

Criteria for education providers and registrants

Approval criteria for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC) approval criteria for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes.

The HCPC has powers to approve and monitor programmes for AMHPs in England and to do so we have produced criteria that set out our expectations of education providers and individuals completing these programmes.

The criteria for approving AMHP programmes are designed to equip individuals with the threshold skills necessary to engage in safe and effective AMHP practice. They set out the processes and procedures that education providers delivering AMHP training must have in place, and the knowledge, understanding and skills that an individual must have when they complete their AMHP training.

The criteria were drafted in accordance with Schedule 2 to the Mental Health (AMHP) (Approval) (England) Regulations 2008, which sets out the competencies of an AMHP required by law.

They were developed with the input of key stakeholders, including education providers, individual professionals, employers and service users. We also publically consulted on the criteria and are grateful to those who replied to the consultation.

I am confident that the criteria will play a key role in supporting safe and effective AMHP education and practice.

The criteria are effective from 1 September 2013.



Anna van der Gaag
Chair

Introduction

This document sets out the approval criteria we have developed for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes.

The purpose of these criteria is to set out the level of training necessary to provide safe and effective AMHP practice. They are the threshold criteria we consider necessary to protect members of the public. To do so they:

- set out the processes and procedures that an education provider delivering AMHP training must have in place in order to deliver training safely and effectively; and
- set out the knowledge, understanding and skills that an individual must have when they complete their AMHP training.

About AMHP practice

AMHPs exercise functions under the Mental Health Act 1983. Those functions relate to decisions made about individuals with mental disorders, including the decision to apply for compulsory admission to hospital.

Social workers, mental health and learning disabilities nurses, occupational therapists and practitioner psychologists, registered with their respective regulator, may train to become AMHPs.

Successful completion of an approved programme only makes an individual eligible to be approved to act as an AMHP. Only those who have completed approved training and have been approved to act as an AMHP by a Local Social Services Authority in England may perform the functions of an AMHP.

Our expectations of education providers

We will approve and monitor AMHP education and training programmes against the criteria set out in this document. Our Education Department is responsible for conducting approval visits to AMHP education providers to ensure their programmes have the processes and procedures outlined in Section 1 in place, and are delivering the knowledge, understanding and skills

outlined in Section 2. If a programme meets the criteria we grant open-ended approval, subject to ongoing monitoring.

We have set threshold criteria which ensure the outcomes of education and training and do not dictate how education providers should meet the criteria. This is because there is normally more than one way in which the criteria can be met and the way in which they are met may change over time because of improvements in technology or changes to practice. However, we have produced a mapping document which maps the criteria in this document to our existing standards of education and training guidance. This provides more information as to how the criteria could be implemented in practice and is available on our website.

We also produce supplementary information documents for education providers when preparing for an approval visit, completing annual monitoring submissions, or making significant changes to programmes. These documents give more information about the processes we use to assess and monitor programmes and are also available on our website.

Our expectations of individual AMHPs

These criteria do not replace other standards that either we or the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) set and AMHPs will need to draw on these other standards to support their wider practice. We expect HCPC registrants to keep to our standards of proficiency, standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards for continuing professional development, all of which are available on our website. Nurses will be expected to keep to the standards that the NMC set, which are available on their website.

Given that the AMHP role applies to a number of professions who practice in different environments, we do not stipulate how individuals completing AMHP programmes must be able to demonstrate the competencies set out in Section 2 of the criteria after training.

As autonomous professionals, individuals completing approved AMHP programmes will need to make informed and reasoned decisions about their practice to ensure that they meet the criteria that apply to them. This includes seeking advice and support from education providers, employers, colleagues, professional bodies, unions and others to ensure that the wellbeing of service users is safeguarded at all times. If a professional ensures this, it is unlikely that they will not meet our criteria.

Language

We recognise that the use of terminology can be a sensitive issue, particularly around issues about mental health. We have decided that it is appropriate for us to use the language of mental health legislation and refer to 'mental disorder' in the criteria.

The criteria use phrases such as 'understand' and 'be able to apply'. This is so that they are applicable to those completing AMHP programmes that have not yet started practising as an AMHP.

Section 1: Education providers

This section sets out criteria around how an education provider must design and deliver an AMHP programme.

Programme admissions

- A.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.
- A.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and professional entry standards.
- A.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.
- A.4 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students¹, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Programme management and resources

- B.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.
- B.2 The programme must be effectively managed.
- B.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.
- B.4 There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of an appropriate professional register.
- B.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified, experienced and, where required, registered staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

¹ Throughout this document, 'students' means registered professionals completing AMHP programmes.

- B.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.
- B.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.
- B.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.
- B.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.
- B.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.
- B.11 There must be adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings.
- B.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.
- B.13 There must be a student complaints process in place.
- B.14 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.
- B.15 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Curriculum

- C.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the criteria in section 2.
- C.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in any relevant curriculum guidance.
- C.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum.
- C.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

- C.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics and / or the NMC's code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives on their practice as an AMHP.
- C.6 The delivery of the programme must support and develop autonomous and reflective thinking.
- C.7 The delivery of the programme must encourage evidence-based practice.
- C.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Practice placements

- D.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.
- D.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.
- D.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.
- D.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.
- D.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.
- D.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified, experienced and, where required, registered staff at the practice placement setting.
- D.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.
- D.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.
- D.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

- D.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.
- D.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:
- the learning outcomes to be achieved;
 - the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;
 - expectations of professional conduct;
 - the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and
 - communication and lines of responsibility.
- D.12 Learning, teaching and supervision must encourage safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.
- D.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.

Assessment

- E.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the competencies set out in section 2 of the criteria.
- E.2 All assessments must provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external-reference frameworks can be measured.
- E.3 Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both the education setting and practice placement setting.

- E.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.
- E.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure safe and effective practice as an AMHP.
- E.6 There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment.
- E.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.
- E.8 Assessment regulations must clearly specify that any requirements for an aegrotat award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP.
- E.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.
- E.10 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register.

Section 2: Approved mental health professionals

Education providers must make sure that professionals who complete their AMHP training can meet the criteria set out in this section. We have based these criteria on Schedule 2 to the Mental Health (Approved Mental Health Professionals) (Approval) (England) Regulations 2008.

Knowledge

- 1.1 Understand legislation, related codes of practice and national and local policy and guidance applicable to the role of an AMHP, and be able to apply this in practice.
- 1.2 Understand the legal position and accountability of AMHPs, employers and the authority the AMHP is acting for in relation to the Mental Health Act 1983.
- 1.3 Understand a range of models of mental disorder, and be able to apply them in practice.
- 1.4 Understand the contribution and impact of social, physical and development factors on mental health, and be able to apply this in practice.
- 1.5 Understand the social perspective on mental disorders and mental health needs in working with service users, their relatives, carers and other professionals, and be able to apply this in practice.
- 1.6 Understand the implications of mental disorders for service users, their relatives, carers and other professionals, and be able to apply this in practice.
- 1.7 Understand the implications of a range of treatments and interventions for service users, their relatives and carers, and be able to apply this in practice.
- 1.8 Understand child and adult protection procedures in relation to AMHP practice.
- 1.9 Understand the needs of children and young people and their families and the impact those needs have on AMHP practice.

Autonomous practice

- 2.1 Be able to exercise appropriate use of independence, authority and autonomy in the AMHP role.
- 2.2 Be able to recognise, assess and manage effectively the risks related to the AMHP role.
- 2.3 Be able to manage anxiety, risk and conflict and understand its impact on AMHP practice.

Informed decision making

- 3.1 Be able to evaluate critically local and national policy to inform AMHP practice.
- 3.2 Be able to draw on, and evaluate critically, a range of research relevant to evidence-based AMHP practice.
- 3.3 Be able to gather, analyse and share information appropriately.

Equality and diversity

- 4.1 Be able to demonstrate sensitivity to factors such as race, gender, age, sexuality, disability, culture, religion and belief in AMHP practice.
- 4.2 Be able to identify, challenge and redress discrimination and inequality in AMHP practice.
- 4.3 Understand and respect service users' qualities, abilities and diverse backgrounds.
- 4.4 Be able to promote the rights, dignity and self-determination of service users consistent with their own needs and wishes to enable them to contribute to the decisions made affecting their quality of life and liberty.
- 4.5 Be able to demonstrate sensitivity to a service user's needs for personal respect, confidentiality, choice, dignity and privacy.

Communication

- 5.1 Be able to communicate effectively with service users, relatives and carers when undertaking the AMHP role.
- 5.2 Be able to communicate advice, instruction, information and professional opinion, including providing verbal and written reports.
- 5.3 Be able to present a case at a legal hearing.
- 5.4 Be able to balance and manage the competing requirements of confidentiality and effective information sharing to the benefit of the service user and other persons concerned with the service user's care.

Collaborative working

- 6.1 Be able to work with service users, carers and others to evaluate the outcomes of interventions and identify any unmet needs.
- 6.2 Be able to build and sustain effective professional relationships with service users, relatives and carers when undertaking the AMHP role.
- 6.3 Be able to work as an AMHP in partnership with others, including inter-agency and inter-professional working.
- 6.4 Understand the roles and responsibilities of other professionals involved in statutory mental health work.
- 6.5 Be able to use networks and community groups to influence collaborative working with service users, agencies and advocates.

Assessment and intervention

- 7.1 Be able to make appropriate decisions that are sensitive to the needs of the service user.
- 7.2 Be able to assess the feasibility of, and contribute effectively to, planning and implementing options for care of the service user.
- 7.3 Be able to plan, negotiate and manage compulsory admission to hospital or arrangements for supervised community treatment.

- 7.4 Be able to manage and co-ordinate effectively the relevant legal and practical processes, including the involvement of other professionals, as well as service users, relatives and carers.
- 7.5 Be able to complete statutory documentation, including an application for admission, and written records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines.

Notes

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