
Approval process report

Keele University, Speech and language therapy, 2024-25

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve speech and language therapy programme at Keele 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 is fit to practice.

We have:

- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found most of our standards are met in this area. We needed to review 19 areas through stage 2 of the process.
- Reviewed the programme against our programme level standards and 19 areas relating to our institution level standards through stage 2 of the process. We found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities.
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programme should be approved.
- Decided that all standards are met, and that the programme is approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
 - Quality activity 1: The visitors were unable to find information about equity, diversity, and inclusion in relation to the admissions process. The visitors received information about the education provider's policies around equality and inclusivity. The visitors therefore were unsure whose policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into consideration through the application process. The education provider confirmed that both they, and the employer, shared responsibility for upholding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) during the admissions process. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.
 - Quality activity 2: The visitors could see no reference to how feedback about the employer feeds into the programme. The visitors were unsure how the education provider makes sure the programme delivers overall quality and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The education provider explained they survey employers twice a year as part of monitoring. Feedback related to the employer is also typically gathered through the tripartite review meetings. An internal Apprenticeship Management Group has oversight of delivery and mandates regular updates from all programmes in line with internal quality assurance. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.
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- Quality activity 3: The visitors noted some modules are assessed entirely by test / examination. As the teaching is mostly delivered online, the visitors were unsure whether these assessments will also be delivered online. If so, the visitors were unsure how the education provider maintains the integrity of the assessment so learners who complete the programme can practise safely and effectively in their profession. The education provider informed us all formal examinations and tests are conducted in person during scheduled on-campus days. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.
 - The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore is approved.
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| Previous consideration | Not applicable. This approval process was not referred from another process. |
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| Decision | The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether the programme is approved |
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| Next steps | Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The provider's next performance review will be in the 2028-29 academic year. |
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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

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

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Our regulatory approach

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

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

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

The approval process

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

- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme

- 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:

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| Jane Day | Lead visitor, therapeutic radiographer |
| Lucy Myers | Lead visitor, speech and language therapy |
| John Archibald | Education Quality Officer |

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 12 HCPC-approved programmes across seven professions. It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1996. This includes one post-registration programme for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations.

The education provider has engaged with the approval review process in the current model of quality assurance. The education provider sought approval for the following new programmes:

- MSc Occupational Therapy, FT (Full time)
- BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging), FLX (Flexible)
- MSc Prosthetics and Orthotics, FT (Full time)

We were satisfied there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate our standards were met, and the programmes were approved by the respective Education and Training Committees in:

- November 2023
- August 2022
- December 2021

The education provider engaged with the annual monitoring assessment process in the legacy model of quality assurance in 2019. Annual monitoring was for each profession, and at the meeting on 1 July 2020 the Education and Training Committee agreed that there was sufficient evidence that the standards continued to be met, and the programmes remain approved.

The proposed programme sits within the School of Allied Health Professions and Pharmacy (formerly the School of Allied Health Professions) in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. Other HCPC-approved programmes also sit within this faculty.

The education provider has one degree apprenticeship programme, in occupational therapy. Our Education and Training Committee approved this programme in February 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 | Biomedical scientist | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2009 |
| | Occupational therapy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2024 |
| | Paramedic | <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2021 |
| | Physiotherapist | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 1996 |

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|--------------------------|---|---|--|------|
| | Prosthetist / Orthotist | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2022 |
| | Radiographer | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2017 |
| | Speech and language therapist | <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate | 2024 |
| Post-registration | Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing | | | 2010 |

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.

| Data Point | Benchmark | Value | Date | Commentary |
|-------------------------|-----------|-------|------|---|
| Learner number capacity | 442 | 462 | 2024 | <p>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.</p> <p>We explored resourcing for the programme and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p> |

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| Learner non-continuation | 3% | 2% | 2020-21 | <p>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.</p> <p>The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 1%.</p> <p>We reviewed learners' experience on approved programmes and any potential factors for not continuing. We were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p> |
| Outcomes for those who complete programmes | 92% | 95% | 2021-22 | <p>This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 3%.</p> <p>We reviewed learners' experience on approved programmes and any</p> |

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| | | | | potential for employment and or further study. We were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider. |
| Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award | N/A | Gold | 2023 | <p>The definition of a Gold TEF award is “Provision is consistently outstanding and of the highest quality found in the UK Higher Education sector.”</p> <p>We explored this by reviewing teaching methods on the programme. We were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p> |
| Learner satisfaction | 79.5% | 78.6% | 2024 | <p>This data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is broadly equal to the benchmark, which suggests the provider’s performance in this area is in line with sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year’s data point, the education provider’s performance has dropped by 1%.</p> <p>We reviewed the learner experience at the education provider and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p> |
| HCPC performance review cycle length | n/a | 2028/29 | 2023/24 | The provider will engage with monitoring in the 2028/29 academic year. This decision was made in 2023/24. |

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 aligns with existing provision.

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

At the time of the executive-led stage 1 review, this institution was new to the running of HCPC-approved apprenticeship programmes, and this would have been the first HCPC-approved apprenticeship programme. We therefore needed to make a judgement that they met all standards impacted by the education provider / employer relationship by directly assessing them through a visitor-led review. We have indicated below which standards need to be directly assessed through a visitor-led review.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants –**
 - Information about all programmes is provided on the education provider's website. This contains a breakdown of the entry requirements including details of the academic grade requirements, criminal records declaration, health check requirements, and the requirement to attend an interview.
 - The marketing and programme teams review the contents of programme information pages on the education provider's website.
 - Applicants are provided with admissions information during open day talks. Applicants are encouraged to contact the relevant school should they need further information about the programme.
 - Programme Specifications are available for programmes. These provide full information for a specific year of entry and include information such as fees and additional costs.
 - For the proposed degree apprenticeship programme, employers will provide information about the programme to their employees. As the employer has not been confirmed, we will need to assess how applicants find out about and understand the programme, and how they and the education provider, gain the information they need to make an informed choice. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 of the approval process for the apprenticeship programme.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**
 - The English language entry requirements are detailed in programme specifications and on programme webpages. Applicants whose first

language is not English, must have the required International English Language Testing System (IELTS) results. English GCSE at the required grade must have been achieved.

- Applicants' English language skills are assessed as part of the interview process. Apprenticeship interviews are undertaken jointly with the relevant Trust.
- All applicants are required to declare any criminal convictions. Applicants need to provide an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. For professional programmes, a Health and Conduct Applicant panel is convened to consider convictions. The panel will include practice-based learning provider representation.
- Information about the requirement for occupational health clearance is contained on the webpages and the programme specification.
- For the proposed degree apprenticeship programme, applicants will be employees from an employer. As the employer has not been confirmed, we will need to assess this relationship and whose policies and processes are taken into consideration through the application process; what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ. We will need to assess this as part of stage 2 of the approval process for the apprenticeship programme.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**
 - Many programmes do not allow APEL. Where APEL is allowed, applications are considered on a case-by-case basis by the relevant programme director to assess the suitability of the prior learning. It will be permitted on the proposed programme.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity, and inclusion –**
 - The education provider is committed to ensuring equality of treatment of staff, learners, and applicants.
 - Staff involved in interviewing are required to do EDI training. Interviewers are responsible for ensuring equal opportunities are maintained. This includes seeking further support from Student Support if required and making reasonable adjustments where necessary.
 - Interviews are undertaken by a minimum of two people. This minimises the potential for bias from one individual.
 - The education provider is a member of the Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, Stonewall Diversity Champion, and a Disability Confident Employer. They are committed to equality across staff and learner bodies.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, applicants will be employees from the employer partner. As the employer has not been confirmed, we will need to assess which and whose policies / processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into

consideration through the application process, what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 of the approval process for the apprenticeship programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the employer has not been confirmed for the proposed apprenticeship programme, we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and employer in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 2.1 – how employers provide information about the programme for their employees. We will need to assess how applicants understand about the programme, and how they and the education provider, gain the information they need to make an informed choice.
- SETs 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 - whose policies and processes relating to English language, character, and health are taken into consideration through the application process, and what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ.
- SET 2.7 - whose policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into consideration through the application process, and what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ.

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹ –**
 - Academic standards conform to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) levels and subject benchmark statements where applicable. Programmes are validated through Standing Validation Panels (SVPs). These confirm modules and programmes are at the correct level to achieve the award.
 - All HCPC-regulated programmes are approved by SVPs at or above the expected threshold level of entry to the Register. Annual programme reviews take place, and external examiners comment on benchmark statements where applicable.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Sustainability of provision –**
 - Each school holds a budget which is reviewed regularly, along with cashflow, by the Faculty Management Accountant.

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

- Modules and programmes are reviewed using quality assurance processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose.
- Agreements exist with practice-based learning providers showing joint commitment to the training of learners.
- Stakeholders engage in development of new provisions and are consulted during approval / validation / accreditation processes to ensure programmes meet the needs of the future workforce for the professions.
- For the proposed degree apprenticeship programme, partnerships are with NHS providers to support practice-based learning. Stakeholders from the NHS providers in the region have been consulted in the initial stages of the programme design and will continue to be part of this process until completion of the programme specifications. As we do not know where learners are coming from, we cannot be assured of programme sustainability, nor can we determine how resourcing / threats / support are recognised and managed. We will need to consider the sustainability of the programme as part of stage 2 (SET 3.1) of the approval process for the apprenticeship programme.
- **Effective programme delivery –**
 - The education provider has a Learning Principles policy which is embedded in all programmes. Education provider governance structures are standard for all programmes. Programme level meetings report into the School Education Committee. This reports to the Faculty Education Committee and then the University Education Committee.
 - The School Education Committee receives reports from programme boards, undertakes scrutiny of programmes and modules, and approves responses to external examiner reports. The Director of Education chairs it.
 - The Faculty Education Committee has faculty level oversight of and scrutinises new programme development, programme modifications, and learner experience.
 - The University Education Committee is responsible for strategic and policy-related matters about the development and delivery of programmes.
 - All the education provider's regulations provide the framework for programme management. For example, regulation C7 applies to all postgraduate taught programmes. This gives the framework to manage the programme in areas such as admissions, maximum period of registration, learner engagement with studies and assessments, determination of results, and action to be taken in the event of failure.
 - A registrant of the relevant profession leads programme teams.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, learners will be employees from the employer partner. We will need to be assured how the education provider and employer understands the responsibilities of all involved and work together to deliver an effective programme. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 (SET 3.2) of the approval process for the apprenticeship programme.

- **Effective staff management and development –**
 - The education provider has a probation procedure for all staff, with points for review. The procedure provides a set time when new staff have more intensive guidance, encouragement, and appropriate early training.
 - Staff Performance Review and Enhancement (SPRE) is mandatory for all staff. The SPRE provides a framework for managers and their staff to work together. This framework clarifies expectations and ensures they are realistic and relevant to the direction of the education provider and to the career planning of the individual staff.
 - Academic staff can request study leave to support their development. They are also encouraged and supported to become members of the Higher Education Agency (HEA). The Keele Institute for Innovation and Teaching Excellence (KIITE) supports staff development by offering expertise in academic development, technology, and employability. Organisational Development offers training and support to all staff.
 - Lecturers are supported by their Programme Director and the governance structures, Directors of Education, Deans of Education and Heads of School.
 - Practice Educators are supported by the education provider and are offered training and updates as required.
 - The peer reflection on educational practices policy is applicable to all staff who teach and support learning. The emphasis of the policy is on quality enhancement and continuous improvement, and this process is independent of formal appraisal. All colleagues are required to contribute on an annual basis as both a teacher (observee) and peer reflector (observer).
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
 - The education provider has partnerships with NHS providers to support practice-based learning for all programmes.
 - Agreements are in place with practice-based learning providers to support learning and the provision of the future workforce for these professions.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the employer has not been confirmed for the proposed apprenticeship programme, we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and employer in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.1 – where learners are confirmed as coming from to consider the sustainability of the proposed programme. This includes understanding how the resourcing / threats / support are recognised and managed.

- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and employer understand the responsibilities of all involved and work together to deliver an effective programme.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality –**
 - Academic quality is maintained through a cycle of monitoring, review, and evaluation. This includes module evaluation by learners, review of performance on modules, annual programme reviews, and revalidation.
 - External examiners are appointed for all programmes. They are invited to provide feedback. Programme teams meet to discuss external examiner feedback and how to respond. The education provider responds to this feedback following examination boards. They also meet to discuss any proposed changes to modules based on all feedback.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, the education provider will have overall responsibility for the programme. We will need to review how the education provider works with and monitors / evaluates the role of the employer as part of delivering ongoing quality and effectiveness. We will need to assess these as part of stage 2 (SET 3.4) of the process.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
 - The faculty has a newly constituted Placements and Quality Management Committee with representation from all schools in the faculty, the Placements team, and the Quality team. We will need to consider the Committee as part of stage 2 of the approval process.
 - The school has a practice-based learning team who conduct quality assurance checks on all practice education providers. They provide training for new practice educators and refresher training for longstanding educators. A staff member meets with learners and their clinical educator for each practice-based learning. During link tutor visits and practice-based learning debriefs, learners are asked about any safeguarding issues, serious incidents, discrimination, and whistleblowing situations. These are documented in the link tutor visit form and practice-based learning debrief form.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, the employer has not been confirmed. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider works in partnership with the employer and their requirements through Stage 2 of the process.
 - As such, we will need to consider the processes to ensure 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).

- In addition, we will need to understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the quality of the practice environment through the partnership with the employer (SET 5.3). This includes ensuring there is a safe and supportive environment for learners, as employees, and service users (SET 5.4).
- **Learner involvement –**
 - The cohort chooses learner representatives. They attend Student Staff Voice Committee (SSVC) meetings to give the views of their cohort. SSVC feedback comes to programme meetings and on to School Education Committee and school and faculty SSVC as appropriate.
 - Learner feedback is used to inform any changes to modules and programmes. Learner feedback is requested when programmes are going through revalidation or new programmes are being developed.
 - The Learners' Union and Keele Postgraduate Association are the learner bodies organisations for Keele and have representation on education provider Committees.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Service user and carer involvement –**
 - Service users attend and input into key programme meetings such as the Annual Undergraduate Programme Review and the Postgraduate Programme Review.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the employer has not been confirmed for the proposed apprenticeship programme, we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and employer in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with and monitors / evaluates the role of the employer as part of delivering ongoing quality and effectiveness.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment through the partnership with the employer.
- 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 –**
 - University Regulation B covers all learners' rights and responsibilities. It states learners can access support when they have an issue which is affecting their ability to submit work.
 - The education provider provides institutional support through an Apprenticeship Team for all apprenticeship learners.
 - The Support to Study Policy applies where learners need additional support to continue their studies. The first stage involves a meeting with the Student Experience and Support Officer, the learner, and a member of academic staff. A plan is put into place to help the learner move forward with their studies.
 - There is an Academic Mentoring code of practice. Learners are allocated an academic mentor who signpost support services. If a learner requires reasonable adjustments, they can contact Student Services.
 - The school Engagement and Retention lead receives reports on attendance and engagement. They act on cases flagged for intervention due to falling below threshold attendance. They also receive and act upon an updated list of learners deemed to be in a risk category. For example, those learners who are returning after a leave of absence. These learners are contacted by academic mentors, with involvement of the School's Student Experience and Support Officer.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, the employer has not been confirmed. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider works in partnership with the employer and their requirements through Stage 2 of the process.
 - We recognise there will be additional policies and processes in place from the employer which support wellbeing and learning (SET 3.13). As part of this, we need to understand which policies apply in each situation and how learners know about these; how learners access academic support while in their place of employment; and whether and how processes are shared between the employer and the education provider.
 - We will also need to review how the education provider and the employer work together to provide an impartial, fair, and supportive environment for learners to progress (SET 3.14).
 - We will need to review who learners can complain to and what they can expect from each party. This includes how the education provider manages complaints from learners about allegations relating to incidents which happened at their place of employment (SET 3.15).
 - In addition, the education provider and employer 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). We need to understand which policies apply in which situation and who responds.

- We will also need to consider policies and processes in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners (SET 4.10). This is because the education provider and employer may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
 - Learners complete an annual declaration relating to their health and suitability for the programme.
 - If there is a concern around a learner's health and / or conduct, they will be referred to the school's Health and Conduct Committee.
 - Learners are required to inform the education provider if there are any changes to their DBS clearance.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, the employer has not been confirmed. We will therefore need to understand how the education provider works in partnership with the employer and their requirements through Stage 2 of the process.
 - The education provider and employer will have specific policies and processes to ensure the ongoing suitability of the learner (SET 3.16). We will need to understand which apply in which situation, and which takes priority relating to achievement and progression.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**
 - Some modules are taught with learners from other allied health professions. For example, physiotherapy. The approval of a new occupational therapy apprenticeship programme allows for IPE with the proposed programme.
 - The faculty has an interprofessional education committee which supports programmes in the integration of IPE.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity, and inclusion –**
 - The education provider is committed to ensuring equality of treatment of staff, learners, and applicants. They are a member of the Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, Stonewall Diversity Champion and is a Disability Confident Employer.
 - The school was awarded an Athena Swan departmental silver award in July 2023 in recognition of its work in gender equality. The school runs EDI inductions for staff and learners. It has learner and staff working groups to implement school and education provider level action plans. Programme Directors oversee decolonising the curriculum, and an Athena Swan Lead and an EDI Committee oversees these activities.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.

- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the employer has not been confirmed for the proposed apprenticeship programme, we will need to consider the relationship between the education provider and employer in the following areas through Stage 2 of the process:

- SET 3.13 – the additional policies and processes in place at the employer to support wellbeing and learning. As part of this, we need to understand which policies apply in each situation and how learners know about these; how learners access academic support while in their place of employment; and whether and how processes are shared between the employer and the education provider.
- SET 3.14 - how the education provider and the employer work together to provide and impartial, fair, and supportive environment for learners to progress.
- SET 3.15 - who learners complain to and what they can expect from each party. This includes how the education provider manages complaints from learners about allegations relating to incidents which happened at their place of employment.
- SET 3.16 – the specific policies and processes from the education provider and employer to ensure the ongoing suitability of the learner. We will need to understand which apply in which situation, and which takes priority relating to achievement and progression.
- 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 and who responds.
- 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 employer may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity –**
 - Assessments are designed to ensure they assess learning outcomes. They are reviewed as part of module approval and revisions.
 - There are exemptions from anonymous marking where it is not possible, for example for presentations. Where this is the case, the exemption is written into the module specification.
 - External Examiner reports are received after each board. Responses are drafted and approved at School Education Committee. These include how programme teams plan to respond to any recommendations made by External Examiners.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Progression and achievement –**
 - The explanation of protected titles and exit awards for learners who do not achieve the requirements for that award are stated in the programme specifications.
 - Professional programmes attendance requirements are more stringent than for non-regulated programmes. These requirements are stated in programme handbooks and are communicated to learners.
 - For the proposed apprenticeship programme, the employer has not been confirmed. Learners will also be employees so will have employment contracts which cover attendance. We will need to know how these work in partnership with the education provider's requirements about attendance and how they are monitored and shared between the parties, and how the requirements are identified and communicated (SET 4.11).
- **Appeals –**
 - All learners have the same right to appeal. They may only appeal based on exceptional circumstances not known at the time, or procedural irregularity.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the employer has not been confirmed for the proposed apprenticeship programme, 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 - as learners are employers, we will need to know how employment policies work in partnership with the education provider's requirements about attendance and how they are monitored and shared between the parties, and how the requirements are identified and communicated.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process due to the alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section.

For the proposed apprenticeship programme, it is clear the employer has not been confirmed. As learners will also be employees on this proposed programme, the employer is fundamental to the design, sustainability, and delivery of the programme

to ensure those who complete, can meet our requirements for registration. It is therefore appropriate for us to refer the 19 areas identified through the institution level standards review, to Stage 2. These are outlined below:

- SET 2.1 – how employers provide information about the programme for their employees. We will need to assess how applicants understand about the programme, and how they and the education provider, gain the information they need to make an informed choice.
- SETs 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 - whose policies and processes relating to English language, character, and health are taken into consideration through the application process, and what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ.
- SET 2.7 - whose policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into consideration through the application process, and what happens, and who holds the overall decision, if they differ.
- SET 3.1 – where learners are confirmed as coming from to consider the sustainability of the proposed programme. This includes understanding how the resourcing / threats / support are recognised and managed.
- SET 3.2 - how the education provider and employer understand the responsibilities of all involved and work together to deliver an effective programme.
- SET 3.4 - how the education provider works with and monitors / evaluates the role of the employer as part of delivering ongoing quality and effectiveness.
- SET 3.13 – the additional policies and processes in place at the employer to support wellbeing and learning. As part of this, we need to understand which policies apply in each situation and how learners know about these; how learners access academic support while in their place of employment; and whether and how processes are shared between the employer and the education provider.
- SET 3.14 - how the education provider and the employer work together to provide and impartial, fair, and supportive environment for learners to progress.
- SET 3.15 - who learners complain to and what they can expect from each party. This includes how the education provider manages complaints from learners about allegations relating to incidents which happened at their place of employment.
- SET 3.16 – the specific policies and processes from the education provider and employer to ensure the ongoing suitability of the learner. We will need to understand which apply in which situation, and which takes priority relating to achievement and progression.
- 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 and who responds.
- 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 employer may have specific, and differing, policies / processes.

- SET 4.11 - as learners are employers, how employment policies work in partnership with the education provider's requirements about attendance and how they are monitored and shared between the parties, and how the requirements are identified and communicated.
- SET 5.3 - understand how the education provider assesses and monitors the practice environment through the partnership with the employer.
- 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.

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

- The programme director and four lecturers are in post. All lecturers are qualified and HCPC registered. Subject matter experts from other disciplines will contribute to the programme. The business case has provision for further staff as the programme develops, and the cohort numbers grow.
- There are Clinical Skills Houses both on campus and at University Hospital North Midlands Clinical Education Centre. The campus simulation suite includes adapted living spaces, and consultation rooms. There are on-site library facilities, clinical suites, and learner services.
- Many teaching resources and support mechanisms are in place. Specific professional resources for the proposed programme are in place.
- All teaching and support resources will be in place for the Standing Validation Panel of the education provider in March 2025. All physical resources will be available for teaching, skills, and simulation by the start of programme.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

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 |
|--|---------------------------|---|--|---------------------|
| BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Degree Apprenticeship) | WBL (Work based learning) | Speech and language therapist | 20 learners, one cohort | 26 January 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.

Data / intelligence considered

We also considered data points / intelligence from others (e.g. prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England (Midlands) - we did not receive any information which could impact on this assessment.

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](#).

Quality theme 1 – equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants

Area for further exploration: The visitors were informed academic staff engaged in a range of internal mandatory training and internal and external continual professional development (CPD) opportunities. These supported diversity, inclusivity, and an anti-discriminatory approach to their work. The visitors also received information about the education provider's policies around equality and inclusivity. However, they did not receive information about how the employer equality and diversity policies would be applied through the admissions process. The visitors therefore were unsure whose policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into consideration through this process, to ensure the admissions process is open and impartial and does not discriminate against certain applicants. We sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider confirmed both they and the employer shared responsibility for upholding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI)

during the admissions process. Employers managed the initial recruitment stages under their own EDI policies and applicants underwent the education provider's admissions process once nominated by employers. The education provider's admissions process was governed by its EDI policy. This ensured fair treatment regardless of protected characteristics, and applicants who have additional needs received appropriate support in line with the employer's requirements under the Equality Act 2010. The education provider retained final say over admissions. The visitors were satisfied the evidence demonstrated how the education provider and employer's policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion were taken into consideration through the application process. They had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.

Quality theme 2 – the programme must have regular and effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted ongoing and regular evaluation of the programme was in place as part of the education provider's quality assurance processes. However, they could see no reference to how feedback about the employer fed into the programme. The visitors were not clear how the education provider evaluated the role of the employer as part of delivering ongoing quality and effectiveness, and so made sure the programme delivered overall quality and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The visitors were therefore unsure how the education provider monitored and evaluated the programme's quality and effectiveness. We sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider explained and provided evidence they surveyed employers twice a year as part of monitoring. Feedback related to the employer was also gathered through tripartite review meetings. An internal Apprenticeship Management Group had oversight of delivery and obtained regular updates from programmes in line with internal quality assurance. The visitors were satisfied the evidence demonstrated how the education provider made sure the programme delivered overall quality and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. They had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.

Quality theme 3 – the integrity of tests / examinations

Area for further exploration: The education provider informed us there were a range of assessment methods used on the programme. The visitors considered these appeared well matched to the learning outcomes. However, they noted some modules were assessed by a test / examination. For example, Introduction to Clinical Research. As the programme was delivered remotely, the visitors were unsure whether these assessments would also be undertaken remotely. If so, the visitors

were unsure how the education provider ensured these assessments were effective at deciding whether a learner is fit to practise by the end of the programme, and could practise safely and effectively in their profession. We therefore sought more information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider informed us that although proposed programme includes substantial online teaching, all formal examinations and tests were conducted in person during scheduled on-campus days. They explained this ensured consistency with education provider-wide assessment practices, supported academic integrity, and allowed for full invigilation in line with their regulations. The visitors were satisfied the evidence demonstrated how these assessments were effective at deciding whether a learner is fit to practise by the end of the programme and could practise safely and effectively in their profession. They had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.

Section 4: Findings

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

Conditions

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

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

Overall findings on how standards are met

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

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** – this standard is covered through institution-level assessment.
- **SET 2: Programme admissions** -
 - All applicants must be employed in a speech and language therapy-related role and be sponsored by their employer. Applications are submitted via the employer and the selection process includes an interview led by them. However, final acceptance onto the programme is determined by the education provider.
 - The visitors noted the education provider's apprenticeship department helps employers with promoting vacancies, assessing eligibility of candidates, and selecting candidates. For example, a training needs assessment is conducted by the Business Engagement Manager in collaboration with employers. While employers complete an eligibility document to confirm applicants meet contractual and employment criteria.
 - The education provider told us the Apprenticeship Team provides webinars about all its programmes and the education provider provides employers with information, including programme handbooks, which is shared with applicants. Admissions criteria are defined in the education provider's policies and programme-specific documents. They are reviewed regularly to uphold academic and professional standards. Applicants need 128 UCAS points, and GCSE Grade 4 / C in Maths and English Language or Level 2 Functional Skills Maths. Equivalent qualifications and relevant experience are considered.
 - Applicants must demonstrate English communication skills equivalent to IELTS level 8.0, with no component below 7.5. The visitors considered this standard is specific to speech and language therapists due to the profession's reliance on effective English communication. Candidates who do not meet this requirement will not be accepted onto the programme. Should there be any discrepancies - for example, if an employer proposes an applicant who does not meet the required English language standard – the visitors understood the education provider's admissions process takes precedence.
 - Applicants must provide a satisfactory occupational health clearance, character references, and Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. These checks are completed as part of the application process with the employer. The employer provides information to the education provider they have taken place as part of the applicant's eligibility review. The education provider checks this, and the programme team follows it up at the first tripartite review and checked prior to any practice-based learning.
 - The visitors understood all staff participate in mandatory training and ongoing internal and external continual professional development (CPD) activities. This is to support diversity, inclusivity, and an anti-discriminatory approach in their professional practice. As discussed in

[quality theme 1](#), the education provider and the employer share responsibility for upholding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) during the admissions process.

- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management, and leadership –**
 - The Midlands Partnership NHS Foundation Trust are the employer partners for this programme. They engaged with the education provider regarding the partnership. They also worked with the education provider's marketing and apprenticeship engagement teams for information and support. They have agreed to send three of their employees to study on the programme from January 2026. The visitors considered the programme aims to develop learners both practically and academically through a variety of teaching, learning, and assessment methods. A dedicated budget supports specialised facilities and resources for learners and educators.
 - The education provider's Placement Team works with a network of speech and language therapy practice-based learning providers. The education provider holds regular meetings with stakeholders such as local organisations, representatives of the ICS (Integrated Care Systems) and AHP (Allied Health Professions) faculty to monitor workforce needs. The Placement Lead connects with employers and builds the apprenticeship practice-based learning network. As the programme is delivered online, the education provider expects to recruit nationally. The Placement Lead links up employers and builds a network of apprenticeship placement providers. A SLT Apprentice Planning Group exists between the programme team and local employers. This group meets to collaborate, agree, and manage expectations, including practice-based learning.
 - The programme is overseen by a Professional Lead, supported by the Director of Education and Head of School, ensuring strong leadership and accountability. The Programme Director for the MSci Speech and Language Therapy also manages the proposed programme. The Programme Director holds a Master's qualification and PhD and has experience developing curricula.
 - Regular reviews are used to drive programme improvement. All modules are assessed using the education provider's mechanisms and contribute to annual programme reviews. Learners evaluate each practice-based learning site. Feedback is reviewed and acted upon, with data shared with partner organisations for quality enhancement. Senior academic staff from other institutions are appointed as external examiners and provide feedback on the programme to drive improvements. As discussed in [quality theme 2](#), the education provider gains feedback about the programme through an employer survey and tripartite review meetings.
 - The Placement Team manage practice-based learning with administrative support. A speech and language therapist leads

practice-based learning development and is supported by the Programme Director. The Placement Lead focuses on building practice-based learning capacity and networks for non-local learners.

- The visitors considered the education provider has sufficient suitably qualified and experienced staff to run the programme effectively. The programme team currently includes four speech and language therapy lecturers with teaching experience and master's-level qualifications. Additional staff will be recruited once the programme has been approved. The team is supported by linguists, allied health staff, a psychologist, and administrative staff. A workload allocation model ensures an appropriate balance of suitably qualified individuals to deliver and support the responsibilities across teaching, support, research, and leadership.
- All lecturers are registered with HCPC and have experience of working in the NHS and other settings and are all engaged in research or scholarship activities and have leadership experience. Any academic staff across the wider school, who also teach on the programme, are HCPC registered.
- Visitors noted the education provider's resources include a dedicated speech and language therapy room. This contains specialist materials such as a simulation centre with ward and sensory environments. Learners have access to library resources and technology such as the Keele Virtual Learning Environment (KLE).
- The education provider told us about the academic, pastoral, and wellbeing support it provides to all learners, whether studying online or in person. For example, the visitors noted services such as academic skills development, careers advice, and access to academic mentors. All support is available remotely and on campus. All learners have access to the Health Assured 24 / 7 service. A dedicated Student Experience and Support Officer (SESO) is the first contact for non-academic issues and refers learners to specialist services. Module Leaders provide learning and assessment support. The Disability Inclusion Tutor (DIT) supports learners with disabilities and works closely with Student Support services. Counselling and mental health support is available. Each learner is assigned a speech and language therapy staff member as their Academic Mentor, who serves as the first point of contact for study-related concerns.
- The programme supports learners from underrepresented groups to access, participate, and succeed by aligning with the education provider's Access and Participation Plan (2020–2025). The curriculum has been decolonised and co-created to reflect diversity and teaching materials embed culture, inclusion, and authenticity. In addition, learners are introduced to Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) working groups on diversity. Quality monitoring includes staff / learner voice groups. The KLE uses Padlet, Mentimeter, podcasts, expert talks, and colour-coded materials. All teaching is recorded for flexible access.

- The programme encourages informal and impartial resolution of learner complaints. The visitors understood, for example, learners can raise issues with the Programme Director, Academic Mentor, or through Student-Staff Voice committees. Issues are often addressed through the tripartite meetings which involve the learner, Practice Educator, and academic representative. The Early Resolution Officer acts as the first point of contact for learners experiencing academic or non-academic issues. The education provider's complaints policy is outlined in the Training Plan and follows standard Early Resolution procedures. The Training Plan also includes the mandatory route for escalating complaints to the Department for Education. Learners use the education provider or employer's complaints policies depending on the circumstances. Therefore, learners would use the employer's complaint policy for issues which took place in the learner's workplace.
- Learners are subject to the education provider's Fitness to Practise procedures from enrolment, which takes precedence in all relevant matters. Employers can raise concerns about learner's conduct, character and health through formal channels, and issues arising in academic or practice-based learning are shared for appropriate action.
- The visitors noted learners must follow the employer's procedures for reporting concerns about the safety and wellbeing of service users. Learners are encouraged to contact the education provider Placement Team for guidance and support throughout the process.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
 - The visitors reviewed the programme and module outcomes, content, and assessments and determined they demonstrated the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs). In addition, the module specifications included information about learning outcomes to be met.
 - Programme and module outcomes and assessments are aligned with the professional conduct standards. Learners are introduced to ethical and professional expectations in their first semester. The visitors considered the HCPC Standards of conduct, performance, and ethics are embedded throughout the curriculum, with emphasis on protecting service users and effective communication. For example, in year 1, learners study professional behaviour in the Clinical and Professional Development module.
 - The visitors noted how the programme is centred on speech and language therapy and its core professional values. It is designed to meet the knowledge, skills, and values expected of new graduates, as outlined in the RCSLT curriculum guidance. Speech and language therapy principles are embedded throughout the programme. For example, hearing impairment in the module Conditions Across the Lifespan in the third year of the programme.
 - The programme is designed to adapt to innovations and changes in practice. The education provider outlined how internal monitoring and

external examiner input support regular curriculum review and enhancement. The education provider gains insights from the 'SLTeaTime' group which inform curriculum and practice-based learning planning. In addition, all staff have dedicated time for research and scholarly activity, helping maintain the programme's relevance and currency.

- Learners first build foundational knowledge from relevant disciplines before their initial practice-based learning. They apply this knowledge during practice-based learning and then return to academic study to reflect, consolidate, and deepen their understanding. Workbooks and on-the-job learning activities help learners connect theory to practice.
- The visitors noted programme follows the Curriculum Design Framework, Learning and Teaching Strategy, and Learning Principles. Teaching methods include digital technologies, interactive lectures, seminars, workshops, and synchronous learning activities to promote engagement and learning.
- Learners develop reflective and autonomous thinking skills throughout the programme, applying them in both academic and workplace settings. Problem-solving and critical analysis is developed through scenario-based learning and scaffolded via research modules in years one and two. The education provider told us reflective practice is embedded throughout the programme via summative assessments and debriefing with tripartite meetings including reflection on personal and professional development.
- Evidence-based practice and research skills are integrated throughout the programme. Learners are introduced to clinical research, evidence-informed practice, and research methods during the first year. In year two the focus moves to an understanding of quantitative and qualitative methods, implementation science, literature searching, and statistical principles. In year three learners use feedback from year two to complete an independent research project.
- During the on-the-job portion of the programme, learners follow their employer's policies for obtaining service user consent. Employers are responsible for inducting learners into local protocols and ensuring their role is clearly explained to service users. Campus-based activities involving learners as service users do not occur during the programme. Members of the programme staff do undertake these activities as the service user rather than learners participating in this capacity.
- Attendance during all components of the programme is compulsory. Attendance is monitored through tripartite review meetings and tracked using the engagement dashboard. Poor attendance without valid reason may result in disciplinary procedures. When a learner has an unauthorised absence, the programme team notifies the employer.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**

- The education provider outlined how the programme emphasises active engagement with professional practice, using scenario-based learning in clinical modules. They explained that practice-based learning is led by a Practice-Based Learning Lead Tutor and supported by a multi-professional HCPC-registered Placement Team and an Administrative Team.
- As outlined earlier, the SLT Apprenticeship Planning Group supports practice-based learning coordination, strategy development, practice educator training, and sharing of best practices. The education provider told us membership is flexible to accommodate new employer partners as the programme expands nationally.
- The programme includes three practice-based learning blocks of four weeks (150 hours), six weeks (225 hours), and six weeks (225 hours). These are across all three years of the programme, and the visitors considered this demonstrated the integral nature of practice-based learning to academic learning and structure, duration, and range. Learners experience diverse practice-based learning opportunities and apply their knowledge, skills, and values throughout. Learners may rotate across teams.

Practice-based learning is approved and audited by the education provider's Practice Experience team. All practice learning environments are subject to the same quality assurance processes. Therefore, quality is monitored through various mechanisms, including the Placements Management and Quality (PMQ) sub-committee, evaluations, stakeholder meetings, and CPD sessions. During practice-based learning, the Placement Team provides duty cover to support learners as needed. As part of their preparation, learners are informed about the process for raising concerns. Throughout their placement, learners are expected to follow the education provider's policies, including reporting any concerns through the designated channels.

- The practice-based learning Lead Tutor oversees the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of practice-based learning, supported by a Placement Team and an Administrative Team. The education provider collaborates with employers to ensure adequate practice educator capacity.
- The visitors understood Practice Educators are qualified and registered speech and language therapists so they are able to support and develop learners in a safe and effective way.
- The education provider provides initial mandatory and ongoing training for Practice Educators, and CPD opportunities to support their development. They recommend refresher training is undertaken every three years. The training includes support for under-represented learners and guidance on addressing discrimination, racism, unconscious bias and promoting inclusion and diversity. Practice Educators are supported and trained to assess learners' competencies through this training.

- In addition, the education provider provide detailed marking guidelines that are mapped against each section of the paperwork, and mapped to level of study, to support standardisation and transparency.
- Preparation for Practice sessions are held before each practice-based learning block to help learners. These sessions cover areas such as assessment processes, reflection, record keeping, expectations, resilience, and insights from past learners and Practice Educators.
- Learners with support needs are encouraged to contact the education providers Disability Inclusion Tutor before practice-based learning. They must communicate their needs to their Practice Educator to ensure appropriate support and reasonable adjustments.
- Live online sessions for Practice Educators are held a month before practice-based learning blocks to review paperwork, explore scenarios, and address any questions. In addition, the practice-based learning assessment for Practice Educators is outlined in the Practice Based Learning Handbook.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment –**
 - The visitors reviewed the programme documentation submitted which included module descriptors. The visitors understood these outlined the assessment methods used to demonstrate achievement of both programme-level and module-level learning outcomes so learners can demonstrate achievement of the SOPs. Assessments are appropriately designed, aligned with clinical practice, and include formats such as assignments, case-based tasks, and statistical analysis.
 - Learners are introduced to professional conduct, performance, and ethics requirements during induction and early modules and are assessed throughout the programme. The visitors recognised module descriptors outline the assessments used.
 - The education provider told us the programme uses a variety of assessment methods, including direct observation during practice-based learning and clinical presentations with viva-style questions. The visitors considered these methods are aligned with the programme's aims and learning outcomes. As discussed in [quality theme 3](#), all formal examinations and tests are conducted in person during scheduled on-campus days.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

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

Section 5: Referrals

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

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

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- All standards are met, and therefore the 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 observation they had on the conclusions reached.

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

- The programme is approved

Reason for this decision: The Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the 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 | Case reference | Lead visitors | Quality of provision | Facilities provided |
|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| Keele University | CAS-01749-N1Q9P8 | Jane Day Lucy Myers | <p>Through this assessment, we have noted:</p> <p>The areas we explored focused on:</p> <p>Quality activity 1: The visitors were unable to find information about equity, diversity, and inclusion in relation to the admissions process. The visitors received information about the education provider's policies around equality and inclusivity. The visitors therefore were unsure whose policies and processes relating to equality, diversity and inclusion are taken into consideration through the application process. The education provider confirmed that both they, and the employer, shared responsibility for upholding Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) during the admissions</p> | <p>The programme director and four lecturers are in post. All lecturers are qualified and HCPC registered. Subject matter experts from other disciplines will contribute to the programme. The business case has provision for further staff as the programme develops, and the cohort numbers grow.</p> <p>There are Clinical Skills Houses both on campus and at University Hospital North Midlands Clinical Education Centre. The campus simulation suite includes adapted living spaces, and consultation rooms. There are on-site library facilities, clinical suites, and learner services.</p> <p>Many teaching resources and support mechanisms are in place. Specific professional resources for</p> |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | <p>process. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.</p> <p>Quality activity 2: The visitors could see no reference to how feedback about the employer feeds into the programme. The visitors were unsure how the education provider makes sure the programme delivers overall quality and effectiveness on an ongoing basis. The education provider explained they survey employers twice a year as part of monitoring. Feedback related to the employer is also typically gathered through the tripartite review meetings. An internal Apprenticeship Management Group has oversight of delivery and mandates regular updates from all programmes in line with internal quality assurance. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.</p> <p>Quality activity 3: The visitors noted some modules are assessed entirely by test / examination. As the teaching is mostly delivered online, the visitors were unsure</p> | <p>the proposed programme are in place.</p> <p>All teaching and support resources will be in place for the Standing Validation Panel of the education provider in March 2025. All physical resources will be available for teaching, skills, and simulation by the start of programme.</p> |
|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|----------------------------|
| | | | <p>whether these assessments will also be delivered online. If so, the visitors were unsure how the education provider maintains the integrity of the assessment so learners who complete the programme can practise safely and effectively in their profession. The education provider informed us all formal examinations and tests are conducted in person during scheduled on-campus days. The visitors had no further questions in this area and considered the standard to be met.</p> <p>The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.</p> | |
| Programmes | | | | |
| Programme name | | | Mode of study | Nature of provision |
| BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Degree Apprenticeship) | | | Work-based learning | Apprenticeship |

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

| Name | Mode of study | Profession | Modality | Annotation | First intake date |
|---|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science | FT (Full time) | Biomedical scientist | | | 01/09/2009 |
| BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy | FT (Full time) | Occupational therapist | | | 01/09/2025 |
| BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy | WBL (Work based learning) | Occupational therapist | | | 01/09/2025 |
| MSc Occupational Therapy | FT (Full time) | Occupational therapist | | | 20/01/2024 |
| MSc Paramedic Science | FT (Full time) | Paramedic | | | 22/09/2025 |
| MSci Paramedic Science | FT (Full time) | Paramedic | | | 01/09/2021 |
| MSc Physiotherapy | FTA (Full time accelerated) | Physiotherapist | | | 01/01/2020 |
| MSci Physiotherapy | FT (Full time) | Physiotherapist | | | 01/09/2019 |
| MSci Physiotherapy (with International year) | FT (Full time) | Physiotherapist | | | 01/09/2019 |
| MSc Prosthetics and Orthotics | FT (Full time) | Prosthetist / orthotist | | | 01/01/2022 |
| BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging) | FLX (Flexible) | Radiographer | Diagnostic radiographer | | 26/09/2022 |
| BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging) | FT (Full time) | Radiographer | Diagnostic radiographer | | 01/09/2017 |
| MSci Speech and Language Therapy | FT (Full time) | Speech and language therapist | | | 23/09/2024 |
| Independent and Supplementary Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals | PT (Part time) | | | Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing | 01/01/2014 |