

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of York
Name of programme(s)	Masters in Social Work (Hons), Full time MA in Social Work, Full time Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only), Full time
Approval visit date	30 May 2018
Case reference	CAS-12091-Z7F0F6

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	7

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:

Sheila Skelton	Social worker
Susan Bell	Social worker
Joanne Watchman	Lay
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.

Tracy Lightfoot	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of York
Hayley Rowan	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of York

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Masters in Social Work (Hons)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
Proposed first intake	01 September 2018
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01774

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.

Programme name	MA in Social Work
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 July 2004
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01947

Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Social worker in England
First intake	01 July 2004
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP01948

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 HCPC considered that the ability of these two programmes to meet the standards might be affected by the introduction of the new programme, so we decided to consider their ongoing approval as part of the visit.

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	Yes

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

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	We met with learners from the existing HCPC-approved MA in Social Work, which is already running, and the BA (Hons) in Social Work, as the Masters in Social Work (Hons) has not yet started.
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 03 August 2018.

4.11 The education provider must identify and communicate to learners the parts of the programme where attendance is mandatory, and must have associated monitoring processes in place.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will communicate to learners the detail of attendance policies, and the action to be taken if learners miss compulsory parts of the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence supplied for this standard, including policy statements, information supplied to learners, and a monitoring sample. They discussed attendance monitoring with the programme team and learners. However, from their review and these discussions, it was not clear how all learners would be enabled to understand the full consequences of missing compulsory parts of the programme, and the action that will take in relation to absence. The visitors could also not see where it was clearly explained to learners that self-certification of illness absence would only be allowed for a limited period, which the programme team had confirmed was the policy. Specifically, the visitors considered that information provided for learners needed to be more explicit about the following:

- How learners are expected to catch up with teaching or learning activities, or assessments, missed due to absence;
- That self-certification of illness absence would only be allowed for a limited time and that after that time it would be necessary to provide a doctor's certificate.

They therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing how they will ensure that learners are provided with information about the consequences of missing compulsory parts of the programme.

5.3 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the process by which they ensure the quality of the 30-day placement on the Masters in Social Work (Hons) programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, and discussed audit processes with the programme team. They were satisfied that there were appropriate systems in place for approving and ensuring the quality of most of the practice-based learning on the programme. However, the visitors noted that learners on the Masters in Social Work (Hons) programme would undertake a 30-day placement, which learners would be responsible for finding for themselves and could be in a wide variety of settings. It was not clear to them how the education provider would ensure the quality of this practice-based learning, if for example a particular setting had not previously been used by learners from the University of York or was otherwise not within the scope of the general audit system. In the programme team meeting the visitors were told that all 30-day placements had to be quality assured, but in the practice educator meeting the visitors heard that there was uncertainty about whether new practice based learning settings would be quality assured. As such, the visitors were unable to determine that all practice based settings, would be approved and quality assured and consequently that the education provider maintains a thorough and effective system to do so. They therefore require the education provider to clarify how

they will ensure that there is a thorough and effective system in place for ensuring the quality of all of the 30-day placements learners will undertake.

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.

2.7 The education provider must ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing how they ensure that service users and carers involved in admissions are appropriately trained in equality and diversity policies.

Reason: The visitors considered that the standard was met at threshold, as there were equality and diversity policies in place in relation to applicants, and that they were implemented and monitored. The programme team had a clear understanding of their responsibilities in this area. From discussions with service users and carers, the visitors were aware that some service users and carers were involved with admissions. When the visitors asked the service users and carers how they were prepared for involvement in admissions, they were aware of the equality and diversity policies. However, the visitors were not clear that all service users and carers were aware of how they might need to let those policies influence their behaviour and decision-making in the admissions process. This might create a risk in future that equality and diversity policies in admissions are not implemented. They therefore suggest that the education provider keep under review how they prepare service users and carers for involvement in admissions.

3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

Recommendation: For the Masters in Social Work (Hons), the education provider should keep under review contingency plans for accommodating changes if the Practice Education Consultant posts are no longer funded, once the Teaching Partnership Initiative funding ends.

Reason: The visitors considered that the standard was met at threshold, as the programme was well supported by management at the University of York and the wider Department of Social Policy and Social Work. There were no threats to the viability of the programme. There were agreements in place with local authority partners. However, visitors were aware that the Practice Educator Consultant posts were funded by the Teaching Partnership initiative and had a significant role in the programme. If these posts were not funded after the Teaching Partnership funding ends, consideration would need to be given as to how the roles and tasks of these posts would be covered to ensure that the programme was fit for purpose. The visitors therefore suggest that the education provider maintain a contingency plan for this situation.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider a formal development programme for service users and carers.

Reason: The visitors considered that the standard was met at threshold, as there was an active body of service users closely involved in different parts of the programme, who were well supported by the programme team. The education provider had considered and was able to justify the different types of involvement by different service users and carers. The visitors did note, however, that the service users and carers said that they would appreciate more formalised training and development opportunities. This would provide opportunities for them to become more familiar with appropriate guidelines and policies (see the Recommendation under SET 2.7 above), where this was judged necessary. The visitors therefore suggest that the education provider review the development and training structure available for service users and carers.

4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.

Recommendation: For the Masters in Social Work (Hons), the education provider should keep under review how they ensure that all learners have a full understanding of appropriate consent throughout the programme.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that the standard was met at threshold, as there were clear processes in place by which learners, and service users and carers, could give their consent. They saw examples of forms and policies. Most of the learners appeared to have a clear understanding of consent. However, the visitors did note that the learners appeared to have only one opportunity to give written consent to involvement in role play exercises, at the start of the programme. In a discussion of consent one of the learners appeared to think that it would not be possible to continue on the programme if he withdrew ongoing consent. As the programme lasts for four years, the visitors considered that there was a risk that if learners only had one formal opportunity to give consent, they would not be enabled to understand the ongoing nature of consent, and might feel pressured to take part in particular activities when they feel uncomfortable. They therefore suggest that the education provider review whether learners should be given more regular opportunities to renew and reflect upon their written consent.

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 23 August 2018 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).