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## Approval process report

University of Sunderland, Chiropodist / podiatrist, 2023-24

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### Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve programmes at the University of Sunderland. This report captures the process we have undertaken to date to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) 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(s) against our programme level standards and 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(s) should be approved.
- Decided that all standards are met, and that the programme(s) is approved.

Through this assessment, we have noted

- The following are areas of best practice:
    - The involvement of learners in the staff recruitment process. The visitors considered this commendable.
    - Collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers. The visitors considered evidence of in-depth discussions and collaboration in the application interviews an example of good practice.
  - The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
    - The compressed nature of the programme - the visitors are satisfied that all standards are met. However, they have concerns about the compressed nature of the programme. The visitors are aware that compressing the programme into 2.5 years could have an impact on both learners and staff. Therefore, the visitors would like to review this area after the programme has run for one year via the focused review process. This would help us to understand how the learners are progressing, for example by reviewing the number of learners that have left the programme. The visitors would also consider any concerns from staff members and practice educators as a result of the compressed nature of the programme.
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**Previous consideration** Not applicable. This approval process was not referred from another process.

**Decision** The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide:

- whether the programme(s) is approved, and
- whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how.

**Next steps** Outline next steps / future case work with the provider:

- The education provider's next performance review will be in the 2026-27 academic year.
- Subject to the Panel's decision, we will undertake further investigations as per section 5.

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## Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment .....	4
About us .....	4
Our standards.....	4
Our regulatory approach.....	4
The approval process .....	4
How we make our decisions .....	5
The assessment panel for this review.....	5
Section 2: Institution-level assessment .....	5
The education provider context .....	5
Practice areas delivered by the education provider .....	6
Institution performance data .....	6
The route through stage 1 .....	9
Admissions.....	9
Management and governance .....	10
Quality, monitoring, and evaluation .....	12
Learners.....	13
Outcomes from stage 1 .....	16
Section 3: Programme-level assessment.....	16
Programmes considered through this assessment.....	16
Stage 2 assessment – provider submission .....	17
Quality themes identified for further exploration .....	17
Quality theme 1 – collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers .....	17
Quality theme 2 – ensuring adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.....	18
Quality theme 3 – ensuring adequate number of staff in practice-based learning relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support learning .....	19
Section 4: Findings.....	20
Conditions.....	20
Overall findings on how standards are met.....	20
Section 5: Referrals.....	24
Recommendations.....	25
Referrals to the focused review process.....	25
The compressed nature of the programme .....	25
Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes.....	25
Assessment panel recommendation.....	25
Education and Training Committee decision .....	25
Appendix 1 – summary report .....	27
Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution .....	30

## Section 1: About this assessment

### **About us**

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

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

Wendy Smith	Chiropodist/ podiatrist / POM - Administration
Jennifer Caldwell	Occupational therapist
Temilolu Odunaike	Education Quality Officer

## **Section 2: Institution-level assessment**

### **The education provider context**

The education provider currently delivers 16 HCPC-approved programmes across four professions, including two post registration programmes for independent

prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations. It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2006.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021.

The education provider engaged with the programme closure process in the legacy model of quality assurance. The level of qualification for paramedics' registration was raised and approval was withdrawn from programmes that were below the threshold.

In 2020 they engaged with the approval process to introduce two post registration programmes for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations. In 2021 they reported to us via the major change process the introduction of a new degree apprenticeship programme and a two-year accelerated programme from September 2021. It was reviewed through the approval process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021.

The new BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Apprenticeship) programme sits within the School of Nursing and Health Sciences which is one of the four Schools under the Faculty of Health Sciences & Wellbeing. There are a few policies and processes at faculty level which the new programme will benefit from. All of the HCPC approved Allied Health Profession (AHP) programmes are in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences therefore the policies and processes also apply to them.

### Practice areas delivered by the education provider

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

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
<b>Pre-registration</b>	Biomedical scientist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2006
	Occupational therapy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2019
	Paramedic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2016
	Physiotherapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2019
<b>Post-registration</b>	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2020

### 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
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	630	642	2022	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.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	3%	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 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</p>

				<p>performance has dropped by 2%</p> <p>We did not explore this data point through this assessment because there is no impact on the SETs considered.</p>
<p>Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study</p>	94%	98%	2019-20	<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 been maintained.</p> <p>We did not explore this data point through this assessment because there is no impact on the SETs considered.</p>
<p>Learner positivity score</p>	78.9%	80.1%	2023	<p>This National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score data was sourced at the subject level / the summary. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p>
<p>HCPC performance review cycle length</p>	N/A	5	2021/22	



## 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.

### Admissions

#### **Findings on alignment with existing provision:**

- Information for applicants –
  - The Admissions Policy and Procedure is set at institution level and applies to all programmes. The policy sets out the education provider's key principles guiding the operation and management of admission processes for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.
  - The education provider's website also contains admissions information as a first point of contact for applicants.
  - We understand that these will apply to the new provision with additional guidance for apprenticeship admissions for employers. For example, one to one support when assessing if their staff have the academic requirements.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**
  - The programme specification lists the English language requirement, details of the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as well as the occupational health requirements that must be undertaken by the employer. This therefore makes this a shared responsibility between the education provider and the employer.
  - The Admissions process is at School level and aligns with the process already approved for their BSC (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Apprenticeship).
  - The new provision will align with existing processes and procedures around assessing English language, character, and health.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**
  - The education provider's accreditation of prior learning (APL) Policy not only defines APL and how it can be achieved, but also defines the extent to which prior learning can contribute to an award.
  - The process for APL application includes discussion between the programme leader and the programme team to advise on how learning outcomes can be achieved and assessed as well as information around

timeline for completion. Final decisions around APL are made by the Programme Assessment Board.

- Information about APL is provided on the website and will be provided in the pre-application stage. Academic staff will be available to give advice to individual applicants.
- The new programme will follow the institutional approach around APL.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
  - There are several institution-wide policies that support equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). For example, Equality and Diversity, Student Transgender Policy, Staff Transgender Policy, and Support for care experienced learners.
  - These policies are set at institution level and apply to all programmes. Some of the aims of these policies are to ensure all staff understand why EDI is important. The policies also aim to equip the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group to create a positive and inclusive working environment.
  - We understand that the new provision will follow the same approach.

**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<sup>1</sup> –**
  - The Academic Regulations - undergraduate is an institutional policy that provides a regulatory framework for undergraduate programmes and modules.
  - There is also a faculty development plan that details the education provider's commitment to providing apprenticeship provision.
  - The Academic Guidance – Developing and Approving Higher and Degree Apprenticeship Programmes outlines the process for developing and approving higher and degree apprenticeships. The guidance provides information on the Institute for Apprenticeship (IfA) 'Standards for Apprenticeships' around support available from the central Work-Based Learning team, the critical role of employer engagement and delivery models. It also provides information on end point assessment and associated administration to meet the Education and Skills Funding Agency requirements (progress review meetings, monitoring off the job learning, evidence packs).
  - The new provision will align with the arrangements in the existing provision.
- **Sustainability of provision –**

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<sup>1</sup> 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

- The University Strategic Plan outlines the education provider's overall aim for all their programmes which is to be educationally and financially sustainable.
- The Faculty Development Plan details the education provider's commitment to providing an apprenticeship in Podiatry. The education provider noted finance for staff has been identified and staff are now in post.
- We understand from the information provided by the education provider that these institution and faculty policies and processes will apply in the same way to the new provision.
- **Effective programme delivery –**
  - Several institution-wide policies apply to the new provision to ensure its effective delivery. Some of these include the Staff Recruitment Strategy which ensures staff are recruited in alignment with programme development and the growth in learner enrolments in line with Faculty Growth Plan to ensure sustainability of the provision. The education provider also noted their Faculty Staff Recruitment Strategy and Recruitment and Selection Procedure sets out a framework to ensure they attract, select and retain the most suitable candidate.
  - In addition to the policies there are procedures and guidance documents, training provision and standardised forms that would support the effective delivery of the programme. Some of the procedures and processes include Consulting with applicants and learners following significant changes to a programme, and Programme Specific Regulations Process. Guidance includes Integrated Curriculum Design Framework, and Inclusive Programme Design Disabled Students. Training includes Programme Leader training, and Personal Academic Tutor training. The Programme Enhancement Plan is an example of standardised forms used to support effective programme delivery.
  - The institutional External Examiner Policy would ensure External Examiner will be appointed to the programme in line with the institutional policy.
  - All of these policies and processes will apply to the new provision.
- **Effective staff management and development –**
  - Annual appraisals are institution-wide policies that support effective staff management and development. The education provider also noted there are institution-wide development opportunities that would also support this. Podiatry staff will have access to a Day in practice (a day in a week in practice) to remain up to date with practice.
  - There is a management structure in place consisting of a Head of School, an Operations Manager and nine Associate Heads of School. There are monthly senior management team meetings which ensure regular communication between the Head of School and the Associate Heads of School.

- In line with this, the education provider has recently appointed an Associate Head of School of Allied Health Professional Teams who has responsibility for the Allied Health Professions (AHP) team staff.
- We understand from the information submitted by the education provider that these institution-wide policies will apply to the new provision.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
  - The education provider has existing contracts with employer organisations which are managed at institution level. They noted they have apprenticeships in a wide range of local institutions and will use the contracts already in place.
  - There is a dedicated workplace learning team who monitor and facilitate any contractual arrangements, in line with the apprenticeship standards.
  - These processes and procedures will apply to the new provision.

**Non-alignment requiring further assessment:** None.

#### Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

#### **Findings on alignment with existing provision:**

- **Academic quality –**
  - The education provider noted several institution-wide policies that ensure academic quality. Some of these include Academic Appeals, Academic misconduct, Learning Engagement Policy & Student Attendance.
  - The education provider also noted their Programme Enhancement Policy which supports how programmes undertake quality and enhancement review. The Programme Enhancement Policy is a live process that enables programme leaders to continuously monitor the quality of provision, rather than waiting for a specific point in the academic year. The programme leader keeps the live Programme Enhancement Plan (PEP) updated and will use the plan for the basis for at least seven programme team meetings throughout the academic year. An enhancement review of every programme is undertaken by the relevant Associate Head of School, twice a year, to enable oversight of the PEP and the outcome presented at the Enhancement of Student Experience Group (ESEG).
  - All of these policies are set at institution level and will apply to the new provision.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
  - The education provider noted a few policies and processes that are at faculty level and apply to all their AHP provision. For example, their Practice Placement Audit is a Faculty policy that is used across all existing AHP provision and will apply to the new provision. Placement

supervision training is established across all AHP programmes and will also apply to the new provision.

- The Assessor and mentor training is a generic learning opportunity for new assessors and mentors across the whole institution. In addition, programme specific training, which is already in place for practice staff mentoring Occupational Therapy learners, will be adapted for the new Podiatry provision.
- Practice liaison meetings are regular meetings with practice educators where the education provider can communicate changes and support practice staff with placement provision and apprenticeship learning.
- Our understanding is that all these policies and processes both at institution and faculty level will apply to the new provision.
- **Learner involvement –**
  - Student Staff Liaison meetings are part of the education provider's commitment to regular meetings with learner representatives to discuss programme provision.
  - There is also a Student Representation and Feedback Policy which ensures each programme has learner representatives at each level who engage with staff regarding their provision. The policy describes how the education provider, in partnership with the Students' Union, are jointly accountable and responsible for ensuring that learners are represented within the education provider's community.
  - The Student Learning Engagement policy outlines how data on learner engagement (including attendance and use of the virtual learning environment) is used to support learners, and to enable early academic or support intervention.
  - These are all institutional policies which will apply in the same way to the new provision.
- **Service user and carer involvement –**
  - The education provider has a well-established Patient Carer & Public Involvement (PCPI) policy that supports the involvement of service users and carers across all aspects of the provision. The policy ensures PCPI participants are embedded in every part of the learner's journey from module development, interviews, induction, examinations, and relevant modules throughout the various years of their programmes. PCPI participants are also embedded in the interprofessional learning events.
  - This policy applies at Faculty level and will equally apply to the new provision.

**Non-alignment requiring further assessment:** None.

### Learners

**Findings on alignment with existing provision:**

- **Support –**

- The education provider has several services, processes, and facilities in place for supporting learners. The Personal Academic Tutoring Policy outlines the minimum entitlement to personal tutorial support of on-campus undergraduate and taught postgraduate learners.
- The education provider also noted their Timetable Policy, Guidance and Good Practice on Responses to Student Emails and Other Student Contact as well as their Guidance: Getting the Essentials Right which are in place to support learners.
- We noted each programme also has individualised wellbeing approaches that enable learners to feel a sense of belonging. This means in addition to the institution-wide policies, programmes can offer opportunities for learners to develop a sense of belonging to their cohort and professional group. Examples are having wellbeing sessions where the different year groups come together to participate in learning or social activities. In relation to the new programme, this could mean having a learner led Podiatry society for learning and social events.
- All of these policies are set at institutional level and will apply to the new provision.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
  - The Fitness to Practise Procedure is an institution-wide process that deals with learners' current state of health, conduct and / or competence that may affect their fitness for professional practice.
  - Student Conduct Policy, Student Disciplinary Procedure, and Academic Misconduct Regulations are other institutional policies that would also apply to the new provision.
  - The education provider noted the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and Occupational Health will be monitored by the workplaces in line with their Apprenticeship policy. The Podiatry admissions policy however requires the workplace to inform the admissions tutor if there are any changes.
  - Our understanding is that the new provision will align with these policies and processes in the same way.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**
  - The School of Nursing and Health Sciences under which the new provision sits operates Interprofessional learning (IPL) as standard sessions that run each academic year. There is also opportunity to include additional sessions as required.
  - The education provider noted that where possible, learners on the new programme will learn alongside medical, physiotherapy and sports rehabilitation learners in the anatomy centre.
  - This aligns with our understanding of how the institution and school run and the new programme will follow the same approach.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
  - Module teaching ensures equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) teaching. This is done by ensuring a wide range of case studies are used that incorporate people from all protected characteristics.

- The education provider also ensures their Patient Carer and Public Involvement team has a wide range of members who participate in modules. Associate lecturers, specialists or special training are also used to enhance EDI.
- Mandatory training ensures all learners in the school undertake e-learning for health modules for EDI and there is additional University EDI online training available for all learners.
- These are policies and processes at both institution and school level and will apply in the same way to the new provision.

**Non-alignment requiring further assessment:** None.

### Assessment

#### **Findings on alignment with existing provision:**

- **Objectivity –**
  - There are several institution-wide policies that ensure assessments are objective. The Assessment Policy sets out the basic requirements for assessment. This includes information on academic standards, learning outcomes and assessment criteria.
  - For the new provision, we understand all assessments have been peer reviewed by the Patient, Carer & Public Involvement team members, practice colleagues and academic staff.
  - Extenuating Circumstances, Academic Integrity and Misconduct, Learning and Teaching Strategy, and Learning and Teaching Observation Policy are all institution wide policies that ensure objectivity.
  - We understand that all these policies will apply to the new provision.
- **Progression and achievement –**
  - The Student Engagement Policy is an institution wide policy that ensures that information on attendance monitoring is available to learners in the Student Handbook. Programme specific requirements are detailed in Programme Specifications and / or Programme Handbooks. For apprentices, there is additional specification in the contract between the learner, employer and education provider. Attendance monitoring on campus is achieved through a swipe card system in every teaching room, while online learning is monitored in the virtual learning environment.
  - The education provider's Academic Regulations describe the conditions for learner progression between stages of a programme and degree classification calculations.
  - The Placement Regulations is an institutional policy that outlines the assessment and progression requirements specifically related to placement learning. Exceptions to these regulations, such as to meet Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) requirements,

must be approved by the Academic Board and are recorded as programme-specific regulations.

- These are all institutional policies that will apply to the new programme.
- **Appeals –**
  - The University Assessment Appeals policy is applied at institutional level, and details the grounds for appeal, the procedure (the faculty and institution level stages) and timeframes.
  - Our understanding is that the new programme would also benefit from this policy.

### **Outcomes from stage 1**

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

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

- The programme is supported by the Head of School and the Associate Head of School (Allied Health Professionals). Two work time equivalent (WTE) Podiatry academic staff are already in place. These include the Programme Leader. There is also a Professional Lead on the programme.
- Resources appropriate to the modules and programme learning outcomes are currently in place to provide the learners the means to sufficiently meet the HCPC SOPs. Physical teaching spaces will be used in collaboration with other provisions such as the anatomy suite, gait lab and other specialist facilities to provide the best learning experience for the apprentice.
- Programme specific handbooks, module guides, information technology, virtual learning environment(s), textbooks and journals and a vast array of equipment are available to learners at both the education provider and in practice-based learning.
- The clinical portfolios, along with the placement Practice Assessment Document, and Podiatry Practice placement Competence Assessment Tools are available to monitor the learners' progression in terms of the standards of proficiency and stage learning outcomes.

**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) Podiatry (Apprenticeship)	Work based learning	Chiropodist/podiatrists	12 learners, 1 cohort	01/05/2024

## 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](#).

#### Quality theme 1 – collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers

**Area for further exploration:** Whilst extensive and comprehensive paperwork relating to the collaboration between the education provider and the practice education provider was provided, these were in template / blank form only. Therefore, there was no demonstration that collaboration existed. We noted reference to support provided by local stakeholders within the documentation. However, there was no evidence to demonstrate that this is in relation to the new programme.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** The visitors requested further documentary evidence of communication between the education provider and practice education providers. For example, minutes of meetings. We requested more information regarding the discussions that have taken place with potential practice education providers identifying that they agreed with the requirements of the programme. We considered this the most effective way to get a clearer understanding of how the education provider addressed the issues raised.

**Outcomes of exploration:** In their response, the education provider explained they have had frequent in-person and online discussions with their practice education providers which have ensured continuous collaboration. Evidence of these were provided through minutes of meetings with stakeholders. We understood these collaborative efforts covered the programme structure, curriculum, assessments, and practice-based learning, and have ensured strong alignment with practice requirements. The education provider also noted that agreements with practice education providers have solidified their commitment to learner learning and programme objectives. The visitors noted minutes of meeting with stakeholders demonstrated cooperation / co-production of the programme, including discussions about practice-based learning, potential numbers of learners etc. The visitors noted the further documentation submitted identified there was regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice education providers. The visitors were satisfied that the quality activity had adequately addressed the issues raised and following the quality activity, they had no further concerns. The visitors considered evidence of in-depth discussions and collaboration in the application interviews an example of good practice.

#### Quality theme 2 – ensuring adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff

**Area for further exploration:** From the curriculum vitae (CVs) provided, the visitors noted the two staff, who were presently recruited, who were also undertaking their Masters programmes. Whilst it was evident that these two members are appropriately qualified Podiatry staff, there was no evidence provided regarding the degree of aid provided to the programme team by other staff from the Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing in the delivery of the programme.

We considered that two members of staff could carry the workload of the programme in year 1 of delivery. Although there was little to no capacity if a member of staff left or was absent for whatever reason which would mean their capacity to deliver the programme, with subsequent cohorts, would be challenging.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We explored this area through further documentary evidence. We requested more evidence of the involvement of other members of the Faculty in the delivery of the programme. We requested to know the expected distribution of workload for both the Podiatry team and the other members of the Faculty.

In addition, we requested evidence of the consideration of the development of staff to support subsequent, and hence overlapping, cohorts of learners. We considered this type of quality activity the most effective at addressing the visitors' concerns around this area.

**Outcomes of exploration:** As part of the documentation submitted, we noted evidence of the education provider's commitment to employing a further Podiatry

Lecturer in the 2024-25 academic year, as well as suggestions of potential higher learner numbers in future cohorts.

It was clear that the programme will be well supported by numerous members of the Faculty, from multiple professions who will provide teaching within different modules throughout the programme. The education provider noted that individual specialisms have been aligned to indicative content within the modules to provide exceptional interprofessional learning opportunities for both staff and learners. We were also made aware that workload for the podiatry team over the programme will be much reduced in terms of lecturing hours with the aid of this Faculty support.

The visitors considered that details of funding for staff as number of learners increases over coming years was appropriate in view of potential learner numbers. We were also reassured by the details of the staff from other programmes who will contribute to the Podiatry programme as well as details of specific modules these staff will have input to. These demonstrated there is an adequate number of appropriately experienced staff in place for effective delivery of the programme.

The visitors considered the quality activity had adequately addressed their concerns and as such considered the standard around this area met.

#### Quality theme 3 – ensuring adequate number of staff in practice-based learning relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support learning

**Area for further exploration:** Within the programme documentation, we noted reference to innovative podiatry placements with integration of telehealth, diverse range of patients in a variety of settings but no actual evidence / examples have been provided. Therefore, it was not possible to establish if there are adequate numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning as we were not provided with any information regarding where learners will be placed or the staffing that would be available.

The education provider also noted that all practice educators are required to be registered with the relevant healthcare regulatory body, for example the HCPC or Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and have completed the clinical educator training for this programme. They noted there is an additional clinical educator forum to facilitate peer learning and support. However, there was a lack of evidence to support this statement. There was therefore no evidence to demonstrate that the practice educators for this programme have the relevant knowledge / skills or experience to support learning.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We explored this area through further documentary evidence. We requested further information regarding where the practice-based learning will be taking place and the qualifications and experience of the staff involved. The visitors also considered more detail of number of practice educators who have agreed to have learners in practice-based learning would be

helpful. We also requested further details about the practice educators, for example areas of practice and previous training for taking learners.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The education provider submitted further evidence that demonstrated that NHS trusts involved in providing practice-based learning have provided information regarding where this will be taking place. We also understood that discussions were ongoing with two further NHS trusts who have stated they would be willing to provide practice-based learning alongside the other local NHS trusts. In addition, the education provider submitted a list of podiatrists practice educators who would aid in the support and development of the learners in practice.

The visitors also noted within the education provider's response, a list of HCPC registered podiatrists within local trusts, who are involved in practice education. We understood these podiatrists are employed in a range of specialisms and bandings and have already been experienced in educating learners in practice-based learning from another local podiatry programme. We also understood two local NHS trusts have employed a podiatrist into a Clinical Educator post, who are responsible for overseeing clinical educators and apprentices within their department.

The visitors considered the information submitted which identified the number, qualifications and experience of those involved in practice-based learning, to be comprehensive and appropriate to the potential numbers of learners supported by NHS trusts. The visitors were satisfied the quality activity had adequately addressed their concerns and had no further concerns afterwards.

## 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** –
  - The selection and entry criteria for the podiatry degree apprenticeship programme are similar to those of other UK podiatry programmes. The selection and entry criteria ensure that all applicants possess the necessary academic, practical and personal qualities to succeed in the programme.
  - The entry criteria and job description for employers to utilise for the applicants was formulated following guidance provided by The Royal College of Podiatry.
  - The visitors considered that the evidence submitted clearly demonstrated that the academic and professional entry criteria are appropriate to the level and content of the programme. And that they are such that would ensure learners are able to meet our standards for registration once they have completed the programme.
  - Therefore, the visitors are satisfied that the relevant standard in this SET area is met.
  
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
  - Information relating to the collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers was provided although in template / blank form. Through [quality theme 1](#), we noted further evidence such as minutes of meeting with stakeholders where discussions about the programme including practice-based learning were held. This demonstrated there is regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice education providers.
  - From seeking further clarification, we understood that provision of practice-based learning had been a key item of discussion during meetings with stakeholders. Timings and capacity of practice-based learning must be confirmed before a learner is offered a place on the programme. Each practice education provider had submitted a list of areas that could be offered to learners in practice-based learning. Discussions around the timing of practice-based learning had been mutually agreed and we understood careful considerations have been made to ensure there is no disruption with other local HEI podiatry placements.
  - The curriculum vitae (CVs) provided demonstrated there are two staff members who are appropriately qualified to deliver the programme

effectively. Through [quality theme 2](#), we were reassured that additional support will be provided by other members of the Faculty who would also be teaching on different modules on the programme.

- The Faculty of Health Sciences and Wellbeing under which the programme sits has a team of highly skilled and experienced staff with expertise in a wide range of disciplines who would also contribute to the core modules of the programme.
  - Both learners and staff have access to the programme handbooks, module guides, information technology, virtual learning environment(s), specialist rooms and facilities, textbooks and journals and equipment in both the education provider and the workplace.
  - The visitors saw sufficient evidence that demonstrated that the programme, including the practice-based element will be properly managed, and that both staffing and physical resources will be adequate to ensure effective delivery.
  - The visitors therefore considered standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
    - The learning outcomes for the programme have been mapped against the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for podiatrists. This ensures that all learners who complete the programme will have the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required to practise the profession safely and effectively.
    - Learners are made aware of the HCPC standards of conduct performance and ethics through the mandatory induction process and through core modules that focus on professional standards.
    - The education provider maps the curriculum to all relevant benchmarking statements including The Royal College of Podiatry core curriculum guidance and the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (Podiatry). This helps to ensure the curriculum is aligned with the latest best practices and standards.
    - One of the ways by which the education provider ensures the programme is relevant to current practice is through Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff to ensure that they are up to date with the latest best practices in podiatry.
    - The education provider reviews the curriculum on an annual basis to identify areas where it can be updated to reflect changes in the profession. Curriculum standardisation and development is done through ongoing consultation with stakeholders, professional organisations, regulatory bodies, external examiners and other relevant parties. This also helps to ensure that it is aligned with the latest best practices and standards in podiatric practice.
    - The programme is designed in a way that ensures clinical and placement portfolios are central to the learners' learning experience. The theory modules are taught at specific times of the academic year are directly linked to the core aspects of on-the-job learning which are then reinforced through practice-based learning.

- The teaching and learning strategies are constructed through a linked learning approach that incorporates both on the job and off the job activities. The teaching methods employ an evidence-based approach that is tailored to the learning facilities, while also being learner-centred and supportive of learners' diverse backgrounds and abilities.
  - The core modules of the programme have been developed in such a way that supports and develops autonomous and reflective thinking.
  - Evidence-based practice is introduced early in the programme and is central to the teaching and assessment process. Specific modules focus on the evidence-based practice process and assess the learners' ability to apply evidence-based practice to their academic work and clinical practice.
  - The visitors saw sufficient evidence that demonstrated the design and delivery of the programme is such that would allow learners who complete the programme, meet our standards for their professional knowledge and skills and fit for practice.
  - The visitors therefore considered standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**
    - From seeking further clarification, we noted evidence that NHS trusts have committed to providing a range of practice-based learning opportunities for learners undertaking the programme. There are opportunities within specialist podiatry clinics, but also within areas such as district nursing, vascular departments, multidisciplinary team clinics, in-patient tissue viability wards and with primary care podiatrists. Learners would also be able to learn alongside Dietetics, Physiotherapy, Orthotists and Paediatric Therapists learners as part of practice-based learning opportunities. Additionally, there will be opportunity for learners to experience other aspects of the NHS working environment such as attending service improvement meetings, directorate and clinical governance meetings and undertaking clinical audits.
    - From the details provided around the numbers, skills and area of practice of the staff that would support learners in practice-based learning, there is reassurance that learners will have access to a comprehensive range of opportunities within each trust. This is detailed in [quality theme 3](#). This ensures there is sufficient support for the learners to take part in safe and effective practice-based learning.
    - Also, through the details provided about the practice educators as noted above, we noted there is a range of specialisms. It was also clear that the practice educators have the relevant experience as they have been supporting learners in practice-based learning from another local podiatry programme. This is also noted in [quality theme 3](#) above.
    - The visitors were satisfied that practice-based learning is a central part of the programme and there are effective systems and processes as well as appropriate staffing in place to support its delivery. The visitors therefore considered standards within this SET area met.

- The visitors were satisfied with the information presented regarding the structure, duration and range of practice-based education learning together with the collaborative approach. They considered the information identified how the education provider proposes to support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for podiatrists. However, given that this programme is two and a half years in duration, the visitors considered it would be appropriate to review the programme after one year to consider how both learners and staff have adapted into and progressed on the programme.
- **SET 6: Assessment –**
  - We noted a range of evidence-based methods of assessments that would ensure learners are able to meet all the portfolio, modular, stage and programme learning outcomes. The assessments have been mapped to relevant HCPC SOPs.
  - Learners are assessed on professional behaviour at each stage through the clinical portfolio and practice placement tools. There is also a summative assessment through a final review of evidence. This along with other assessments align with the learning outcomes that relate to adherence with HCPC standards of conduct, performance, and ethics.
  - The programme handbook and module descriptors outline the range of assessments that would ensure learners are able to demonstrate the skills, knowledge or behaviours appropriate to meeting the learning outcomes of each module.
  - The visitors saw sufficient evidence that demonstrated that standards within the SET area are met.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** The compressed nature of the programme into 2.5 years could have an impact on both learners and staff. There is a risk that this could lead to more learners leaving the programme. Staff members and practice educators may also find the compressed nature of the programme challenging to cope with.

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:**

- The involvement of learners in the staff recruitment process. The visitors considered this commendable. The visitors considered it was unusual for learners to be involved in such processes and noted the learners could benefit from the experience and responsibility.
- Collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers. The visitors considered evidence of in-depth discussions and collaboration in the application interviews an example of good practice.

**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).

## **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.

## **Referrals to the focused review process**

### The compressed nature of the programme

#### **Summary of issue:**

- The visitors are satisfied that all standards are met. However, they have concerns about the compressed nature of the programme. The visitors are aware that compressing the programme into 2.5 years could have an impact on both learners and staff. Therefore, the visitors would like to review this area after the programme has run for one year via the focused review process. This would help us to understand how the learners are progressing, for example by reviewing the number of learners that have left the programme. The visitors would also consider any concerns from staff members and practice educators as a result of the compressed nature of the programme.

## **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.
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report.

### **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 programmes are approved
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out as noted in section 5 above.

**Reason for this decision:** The Panel accepted the visitors' 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
University of Sunderland	CAS-01445-K1T0L6	Wendy Smith - chiroprapist/ podiatrist / POM - Administration Jennifer Caldwell – occupational therapist	<p>Through this assessment, we have noted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following are areas of best practice:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The involvement of learners in the staff recruitment process. The visitors considered this commendable.</li> <li>○ Collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers. The visitors considered evidence of in-depth discussions and collaboration in the application interviews an example of good practice.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme is supported by the Head of School and the Associate Head of School (Allied Health Professionals). Two work time equivalent (WTE) Podiatry academic staff are already in place. These include the Programme Leader and the Professional Lead.</li> <li>• Resources appropriate to the modules and programme learning outcomes are currently in place to provide the learners the means to sufficiently meet the HCPC SOPs. Physical teaching spaces will be used in</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The compressed nature of the programme - the visitors are satisfied that all standards are met. However, they have concerns about the compressed nature of the programme. The visitors are aware that compressing the programme into 2.5 years could have an impact on both learners and staff. Therefore, the visitors would like to review this area after the programme has run for one year, via the focused review process. This would help us to understand how the learners are progressing, for example by</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>collaboration with other provisions such as the anatomy suite, gait lab and other specialist facilities to provide the best learning experience for the apprentice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme specific handbooks, module guides, information technology, virtual learning environment(s), textbooks and journals and a vast array of equipment are available to learners at both the education provider and in practice-based learning.</li> <li>• The clinical portfolios, along with the placement Practice Assessment Document, and Podiatry Practice placement Competence Assessment Tools are available to monitor the learners' progression in terms of the standards of proficiency and stage learning outcomes.</li> </ul>
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			<p>reviewing the number of learners that have left the programme. The visitors would also consider any concerns from staff members and practice educators as a result of the compressed nature of the programme.</p>	
Programmes				
Programme name			Mode of study	Nature of provision
BSc (Hons) Podiatry (Apprenticeship)			Work based learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taught (HEI)</li> </ul>

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Annotation</b>	<b>First intake date</b>
BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2006
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Blood Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2011
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Cellular Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2011
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Genetic Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2011
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Infection Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2011
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science Practice (Blood Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science Practice (Cellular Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science Practice (Genetic Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science Practice (Infection Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) in Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Accelerated)	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2022
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Apprenticeship)	WBL (Work based learning)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2022
BSc (Hons) in Paramedic Science and Out of Hospital Care	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/04/2018
BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2019

Enhanced Prescribing for health professionals	PT (Part time)			Independent prescribing	01/06/2020
Prescribing for Health Professionals	PT (Part time)			Independent prescribing	01/07/2020