

Approval process report

University of Exeter, Diagnostic Radiography, 2022-23

Executive summary

This report covers our review of the MScI Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography) programme at the University of Exeter. Through our review, we did not set any conditions on approving the programme, as the education provider demonstrated it met our standards through documentary evidence. This report will now be considered by our Education and Training Panel who will make a final decision on programme approval.

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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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.

This is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme(s) ongoing approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which 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.

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent, and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

The approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme(s)
- Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme

Through the approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

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 design quality assurance assessments and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the 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 takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support this review:

Rachel Picton	Lead visitor, Radiographer
Mark Widdowfield	Lead visitor, Radiographer
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers seven HCPC-approved programmes across three professions. It is a higher education institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2005.

The education provider is a well-established higher education institution with six academic colleges. The Diagnostic Radiography programmes are based in the College of Medicine and Health, alongside The Institute of Biomedical and Clinical Science and Nursing subjects. The Psychology programmes are based in the College of Life and Environmental Sciences.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Practitioner psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2005
	Radiographer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2020
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2021

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution and does not include the proposed programme(s).

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	100	194	2019-20	This indicates the learner numbers have increased above what the programmes were originally approved for. Visitors identified no issues within the submission which needed to be considered further.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	3%	2021	This percentage meets the benchmark and there are no concerns in this area.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	94%	2021	The percentage in employment / further study is higher than the benchmark, which indicates graduates make good progress with securing employment opportunities and progressing to further study.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Gold	2017	A Gold award would indicate the institution is doing well.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	76.9%	67.1%	2021	This score indicates that the percentage of learners who are satisfied with their learning at this institution is lower than the benchmark. The difference is around 10%, which is significant, but this should not be considered for the proposed programme alone. We will consider this data point through this process and refer to the next focused review or performance review process where required.
HCPC performance review cycle length	N/A	N/A	N/A	We have not yet run this process with the provider and a cycle length will be determined through their first engagement.

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

The proposed programme is a master's level top up to the three-year undergraduate degree and is being offered to learners on the previously approved BSc (Hons) Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography) programme at the end of year 2. Entry on to the proposed programme is via transfer only from the BSc (Hons) Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography) programme and learners are required to pass all year one and two modules to be eligible.

Year 3 modules are currently being delivered to learners. For the proposed programme there will be four new compulsory modules in addition to the existing optional modules available to learners.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programme(s), the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants** - The education provider's admissions policies and procedures apply to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes and have highlighted the different admissions processes that apply to specific programmes. These provide clear information for applicants to make an informed choice. For example, the Independent and Supplementary Prescribing applicants must complete an online application at least a month before the programme is due to commence. Applicants interested in the Medical Imaging and Diagnostic Degree Apprenticeship programmes must meet the requirements of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. Based on the information provided, the proposed programme aligns with the institution wide policies and procedures.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** - The education provider's English language requirement policy is available online and lists the different qualifications and tests that applicants need to pass to apply to a programme. This information is accessible to all applicants on the education provider's website.

All applicants are required to complete criminal conviction checks via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and health checks, for existing HCPC approved programmes. These processes and requirements will apply to applicants for the proposed programme, which aligns with institution wide policies and procedures.

- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** – The education provider has policies in place to assess applicants' prior learning and experience and these are available in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual (TQA). The policies apply to the Diagnostic Radiography programmes and are applied on a case-by-case basis after a discussion between the Admissions Tutor and the applicant. This is an institutional policy for APEL and will apply to applicants on the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – The education provider notes they are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and have outlined their strategic objectives in the EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Vision document, which is accessible on their website to all applicants. These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹** – The education provider is a higher education institution, which is aligned to requirements set by the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency. This enables the provider to deliver higher education qualifications including those required within SET 1. In addition, all existing and developing programmes are reviewed by the College Scrutiny and Steering Groups and the proposed programme has been subject to this review to ensure threshold levels are met. These policies apply to the proposed provision.
- **Sustainability of provision** – All proposals to expand provision go through the education provider’s approval process where sustainability of the provision is considered. The business planning process includes a budget allocation for additional staff to support the design and delivery of programmes. Annual module reviews, periodic reviews, staff and student evaluations and external examiner reports are also used as mechanisms to ensure programmes are up to date and sustainable. The proposed programme would be subject to these institution wide reviews to ensure sustainability.
- **Effective programme delivery** – Through relevant policies and procedures, the education provider ensures they recruit appropriately qualified and experienced individuals from a range of expertise with strong research backgrounds. This is in line with the College Management of Education Code of Good Practice, as stipulated in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. This aligns with institution wide policies and procedures and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Effective staff management and development** – There are staff management and development processes in place, which are outlined in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual and all teaching staff are required to have a nationally recognised teaching qualification or be working towards one. The education provider has policies and procedures for professional development and annual appraisal that all academic staff are required to engage with and supports professional development and offers a variety of support (mentors, faculty development fund, peer reviews and regular staff development reviews). These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** – The education provider’s Academic Partnerships Strategy and Governance policy highlights their continued plan to establish formal relationships with other institutions. The provider noted they are committed to strengthening their partnerships with formal and legal agreements, which they review after five years. The Medical School has formal relationships with NHS Trusts and partners, and within the private and independent sector. This policy, and the partnerships already established, will apply to the proposed programme.

¹ This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality** – The policies and procedures for quality, monitoring and evaluation are outlined in the education provider's Teaching Quality and Assurance Manual and the Quality Review and Enhancement Framework. These policies and procedures apply to all programmes.

External Examiners are involved with all programmes and are a key part of the quality assurance process and provide input into all aspects of assessment. There is a requirement on some of the clinical programmes for the external examiners to be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and have relevant qualifications and experience. This ensures the education provider has appropriately qualified and experienced individuals monitoring and evaluating the teaching, placements, and assessments on the programmes. This will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** – All practice-based learning sites are audited annually, and additional guidance and support is provided where needed. All learners are expected to adhere to the education provider's health and safety policies and procedures alongside the policies and procedures of the placement or workplace. There is also a Raising Concerns Policy which enables learners, staff, and stakeholders to raise concerns for further investigation through formal and informal procedures.

The education provider noted they are committed to ensuring sufficient support is in place for learners on the programme in relation to their placements and ensure the practice learning environments are safe to practice in. These policies, procedures and support will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Learner involvement** – There are several forums where learner involvement is encouraged, including Student Staff Liaison Committee meetings, Teaching Excellence Monitoring Meetings, and Quality Review processes (via action plans, thematic reports, meetings, etc)

Feedback is also gathered in all modules and currently the education provider is piloting a new Unitu student feedback system. The education provider has demonstrated there are relevant systems in place to gather feedback and respond positively and these systems will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Service user and carer involvement** – The College of Medicine and Health have a Patient Involvement in Medical Education group and their involvement is embedded in programmes. Service users are involved with workshops, admissions and teaching on some of the modules. This level of service user involvement will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support** – The education provider provides a full range of accessible services to support learners with pastoral and academic needs. The education provider also operates a Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study procedure. The purpose of this procedure is to provide learners with support when they are experiencing medical or personal problems and to put a plan in place to keep them on track with their studies. A Welfare Adviser is also available to provide learners with support and offers drop-in sessions.

The complaints and whistleblowing policies and procedures are also accessible on the education provider's website alongside the health and safety policies. The education provider is committed to supporting learners and providing a safe learning environment for them. The policies and procedures referenced in this section will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Ongoing suitability** – The Fitness to Practice Regulation applies to all learners on regulated programmes. To ensure suitability, all learners are required to complete an annual declaration of fitness to practice and submit this to the programme team. This declaration enables the programme team to arrange support and make reasonable adjustments where required and, in some cases, arrange health screenings for practice-based training. These suitability policies and procedures will apply to the new programme.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** – The College of Medicine and Health have a range of healthcare professions and the curriculum incorporates shared learning experiences with other healthcare programmes. There is an established Interprofessional learning committee, which is attended by representatives from all programmes and interprofessional activities are scheduled. This shared learning approach will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – The EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Vision document outlines the strategic objectives and the education providers commitment to equality and diversity. All equality, diversity and inclusion policies and procedures are accessible on the education provider's website and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity** – The Teaching Quality Assurance manual advises on the principles for setting assessments and ensures consistency and fairness across all programmes. External Examiners are also involved with all assessments and provide independent input into the assessments in

accordance with the education provider's procedures. These principles will apply to the assessments for the proposed programme.

- **Progression and achievement** – All assessment processes comply with the education provider's Teaching Quality Assurance Manual and the policies and procedures can be accessed on the education provider's website. It is compulsory to pass all modules at all three levels to progress to the next stage of study. This manual and referenced policies and procedures will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Appeals** – The education provider has a Student Academic Appeals Procedure and all learners have a right of appeal against:
 - Academic decisions and recommendations made by Boards of Examiners and Faculty Boards (or Deans of Faculty acting on their behalf) that affect their academic progress.
 - Post-graduate research students only: decisions about Covid-19 funded extensions or fees scholarship

The appeals process is overseen by the University Cases Office and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1, due to the clear alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section

Section 3: Programme-level assessment

Programmes considered through this assessment

Programme name	Mode of study	Profession (including modality) / entitlement	Proposed learner number, and frequency	Proposed start date
MSci Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography)	Full time	Radiographer	25 per year	19/09/2022

Stage 2 assessment – provider submission

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet programme level standards for each programme. They supplied information about how each standard

was met, including a rationale and links to supporting information via a mapping document.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their submission. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider met our standards.

Quality theme 1 – Availability and capacity of practice-based learning

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted there would be a potential increase in placement demand in year 2 of the proposed programme depending on the number of learners in year 1 of the approved BSc (Hons) programmes. Visitors noted no evidence of any plans or processes in place to manage this demand and were concerned about the capacity of practice-based learning. The provider was therefore asked to demonstrate the ongoing processes to monitor the increase in practice-based learning requirements with the incoming cohort on the BSc (Hons) programmes and the transfer to the proposed programme. In addition to this the education provider was asked to provide an example of how they would manage if 75% of the BSc (Hons) cohort were eligible to transfer to the proposed programme.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:

We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors thought the email clarification would be the most effective method to understand how the demand would be managed and for the education provider to explain the process.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider shared figures relating to the previous and current cohort of learners which demonstrates, by percentage, those eligible to transfer to the proposed programme. The figures over the last four academic years have averaged at 70-75% of learners being eligible to transfer. The figure for this year currently stands at 76%, however only 32% of those learners have requested to transfer, which means demand on placements will be reduced. The education provider has also confirmed the launch of the proposed programme will not alter the current learner recruitment numbers. The demand for general placements will therefore not change, however there will be a demand for cross-sectional imaging placements in year 4 and these will be sourced through private healthcare facilities, which are currently not used. The visitors were satisfied with the explanation provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register**
 - This standard is covered through institution-level assessment

- **SET 2: Programme admissions**
 - Selection and entry on to the proposed programme will be by transfer from the already approved BSc (Hons) Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography) programme at the end of year 2. Learners who achieve 60% or above in year 2 will be eligible to transfer to the proposed programme.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the information available on the education providers website for applicants who are eligible to transfer to the proposed programme.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership**
 - There was evidence of collaboration between the academic team and NHS Trust Managers and partnership agreements were in place to provide practice-based learning.
 - Visitors noted the skills matrix demonstrated how the programme would be adequately staffed and the range of skills and experience the staff had.
 - There was clear evidence of the resources available to learners, both physically and online, including skills and simulation environments.
 - Evidence of collaboration with practice education providers about the proposed programme was clearly highlighted in the meeting minutes which were provided.
 - Visitors noted sufficient evidence which demonstrated placement capacity would not be impacted by the proposed programme and the

education provider had adequate placement provision in place for the proposed programme.

- The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery**
 - The programme ensures it meets the HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs) and is thoroughly evidenced in the SOPs mapping document for each module.
 - To ensure learners understand the expectations of professional behaviour there is a clear link to a Student Code of Conduct which forms part of the induction package. In addition to this, professional behaviour is embedded throughout the modules.
 - The structure of the programme has been based on the already approved BSc (Hons) programme and reflects the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base.
 - There is evidence of the curriculum remaining relevant to current practice through clear engagement with clinical practitioners and service managers.
 - The link between theory and practice is clearly outlined in the programme specification and demonstrates how academic knowledge is built on with technical skills in clinical practice.
 - The programme specification highlights the learning and teaching strategies used, which are varied and appropriate.
 - The development of evidence-based practice is identified in modules across the curriculum from year 1 of the BSc (Hons) programme through to proposed programme.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning**
 - There is a clear use of clinical link tutors and a clear job description for them, which demonstrates relevant knowledge, skills and experience.
 - The structure and duration of practice-based learning demonstrates learners can achieve the learning outcomes and are supported with a variety of practice-based learning opportunities across the area.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

- **SET 6: Assessment**
 - There is no condonement within the programme and progression to the next stage of study is only possible with successful completion of the previous modules. This ensures all learners who complete the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs).
 - The assessment methods used are clear, appropriate and link to the learning outcomes. Visitors noted there may be some over assessment in placements, where some modules were assessing the same learning outcome twice, however they were not concerned by this and viewed this as compensation for learners to pass the modules.

- Assessments are designed to be fair to learners. Learning outcomes are assessed for each module and aim to equip students with the relevant skills and knowledge to be eligible to apply onto the Register.
- The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: None

Section 5: Referrals

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval, focused review, or performance review process).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

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. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that all standards are met, and therefore the programmes should be approved

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The programme is approved.

Reason for this decision: The Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that

the provider and its proposed programme have demonstrated they meet our standards and should receive approval.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Clinical psychologist		01/10/2010
Educational, Child and Community Psychology (D.Ed.Psy)	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Educational psychologist		01/01/2005
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging	WBL (Work based learning)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/03/2020
BSc (Hons) Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2004
MSc Diagnostic Radiography & Imaging Degree Apprenticeship (Pre-Registration)	WBL (Work based learning)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/11/2021
Practice Certificate in Independent and Supplementary Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/10/2021