

## Visitors' report

<b>Name of education provider</b>	University College London
<b>Programme name</b>	BSc (Hons) Audiology
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	Full time
<b>Relevant part of HPC Register</b>	Hearing aid dispensers
<b>Date of visit</b>	14 – 15 April 2011

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## Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Hearing aid dispenser' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 22 February 2012. At the Committee meeting on 22 February 2012, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

## Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Hearing aid dispenser profession came onto the register in April 2010 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was part of a joint event. The professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – MSc Audiological Science with Certificate in Clinical Competency (CCC) (formerly - MSc Audiological Science (with clinical competency certificate or certificate of audiological competence)) and Postgraduate Diploma in Audiological Science with Certificate in Clinical Competency (CCC). The professional body and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on this programme only. A separate report exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report produced by the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

## Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Tim Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser) Richard Sykes (Hearing aid dispenser)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	20
First approved intake	1 September 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Rob Lowe (University of Southampton)
Secretary	Robert Heller (University College London)
Members of the joint panel	Amr el-Refaie (British Academy of Audiology) Lynette Blaney Refaie (British Academy of Audiology)

## Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 42 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 15 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

## Conditions

### **2.1 The admissions procedures 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 revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the HPC approved programme title is clearly stated as BSc (Hons) Audiology.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted inconsistencies throughout the documentation in the way the education provider referred to the programme award title. The current HPC approved programme title is BSc (Hons) Audiology, however the visitors' noted the education provider frequently referred to the programme as 'BSc Audiology'. The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the award title is consistently referred to throughout the documentation. The visitors note that referring to the programme as 'BSc Audiology' could be misleading to applicants and students and therefore require all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to be amended to ensure consistency and clarity.

### **2.1 The admissions procedures 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 revisit the programme documentation to clearly highlight that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a Hearing aid dispenser with the HPC. The education provider must also revisit the programme documentation to ensure that applicants and students are given further information about the option of becoming a Hearing aid dispenser and what it entails. The education provider must finally clearly highlight the role of the HPC as the statutory regulator for Hearing aid dispensers.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to find any reference to Hearing aid dispensers and the fact that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a Hearing aid dispenser with the HPC. The visitors were concerned that the role of a Hearing aid dispenser was not clearly highlighted within the programme documentation and that potential applicants as well as students on the programme would be unaware of the options available to them. The visitors also noted little reference to the role of the HPC as the statutory regulator for Hearing aid dispensers. The visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation in relation to information regarding the option of becoming a Hearing aid dispenser to ensure that applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

## **2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials for the programme, to clearly and consistently articulate the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) standard or equivalent required for entry on to the programme.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to determine the IELTS level for entry on to the programme. At the visit the programme team stated that the level was 6.5. The visitors require the IELTS entry level to the programme to be clearly stated in the programme documentation and advertising materials. If students enter the programme with an IELTS score of 6.5 the visitors also require evidence of how the programme team ensures at the point of registration the applicant will attain a score of IELTS 7.0, with no element below 6.5 and therefore ensure that Standard of Proficiency 1b.3 is met.

- 1b.3 – be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the international English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5.

## **3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide details that outline how they will manage the planned discontinuation of the BSc (Hons) Audiology programme in September 2012. The visitors require evidence showing how students who are on the programme after September 2012 will continue to have appropriate support and demonstrate that the programme will continue to have a secure place in the education provider's business plan until the last cohort has graduated.

**Reason:** From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider plans to discontinue the BSc (Hons) Audiology programme in September 2012. The education provider will therefore cease taking on further cohorts from September 2012 and this cohort will be the last to graduate on the programme. The visitors have noted that the rationale for the discontinuation is the creation of a master's level programme in response to the Modernising Scientific Careers agenda. The visitors require evidence showing how students who are on the BSc (Hons) Audiology programme after September 2012 will continue to have appropriate support in light of the creation of a new master's level qualification and also reassurance that the programme will continue to have a secure place in the education provider's business plan until the last cohort has graduated.

## **3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that a system is in place for gaining students informed consent before they participate as service users in practical teaching.

**Reason:** The visitors noted through discussion with the programme team, consent was obtained verbally from students when participating as service users in clinical and practical teaching. There was no formal information regarding consent protocols in place, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained or how situations where students declined from participation were managed. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from students or could appropriately manage situations where students declined to participate in the practical and clinical teaching. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement formal protocols for obtaining consent from students (such as a consent form to be signed prior to commencing the programme) and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching (such as alternative learning arrangements).

#### **4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2.

- 1b.3 – be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the international English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5.
- 1b.3 - be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems.
- 2b.4 – be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system and performance settings and/or associated technologies for service users.
- 2c.2 – be aware of emerging technologies and new developments in hearing assistance.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme document and discussions with the programme team the visitors were unable to determine where in the curriculum the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2. The visitors also noted that the education provider provided a standards of proficiency mapping document for Clinical scientists, and not Hearing aid dispensers. The visitors were therefore not clearly signposted to the standards of proficiency specific to Hearing aid dispensers. The visitors require the education provider to provide evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2 and therefore that those who successfully complete the programme meet the profession specific standards of proficiency for Hearing aid dispensers.

#### **4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.**

**Condition:** The education provider must review the programme documentation to refer to the HPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics and provide evidence of how these are taught throughout the programme.

**Reason:** In the documentation submitted the HPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics were not referred to. The visitors require further evidence that demonstrates that the HPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics are taught within the programme to ensure that students understand the standards and when they apply. The visitors therefore require further evidence before this standard is met.

#### **5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence of the audit tool used to approve and monitor placement environments which ensures the provision of a safe and supportive environment.

**Reason:** The visitors noted discussions with the programme team outlining the procedure in place to check and monitor the quality of a practice placement. The visitors were not however provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors require further evidence of the auditing process and the guidelines in place to ensure that the education provider can make a judgement on whether placements are of good quality and provide safe and supportive environments.

#### **5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence outlining the systems used to effectively monitor placements.

**Reason:** The visitors noted discussions with the programme team outlining the procedure in place for approving and monitoring placements. The visitors were not however provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors therefore require clear written protocols that outline the systems in place to ensure that placements are approved and monitored in a thorough and effective way. Protocols might include evidence of policies and processes for approving placements and examples of how these are put into practice, details of systems for on-going monitoring and assessing placement providers, an explanation of how feedback from students is collected, analysed and acted on, details of how feedback is gained from practice placement educators and co-ordinators and evidence that shows the education provider ensures that there are clear and easy methods for communication between the parties. Evidence might also include details of how feedback is used to inform processes with copies of policies or details of processes provided for dealing with placement providers where difficulties arise.

### **5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence outlining the systems used to ensure that placement providers have equality and diversity policies in relation to students.

**Reason:** The visitors noted discussions with the programme team outlining the audit procedure in place for approving and monitoring placements. The visitors were not however provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors therefore require clear written protocols that outline the systems in place to that placement providers have equality and diversity policies in relation to students.

### **5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence outlining the systems used to ensure that placement providers have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

**Reason:** The visitors noted discussions with the programme team outlining the audit procedure in place for approving and monitoring placements. The visitors were not however provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors therefore require clear written protocols that outline the systems in place to ensure that placement providers have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

### **5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence outlining the systems used to ensure that practice placement educators have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

**Reason:** The visitors noted discussions with the programme team outlining the audit procedure in place for approving and monitoring placements. The visitors were not however provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors therefore require clear written protocols that outline the systems in place to ensure that practice placement educators have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

### **5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate the mechanism they use to ensure that practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training in advance of receiving students and how they decide when practice placement educators require refresher training.

**Reason:** From the documents submitted and from discussions with the programme team and students the visitors noted that the education provider does offer practice placement educator training to practice placement educators. However, from discussions with the students the visitors noted that not all practice placement educators had received practice placement educator training. The programme team confirmed to the visitors that practice placement educator training was not mandatory. The visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that all practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training in advance of receiving students. The visitors require clarification on how the education provider records and monitors the training of new practice placement educators and information on how it is determined if a practice placement educator needs refresher training and how this is articulated to the relevant parties. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is being met.

### **6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence that demonstrates that the assessment strategy and design ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2.

- 1b.3 – be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the international English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5.
- 1b.3 – be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems.
- 2b.4 – be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system and performance settings and/or associated technologies for service users.
- 2c.2 – be aware of emerging technologies and new developments in hearing assistance.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme document and discussions with the programme team the visitors were unable to determine how the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2. The visitors also noted that the education provider provided a standards of proficiency mapping document for Clinical scientists, and not Hearing aid dispensers. The visitors were therefore not clearly signposted to the standards of proficiency specific to Hearing aid dispensers and therefore were not able to see how the assessment strategy and design ensured that the relevant profession specific learning outcomes were assessed. The visitors require the education provider to provide evidence that demonstrates that the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2 and that those who successfully complete the programme meet the profession specific standards of proficiency for Hearing aid dispensers.

### **6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide details of the training offered to clinical assessors to ensure that the measurement of student performance is objective and ensures fitness to practice.

**Reason:** From discussions with the programme team the visitors note that the education provider has trained up a number of senior practice placement educators to represent the education provider as clinical assessors. The visitors note that the clinical assessors are responsible for signing off a number of core proficiencies whilst students are on placement. The visitors require details of the training offered to clinical assessors to ensure that the measurement of student performance is objective and ensures fitness to practice.

#### **6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the policy on aegrotat awards to state that they do not provide eligibility for inclusion onto the Register, and demonstrate how this information is clearly communicated to the students.

**Reason:** From the documentation provided the visitors found it difficult to determine the assessment regulations for the programme and how these are conveyed to students so that it is clear that aegrotat awards would not enable students to be eligible to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that this standard is being met.

## Recommendations

### **3.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider revisiting the mechanisms in place to ensure that specialist visiting lecturers have relevant specialist expertise and up to date knowledge and to guarantee the quality of their teaching.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that specialist visiting lecturers are frequently integrated into the delivery of the programme. The visitors also noted in discussions with the programme team that the role of the module coordinator is a key safeguard in monitoring the quality of specialist visiting lecturers and that specialist visiting lecturers are subject to peer review on a bi-annual cycle. The visitors recommend that the programme team may want to revisit these quality mechanisms to ensure that a specialist visiting lecturer is peer reviewed in the first session they deliver and that any teaching material is signed off to ensure that it is relevant and up to date.

### **3.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider reviewing the mechanisms in place that monitor the continuing professional and research development requirements of its practice placement educators and formulate a more strategic and holistic approach to providing opportunities.

**Reason:** From discussions with practice placement educators and the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider does offer some continuing professional development opportunities to its practice placement educators. However the visitors also noted discussions with practice placement educators where it was stated that these opportunities were often ad hoc in nature. The practice placement educators also noted that they were not always consulted on their continuing professional development requirements. The visitors recommend that the education provider may want to review the way it consults with its practice placement educators. A review will ensure that practice placement educators continuing professional and research development requirements are clearly communicated to the education provider and allow a more strategic planning approach to be adopted, ensuring as many practice placement educators as possible are able to access development opportunities.

### **5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider may wish to consider introducing an independent sector placement setting to help ensure students gain access to a wider range of learning experiences.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors are satisfied that the number, duration and

range of practice placements are appropriate and support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. The visitors wish to encourage the programme team to consider facilitating an independent sector placement for students so they can gain access to a wider range of learning experiences.

**5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider developing a system that ensures that all practice placement educators within private practice placements are appropriately registered with the HPC.

**Reason:** The visitors note that the education provider does not currently use private practice placements within the programme. The visitors did however note discussions with the programme team where they discussed the possibility of using private practice placements in the future. If this is the case the visitors recommend that the education provider may want to consider setting up protocols that ensure that they check, monitor and record the HPC registration details of practice placement educators within private practice placement.

**6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider clearly stating that the exit award, BSc (Hons) Hearing Science, does not lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register.

**Reason:** The visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met and that the exit award does not contain any reference to a HPC protected title. The visitors would however recommend that the education provider may want to consider including a clear statement, whenever reference is made to the exit award, to ensure that students are absolutely clear that this award does not lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register.

Tim Pringle  
Richard Sykes