

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Birmingham City University
Name of programme(s)	MSc Social Work, Full time PGDip Social Work, Full time
Approval visit date	27-28 June 2018
Case reference	CAS-13162-B1C8Z9

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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:

Mohammed Jeewa	Lay
Graham Noyce	Social worker
Sheila Skelton	Social worker
Shaista Ahmad	HCPC executive
Tamara Wasylec	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.

Clare Mackie	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Birmingham City University
Victoria McGrath	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Birmingham City University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Social Work
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
Proposed First intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01914

Programme name	PGDip Social Work
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
Proposed First intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01915

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

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

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

Required documentation	Submitted
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes

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

Group	Met
Learners	Yes
Senior staff	Yes
Practice education providers	Yes
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes
Programme team	Yes
Facilities and resources	Yes

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

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

Conditions

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

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 10 August 2018.

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 ensure that the resources to support learning in all settings are accessible to all learners.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that resources such as the programme specification, VLE and Moodle were available for learners to access. In discussions with the learners, the visitors were informed that the books and eBooks for the current BSc social work programme were not up to date or readily available in the library. The learners explained that whenever they accessed the recommended reading, the books and eBooks were all signed out. The learners went on to explain that if they left their eBook idle for a period, they would be signed out of the eBook when someone else requested it and would have to wait for it to be available again. The visitors noted that if the learners on the existing programme consider the resources to support learning to be under resourced then they could not determine that there would be enough resources for the fifty extra learners on the new MSc and PGDip programme. As such, the visitors require the education provider to demonstrate that the resources to support the learning are accessible to all learners.

3.13 There must be effective and accessible arrangements in place to support the wellbeing and learning needs of learners in all settings.

Condition: The education provider must ensure timely support is available for learners with additional learning needs.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that there were academic support systems provided by the education provider, such as ASK desk and Student services, whereby learners can access support around learning needs. In discussions with the learners, the visitors were informed that there was a long waiting list for learners with additional learning needs. The visitors were told that there could be a waiting period of up to eight weeks before support was offered to a learner. As such, the visitors were unable to establish how these arrangements were effective in providing necessary support to learners with additional needs. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that the education provider has timely, effective and accessible support arrangements in place to support learners with additional learning needs on 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.

3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the payment process for service users to ensure continued involvement of service users in the programme.

Reason: From discussions with the service users and carers, the visitors noted that service users were involved in the development of the programme including aspects such as interviewing. The visitors were able to determine that service users are involved in the programme and therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, from discussions with the service users and carers the visitors were informed that there was often a delay between the work being completed and the payment being received. In some instances, there was a delay of up to three months. As such, the visitors recommend that timely financial payment is provided to service users and carers to ensure they are continually involved in the programme over the coming years.

3.15 There must be a thorough and effective process in place for receiving and responding to learner complaints.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing how they make information about the complaints process available to learners so that the information is readily available to them.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that there was an effective process in place for learners to raise a complaint, which was contained within the admissions handbook. As this information was provided, the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. However, from discussions with the learners the visitors were informed that learners were unaware of how they would access

information about the complaints process if they needed to. Although learners explained, they would complain to certain individuals they were unclear what the process was and how to find that information should, they need to. As such, the visitors recommend that the education provider strengthen the information provided to learners on how to raise a complaint should this be necessary.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, and the request for further evidence set out in section 5, 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 23 August 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](#).