Approval process report

Health Sciences University, Speech and Language Therapy, 2024-25

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve the speech and language therapy programme at the Health Sciences University. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme are fit to practice.

We have
- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area.
- Reviewed the programme against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Decided all standards are met, and that the programme should be approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The areas we explored focused on:
  - Quality activity 1 – we recognised the programme is delivered in Ireland and we considered the overall resourcing and sustainability of the proposed programme, including the anticipated demand and how the education provider plans to support its delivery over time. In addition, we examined how Ireland specific policies had been considered and how these would be appropriately applied to the proposed programme.
  - Quality activity 2 – we explored how regularly the education provider was collaborating with practice education providers, particularly in relation to the student led clinic which the education provider was in the process of developing.
  - Quality activity 3 – we considered the education provider approach to placement capacity and examined the processes in place to ensure sufficient availability of placements for learners. The education provider outlined how placement capacity was planned, monitored, and maintained over time to support the delivery of practice-based learning and meet programme requirements. In addition to this we also considered how the proposed programme may impact other programmes within the region.
  - Quality activity 4 – we examined how the education provider ensured there was a sufficient number of staff to support practice-based learning. We also explored the measures in place to confirm practice educators were appropriately qualified and experienced, ensuring they were equipped to deliver supervision and support to learners during their placements.

- o Quality activity 5 – we explored how the education provider had accounted for the differences between UK and Irish qualifications when setting the entry criteria for the proposed programme. The education provider demonstrated that these variations were considered to ensure fair and appropriate access for applicants from both the UK and Ireland. Additionally, we examined the Recognised Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) route and sought clarification on whether any distinctions existed for Irish applicants. This helped confirm that the RPEL process was inclusive and consistently applied to all applicants.
- The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This approval was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programme is approved
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • The provider's next performance review will be in the 2028-29 academic year • The programmes have been approved and will be delivered by the education provider from January 2026.

Included within this report

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 detailed in this report meets our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme 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:

Jennifer Caldwell	Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist
Lucy Myers	Lead visitor, Speech and language Therapist
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 14 HCPC-approved programmes across six professions and includes one post-registration programme for the independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations. The chiropodist / podiatrist programme has the POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH) annotations.

It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2023.

The education provider is made up of four schools and one centre. The HCPC approved programmes are based in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences. The proposed programme will be delivered in Dublin in partnership with the Portobello Institute. The Portobello Institute are a small specialist education provider who have access to placement opportunities for learners based in Dublin. The education provider already work in partnership with the Portobello Institute to deliver the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme in Dublin, which was approved in August 2024.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process in 2023-24 and received a four year monitoring period. They will therefore next engage in the performance review process in 2028-29.

The education provider engaged with the approval review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021. The review covered the MSc Occupational Therapy, MSc Speech and Language Therapy, MSc Dietetics, and MSc Podiatry programmes. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards were met, and the programmes were approved by the Education and Training Committee in 2022.

The education provider recently engaged with the approval process to seek approval for the BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography, BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Podiatry and BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy degree apprenticeship programmes. These were approved in August 2025 and the start date was September 2025.

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 2 of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Chiropodist / podiatrist	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Dietitian	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Occupational therapy	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
	Physiotherapist	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2023

	Radiographer	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2024
	Speech and language therapist	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2023
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2025
	Prescription Only Medicine – Administration			2023
	Prescription Only Medicine – Sale / Supply			2023

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	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Learner number capacity	180	260	2025	The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision. The value is above the benchmark; however, this figure includes the additional learners for the proposed programme. The currently

				enrolled numbers, therefore, meet the benchmark. We should explore if there are sufficient resources for the proposed programmes.
Learner non-continuation	7%	6%	2021-22	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 4%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because there is no impact on SETs considered.
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	92%	100%	2021-22	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 7%.

				We did not explore this data point through this assessment because there was no impact on SETs considered.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Bronze	2023	The definition of a Bronze TEF award is "Provision is of satisfactory quality." We did not explore this data point through this assessment because there was no impact on SETs considered.
Learner satisfaction	77.5%	65%	2024	This data was sourced at the summary. This means the data is the provider-level public data. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 1%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because this was considered through the focused review process.
HCPC performance review cycle length	N/A	2028-29	4 years	The education provider has engaged with the HCPC previously and a four-year review period was agreed.

We did not consider data points / intelligence from other organisations through this approval review.

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.

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

<u>Admissions</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Information for applicants** –
    - The Recruitment, Selection and Admissions Policy outlines the education providers policies and processes for recruiting selecting and admitting applicants onto the programme. The policy applies to all applicants and is set at institution level. It provides information relating to the admissions process, which includes information for applicants requiring a visa to study in the United Kingdom (UK).
    - There is programme-specific documentation available on the programme specific webpages. The information provided on these webpages includes an overview of the programme and entry requirements and also provides information relating to fees and qualifications. Information is also available through other channels, such as the education providers prospectus and their open days.
    - These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** –
    - The Recruitment, Selection and Admission regulations and the Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy and Procedure documents provide information relating to the English language proficiency. To meet the requirements, applicants are required to provide evidence of the level of their English language, at a minimum of GCSE grade 4, as part of the application process. Additional information can be found on the programme specific webpages.
    - The programme webpages and information packs provide details of the health requirements for all applicants. This includes any vaccinations that maybe required and occupational health assessments.
    - All applicants are required to present a satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate as part of the admissions process. Applicants living outside of the UK will be required to present a National Police Certificate. This is to ensure they are safe to work with vulnerable adults and children.
    - The education provider also applies the Criminal Convictions Procedure to all programmes. This ensures all applicants with criminal

convictions are assessed appropriately to mitigate any risks and ensure the safety of other learners and staff.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** –
  - o Information on this area is outlined in the education provider's 'Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy' document and in the 'Policy and Procedures for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)' document. All applicants are required to undergo a thorough initial assessment. If applicants are able to demonstrate skills and learning these will be considered through these processes and exemptions will be applied.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
  - o The education provider has an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy which outlines their commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture where all learners are treated fairly and equally. To ensure learners are not discriminated against all characteristics are taken into account, which include age, disability, race and gender.
  - o The Recruitment, Selection and Admission Policy and Procedure document outlines a commitment to supporting learners with disabilities and additional support needs.
  - o These policies are institution wide 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 Register[1]**
  - o The education provider has a number of policies in support of this area. The 'Course Design Framework' policy includes information on how the education provider ensures that programmes are delivered at the appropriate level.
  - o The Course and Unit Monitoring and Periodic Review Policy and Procedure provides details of how the approved programmes and unit specifications are set and the appropriate Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level identified. This is considered as part of the programme approval and review process.
  - o The education provider highlighted how they already deliver HCPC approved programmes for the four professions of speech and language

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[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

therapy, occupational therapy, diagnostic radiography and podiatry. In addition to this, they also deliver a physiotherapy programme in Dublin which was approved in August 2024. This forms the rationale for the new proposal and programme development.

- o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o For the proposed programme, we will need to understand how the education provider ensures learners and educators are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register. Given the programme will be delivered in Dublin, we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.18) of the approval process.

- **Sustainability of provision** –
  - o The Course Consideration and Review Policy applies to all programmes. As part of the course consideration process, a business plan will be considered by the University College's Senior Management Group where programme sustainability will be considered and approved internally. In addition to this the Periodic Review Process ensures the curriculum is current and programmes are fit for purpose and sustainable.
  - o The proposed programme will be funded through tuition fees received from learners. In addition to this, all schools are involved with the annual budgeting processes, where funding and the sustainability of the programmes is considered.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Effective programme delivery** –
  - o The education provider uses their 'Course and Unit Monitoring Policy' and periodic review process to monitor and evaluate the effective delivery of programmes. All programmes have steering groups who meet regularly to discuss, develop and deliver the programme action plan. There is also an annual monitoring and reporting process for individual programmes.
  - o Each programme sits within a specific academic School where Course Leaders are line managed by the Head of that School. The Head sits on the Institution's Senior Management Team and reports directly to the Board of Governors.
  - o Appropriate qualification and experience are articulated as essential criteria in the job description for all academic staff appointed to the programme. This includes being registered with the HCPC and a member of the relevant professional body.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

- o For the proposed programme, we will need to be assured of how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understand their responsibilities and work together to deliver an effective programme. Alongside this we will also need to understand how the UK based education provider will deliver the proposed programme and manage it. Due to the proposed programme being delivered in partnership with the Portobello Institute we will also need to consider it's sustainability, which will include resourcing and financial position. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 (SETs 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) of the approval process.

- **Effective staff management and development** –
  - o The education provider has a 'Staff Development Policy' which sets out their approach to staff management. This contributes to effective management and development of staff.
  - o The education provider explained how staff development includes all policies, practices, and procedures to support and develop the capabilities of staff. These include induction, probation period, mentoring, peer observations and online learning. This aims to improve the quality of their work and to ensure success of the programme. It is an ongoing process, closely linked to their annual appraisal process.
  - o To ensure that learners are taught and guided in their learning by appropriately qualified staff, all non-clinical academic staff are expected to have, or be working towards, a PhD or other doctoral qualification. All clinical staff must have full registration with the relevant Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) and conform to the continuing professional development (CPD) requirements of the relevant regulator or professional body.
  - o New staff without teaching experience are encouraged to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching or equivalent, with support for achieving recognition as a Fellow of Advance HE.
  - o Staff involved with delivery and management of the proposed programme will be existing staff with plans approved to appoint further speech and language therapy specific staff for delivery of the proposed programme in Dublin.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
  - o For the proposed programme we will also need to understand how the existing staff will be used for the proposed programme and where they will be based. Additionally, we will also need to understand if the new staff being appointed for the proposed programme will be based in Dublin or elsewhere. We will assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.1) of the approval process.

- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** –
  - o The education provider has an institution wide 'Placement Policy' that outlines the process for the identification, approval, and ongoing monitoring of student practice placements.

- o Placement provider partnerships and agreements are coordinated by the University College Executive Team and signed off by the Vice-Chancellor. All placements are monitored and reviewed by the Placement Coordinator to ensure capacity and suitability.
- o The education provider are currently working in partnership with the Portobello Institute to deliver another programme and have access to placement opportunities within Dublin. The education provider therefore plans to develop the second MSc Speech and Language Therapy programme and deliver it in Dublin and access these placement opportunities.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o For the proposed programme, we will need to consider how the 'Placement Policy' will apply to the proposed programme, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.1 and 3.2) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: We will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.1 – we need to understand how the UK based education provider will manage the proposed programme and ensure it is sustainable both from a resourcing and financial perspective. This will include us considering how the 'Placement Policy' will apply to the proposed programme, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin.
- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and the Portobello Institute understand the responsibilities of all involved, and work together to deliver an effective programme.
- SET 3.3 – we must ensure the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and registered on the relevant part of the Register. We will need to understand how the existing staff will be used for the proposed programme and where they will be based. Additionally, we will also need to understand if the new staff being appointed for the proposed programme will be based in Dublin or elsewhere.
- 3.18 - Given the programme will be delivered in Dublin, we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Academic quality** –

- o The education provider has several policies and mechanisms in place to manage and monitor academic quality. These include their 'Course Design Framework' policy and the 'Education Strategy.' Academic quality monitoring is an ongoing process and is key to the continuous enhancement of learners' experiences of their programmes.
- o The baseline document states that all programmes undergo continuous monitoring and Course Leaders complete an annual monitoring report form. The forms are considered through an internal review process and received by Academic Standards and Quality Committee, which is a committee of Academic Board. Annual monitoring leads to the development of a course action plan that is monitored by the relevant Couse Steering Committee throughout the year.
- o All programmes are reviewed every six years. The procedure is the same as for new programmes but also includes consideration of a range of qualitative and quantitative monitoring data.
- o Changes to programmes between reviews are managed through the institutional 'Course and Unit Modification' policy. To ensure institutional oversight, any changes to programmes approved at programme level are reported to the institutional Academic Standards and Quality Committee.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o For the proposed programme, we will need to understand how the education provider will monitor and evaluate the quality of the proposed programme and how the processes will be applied, given the programme will be delivered in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.4) of the approval process.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** –
  - o The education provider uses their 'Placement Policy' to outline the requirements and expectations for course teams involved in the organisation, approval, and ongoing management of placement learning. This ensures a high-quality student learning experience.
  - o The education provider's institutional 'Placement Policy' sets out arrangements for learner concerns and whistleblowing, emphasising its importance, and the need to support learners. At the programme level, specific arrangements covering 'whistleblowing,' etc., are included in each Placement Handbook. Guidance on conduct and ethics is embedded in the curriculum, which focuses on expectations regarding reporting concerns. Raising concerns is also covered in the Placement Handbook.
  - o The education provider outlines the specific role and responsibilities of the Practice Educator, including their level of experience and qualification in the Practice Educator Handbook. The provider has also stated that they will run training and continuing professional development (CPD) for Practice Educators to further ensure the

required knowledge, skills, and experience are developed in Practice Educators working with learners.

- o The education provider states the Portobello Institute have a long-established placement provision for a number of their current programmes. Career prospects of learners are maximised via successful engagement with a wide variety of employers in sports, healthcare and private and public sector organisations to offer practice-based learning.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o The education provider and Portobello Insitute will have specific policies and processes in place to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users (SET 3.17).
- o There will be specific policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. We will need to understand which policies apply in which situation (SET 4.10).
- o The proposed programme will be delivered in Ireland, we will need to consider how the education provider ensures practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes (SET 5.7); and learners and practice educators have the information they require to be prepared before going into the practice environment (SET 5.8).
- o The education provider will have overall responsibility for the proposed programme. We will need to review how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 (SET 3.4) of the process.
- o In addition, we will need to understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the quality of the practice environment with the Portobello Institute (SET 5.3). This includes ensuring there is a safe and supportive environment for learners and service users (SET 5.4).
- o It is not clear how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to ensure the capacity, quality and range of placements. We will assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 5.2) to understand how the Portobello Institute's long established placement provision will support the proposed programme.

- **Learner involvement** –
  - o The education provider refers to their 'Course and Unit Monitoring Policy' and the 'Student Engagement Policy' to demonstrate learner involvement in the programme. Learners at both mid and end points of individual units of study provide feedback on their programmes. All course years of study have at least one student representative who sits on the Course Steering Group and the university-wide Student Experience Committee.
  - o The 'Course Design Framework' and 'Course Consideration Policy' include the institutional expectation that learners are involved in the design process for new programmes. Groups of learners are invited to

meet with the Course Consideration Panel to give feedback on the learning experience.

- o Student representatives for each programme are members of the Course Steering Committee. The remit of the Committee is to maintain the academic standards of the program and to ensure that it operates in accordance with the approved program specification. The Committee also seeks to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities, ensuring that issues requiring improvement are addressed, and good practice shared.
- o There is learner representation on all committees of the Academic Board and on the Board of Governors. The Student Experience Committee has the specific remit to promote and facilitate a two-way channel of communication between learners and staff. This relates to learner experience and enhancement, support services, and learner engagement in academic governance.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o For the proposed programme, it is not clear how learner involvement will be facilitated in Dublin. We will need to understand how this will be coordinated and how the learners based in Dublin will be involved with the proposed programme. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.8) of the approval process.

- **Service user and carer involvement** –
  - o The education provider uses their 'Sharing Patient and Community Experience' (SPaCE) Group, along with other groups that contribute to this area, to demonstrate service user and carer involvement. The 'Friends of the Clinic' group of service users provides regular feedback and input into the delivery of services in the University College Clinic. The clinic will provide some placements for learners on HCPC approved courses. This feedback is reported directly to a Clinical Governance Group. In the clinic, the patient voice is also collected through annual questionnaires and comment cards. We understand this is a UK model and therefore need to understand what arrangements there will be in place to involve service users and carers with the proposed programme in Dublin.
  - o The education provider has stated that by working with service users and carers, they can provide outstanding person-centred care to patients in the local community and deliver first-class education to healthcare learners.
  - o Service users and carers are involved in programme design, governance and admissions recruitment. They also provide learners undertaking practice based learning with feedback on their experience.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
  - o For the proposed programme, it is not clear how service user and carer involvement will be facilitated in Dublin. We will need to understand how this will be coordinated and how service users and carers will be

involved with the proposed programme in Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.7) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme.
- SET 3.7 – how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate service user and carer involvement for the proposed programme.
- SET 3.8 – how the education provider will work the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate learner involvement for the proposed programme.
- SET 3.17 – the specific policies and processes in place to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. We need to understand which policies apply in which situation.
- SET 4.10 - the policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. This is because the education provider and the Portobello Institute may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.
- SET 5.2 – understand how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to ensure the capacity, quality and range of placements and how the Portobello Institute's long established placement provision will support the proposed programme.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment with the Portobello Institute.
- SET 5.4 - the processes to make sure practice-based learning takes place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.
- SETs 5.7 and 5.8 - the processes to ensure practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes; and learners and practice educators have the information they require to be prepared before going into the practice environment.

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Support** –
  o The education provider offers a broad range of support services via their Student Services Team. This provision includes well-being advice and counselling services and support with study skills. Learners are also able to talk to their assigned Personal Tutor regarding pastoral issues, as well as any tutor they feel they can confide in.
  o The institutional 'Placement Policy' sets out overarching arrangements for student concerns and whistleblowing, emphasising its importance, and the need to support learners.

- o The 'Student Complaints Policy and Procedure' is set at the institutional level and applies to learners on all programmes. The policy considers the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) good practice guidance. Learners are encouraged to raise and resolve complaints informally in the first instance. If this does not address their concerns, there is a three-stage complaints procedure. At the end of the process, learners may take a complaint to the OIA.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- o For the proposed programme, it is not clear how the support provided and available to learners through the UK education provider will be available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programme. We will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programme and who will be responsible for managing this. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.13 and 3.15) of the approval process.
- **Ongoing suitability** –
  - o The education provider has several mechanisms in place to determine learners' ongoing suitability. This includes the 'Fitness to Study' and the 'Fitness to Practice' (FtP) policies, as well as the 'Student Disciplinary Policy.' Any concerns relating to the ongoing suitability of learners' conduct, character, and health will be addressed institutionally through these policies.
  - o The education provider has an established Student Monitoring and Wellbeing Group that meets regularly for each programme. They consider matters related to individual learner progress, including academic performance, skills attainment, attendance requirements, and well-being issues. This group considers and helps to identify learners who perform below the required standard or are in danger of doing so, makes recommendations, and monitors outcomes.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** –
  - o Placement Handbooks and unit descriptors are utilised to introduce learners to concepts of interprofessional learning and interprofessional practice at the start of all programmes. There is joint delivery of units across health profession-focused programmes to foster interprofessional education, and interprofessional learning forms a core part of the placement experiences of learners. Learners on the proposed programme will have the opportunity to collaborate with learners on the MSc Physiotherapy programme that is currently being delivered in Dublin. In addition to this they will have opportunities to work with other professionals through their clinical experiences.
  - o The education provider has referred to the School's Guidance document, which outlines the School of Health and Rehabilitation

Services approach to interprofessional learning. This involves shared learning with other relevant healthcare profession-focused programmes. For the proposed programme there will also be a particular emphasis on learners engaging with learners on the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme, which is currently delivered in Dublin.
- These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
  - The education provider has stated that they are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture that offers equality and opportunity for all by eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and promoting respectful relations on campus. This commitment is evidenced through their 'Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Policy'.
  - The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy highlights the education providers commitment to providing all learners with a diverse and inclusive environment to learn in. This ensures all learners are treated fairly and equally and have access to all opportunities available.
  - Changing the Culture working group is a joint University/College Students Union group who lead on cultural change and undertake activities to promote an inclusive culture and environment. This includes initiatives related to Black Lives Matter, disability, LGBTQ+, mental health, and well-being.
  - These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
  - For the proposed programme, it is not clear how the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will apply to the proposed programme and who will be responsible for these. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure these policies are applied and monitored throughout the programme and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 3.14) of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and the Portobello Institute in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.13 and 3.15 - how the support provided and available to learners through the UK education provider will be available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programme. We will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programme and who will be responsible for managing this.
- SET 3.14 – we need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will be applied

and monitored on the proposed programme and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided.

<u>Assessment</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Objectivity** –
  - o To ensure objectivity in assessments, the provider has existing policies, procedures, and regulations in place, including the 'Course Design Framework' policy, 'Assessment Criteria' policy, and 'Academic Misconduct' policy. The education provider asserts that all assessments align with these policies, as well as with the 'Assessment Regulations' and the 'Marking and Moderation Policy,' which are institutional-wide policies.
  - o The institutional 'Setting and Scrutiny of Assessments Policy and Procedure,' referenced in the baseline document, guides the scrutiny of assessments to ensure validity, reliability, and accurate assessment documentation. Implementation occurs at the School level, where all assessments have clear criteria objectively mapped to institutional generic assessment criteria.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Progression and achievement** –
  - o To ensure objectivity in assessments, the provider has existing policies, procedures, and regulations in place, including the 'Course Design Framework' policy, 'Assessment Criteria' policy, and 'Academic Misconduct' policy. The education provider asserts that all assessments align with these policies, as well as with the 'Assessment Regulations' and the 'Marking and Moderation Policy,' which are institutional-wide policies.
  - o The institutional 'Setting and Scrutiny of Assessments Policy and Procedure,' referenced in the baseline document, guides the scrutiny of assessments to ensure validity, reliability, and accurate assessment documentation. Implementation occurs at the School level, where all assessments have clear criteria objectively mapped to institutional generic assessment criteria.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
  - o We will need to understand the education providers requirements regarding attendance and how this is monitored and by whom. In addition, how the requirements are communicated to the learners (SET 4.11).
- **Appeals** –
  - o The Academic Appeals Policy and Procedures (Taught Awards) and Disciplinary Policy outline the process for appeals across the institution.

- Appeals follow a two-stage process: stage 1 involves an informal discussion, and stage 2 includes a panel review. At the end of this process, learners may escalate a complaint to the Office of Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Given the proposed programme will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 (SET 6.6) of the approval process.
- These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: We will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and employer in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 4.11 - we will need to understand the education providers requirements regarding attendance and how this is monitored and the requirements are identified and communicated to the learners (SET 4.11).
- SET 6.6 – we will need to understand how academic appeals will be considered. Given the proposed programme will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1. As noted through the previous section, there are areas to take forward into stage 2. These are outlined below.

- SET 3.1 – we need to understand how the UK based education provider will manage the proposed programme and ensure it is sustainable both from a resourcing and financial perspective. This will include us considering how the 'Placement Policy' will apply to the proposed programme, given the placements will be sourced in Dublin.
- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and Portobello Institute understand the responsibilities of all involved, and work together to deliver an effective programme.
- SET 3.3 – we must ensure the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and registered on the relevant part of the register. We will need to understand how the existing staff will be used for the proposed programme and where they will be based. Additionally, we will also need to understand if the new staff being appointed for the proposed programme will be based in Dublin or elsewhere.
- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with the Portobello Institute to monitor the ongoing quality and effectiveness of the programme.

- SET 3.7 – how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate service user and carer involvement for the proposed programme.
- SET 3.8 – how the education provider will work the Portobello Institute to coordinate and facilitate learner involvement for the proposed programme.
- SET 3.13 and 3.15 - how the support provided and available to learners through the UK education provider will be available and accessible to the learners on the proposed programme. We will also need to consider how the education provider will support learners with raising and resolving complaints on the proposed programme and who will be responsible for managing this.
- SET 3.14 – we need to understand how the education provider and Portobello Institute will ensure the equality, diversity and inclusion policies will be applied and monitored on the proposed programme and how an impartial, fair and supportive environment will be provided.
- SET 3.17 – the specific policies and processes in place to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. We need to understand which policies apply in which situation.
- SET 3.18 - Given the programme will be delivered in Dublin, we will require assurance on how the education provider will make it clear to applicants, learners, educators and the public who is eligible to apply for registration with us and who is not.
- SET 4.10 - the policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners. This is because the education provider and the Portobello Institute may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.
- SET 4.11 - we will need to understand the education providers requirements regarding attendance and how this is monitored and the requirements are identified and communicated to the learners.
- SET 5.2 – understand how the education provider will work with the Portobello Institute to ensure the capacity, quality and range of placements and how the Portobello Institute's long established placement provision will support the proposed programme.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment with the Portobello Institute.
- SET 5.4 - the processes to make sure practice-based learning takes place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.
- SETs 5.7 and 5.8 - the processes to ensure practice educators have the programme specific understanding to deliver and assess the learning outcomes; and learners and practice educators have the information they require to be prepared before going into the practice environment.
- SET 6.6 – we will need to understand how academic appeals will be considered. Given the proposed programme will be based in Dublin, we need to understand how this process will apply to learners, as the OIA does not cover Dublin.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- The education provider currently have staff to deliver the proposed programme, however they will be appointing additional staff for the delivery of the course in Dublin.
- The education provider will be delivering the programme in partnership with the Portobello Institute in Dublin. The Portobello Institute are based in the centre of Dublin and have two buildings, which offer offices, classrooms, a library, an on-site clinic, clinical skills laboratories and learner rest rooms. The location of the buildings also provides good transport links, which provides learners and staff with easy access.
- The Portobello Institute are also developing another campus where they plan to provide clinical simulation environments, human performance laboratories and additional teaching spaces. They are also working with the education provider to develop a speech and language therapy clinic onsite.

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
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (full time)	Speech and language therapy	25 learners, one cohort per year	06/01/2026

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.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the [Findings section](#).

<u>Quality theme 1 – Sustainability and demand for the programme</u>

Area for further exploration: The education provider submitted a resource document that provided details on projected learner numbers and anticipated income. However, the level of detail was not sufficient to enable the visitors to make an informed judgement regarding the financial sustainability of the proposed programme. For example, it did not include staffing costs and the income figures appeared to be incorrect. It was therefore unclear whether the programme was financially stable and whether sufficient resources had been allocated to support its delivery and long-term viability. In addition, it was not clear how the education provider had considered relevant policies and regulatory requirements specific to Ireland, or how these had influenced the programme's development. Without this information, the visitors could not be assured that the programme would be appropriately resourced or contextually aligned with national expectations. Consequently, the visitors requested further clarification and documentation outlining how the programme would be adequately resourced. The visitors considered, that as part of the financial resourcing, there should be evidence of a demand to demonstrate there was a clear need for the proposed programme within the region.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification / additional documentation from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand the financial sustainability of the proposed programme.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider submitted the MSc SLT Dublin Resource Planning Document and their On-Site Resources Costing Document. These outlined the staffing levels, and physical / digital resources available to support the proposed programme. Additionally, a Market Demand Analysis was provided, detailing demographic trends, evidence of a national skills shortage, and research on policy and recruitment needs that supported the case for the development of a programme delivered in Dublin.

The response also demonstrated the education providers recognition of the importance of the Portobello Institute policies in shaping the programme. The Ireland-based Course Development Lead and External Course Advisors played a central role in the development process, contributing to amendments that ensured alignment with regulatory requirements. This included embedding relevant Portobello Institute policy references within module specifications and addressing the Irish regulatory landscape throughout the Course Specification, particularly in sections 4 (Course Learning Outcomes – what students will be expected to achieve), section 6 (Placements, work-based learning or other special features of the course), section 9 (Staff delivering the course), and section 15 (External reference points). All internal

institutional policies and procedures were reviewed and aligned with the institutional approval process.

The visitors confirmed they were satisfied with the documentation they received, which clarified programme resourcing and provided evidence of market demand for the proposed programme. They also noted the education provider's engagement with the Ireland specific policy requirements, including contributions from local advisors and the integration of relevant policy references across course materials. Visitors were therefore satisfied and had no further queries in relation to this quality theme.

<u>Quality theme 2 – Ensuring effective collaboration with practice education providers and other education providers</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the programme would be delivered in Ireland. They recognised there was evidence of regular collaboration between the education provider with practice education providers. However, they were unable to see the nature and extent of collaboration between the education provider and local practice education providers, particularly in relation to the proposed student-led clinic. They therefore requested further detail on how these partnerships have informed the planning and development of the clinic. This was to understand the extent of consultation with local services, which would help determine whether the provision is appropriately integrated into the regional healthcare and education systems. Clear evidence of meaningful collaboration would help demonstrate that the clinic is aligned with local needs, resources, and expectations, thereby supporting its feasibility and effectiveness.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand the extent of the collaboration with practice education partners and any impact the proposed programme may have on existing programmes within the region.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider explained how they had engaged in consultation with local public and charity sector services to support the development of the student-led clinic. The consultation mainly focused on developing referral sources and identifying which services expressed an interest in engaging with the programme Further details were provided in the 'Onsite Clinic Referral Source Meetings Document'.

Visitors confirmed they were satisfied the education provider were engaging appropriately with local services to develop the student led clinic and had no further queries in relation to this quality theme.

<u>Quality theme 3 – Ensuring sufficient practice-based learning capacity</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted there was available placement capacity for at least 25 learners, however they were unable to identify a clear process for maintaining this capacity for the duration of the programme. This created uncertainty around the reliability and consistency of placement opportunities, which are essential for ensuring learners can meet required practice-based learning outcomes. To gain assurance that placements would remain sufficient and sustainable, the visitors requested further information detailing how placement availability will be monitored and maintained, and how this will be included within ongoing communication and collaboration with practice education providers. Additionally, the visitors sought clarification on whether the education provider had considered the potential impact of the proposed programme on other existing programmes within the same geographical area. This was important to ensure that the introduction of the proposed programme would not affect placement availability or resources for other programmes, and that regional capacity could support all learners equally.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the education provider will ensure sufficient capacity in placement provision, particularly as learner numbers grow and sector needs change.

Outcomes of exploration: In the response the education provider outlined how they ensured sufficient placement capacity by adopting a multi-provider hub model with four hubs. This specialised in adult palliative care, children's autism and early years education, advanced age care, and adult rehabilitation. These hubs offered learners interdisciplinary learning experiences in authentic practice settings, which were supported by additional placements in onsite clinics and a range of external providers. To maintain this capacity, as part of the placement development strategy, all placement providers were required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and thereafter establish placement agreements, which provided details on the placement capacity, supervision arrangements and processes to monitor and review capacity. We noted a Practice Education Coordinator (PEC) was being recruited to lead placement development, manage partnerships, coordinate allocations, and support practice educators. The PEC would also oversee monitoring, capacity planning, and feedback processes to ensure placement quality was maintained and future needs were being considered in response to growth in learner numbers and sector needs.

With regards to the potential impact on other speech and language therapy programmes in the region, visitors noted that the education provider had taken proactive steps to mitigate disruption. This included extensive consultation with existing providers, which was recorded in the 'University Consultation Record Document'. Alongside this there was agreement on biannual coordination meetings which would include the other speech and language therapy education providers in Ireland. Other considerations included the development of an alternative placement schedule, and creation of new placement opportunities through clinical hubs and the onsite clinic. The education provider also highlighted that there are currently no

postgraduate pre-registration speech and language therapy programmes in the Greater Dublin area and therefore the proposed programme would serve an unmet need in the area, particularly for mature students.

The visitors recognised the education provider's strategic approach to securing placement capacity. They highlighted the provider's commitment to formalising partnerships through structured agreements and acknowledged the role of the Practice Education Coordinator (PEC) in leading placement development, managing relationships, and ensuring quality assurance. They also recognised the efforts the education provider had made to ensure the proposed programme did not impact existing speech and language therapy programmes within the region. Overall, the visitors were satisfied with the structured approach they had taken to support sustainable placement capacity, which was aligned with anticipated growth and future sector demands. Visitors were therefore satisfied and had no further queries in relation to this quality theme.

<u>Quality theme 4 – Ensuring an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved with practice-based learning</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted no details were provided of the consideration given to ensuring a suitable number of staff involved with practice-based learning. There was also no information about the process used to ensure staff were appropriately qualified and experienced to effectively support learning and assessment and how this was monitored. Further information has therefore been requested to explain how the adequate number of staff involved with practice-based learning is determined. Further information is also requested to explain the process used to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to effectively support learning and assessment and how this will be monitored. It was also unclear if practice educators were required to be registered speech and language therapists. Visitors therefore requested further clarification about who could be a practice educator. This was to ensure that all individuals supporting learners in practice-based settings had the necessary qualifications, experience, and training to provide appropriate supervision and assessment, even if they were not registered within the relevant professional part of the Register.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the education provider ensured practice educators were appropriately qualified.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider outlined how the staffing and supervision for practice-based learning would align with current professional guidance and a variety of Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) practice-based tools would be used to manage this. To ensure practice educators were appropriately qualified and experienced, the education provider required them to be registered speech and language therapists (either with CORU which is Ireland's multi-profession health regulator or HCPC), be members of the

Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) and have at least two years of relevant clinical experience. Their suitability was verified through CV screening, reference checks, registration confirmation, and formal interviews. This information was stored and updated in a placement database. Alongside this, prior to learners commencing a placement, practice educators were required to complete mandatory training where roles and responsibilities were outlined. In addition to this refresher training was offered every three years. Their capacity to support learning was also monitored through learner feedback, regular check-ins, and quality assurance processes.

We noted in rare cases where supervision was provided by a non-speech and language therapist, the practice educator would be a registered healthcare professional (CORU or HCPC), have at least two years of relevant experience, and demonstrate alignment with placement learning outcomes. These practice educators would undergo the same selection, verification, training, and monitoring processes as speech and language therapists. Oversight will remain with a registered speech and language therapist, who will be responsible for signing off clinical competencies and ensuring professional standards are upheld.

Visitors were satisfied with the education provider's approach to staffing and supervision for practice-based learning because it followed professional standards and included processes for verifying practice educator qualifications and experience. Visitors were therefore satisfied and had no further queries in relation to this quality theme.

Quality theme 5 – Consideration of Irish qualifications in the entry criteria

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted that while clear information was provided regarding UK qualifications, it was unclear whether consideration had been given to whether Irish grades or qualifications would be accepted within the entry criteria. They therefore requested confirmation on whether these would be considered. This was important to ensure the admissions process was inclusive and accessible to prospective applicants from Ireland.

Alongside this, the visitors noted the statement about applicants having significant recent relevant work experience as an alternative, to the degree qualification entry requirement. No further information was provided about this, such as where the work experience could be gained from or how recent it needed to be. They were therefore not clear about this statement and requested clarification of the allowances that would be made for applicants who had significant recent relevant work experience and how the education provider would ensure their qualifications were appropriate to the required level of the programme.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the education provider were considering the Irish qualifications and applying the entry criteria appropriately.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider highlighted how ensuring clarity through the communication of admissions information for Ireland based applicants was important. It was noted how the equivalence between UK and Irish higher education qualifications were considered carefully and, although titles and qualifications were similar, there were differences with the qualification frameworks. For example, the Irish National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 8 was the equivalent of the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) Level 6. Due to these differences the education provider decided to present the entry requirements without references to specific frameworks, which would reduce any confusion for applicants and also make them easier to understand. Additionally, tailored information was provided for applicants whose first language was not English, including details of recognised English language tests and acceptable alternatives. This approach ensured that the entry criteria was clear and inclusive for Ireland's diverse applicant pool.

It was noted, although applications based solely on work experience were rare, the education provider offered the Recognised Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) route to support widening access. To be considered for this, applicants were required to demonstrate work experience / learning equivalent to formal qualifications through a detailed portfolio, which was assessed and reviewed for a decision by the MSc Speech and Language Therapy Course Coordinator. Alongside the portfolio, applicants applying through this route were also interviewed to ensure their readiness and suitability.

Visitors were satisfied with the education provider's admissions approach because it clearly addressed differences between UK and Irish qualification frameworks, making entry requirements easy to understand. They also acknowledged the availability of the Recognised Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) route, which allowed applicants with relevant work experience to be considered through a structured process.

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.

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** –
    - The selection and entry criteria are clearly articulated and set at an appropriate level for the proposed programme. The information available stated applicants are required to have a 2:2 BSc (Hons) degree in a relevant subject, such as psychology, biological science, medical science or childhood studies.
    - In addition to this, applicants are also required to complete an occupational health check, which will be completed by an organisation that has experience of working with healthcare providers in Ireland and a Garda Vetting check.
    - Through Quality theme 5 we noted the education provider had considered the Irish grades and qualifications alongside the UK qualifications when developing the proposed programme. We also noted the education provider had a clear RPEL process to assess those applicants with extensive work experience. This ensured consistency with the application of the academic and professional entry standards across applicants with a range of different qualifications and work experience.
    - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
    - There was evidence of regular collaboration with practice education providers. They were involved with the development of the programme and will continue to be involved through stakeholder events and meetings. There were also plans to open a student led clinic, which we explored through Quality theme 2. We noted through this quality activity the education provider had collaborated with local services to develop this clinic and gained support and interest for it.
    - Through Quality theme 3, we noted the education provider had considered how the proposed programme would impact other programmes in Ireland and had consulted with the education providers in Ireland to minimise any disruption. It was noted there were arrangements to regularly engage with these Programme Leaders to discuss any issues.
    - Visitors acknowledged that there was sufficient placement capacity for 25 learners. However, they were unable to identify a clear process for managing this capacity. To explore this further, we examined the issue through Quality theme 3 and found the education provider had a strategic approach in place to secure and maintain placement capacity throughout the duration of the proposed programme.
    - Through clarification we noted the updated Staff Recruitment Plan outlined clear timelines and staffing requirements for the Dublin-based staff, including module leads and part-time staff. We acknowledged guest lecturers staff would support practical teaching and adapt course content to the Irish speech and language therapy context. This approach enabled the education provider to maintain a staff-to-student

ratio of up to 1:15. In addition, details of staff qualifications and clinical expertise were documented and regularly updated in the Staff Recruitment Plan and Staff Specialities Record Documents. A costing model supported flexible staffing based on learner numbers, with plans in place to recruit additional staff as needed, following approval from the Head of School.

o Through clarification we confirmed the education provider and Portobello Institute follow a transparent recruitment process for teaching staff. All staff involved with teaching on speech and language therapy modules must hold professional registration with CORU (Ireland) or HCPC (UK), while non-speech and language therapy staff must demonstrate subject expertise and academic qualifications. All teaching staff are required to hold at least a Master's or Doctoral degree and have some teaching experience. It was noted there was a two stage recruitment process, which involved CV screening and a formal interview. This process involved both the education provider and the Portobello Institute. We acknowledged the education provider kept a record of staff clinical expertise and academic backgrounds in the speech and language therapy Staff Specialities Record.

o Through clarification, the visitors were informed about how the library list would be accessible for learners at the Dublin campus. It was confirmed that learners would have access to both the education provider and Portobello Institute's digital platforms, ensuring comprehensive access to academic and clinical training resources. The ePortobello Virtual Learning Environment will serve as the primary hub, offering course materials, key databases, textbooks, and links to specialist speech and language therapy resources and journals. In addition, hard copies of core texts will be available onsite at the Dublin campus.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the sustainability of the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.1). A range of supporting documents were submitted, including the MSc Speech and Language Therapy Dublin Resource Planning and On-Site Resources Costing documents, which provided details of teaching, administrative, physical, and digital resources. The Market Demand Analysis had been updated to reflect current sector trends and application data. We also received the MSc Speech and Language Therapy Operations Manual, which provided details of the programme delivery. We explored this further through Quality theme 1.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the programme being managed effectively (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.2). The education providers Operations Manual specific to the MSc Speech and Language Therapy programme was provided. Previously, the education provider had submitted the Operations Manual for the MSc Physiotherapy programme as an example. While that manual clearly outlined applicable policies, the examples were tailored to the Physiotherapy

programme. As a result, visitors had requested the speech and language therapy manual to review programme specific examples and ensure relevance to the Speech and Language Therapy provision. Following their review of the updated documentation, the visitors were satisfied the programme was appropriately managed and that the processes in place were suitable to support the delivery of the proposed programme.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the education provider ensuring the person holding overall responsibility for the programme was appropriately qualified and experienced (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.3). Visitors noted that the Speech and Language Therapy and Dietetics areas were led by a HCPC registered Speech and Language Therapist. A Dublin based Programme Lead, also CORU registered and academically qualified, would work closely with the Bournemouth based Programme Coordinator to support the programme.

o Through clarification we noted all speech and language therapy staff for the proposed programme would be appropriately qualified and registered with CORU or the HCPC, in line with standards previously agreed for the HCPC approved MSc Physiotherapy programme. We acknowledged the majority of teaching staff would be based in Dublin, with some remote and hybrid contributions to ensure inclusion of subject expertise. All speech and language therapy teaching staff will be members of IASLT and hold contracts with both the education provider and Portobello Institute. The Operations Manual states, Portobello Institute is responsible for ensuring appropriately qualified staff are in place. It was noted the Head of School based at Bournemouth would be required to approve all appointments.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.8). Visitors noted the programme documentation clearly stated that only successful completion of the full MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration) programme would enable learners to graduate and apply for HCPC registration. We noted CORU recognises HCPC approved speech and language therapy qualifications through its international application route. Alongside this the updated Course Handbook and Specification clarify the role of the UK regulator and eligibility for registration in Ireland. We acknowledged the education provider would be advising learners to apply to CORU via the international route when the proposed programme had been approved. In addition to this the education provider and Portobello Institute were engaging with CORU to identify and address any gaps within the curriculum to ensure learners met all requirements in preparation for future eligibility for registration in Ireland. Learners would also be kept informed of registration processes and regulatory

developments through regular sessions with input from CORU and Health Service Executive representatives.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to service user and carer involvement on the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.7). We received confirmation that the current service users on the steering group were recruited via the Irish Platform for Patient Organisations, Science and Industry (IPPOSI). The Special Interest Groups listed in the MSc Speech and Language Therapy Dublin Stakeholder Engagement Progress document were contacted for support to identify individuals with lived experience of speech and language therapy. We noted service users collaborated with the education providers Sharing Patient and Community Experience (SPaCE) group to contribute to clinical, academic, and research activities. Their involvement included reviewing curriculum content, guest lecturing on relevant topics, and supporting learners with placement workshops.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process to support learners to raise concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.17). We received confirmation that the Portobello Institute will act as the main contact point for learners to raise concerns while the education provider will have overall responsibility for quality assurance and oversight of procedures. We noted appropriate processes and policies were in place at Portobello Institute to manage academic and non-academic concerns, including safeguarding, complaints, misconduct, and appeals. Safeguarding issues during placements were handled by the placement provider's policies. The Operations Manual outlined the process for raising concerns, which included the Portobello Institute being responsible for informing the education provider of any concerns raised.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the arrangements in place to support the wellbeing and learning needs of learners (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.13). Visitors noted all learners in Dublin had access to a range of support services which were provided by the education provider and the Portobello Institute. We acknowledged there was a Student Liaison Officer based at Portobello Institute who focused on promoting learner engagement and well-being, with additional support being coordinated by the academic team. The Portobello Institute has developed a new "By Your Side Student Well-being Strategy," which includes in-house counselling, online resources, and staff training. Alongside this learning support was provided by academic staff.

o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the equality and diversity policies (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.14). Visitors received confirmation that the Portobello Institute's Equality Policy would apply with oversight from the education provider. We acknowledged the purpose of the policy was to create an

inclusive and supportive learning environment for all staff and learners. It was noted the education provider and Portobello Institute were committed to ensuring all learners had access to all opportunities, which included reasonable adjustments for those learners with protected characteristics.

- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the monitoring and evaluation of the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.4). We noted the education providers Operations Manual provided details of the Educational Partnerships, which outlined the Portobello Institutes responsibilities in relation to the delivery of the proposed programme. As part of this process, external examiners were appointed and reported directly to the education provider. The education providers procedures for annual monitoring and periodic review were followed, with outcomes considered through the Educational Partnerships Sub-Committee and the Course Steering Committee.
- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the learners being involved with the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.8). We noted the Operations Manual outlined the mechanisms through which learners could engage with quality assurance processes, including access to learner representatives and opportunities to provide feedback. These arrangements are consistent with those in place for the MSc Physiotherapy programme, which suggests a shared approach to learner involvement in quality monitoring and enhancement.
- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the process for receiving and responding to learner complaints (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 3.15). We acknowledged the Operations Manual outlined the procedures for managing complaints related to various aspects of the programme, specifying which policies applied and who held responsibility for them. These arrangements are consistent with those established for the MSc Physiotherapy programme, indicating a shared approach to complaint handling across both programmes.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The learning outcomes were mapped against the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) in the mapping document and outlined in the module descriptors. The structure of the modules ensured learners would be able to meet the SOPs.
  - o Professional behaviours and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics were embedded throughout the programme to ensure learners would understand the expectations. This had been considered in the programme documentation and module specifications. It was noted module DSLT7001 Professional Practice in Speech and

Language Therapy was closely linked to professional behaviours and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

- o The philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base were outlined in the structure and delivery of the programme. It was noted this was based on the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists curriculum, which ensured the programme reflected current professional standards and expectations. This was evidenced through the module and programme specifications.
- o There were a range of processes to review and update the curriculum to ensure it remained up to date and relevant. This included annual programme review, engagement with placement providers and external examiners. These processes introduced a level of flexibility within the curriculum, enabling the education provider to implement regulatory changes efficiently and respond to learner needs and make improvements.
- o The structure of the programme ensured the integration of theory and practice. Visitors noted how clearly this had been outlined in the Course Rationale document. Theory and practice was integrated throughout the programme across practice placements, learning outcomes and assessment approaches. This was also identified as one of the programme's key aims, highlighting its central importance and the focus placed on embedding it throughout the curriculum. There was evidence of a variety of learning and teaching methods being used, which were outlined in the Course Summary document. These included a combination of blended and face to face teaching and collaborative peer learning. This approach reflected a diverse approach to learning and teaching and was considered appropriate to the aims and structure of the proposed programme.
- o A commitment to developing autonomous and reflective practice was embedded within the course aims and assessment approaches, which included reflective components. This was evidenced through the programme specification and module specifications.
- o The structure of the curriculum ensures evidence-based practice is embedded throughout the programme. This is demonstrated through the module specifications where the learning outcomes are embedded across a range of modules. It was noted a core aim of the programme was to develop evidence-based speech and language therapists. It was noted that a central aim of the programme was to develop speech and language therapists who were guided by evidence-based practice.
- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to obtaining consent (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 4.10). We received clarification on the process the education provider had in place to enable learners to gain consent to work with service users. Alongside this they also provided details of the process they had to gain consent from learners participating as service users. The placement handbooks were updated to reflect this and it was made clear that participation was optional.

- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the attendance requirements of the programme (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 4.11). We noted the Portobello Institute would be responsible for managing and monitoring attendance requirements and the programme coordinator would oversee this in line with the education providers guidance outlined in the Operations Manual. We noted the Attendance Policy and Attendance and Engagement Policy for Blended and Online Programmes outlined the expectations for learner participation throughout the programme.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o Practice-based learning was integrated throughout the programme. The Course Specification document demonstrated the programme had been structured to ensure learners could gain knowledge and skills through two level 6 practice-based learning modules, DSLT6001 Practice Placement 1 and DSLT6002 Practice Placement 2 practice-based learning, which they could then apply to their academic modules.
  - o The Summary and Resource document demonstrated the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning was appropriate to enable learners to meet the SOPs and achieve the learning outcomes. Visitors acknowledged the range of placements available, which would enable learners to gain a breadth of experience. Alongside this, they also noted the number of placement hours exceeded what was required by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists.
  - o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the quality of practice-based learning (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.3). We received confirmation that the placement coordinator who would be responsible for assessing the suitability of placements would be based in Dublin. We noted they would be a CORU registered speech and language therapist. We acknowledged they would be assessing the suitability of placements in accordance with the education providers Placement Learning Policy (PLP) and the Practice-Based Education Policy (PBEP).
  - o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to practice-based learning taking place in a safe and supportive environment (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.4). We noted the appointment of a Practice Education Coordinator and adherence to the education providers placement policies, such as the Placement Learning Policy and the Practice-Based Education Policy would ensure that practice-based learning was delivered in a safe and supportive environment.
  - o Through Quality theme 4, we explored how the education provider had considered the number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff and what processes were used to ensure they were qualified, had relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to training for practice educators (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.7). We received confirmation of the training that would be offered to practice educators. We noted the initial induction session would be delivered online, however, an optional in person session would be available on campus in Dublin. We recognised this training was mandatory for all practice educators to complete before the placement commenced. In addition to this, there was also a recorded video series available to provide further support for practice educators, which had been developed by both the education provider and Portobello Institute. This series covered topics such as, placement planning, supervision, assessment and support for learners. Alongside this there is also the education providers CPD training that will be accessible to the Dublin based practice educators.
  - o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to learners and practice educators receiving information in preparation for practice-based learning (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 5.8). The education provider has a course-specific downloadable document on the website. This document outlines the specific information learners need for the proposed programme. Further information to prepare learners for practice-based learning will be available in the Practice Placement Student Handbook. With regards to practice educators, they will be provided with training prior to learners commencing their placements and will be supplied with the relevant information and documentation.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - o The programme documentation demonstrated clear alignment between the learning outcomes and the SOPs. The assessment strategy was explained in detail, confirming that learners were required to complete two core practice-based modules (DSLT6001 Practice Placement 1 and DSLT6002 Practice Placement 2) to be eligible for registration. These modules were assessed through a portfolio that provided evidence for each SOP. Additionally, where modules included a single assessment, these were directly mapped to specific SOPs and had to be passed individually. The programme design also ensured that compensation was not permitted for Level 6 and 7 modules, which ensured all learning outcomes were fully met.
  - o The module DSLT7001 (Professional Practice in Speech and Language Therapy), along with the two core practice-based modules above, includes clear references to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics. Through clarification, it was confirmed that these standards were assessed via a portfolio, which required learners to explicitly address and provide evidence for each relevant SOP. This approach ensured meaningful engagement with the professional expectations.

- o Assessment methods were clear and appropriate and were outlined in the module specifications. It was noted the assessment methods were varied and included portfolios, essay assignments, oral presentations and practical skills assessments. This demonstrated there were a range of assessment methods used to assess the learning outcomes.
- o Visitors noted the additional information provided relating to the academic appeals process (in relation to the referral from Stage 1 regarding SET 6.6). We received confirmation that the Operations Handbook outlined the process for academic appeals. In addition to this, it was also made clear that the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) would be accessible to learners on the proposed programme, as the awarding body for the programme was based in England.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: 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 programme 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 observations they had on the conclusions reached.

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

- The programmes are approved.
- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2028-29 academic year.

Reason for this decision: The Education and Training Committee Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the programme should receive approval

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	Health Sciences University		
Case reference	CAS-01778-X7G6B7	Lead visitors	Jennifer Caldwell and Lucy Myers
Quality of provision			

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The areas we explored focused on:
    - Quality activity 1 – we considered the overall resourcing and sustainability of the proposed programme, including the anticipated demand and how the education provider plans to support its delivery over time. In addition, we examined how Ireland specific policies had been considered and how these would be appropriately applied to the proposed programme.
    - Quality activity 2 – we explored how regularly the education provider was collaborating with practice education providers, particularly in relation to the student led clinic which the education provider was in the process of developing.
    - Quality activity 3 – we considered the education provider approach to placement capacity and examined the processes in place to ensure sufficient availability of placements for learners. The education provider outlined how placement capacity was planned, monitored, and maintained over time to support the delivery of practice-based learning and meet programme requirements. In addition to this we also considered how the proposed programme may impact other programmes within the region.
    - Quality activity 4 – we examined how the education provider ensured there was a sufficient number of staff to support practice-based learning. We also explored the measures in place to confirm practice educators were appropriately qualified and experienced, ensuring they were equipped to deliver supervision and support to learners during their placements.
    - Quality activity 5 – we explored how the education provider had accounted for the differences between UK and Irish qualifications when setting the entry criteria for the proposed programme. The education provider demonstrated that these variations were considered to ensure fair and appropriate access for applicants from both the UK and Ireland. Additionally, we examined the Recognised Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) route and sought clarification on

whether any distinctions existed for Irish applicants. This helped confirm that the RPEL process was inclusive and consistently applied to all applicants.
- The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Facilities provided

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:
- The education provider currently have staff to deliver the proposed programme, however they will be appointing additional staff for the delivery of the course in Dublin.
- The education provider will be delivering the programme in partnership with the Portobello Institute in Dublin. The Portobello Institute are based in the centre of Dublin and have two buildings, which offer offices, classrooms, a library, an on-site clinic, clinical skills laboratories and learner rest rooms. The location of the buildings also provides good transport links, which provides learners and staff with easy access.
- The Portobello Institute are also developing another campus where they plan to provide clinical simulation environments, human performance laboratories and additional teaching spaces. They are also working with the education provider to develop a speech and language therapy clinic onsite.

Programmes

Programme name	Mode of study	First intake date	Nature of provision
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration) Dublin	FT (Full time)	06/01/2026	Taught (HEI)

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		16/09/2024
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Radiotherapy and Oncology)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer		16/09/2024
Independent and Supplementary Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	13/01/2025
MSc Dietetics (Integrated Degree apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			23/09/2024
MSc Dietetics (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			16/01/2023
MSc Occupational Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			09/01/2023
MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			09/01/2023
MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) (Dublin)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			16/09/2024
MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	16/01/2023
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist			09/01/2023
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		08/09/2025
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			08/09/2025

BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist			08/09/2025
BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist			08/09/2025