

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Queen Margaret University
Name of programme(s)	BSc Paramedic Science, Full time
Approval visit date	13-14 May 2020
Case reference	CAS-14918-H0L7T2

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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:

John Donaghy	Paramedic
Matthew Catterall	Paramedic
Temilolu Odunaike	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit

There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Richard Bent	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University
Alison Basford-Thomson	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc Paramedic Science
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed First intake	01 September 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 70
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02141

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual 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 ask for 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.

Type of evidence	Submitted	Comments
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes	
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes	
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes	
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes	
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes	
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes	
Internal quality monitoring documentation	Not Required	Only requested if the programme (or a previous version) is currently running

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	No	As this was a virtual visit and, given the current situation around the Covid-19 pandemic, we decided that it was unnecessary to meet with this group
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	No	As above
Facilities and resources	No	As above
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	
Programme team	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 virtual 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 30 June 2020.

3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have adequate effective paramedic-specific equipment, and other resources, appropriate to the delivery of the programme and the number of learners.

Reason: Through their documentary review and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors heard that learners would benefit from an “extensive range of facilities to enhance learning and teaching.” The visitors saw within the programme documentation, that clinical simulation suites with manikins and other laboratory facilities are currently used by nursing, physiotherapy, podiatry and radiography learners. The visitors understood that the paramedic learners and educators would have access to these resources. However, the visitors saw no evidence of the paramedic profession-specific equipment which they would expect to be used to deliver learning on this programme in the academic setting. In discussions with the programme

team, the visitors heard that paramedic equipment would be sourced from the ambulance service when required and that they would be able to order their own equipment through the education provider's procurement process. The visitors considered that they would need to see evidence of these profession-specific resources before they can determine their effectiveness and appropriateness to the delivery of the programme.

The visitors also noted that paramedic learners would be utilising learning and teaching spaces with learners from nursing and other Allied Health Professions (AHP) programmes. The visitors were unclear how the paramedic learners would have access to such physical space resources as this was not fully addressed in the supplied documentation or through visit discussions. The visitors therefore require further details regarding what profession-specific equipment the education provider intends to purchase before the start of the programme. The visitors also require information, such as a draft plan, that shows when and where paramedic learners would be using the available spaces. This way the visitors would be able to determine whether the resources needed to support learning and teaching are effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme and the number of 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 is required to provide clarity about the range, duration and structure of practice-based learning, to demonstrate that it supports the achievement of the learning outcomes and standards of proficiency (SOPs).

Reason: From reviewing the documentation, the visitors were unable to see information regarding the structure, duration and range of placements for this programme. The visitors noted that the programme documentation showed the placement pattern experienced by a learner per year as:

- 10 weeks of placement within the Scottish Ambulance Service;
- 5-8 weeks of placement within Health and Social care settings; and
- Up to 15 days within the third sector, voluntary or charitable organisations.

However, the visitors noted that insufficient detail about what the learners are expected to learn in practice was lacking within the programme documentation.

In discussions with the senior team and the practice education providers, the visitors understood that the education provider intends to ensure that there are practice-based learning opportunities in a variety of settings. However, the senior team acknowledged that due to late funding for the programme, there have been slight delays which meant that details of the practice-based learning design were yet to be finalised. As such, the visitors were unable to determine when, where and for how long, the practice-based learning opportunities would take place, or how their approach will support the achievement of the learning outcomes and SOPs. As such, the visitors require further evidence of the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning for learners on this programme, and how it is appropriate to support the achievement of the learning outcomes and SOPs for paramedics.

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 demonstrate that there is an effective system in place for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.

Reason: From their review of the documentation, the visitors were unable to determine the system used to approve and ensure the quality of practice-based learning for this programme. In discussions with the practice education providers and practice educators, the visitors heard that there is an established audit process which looks at the practice-based learning environment and learners' feedback to ensure the quality of practice-based learning. The visitors noted that the representatives from practice education providers were from Scottish NHS Ambulance. However, the visitors could not see within the documentation, evidence of the clear, thorough and effective system used by the education provider which demonstrates how the quality assurance systems mentioned are applied consistently to all practice-based learning environments. For instance, the visitors were unable to see how both Scottish NHS Ambulance and non-ambulance practice-based learning are approved, and quality assured in a thorough and effective manner. As such, the visitors require further clarity around the system used to approve and ensure the quality of all practice-based learning and how the education provider ensures it is thorough and effective, to determine whether 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.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should keep under review their staff planning to ensure that there continues to be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard was met at threshold level; the staff currently in place for the programme are sufficient for all the necessary curriculum areas and to meet the teaching responsibilities of the programme for all 56 learners in their first year. Although the programme team informed the visitors that an additional 0.5 FTE paramedic lecturing post will be appointed in 2021, the visitors considered that there could be a risk to the effective future delivery of the programme should the recruitment plans fail whilst the learner numbers double in year 2. As such, they considered that there was a risk that the standard may no longer be met at that time. They therefore suggest that, the education provider review staffing requirements ahead of when additional learners come onto the programme in year 2 to ensure that their staff numbers continue to be appropriate to the requirements of the programme.

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 20 August 2020 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).