hcpc health & care professions council

Your duties as an education provider

Standards of education and training

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Introduction

About the standards

This document sets out the standards of education and training (SETs). These are outcome-focused standards and are designed to ensure education providers deliver high-quality education and training. These are the standards against which we assess education and training programmes.

A programme which meets the SETs allows a learner who successfully completes that programme to meet the standards of proficiency for their profession. They are then eligible to apply to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for registration.

These standards are effective from 1 September 2027.

Our work with education providers

We assess education providers and programmes against the SETs. We consider new programmes through our approval process and monitor existing education providers and programmes through our performance review process. We also consider data and intelligence about education providers and programmes and where required consider issues through our focused review process. All our assessments are centred on the SETs, and whether education providers and programmes meet these through programme delivery.

Understanding professional body expectations helps us to set context, to understand what normal and best practice looks like, and to ask appropriate questions of education providers when making our judgements.

We will be producing detailed guidance on the SETs, which is intended to give more information about the meaning and intention of the standards and what our expectations will be when we assess education providers and programmes against them. This guidance will be on our website.

Our work with professional bodies

Professional bodies play an invaluable role within education quality assurance and enhancement. They often define profession-specific expectations within pre-registration education and training through curriculum guidance and education standards, and support education providers in developing new and existing high-quality programmes.

Many professional bodies accredit, endorse, or approve education programmes against their own criteria. Often professional bodies set expectations for areas like entry requirements to programmes, programme design and delivery (including curriculum guidance), resourcing arrangements including staff / learner ratios, and the duration and range of practice-based learning. These are determined according to their expert views and insight about education and training needs, which will often vary across different professions.

We work with professional bodies to share our understanding of current areas of interest, concerns, and initiatives being undertaken in relation to the education and training of the professions we regulate. We are also proactive and purposeful by engaging professional bodies through our assessments, to ensure we are working together and sharing information in a consistent and structured way. We formally consider intelligence provided by professional bodies as part of our activities and within our decision-making. This gives us a clearer picture of the quality of education provision and its alignment with our standards. Understanding intelligence is a key pillar of our quality assurance model, and the information provided by professional bodies is a key part the intelligence we consider.

Meeting the standards

The standards of education and training are underpinned by the following principles. Together, these principles form the foundation of the SETs and reflect our shared ambition to deliver education that is inclusive, innovative, and grounded in public protection.

Person-centred education

At the heart of the SETs is a commitment to safe, fair, and person-centred education. We expect education providers to foster inclusive and accessible learning environments where all individuals, regardless of background or identity, can thrive.

Evidence-based and action orientated

Education providers are expected to make thoughtful, purposeful decisions informed by data, research, and reflection. This includes considering ethical implications, seeking diverse perspectives, challenging assumptions, and remaining open to innovation, particularly in the integration of new tools, technologies, and educational approaches.

Collaborative

The SETs promote a collaborative approach to education. We expect education providers to work in partnership with learners, service users, educators, and other stakeholders to develop and co-produce programmes that reflect shared values and lived experiences.

Future-focused

Education must be up-to-date and future focused. Education providers should be adaptable, responsive to change, and committed to preparing learners for evolving professional practice.

Institution-level standards

1. Resourcing

1.1 Programmes are financially sustainable within the education provider and are fit for purpose with the support of all stakeholders involved.

2. Management

2.1 Programmes are clearly and effectively managed, with defined responsibilities for all aspects of programmes, including with strategic and operational partners.

2.2 Principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in strategies and policies in all settings, and these are meaningfully implemented, monitored, and reviewed to support good quality experiences and outcomes for all learners and others involved in programmes.

2.3 The quality, safety, and fairness of education and training provision is regularly monitored, evaluated, and enhanced across all settings.

2.4 There is a fair and effective process in place for appointing individuals with overall professional responsibility for programmes, ensuring they are suitably qualified and able to support safe and effective delivery of education and training.

3. Safety and wellbeing

3.1 All learning environments are safe, inclusive and supportive for learners, service users, and others involved in programmes.

3.2 The wellbeing and learning needs of all learners are effectively supported across all settings.

3.3 The wellbeing of staff and others involved in programmes is supported to enable effective contribution to the programme and the quality of learning.

3.4 The ongoing conduct, character and health of learners is considered, managed and, where required, addressed by the education provider, to maintain the safety of service users, carers, and others involved in the programme.

3.5 Learners are supported to identify and raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users.

4. Admissions

4.1 The admissions process is fair, transparent, and accessible, and enables the applicant, education provider, and others involved to make informed decisions about admissions to programmes.

4.2 Applicants' prior learning and experience is assessed to support fair admissions decisions across all entry routes.

4.3 There are fair, appropriate, and effective admissions requirements covering health, conduct, character, criminal conviction checks, and English language proficiency, to ensure learners can safely participate in programmes and meet professional standards.

5. Communication and information

5.1 Learners and practice educators have the practical and academic information they need to be appropriately prepared for practice-based learning.

5.2 The education provider effectively communicates the role of the HCPC to learners and ensures that learners, educators and others are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme may lead to eligibility for admission to the Register.

5.3 The education provider identifies, sets, and clearly communicates expectations for attendance, including which parts of programmes require mandatory attendance, and monitors attendance to ensure learners are fully engaged in essential learning activities.

5.4 Assessment requirements for progression and achievement across programmes are clearly set, communicated, and monitored.

5.5 Appropriate and ethical use of technology in learning, teaching, and assessment is identified, embedded, clearly communicated to learners and educators, and regularly reviewed to suport alignment with current practice.

5.6 Learners receive timely and meaningful feedback to empower and enable them to have an active role in their own development.

6. People and partnership

Programme staff

6.1 All educators undertake regular and effective learning and development which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs, and the delivery of learning outcomes.

6.2 There is effective external scrutiny of programmes including at least one appointed person who has the appropriate professional experience and qualifications relevant to the programme.

Learners and service users

6.3 Service users and carers are actively and meaningfully involved in the design, delivery, and evaluation of programmes contributing to their quality, effectiveness and relevance to health and care practice.

6.4 Appropriate consent is obtained from service users and carers, in ways that uphold their rights and reflect ethical practice.

6.5 Appropriate consent is obtained from learners, in ways that uphold their rights and maintain their safety in all settings.

6.6 Learners are actively and meaningfully involved in the design and evaluation of programmes, contributing to their quality, effectiveness, and continuous improvement.

6.7 The education provider receives and responds effectively to complaints, feedback, and learner requests for academic appeals.

Programme level standards

7. Programme establishment

7.1 The academic level of the programme is appropriate to support learners in achieving the standards of proficiency and delivering safe and effective practice, in keeping with the normally expected threshold entry routes stated in the Appendix.

7.2 The programme is informed by principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and relevant strategies and policies are effectively implemented, monitored and reviewed across the programme.

7.3 The resources to support learning in all settings are effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme and are accessible to all learners and educators.

7.4 There is sufficient availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners throughout the programme.

7.5 The selection and entry criteria are appropriate to the level and content of the programme and are fairly applied in admission decisions.

8. Programme design

Learning outcomes and assessment

8.1 The learning outcomes effectively integrate the requirements for professional practice as defined in our standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

8.2 Assessments ensure that those who successfully complete the programme demonstrate they can meet our standards of conduct, performance, and ethics and meet our standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

8.3 Learning and teaching methods are appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

8.4 The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning enables learners to develop the knowledge, skills and experience required to achieve the learning outcomes and to meet our standards for admission to the Register.

8.5 Assessment methods are appropriate and effective for measuring the learning outcomes.

8.6 Assessments are fair and provide an objective and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

Content and structure

8.7 Relevant external reference points are used to ensure the programme reflects the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base of current members of the profession.

8.8 The curriculum is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure it remains responsive to developments in professional practice and continues to prepare learners for safe and effective practice.

8.9 Practice-based learning and the integration of theory and current practice are central to the programme.

8.10 The programme design is informed by evidence and reflective practice, and supports adaptation and integration of appropriate methods and technologies.

9. Programme delivery

Partnerships

9.1 There are formal partnerships between the education provider and their delivery partners, that involve regular and effective collaboration and joint evaluation, which ensure the provider's responsibility for the programme.

9.2 There are sufficient qualified and experienced staff in all settings to safely and effectively deliver and support the programme in a way that enables learners to achieve the standards of proficiency and prepare for practice.

9.3 Learning is supported by educators with relevant qualifications, experience and specialist expertise, to enable learners to develop the knowledge,skills and behaviours required for safe and effective practice.

9.4 Educators are up to date in the use of current technologies and digital tools relevant to their profession and that are used in teaching, supervision and assessment.

Learning approaches

9.5 The programme includes learning with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions in keeping with the principles of multi-disciplinary team working and interprofessional practice.

Appendix

The normally expected threshold entry routes to the Register, as referenced in standard 7.1, are the following:

Bachelor's degree with honours for:

- biomedical scientists (with the Certificate of Competence awarded by the Institute of Biomedical Science, or equivalent);
- chiropodists / podiatrists;
- dietitians;
- occupational therapists;
- operating department practitioners;
- orthoptists;
- paramedics;
- physiotherapists;
- prosthetists / orthotists;
- radiographers; and
- speech and language therapists.

Foundation degree for:

- hearing aid dispensers.

Master's degree for:

- arts therapists;
- clinical scientists (with the Certificate of Attainment awarded by the Association of Clinical Scientists, or equivalent[1]);
- forensic psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in forensic psychology, or equivalent);

1: For more detail, read our **note on the threshold level of qualification for clinical scientists** as covered in standard 1.

- health psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in health psychology, or equivalent);
- occupational psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in occupational psychology, or equivalent); and
- sport and exercise psychologists (with the award of the British Psychological Society qualification in sport and exercise psychology, or equivalent).

Professional doctorate for:

- clinical psychologists.

Professional doctorate or equivalent for:

- counselling psychologists; and
- educational psychologists.

Glossary

You may not be familiar with some of the terms we use throughout the standards and guidance documents, so we have explained them below.

Academic appeal: A request by a learner for a review of a decision of an academic bdy about their progression, assessment or award. An academic appeal should not be confused with a complaint or concern.

Accessible: Designed or adapted to ensure that individuals, including those with disabilities or other needs, can fully participate in learning and assessment activities.

Applicant: Anyone applying to a programme you provide.

Appropriate: Suitable or fitting for a particular purpose, context or individual, especially in relation to professional judgement, behaviour, or educational provision.

Approval: The process that leads to decisions about whether a programme meets the requirements of our standards of education and training. Continuing approval depends on satisfactory monitoring.

Assessment: The process of evaluating a learner's knowledge, skills and professional behaviours to determine whether they meet the required standards for progression or qualification.

Carer: Anyone who looks after, or provides support to, a family member, partner or friend.

Care, treatment or other services: A general term to describe the different work that our registrants carry out.

Colleague: Other health and care professionals, learners and trainees, support workers, professional carers and others involved in providing care, treatment or other services to service users.

Complaint: The expression of a specific concern by a learner about the quality of the programme and learning opportunities or, more generally, about issues such as unequal treatment or bullying. A complaint should not be confused with an academic appeal.

Conduct: A health and care professional's behaviour.

Consent: Permission for a registrant to provide care, treatment or other services, given by a service user, or someone acting on their behalf, after receiving all the information they reasonably need to make that decision.

Curriculum: A structured plan to provide specific learning to support learners' knowledge, skills, behaviour and associated learning experiences. The learning plan is generally organised as a sequence of modules so that a learner receives specific education and training. The curriculum includes the syllabus, teaching guides, an assessment guide and necessary learning resources.

Discriminate: To unfairly treat a person or group of people differently from other people or groups of people. This includes treating others differently because of views about their lifestyle, culture or social or economic status, as well as their characteristics protected by law: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Education provider: The institution (for example, a college, university, company or private higher education provider) which maintains overall responsibility for delivering the programme. This includes responsibility for the quality and conferment of the award given. We hold the education provider responsible for meeting all of our SETs.

Educator: Someone involved in teaching, assessing or aiding learning on a programme. This term can include people who are permanently employed by the education provider and others who help to deliver the programme, such as sessional or visiting lecturers and practice educators.

Effective/effectively: Achieving the intended outcome in a competent, timely and professional manner, particularly in relation to teaching, learning, assessment or practice.

Equality and diversity laws: Legal frameworks that education providers and others involved in the programme must comply with to ensure fair treatment and reasonable adjustments for all applicants and learners, including those with disabilities.

Escalate: To pass on a concern about a service user's safety or wellbeing to someone who is better able to act on it, for example, a more senior colleague, a manager or a regulator.

Ethics: The values that guide a person's behaviour or judgement.

Experience: Having practical contact with and observation of facts or events, or having gained knowledge and skills through involvement in relevant activities over time.

Fair: Treating people equally, impartially and justly, without bias or discrimination, and in line with legal and ethical standards.

Fit to practise: When someone has the skills, knowledge, character and health to practice safely and effectively.

Focused review: Our assessment process which enables timely engagement with education providers based on the information or intelligence we receive or discover.

Governance: The policies, processes and monitoring arrangements that make sure that a programme is well run.

Impartial: Not influenced by personal feelings or interests; showing fairness and objectivity in decision-making and interactions.

Leadership: Providing a strategy, vision or direction for the education provider, programme, or other partner organisation.

Learner: Anyone studying or training on a programme which leads to them being eligible to join our Register. The term includes students, trainees, apprentices and practitioners in training or work-based learning.

Learning outcomes: Statements that describe what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do after completing a learning activity or programme.

Management: Overseeing the day-to-day delivery of a programme, including setting roles and responsibilities and the allocation of resources.

Monitoring: The ongoing processes by which the HCPC ensures that approved programmes continue to meet the required standards. This includes focused review and performance review.

Needs: Requirements or conditions necessary for a learner to succeed, which may include academic support, reasonable adjustments, or wellbeing considerations.

Non-discriminatory: Acting in a way that does not treat individuals or groups unfairly based on protected characteristics.

Objective: Based on facts and evidence rather than personal feelings or

opinions; used in assessment, decision-making and evaluation processes.

Performance review: Our periodic engagement with education providers to understand performance and risk linked to our standards.

Practice education provider: The organisation that provides practice-based learning for a programme. In many cases this is a separate organisation from the education provider. This includes, for example, health and care providers, local authorities, schools, community organisations and charities across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Practice educator: A person who is responsible for a learner's education during their practice-based learning and has received appropriate training and support for this role.

Practice-based learning: The clinical or practical experience that forms an essential part of an approved programme. It may take place in separate periods of time or throughout a programme.

Practitioner: A health and care professional who is currently practising in their profession.

Practice placement: A structured period of practice-based learning within a health or care setting, designed to help learners apply theoretical knowledge in real-world environments.

Programme: The academic teaching, practice-based learning, assessment, qualification and other services provided by the education provider, which together form the programme for approval and monitoring purposes.

Programme sustainability: The ability of a programme to continue operating effectively over time, including having sufficient resources, staffing and strategic planning.

Reasonable adjustments: Changes or accommodations made by an organisation involved in education and training to support learners with disabilities or health conditions, ensuring equal access to learning and assessment.

Recognition of prior learning: Assessment of an applicant's previous learning from experience or formal learning (or both). This can lead to credit transfer or other transition arrangements into a programme, where appropriate.

Refer: To ask someone else to provide care, treatment or other services

which are beyond a registrant's scope of practice or, where relevant, because the service user has asked for a second opinion.

Register: The list (or any part of it) that we keep of the professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

Registrant: A person who is currently on our Register.

Regular: Occurring at consistent intervals or in a routine manner, such as scheduled reviews, meetings or monitoring activities.

Relevant: Closely connected or appropriate to the matter at hand, particularly in relation to curriculum content, assessment criteria or professional practice.

Reliable: Consistently good in quality or performance; able to be trusted to deliver accurate and dependable outcomes.

Safe: Minimising risk and harm to learners, service users and others, and ensuring that environments and practices support wellbeing and professional standards.

Scope of practice: The areas in which a registrant has the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to practise safely and effectively.

Staff: Anyone involved in delivering the programme. The term applies to all roles including educators, management, administrative and support staff, as well as people in both paid and unpaid positions. In practice-based learning, this term may also refer to others working in the practice-based learning setting who interact with learners.

Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs): Standards that apply to everyone on our Register and people who are applying for registration. They set out our expectations regarding a professional's behaviour, and cover their ethics, decision-making, communication and interaction with service users, carers, colleagues and others.

Standards of proficiency (SOPs): Standards which set out the knowledge, skills and understanding that are necessary to practise a profession safely and effectively. Professionals must meet these standards when they complete an approved programme before they can be registered.

Suitability assessment: A process to determine whether an applicant has

the appropriate character, health and conduct to train and practice safely and effectively.

Suitable: Meeting the necessary criteria or conditions for a particular role, activity or context, especially in relation to admissions, placements or professional practice.

Supportive: Providing encouragement, assistance or resources to help learners succeed and maintain wellbeing throughout their education and training.

Thorough: Complete and detailed in approach, ensuring that all aspects of a task, process or decision are considered and addressed.

Threshold level: The minimum standard of education and training required for safe and effective practice, as defined by the HCPC for each profession.

Valid: Logically sound and legally or professionally acceptable; in assessment, refers to accurately measuring what it is intended to measure.

Wellbeing: A person's overall physical, mental and emotional health, which affects their ability to engage with and succeed in their education and training.

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