

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Staffordshire University
Name of programme(s)	DipHE Operating Department Practice, Full time BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice, Full time
Approval visit date	10 - 11 April 2018
Case reference	CAS-12220-Y0J1X5

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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:

Ian Prince	Lay
Joanne Thomas	Operating department practitioner
Julie Weir	Operating department practitioner
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

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.

Sandra Kirkham	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Staffordshire University
Chris Hanks	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Staffordshire University
Philip Shirley	Learner member of internal panel	Staffordshire University
Andrea Bedworth Cook	Member of internal panel	Staffordshire University

Casandra O'Connell	Member of internal panel	External panel member
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	DipHE Operating Department Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Operating department practitioner
First intake	01 September 2003
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 32
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP01807

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 due to the outcome of a previous assessment.

The education provider has informally notified the HCPC that they intend to close this programme, but have not yet submitted a programme closure form. Section 4 of this report includes a condition under SET 2.1 relating to the ambiguity over the status of this programme.

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Operating department practitioner
Proposed first intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 35
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01847

We undertook the 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.

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	Not Required

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 08 June 2018

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 all applicants receive accurate and clear information about whether the DipHE Operating Department Practice will admit a cohort in September 2018.

Reason: From the website for the DipHE programme, the visitors noted that the education provider was advertising for a cohort of learners to start the programme in September 2018. Elsewhere, the documentation stated that the programme had accepted its last learner cohort in September 2017. The education provider has previously informed the HCPC of its intention to close this programme, but has not yet

given formal notification of closure. The website did not give any indication to applicants that the programme might not run. The visitors sought to clarify the education provider's plans in discussions with the senior team and programme team. From these discussions, the education provider's final plans were not clear, but the visitors understood that the education provider's intent as of the time of the visit was to not admit a cohort onto the DipHE in September 2018. Learners had been accepted on to the DipHE with the intention of transferring them when the new BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice programme was approved. The visitors considered that this arrangement did not meet the standard as it was possibly preventing applicants from making an informed choice about whether to take up an offer on the programme. Applicants may enter one programme and then be forced to transfer to another programme which is both longer and at a higher academic level. The visitors therefore require that the education provider clarify the status of the DipHE in all information available to learners and, if they intend to transfer learners on to the new BSc (Hons), that they make this clear to all learners.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the minutes of a Placement Providers Group provided as evidence for this standard, and discussed practice-based learning capacity with the programme team and the practice educators. However, it was not clear from this information that there was a clear process for ensuring sufficient capacity. The practice educators said that going forward they expected practice-based learning capacity to be lower. The programme team said that they expected to have more capacity. The visitors were aware that some of the placement capacity was in settings that were theoretically available, but some distance from the education provider and therefore potentially hard to use because learners might not be able to travel a long distance. The visitors could not see that there was a system in place for maintaining up to date information on capacity in all placements. They therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing how they can ensure sufficient capacity in practice-based learning.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that learners are clearly informed of how they will be supported and protected, if they need to raise a complaint.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the complaints procedure submitted as evidence for this standard, and asked the learners whether they would feel comfortable raising complaints. The learners appeared to understand the procedure, although some of them were less clear about how they would be protected if they did raise a complaint. The visitors considered that the procedure itself, while generally appropriate, did not explicitly explain to learners that they would be supported if they raised complaints, and that they should feel able to raise complaints without any concerns about their studies being affected. The visitors noted that, if learners did not understand this, it might detract from the effectiveness of the process, as they might be reluctant to use it when

appropriate. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that learners understand that they will be supported and protected when raising complaints.

3.17 There must be an effective process in place to support and enable learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that learners are clearly informed of how they will be supported and protected, if they need to raise a concern about the safety and wellbeing of service users.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the procedure in the Practice Learning Handbook submitted as evidence for this standard, and asked the learners whether they would feel comfortable raising concerns about the wellbeing of service users and carers. The learners appeared to understand the procedure, although some of them were less clear about how they would be protected if they did raise a concern. The visitors considered that the procedure itself, while generally appropriate, did not explicitly explain to learners that they would be supported if they raised concerns, and that they should feel reassured that they can raise concerns without their studies being affected. The visitors noted that, if learners did not understand this, it might detract from the effectiveness of the process, as they might be reluctant to use it when appropriate. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that learners understand that they will be supported and protected if they raise a concern about the safety and / or wellbeing of service users.

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 will ensure that all service users and carers have a full understanding of consent, appropriate to their roles in the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted against this standard, including the Service User Code of Conduct, and discussed understandings of consent with the service user who attended the meeting. The visitors could not see how the Code of Conduct would ensure that all service users had a clear and full understanding of consent, including the right to withdraw consent, and the right to say as much or as little as they wished when sharing medical or personal histories. The service user to whom the visitors spoke at the visit had a good understanding of such issues, but she was a qualified medical professional and it was not clear how a service user without such a background would be enabled to achieve the same understanding. The visitors therefore require that the education provider submit further evidence showing they will enable all service users to understand consent.

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 will ensure that all staff carrying out assessment in practice-based learning have been appropriately trained to do so.

Reason: From discussion with the programme team, the visitors were aware that the education provider was planning changes to the roles and responsibilities of mentors for practice-based learning, and the required qualifications for supervision of learners. It was not clear how substantial these changes were intended to be. The visitors were not clear from these discussions how the education provider would ensure that anyone carrying out assessment in practice-based learning had received appropriate training to ensure consistency and fairness. They therefore require the education provider to clarify how the role of mentor will change, and how they will ensure that anyone carrying out assessment on placement will be trained to do so in accordance with the requirements of the programme.

5.8 Learners and practice educators must have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that all learners have access to relevant materials issued by different Trusts where practice-based learning takes place.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team, learners and practice educators, the visitors were not clear about what materials were offered to learners to familiarise themselves with the policies, procedures and expectations of different placement settings. Practice educators said learners did not seem to have access to Trust-specific information, while the programme team said that they did. The visitors could not see from the documentation provided for this standard how the education provider would ensure that such materials were available to learners going out on placement. They considered that it was important that learners did have access to such information, so that they could gain as much value as possible from their placements in terms of meeting the standards of proficiency. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that learners have access to learner-focused materials before they go on placement.

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 review their strategy for service user and carer recruitment, with a view to diversifying, and increasing the size of, the user group.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard was met at threshold, as there were service users and carers involved in admissions and teaching on the programme. The education provider had provided some rationale for their involvement and explained how their contributions improved the programme. However, the visitors noted that the service user group was relatively small, with six individuals, and that half of these individuals had an academic or healthcare professional background. They considered that this might mean that the group would not adequately represent a full enough range of the type of service users and carers that learners were likely to encounter. From

discussions with the programme team and senior team, the visitors were aware that there were plans to develop the service user and carer group. The visitors therefore suggest that the education provider ensures that they take these development plans forward.

3.9 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep under review their staff planning to ensure that there continue to be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard was met at threshold, as the staff currently in place for the programme were able to cover all the necessary curriculum areas and meet the teaching responsibilities of the programme. In determining that this standard was met, the visitors took into account the planned closure of the DipHE Operating Department Practice. This closure meant that in the medium- to long-term the new programme would not create significant new demand on staff time across the education provider's operating department practice provision. However, from discussions with the senior team and the programme team, and from review of the documentation, the visitors were aware that the staff on the programme all had significant teaching loads, in some cases on other programmes as well as this one, and that there was not a lot of spare capacity in the workload model. They considered that in the case of, for example, long-term sickness, or other staff losses, it was not clear that the standard would continue to be met. They therefore suggest that the education provider consider how best to ensure that their staff numbers continue to be appropriate to the requirements of the programme.

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 05 July 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](#).