

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Southampton
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology), Full time MSci Healthcare Science (Audiology), Full time
Approval visit date	28 August 2019
Case reference	CAS-14887-X2M1M2

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Executive Summary

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

The following is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as 'our standards'). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

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

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Ruth Baker	Practitioner psychologist - Clinical psychologist
Hugh Crawford	Hearing aid dispenser
Louise Towse	Lay
Patrick Armsby	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Graham Petley	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Southampton – Senior lecturer, Health Sciences, Faculty of Environmental and Life Sciences
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 September 2013
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02131

Programme name	MSci Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 September 2015
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02132

We undertook this assessment via the approval process, which involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme continues to meet our standards. We decided to assess the programme via the approval process due to the outcome of a previous assessment.

At the conclusion of this previous process (the major change process, triggered by the education provider), visitors considered that there were outstanding issues related to the following SET areas:

SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership

SET 4: Programme design and delivery

SET 5: Practice-based learning

SET 6: Assessment

Therefore the visitors recommended that an approval visit was required determine how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training (SETs).

The ETC agreed with this conclusion. They noted that a visit provides the most effective opportunity for the education provider to demonstrate how all the SETs continue to be met. This process will also provide visitors with the evidence needed to make further recommendations to the Panel regarding the ongoing approval of the programme.

Included within the major change process the education provider has indicated that the programme names will be changing from September 2019. The new programme names are detailed below:

New programme records to be created		
Programme name	Mode of delivery	First intake
BSc (Hons) Audiology	Full time	September 2019
MSci Audiology	Full time	September 2019

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we ask for certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Type of evidence	Submitted	Comments
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes	
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes	
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes	
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes	
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes	
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes	
Internal quality monitoring documentation	Yes	Only requested if the programme (or a previous version) is currently running

We also usually ask to meet the following groups at approval visits, although there may be some circumstances where meeting certain groups is not needed. In the table below, we have noted which groups we met, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Not Required	The Committee considered that it was not necessary to meet this group. The programme has been redesigned, and so existing learners have no experience of the revised programme.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	The Committee considered that it was not necessary to meet this group. No issues to relevant standards were identified via the major change process, and we will be able to review involvement via documentation via future monitoring of the programme.
Facilities and resources	Yes	
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	

Programme team	Yes	
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Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendations

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

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

Recommendation: The education provider should increase the range of hearing aids that learners are exposed to within the teaching of the programme.

Reason: At the approval visit the education provider disclosed to the visitors that learners will work with one particular type of hearing aid throughout the teaching on the programme. The visitors noted this hearing aid is commonly used in NHS environments and so learners were not being exposed to some brands of hearing aids that are dispensed in private settings. The standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers do not stipulate knowledge of specific hearing aids or a range of hearing aids, and so the visitors considered the resources in this area appropriate for the standard to be met at threshold. However, the visitors did consider that learner's exposure to various hearing aids may be limited by this approach. Therefore, they are recommending that the education provider considers including different hearing aids within the teaching of the programme to ensure the programme is remaining relevant to current practice.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the approval visit, the visitors recommend that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met, and that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 24 September 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).