

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Essex
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy - Full time BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Including Placement Year) - Full time BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Including Year Abroad) - Full time
Approval visit date	7-8 June 2017
Case reference	CAS-11662-G6B4N2

Contents

Section 1: Our regulatory approach.....	2
Section 2: Programme details.....	3
Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment.....	3
Section 4: Outcome from first review.....	4
Section 5: Visitors' recommendation	12

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:

Frances Ashworth	Lay
Elsbeth McCartney	Speech and language therapist
Lorna Povey	Speech and language therapist
Jamie Hunt	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.

David Penman	Chair	University of Essex
Carly Peaston-Jones	Secretary	University of Essex
Janet Edwards	External academic	Manchester Metropolitan University
Beth Marrant	Industry representative	N/A
Nicholas Geeraert	Internal panel member	University of Essex
Colin Sadler	Internal panel member	East 15 Acting School
Daniel Underdown	Student panel member	University of Essex

Christos Salis	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) Visitor	RCSLT – professional body
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Speech and language therapist
Proposed first intake	1 October 2018
Maximum student cohort	Up to 30 across the three programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01649

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Including Placement Year)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Speech and language therapist
Proposed first intake	1 October 2018
Maximum student cohort	Up to 30 across the three programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01778

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Including Year Abroad)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Speech and language therapist
Proposed first intake	1 October 2018
Maximum student cohort	Up to 30 across the three programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01779

We undertook 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 programmes meet our standards for the first time. The education provider has existing HCPC-approved speech and language therapy provision (an MSc with a PGDip step off point) which was not considered at this approval visit. The existing programmes will share resources with the new programmes should they be approved.

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
Student handbook	Yes
Practice placement handbook	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	N/A

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

Group	Met
Students	Yes
Senior staff	Yes
Placement providers and educators	Yes
Service users and carers	Yes
Programme team	Yes
Tour of facilities	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 44 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 29 August 2017.

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 provide evidence that they will ensure applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up the offer of a place on the programme.

Reason: As part of the documentary submission, the visitors were not given advertising information specific to the programme. At the approval visit, visitors discussed various costs that would be paid by the education provider or by students. For example, DBS checks and travel costs for placements would be paid for by the education provider, and student membership of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) would be paid for by students. The education provider also explained how the placement and international years would work, specifically that students would make a decision about which route to take at the point of application, with the option to change their mind when progressing through the programme. The visitors considered the education provider's decisions reasonable in these and other areas relating to expectations of, and information that would need to be provided to applicants. However, as the visitors were not shown how this information would be communicated, they were unclear how potential applicants to the programme would be made aware of responsibilities for costs, along with other information that may be pertinent to them taking up an offer of a place on the programme. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must confirm the maximum numbers of students across their speech and language therapy provision, including a breakdown across programmes.

Reason: From the information provided and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were unclear of the intended student numbers across the whole speech and language therapy provision. In discussion the education provider suggested that there would be an upper limit on students that would be accepted onto the programmes at the education provider, including the Masters level programme that was not reviewed at this visit. This would then inform what level of resourcing the provision would receive as a whole, with the provider reducing the student numbers on the masters' programmes to ensure that the resources would remain appropriate for all speech and language programmes. However, this limit had not been determined. As a result the education provider did not provide details of the number of students for these programmes. The visitors noted that we require student numbers to be explicitly stated so we are able to make a judgement whether resourcing for the programme is adequate for the number of students. Therefore, the visitors require information that shows that the education provider has made a final decision about maximum student numbers across the speech and language therapy provision, and a breakdown of these numbers across programmes and years.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they will have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Reason: From the documentation, the visitors noted that the education provider has considered and defined the additional staff that they will need to deliver these programmes while continuing to deliver their existing programmes. In conversations at

the visit, the senior team highlighted that the staffing resources would be increased as needed, but were unclear about specifics such as timescales or job profiles. From these discussions and from the documentation, the visitors could not determine what recruitment plan was in place to appropriately staff the programme in the future, or what, if any, formal commitment to recruit the additional staff noted through the documentation had been made. The visitors also noted that as they were unclear about student numbers (as referenced in the condition for SET 3.1), they were unclear whether the proposed increase in staff numbers would be appropriate to support the delivery of these programmes. Therefore, the visitors require information that demonstrates that the programme will have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that their specialist teaching and learning accommodation will be adequate to support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Reason: In the documentation, the education provider flagged that their speech and language therapy laboratory “may be upgraded at the point of [the] validation visit”. At the visit, the visitors were shown a dedicated speech and language therapy space, and provided with a plan for a new space to support student learning, but were not provided with detailed information about these facilities as the plans had only just been finalised. Therefore, the visitors were unclear exactly what facilities the new space would provide, how it would be used by the programme, or how the whole suite of facilities would be appropriate to support student learning for this programme. The visitors also noted that as they were unclear about student numbers (as referenced in the condition for SET 3.1), they were unclear if there would be sufficient space and resources for all speech and language therapy students when the programmes are running at full capacity. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate how the suite of facilities available to students will effectively support the required learning and teaching of the programme.

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that it will have appropriate and sufficient speech and language therapy specific resources, and that these resources will be readily available to all students.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, and from the resources tour, the visitors were unable to see how the resources would be appropriate to the curriculum or readily available to students. Specifically, the visitors were unclear about which speech and language therapy specific assessments (for example, assessments to identify speech, language and communication needs, and / or eating and drinking difficulties) were available, along with availability of clinical resources such as speech and voice analysis software. Although the visitors saw plans for new facilities (as noted in the condition for SET 3.9), they were not clear about how these plans would translate into the education provider ensuring there will be appropriate and sufficient speech and language therapy resources in place to support the delivery of the curriculum. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

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 demonstrate how the following standards of proficiency (SOPs) for speech and language therapists are delivered by the programme:

- **13.7** understand educational theory and practice and the relationship between language and literacy in relation to speech and language therapy
- **14.7** be able to administer, record, score and interpret a range of published and self-generated assessment tools to describe and analyse service users' abilities and needs using, where appropriate, phonetic transcription, linguistic analysis, instrumental analysis and psycholinguistic assessment
- **14.15** be able to use information and communication technologies appropriate to their practice

Reason: From the information provided, the visitors were unclear if or how the above SOPs were contained in the programme's curriculum. From reviewing the modules holistically, the visitors were able to determine where most of the SOPs were delivered. However, they were unclear where the above SOPs were delivered from undertaking this exercise, and the SOPs mapping document provided to assist the visitors in making this judgement only pointed to overall modules containing the SOPs rather than the detail of where in the modules at a learning outcome level. Specifically to these SOPs, the visitors were unclear about the teaching of literacy (SOP 13.7), instrumental analysis (SOP 14.7), and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) (SOP 14.15). Therefore, the visitors require further evidence that demonstrates that the programme's curriculum delivers these SOPs.

5.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that practice placements will be in place for all students.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, the visitors noted that there were no formal agreements to increase placement capacity for the speech and language therapy provision at the education provider. At the visit, the senior team asserted that they did not expect there to be any problems with sourcing placements for increased student numbers, but were unable to provide assurances that formal agreements would be put in place to ensure that all students would be placed. The placement providers and programme team also discussed that there is currently additional placement capacity in the region, that the programme has been timetabled considering the additional students that will need practice placements, and that there may be a movement to practice educators taking two students at once. However, these groups were also not able to provide formal information or assurances that all students would be placed. The visitors were also unclear about student numbers (as referenced in the condition for SET 3.1), and were therefore unclear how many placements would be required in total by the programme. Although the programme start date is in October 2018, and some placements will not be required until the 2020-21 academic year, the visitors noted that the HCPC is unable to approve a programme unless the education provider is able to demonstrate that placements will be found for all students. Therefore, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate that there will be a sufficient number of practice placements when all speech and language programmes are running at full capacity.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have a thorough and effective system in place to ensure practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, and from discussions at the approval visit, the visitors noted that the education provider has several processes (some formal and some informal) intended to ensure the quality of practice placements. However, the visitors were unclear of the overall placement monitoring system in place, or how the education provider gathers and uses appropriate information to make informed decisions about whether placements provide a safe and supportive environment. To use an example specific to monitoring, it seemed that placements are asked to provide certain information on a regular basis, but it was not clear how the education provider uses this information to make informed judgements about whether placements remain suitable. Therefore, the visitors require evidence that demonstrates that there is a complete thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements associated with this programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have a thorough and effective system in place for approving and monitoring all placements, including how they gather and use appropriate information to make informed decisions about placement quality.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, and from discussions at the approval visit, the visitors noted that the education provider has several processes (some formal and some informal) intended to ensure the quality of practice placements. For example, the education provider asks that students feed back following the completion of each placement, and that placement visits are undertaken by the programme team when required. However, the visitors were unclear of the overall placement monitoring system in place for approving and monitoring placements, or how the education provider gathers and uses appropriate information to make informed decisions about placement quality. To use an example specific to monitoring, it seemed that placements are asked to provide certain information on a regular basis, but it was not clear how the education provider uses this information to make informed judgements about whether placements remain suitable. The visitors noted that there is a separate placement team within the education provider, and that the programme team also have a role with quality assuring placements, but were not given information about how the two teams work together to achieve this aim. From discussions, it also seemed that the programme team was unsure of the role performed by the placement team in the quality assurance of practice placements. The visitors also noted that information is recorded in several different places, and were unclear how all relevant information is drawn together to be used to inform decisions about the suitability of placements. Therefore, the visitors require evidence that demonstrates that there is a complete thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements associated with this programme.

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 demonstrate that they have a thorough and effective system in place to ensure placement providers have quality and diversity policies in relation to students.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, and from discussions at the approval visit, the visitors noted that the education provider has several processes (some formal and some informal) intended to ensure the quality of practice placements. However, the visitors were unclear of the overall placement monitoring system in place, or how the education provider gathers and uses appropriate information to make informed decisions about whether placement providers have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored. To use an example specific to monitoring, it seemed that placements are asked to provide certain information on a regular basis, but it was not clear how the education provider uses this information to make informed judgements about whether placements remain suitable. Therefore, the visitors require evidence that demonstrates that there is a complete thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements associated with this programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there will be a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to support students on placement.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, the visitors noted that there were no formal agreements to increase placement capacity for the speech and language therapy provision at the education provider. At the visit, the senior team asserted that they did not expect there to be any problems with sourcing the placement educators for increased student numbers, but were unable to provide assurances that formal agreements would be put in place to ensure that all students would be placed with appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The placement providers and programme team also discussed that there is currently additional placement capacity in the region, that the programme has been timetabled considering the additional students that will need practice placements, and that there may be a movement to practice educators taking two students at once. However, these groups were also not able to provide formal information or assurances that all students would be placed with appropriately qualified and experienced staff. The visitors were also unclear about student numbers (as referenced in the condition for SET 3.1), and were therefore unclear how many placement staff would be required in total by the programme. The condition for SET 5.4 also links in here, as the visitors were unclear how placements were approved and monitored, and therefore how the education provider will ensure the right staff are in place at each placement. Although the programme start date is in September 2018, and some placements will not be required until the 2020-21 academic year, the visitors noted that the HCPC is unable to approve a programme unless the education provider is able to demonstrate that placements are appropriately supervised for all students. Therefore, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate that there will be a sufficient

number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the placement setting, when all speech and language programmes are running at full capacity.

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

Conditions: The education provider must demonstrate how they assure that practice placement educators are members of the professional body, should they wish to continue with this requirement.

Reason: From the documentation, the visitors noted that the education provider requires that all practice placement educators are members of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT). This is part of the criteria applied by the education provider to ensure that placement staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, rather than an HCPC requirement. At the visit, the programme team explained that placement educators sign a self-declaration that they are members of the RCSLT, but that the education provider does not audit this declaration. However, as the education provider has set this as a requirement of their practice educators, the visitors need to be clear how they ensure this requirement is met. The visitors therefore need to see further evidence that demonstrates how the education provider ensures that all practice educators are RCSLT registered, or that this requirement no longer applies.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training specific to this programme.

Reason: At the visit, the placement team and the programme team explained that in practice, all practice placement educators would undertake some form of practice placement educator training prior to taking students on placement. However, these groups also told the visitors that training is technically not mandatory for either new or existing practice placement educators. Although it is unlikely that a non-trained practice placement educator would be asked to supervise a student on placement, the visitors considered this possible with the existing arrangements. Therefore, the visitors require that appropriate practice placement educator training is made mandatory for all practice placement educators, and that the education provider demonstrates how they will ensure that this is the case.

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 demonstrate how the following standards of proficiency (SOPs) for speech and language therapists are assessed by the programme:

- **13.7** understand educational theory and practice and the relationship between language and literacy in relation to speech and language therapy
- **14.7** be able to administer, record, score and interpret a range of published and self-generated assessment tools to describe and analyse service users' abilities and needs using, where appropriate, phonetic transcription, linguistic analysis, instrumental analysis and psycholinguistic assessment

- **14.15** be able to use information and communication technologies appropriate to their practice

Reason: From the information provided, and linked to the condition for SET 4.1, the visitors were unclear how or students were assessed as having met the above SOPs. From reviewing the modules holistically, the visitors were able to determine where most of the SOPs were delivered and assessed. However, they were unclear where the above SOPs were delivered or assessed from undertaking this exercise, and the SOPs mapping document provided to assist the visitors in making this judgement only pointed to overall modules containing the SOPs rather than the detail of where in the modules at a learning outcome or assessment level. Specifically to these SOPs, the visitors were unclear about the assessment of literacy (SOP 13.7), instrumental analysis (SOP 14.7), and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) (SOP 14.15). Therefore, the visitors require further evidence that demonstrates how students will be assessed as having met these SOPs.

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

Condition: The education provider must revise the assessment of the first year module, 'understanding typical communication' (HS132-4-FY) so that the phonetics assessment cannot be failed and compensated for.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, the visitors noted that at present the summer exam (requiring a transcription of connected speech & analysis of a wide range of sentence structures from a real life case study) for the first year module, 'understanding typical communication' (HS132-4-FY) can be failed and compensated for by coursework, as long as an average 40 per cent mark is achieved. Due to the set-up of this module and the learning outcomes tested in this assessment, the visitors considered the exam as a core part of the programme, and that therefore it must be passed and not compensated for to ensure students are fit to practice. Therefore, the education provider must revise the assessment for this module, so the visitors can be assured that this standard is met.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should recruit to job roles requiring research activity relevant to speech and language therapy, as planned.

Reason: The visitors considered that the current staff team had sufficient access to professional development activities, and that therefore this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that there is currently a lack of research focus in the job roles for the staff team. At the visit, the visitors were told that the programme would be recruiting to job roles requiring research activity relevant to speech and language therapy. Therefore, to ensure balance between professional and research development in the staff team, the visitors recommend that the education provider commits to this approach and recruits staff to this profile.

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The education provider should back up popular speech and language therapist assessments in the library to ensure optimal access for students.

Reason: From the documentation provided, and discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that access to relevant speech and language therapist assessments could be an issue for students. This could be impacted further due to the increase in student numbers, noted through several of the conditions under SET 3. The visitors also note that they have set a condition for this standard. In addition to changes made in relation to the condition, the visitors recommend that the education provider should back up popular speech and language therapy assessments in the library, so students have another option to access these resources. The visitors note that, as some of these assessments should not be used by students in practice, they should reside in the reserve collection of the library.

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 21 September 2017 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).