

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Sussex
Name of programme(s)	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Step Up), FTA (Full time accelerated)
Approval visit date	15 November 2017
Case reference	CAS-12068-V8Z7G8

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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:

Lynda Kelly	Social worker in England
Gary Dicken	Social worker in England
Frances Ashworth	Lay
Jasmine Oduro-Bonsrah	HCPC executive
Jamie Hunt	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.

Bugewa Apampa	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Sussex
Claire Brennan	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Sussex
Robin Banerjee	Internal validation panel member	University of Sussex

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Step Up)
Mode of study	FTA (Full time accelerated)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 April 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 13
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01764

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

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	Reason(s) for non-submission
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	This is a new programme

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

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	The visitors met with learners from the HCPC approved BA (Hons) social work and MA in social work programmes, and also graduates from these

		programmes as the programme seeking approval is new.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers and educators	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

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

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 18 January 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 demonstrate how they inform applicants about the costs associated with the Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) checks.

Reason: At the visit, the programme team informed the visitors that applicants would need to pay for the DBS checks once they are accepted onto the programme. However, from a review of the programme documentation, the visitors did not see any information regarding the DBS checks costs associated with the programme, or how the education provider communicates these costs to applicants. Therefore, the education provider must revise the documentation to ensure that the materials available to potential applicants provide them with the information they require; in particular, the information about the DBS costs associated with this programme, in order for them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a programme.

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 there is an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of private, voluntary and / or independent (PVI) practice-based learning for all learners.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and from discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that learners will be undertaking their 100-day practice-based learning in a statutory setting with Brighton and Hove Council and / or East Sussex County Council. In the practice education provider meeting, the visitors learnt that all learners will undertake their 70-day PVI practice-based learning with Change, Grow and Live (CGL), which is a charity. At the visit, there was no representative from CGL, and therefore the visitors were not able to discuss capacity and availability of practice-based learning with CGL directly. Furthermore, the visitors received no evidence to demonstrate that the education provider and CGL had formally committed to providing the amount and range practice-based learning required to support learning. Therefore, the visitors could not determine how the education provider ensures the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for learners on this programme in the PVI sector. The education provider must therefore provide evidence to demonstrate that there is an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of PVI practice-based learning for all learners.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that service users and carers involved in the programme are appropriately prepared and supported to undertake their roles.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to the Course Handbook, which sets out the Service Users and Carers Advisory Group. At the visit, the visitors learnt from different groups including the learners, programme team and service user and carer group what service user and carer involvement included. Specifically, they were involved in admissions, will share their experiences in taught sessions, and will be involved in the assessment of learners. However, the visitors noted that there is no process to ensure that the group are prepared and supported to be involved in the programme. Service users and carers told the visitors that they did not undertake specific preparation or training prior to their involvement, and that there is no guidance about what is expected of them. The group members noted that they felt particularly unprepared for involvement in the assessment of learners.

Furthermore, the service users and carers noted inconsistencies in how they were debriefed and supported following their involvement. For example, group members noted that they were only debriefed after taught sessions depending on who the lecturer was. Group members were therefore unsure whether they were fulfilling their roles, and at times did not feel supported straight after sharing personal experiences. The programme team echoed that, although they individually provide feedback and debriefs after sessions for service users, there is currently no formal process in place to ensure that it happens.

Therefore, the visitors were unsure:

- how the education provider ensures that the all service users and carers will be fully prepared and supported for their role, to enable them to be effectively involved in the programme; and
- whether there was sufficient support for service users and carers once they had shared their experiences in taught sessions.

The education provider must therefore provide evidence which demonstrates how service users and carers will be prepared and supported to be involved in the programme to undertake their roles effectively.

4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the programme will ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions, and must define why these other professions are relevant to social work.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the education provider stated that learners will undertake a “Practice Development Workshop in group work skills...formed into Problem-based learning groups within which they must work together to produce a group presentation, which is assessed”, as part of the Human Development in the Social World module. At the visit, the programme team explained that students will undertake this module with student teachers and nurses. Although the visitors note that the social work learners on this programme will be working alongside other professions, they could not determine whether producing a group presentation together will enable social work learners to learn with and from these groups. The education provider did not also define why having taught sessions with these other professions are appropriate to the programme.

Additionally, the visitors were also informed that learners will be able to learn with and from other professionals and learners whilst out in their various practice-based learning environments. From the discussions, opportunities to be able to learn from and with other professionals and learners from other relevant professions is dependent on where learners are placed and the programme itself would not guarantee learning from and with others. By learning with and from others whilst on their practice-based learning may happen on an ad hoc basis rather than a planned part of the programme.

The education provider must therefore provide evidence, which demonstrates how the programme will ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions and must also define why these other professions are appropriate to the programme.

5.1 Practice-based learning must be integral to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that they have formal agreements with practice education providers in the private, voluntary and / or independent sector.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to the Course Specification and Practice Learning Handbook, and at the visit were shown formal agreements between the education provider and the statutory setting practice education providers. In the practice education provider meeting, the visitors were informed that all

learners will undertake their private, voluntary and independent (PVI) practice-based learning with Change, Grow and Live (CGL), which is a charity. From these discussions, the visitors learnt that all learners will undertake their 70 day practice-based learning with CGL, and that the education provider has had conversations with CGL to ensure that there are appropriate practice-based learning opportunities for all learners. However, the visitors received no evidence of formal arrangements in place to secure practice-based learning in the PVI sector for all learners. As there were no formal arrangements in place, the visitors could not determine whether the learning opportunities provided by CGL will be appropriate to enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes. The visitors noted that without seeing the formal agreements in place, they are unable to make a judgement about whether practice-based learning is integral to the programme for all learners. The education provider must therefore provide evidence of the formal arrangements in place to secure practice based learning in the PVI sector for all learners.

5.2 The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that the range of practice-based learning available to learners supports the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were directed to the learning outcomes. In the practice education provider meeting, the visitors were informed that learners will experience a range of practice-based learning with the first in the Private, voluntary and / or independent (PVI) sector and their second practice based learning in a statutory setting placement. At the visit, the visitors learnt that the PVI practice-based learning will take place with Change, Grow and Live (CGL), which is a charity. However, from the evidence provided the visitors were unsure what range of practice-based learning opportunities (CGL) provided. The visitors could therefore not determine whether all learners will have access to a range of appropriate practice-based learning opportunities within CGL itself to support the achievement of the learning outcomes. In addition, there are currently no formal arrangements, which highlight what practice-based learning opportunities all learners will have in place between CGL and the education provider. The visitors could therefore not determine whether there is a range of practice-based learning opportunities available to each learner to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency. The visitors therefore require further evidence, which demonstrates that there is a range of practice-based learning opportunities available to all learners, and that this range of practice-based learning is appropriate to support learners to achieve the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

5.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

Reason: For this standard the visitors were directed to the practice learning handbook and at the visit were shown a 'Written agreement between the University of Sussex and Social work Placement Providers for students on the BA Social Work and MA Social work Courses'. This agreement sets out arrangements and expectation of the PVI

agencies. Along with the practice learning handbook, this agreement sets out the roles and responsibilities of Practice supervisors and Practice educators. However, as mentioned in the condition for SET 5.1, there are no formal agreements in place to secure PVI practice-based learning for this programme. The visitors could therefore not determine if there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning. The education provider must therefore ensure that there are formal agreements in place with practice education providers in the PVI sector, which ensure that they will have an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff in place.

6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there will be at least one external examiner for the programme, who is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were referred to the University of Sussex's External Examiners policy. The visitors noted that as part of the appointment criteria external examiners must "have expertise and experience in the academic area... and will have knowledge of Professional Statutory (PSB) requirements where relevant". The statement in the External Examiner's policy does not define whether the external examiners would have to be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register and, if not, that there is an appropriate reason why. The visitors were also given a document at the visit, which stated that external examiners must have a "social work qualification and be registered with the HCPC". Following the review of the document, the visitors could not determine how this narrative forms part of the formal University policy and how the programme team will use the document. As such, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate that there will be at least one external examiner for the programme, who is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

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 is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met, and that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 22 February 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](#).