk of this happening in the future, and so they recommend that the education provider continue to review the equipment available.

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.

Recommendation: For the paramedic programme, the education provider should ensure that there is an appropriate quantity of equipment available.

Reason: The visitors were able to review the resources available for practical teaching on the paramedic programme, and discuss resourcing with the programme team and senior team. They were satisfied that this standard was met. There were enough accessible resources for the proposed numbers of learners, which would enable the learners to meet the learning outcomes. The education provider had used small group teaching to make efficient use of its resources. In discussion with learners on the DipHE the visitors were made aware that some learners' use of some items of equipment, such as cannulas, had been restricted. The programme team noted in discussion that they were aware of feedback from learners around this issue, and that similar restrictions would not be in place for the BSc. The visitors suggest that the education provider continues to monitor how they maintain learners' access to appropriate and effective levels of resources.

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 18 January 2018 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).

Section 6: Future considerations for the programme(s)

In their review of programme documentation and in discussions with learners, placement educators and service users and carers, the visitors noted that stakeholders were often not being informed when action had been taken in response to their feedback, or in response to the outcome of audit processes. This had the result that learners and service users were sometimes unsure whether audit and feedback processes were working appropriately (see the Recommendation under standard of education and training 3.4 above). The visitors therefore considered that in future monitoring visitors should consider reviewing how effectively the outcomes of feedback and audit are being appropriately monitored and communicated.