Performance review process report

University of Bedfordshire, 2018 - 2021

Executive summary

This is a report of the ongoing process to review the performance of the University of Bedfordshire. This report captures the process we have undertaken to date to consider the performance of the institution in delivering HCPC-approved programmes. This enables us to make risk-based decisions about how to engage with this provider in the future, and to consider if there is any impact on our standards being met.

We have

- recommended when the institution should next be reviewed.

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
  - Understanding the balance between virtual and actual practice-based learning. Further clarification was sought to understand how virtual placements contributed to the programme. The education provider confirmed virtual placements were not being used. This option had been explored during lockdown to enable learners to have more access to opportunities, however due to restrictions being removed it was no longer required.
  - Impact of digital poverty on learner performance. This affected several learners and they were provided with support to access the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment across the campus and use the laptop loan policy.
  - Identifying learners at risk policy. It was noted there was a policy to identify and support learners at risk but it was not clear how this was monitored. In the response received from the education provider they explained a tool from SolutionPath was used by academic tutors to monitor engagement and progress.
  - Analysis of data from the practice-based learning audits and surveys. There was no evidence of how this data was analysed and actioned to improve the learner experience and further information was therefore requested. In the response, the education provider confirmed they used the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) platform to gather data. This data was then analysed and discussed at the Quality Education Partnership Liaison (QEPL) meeting.

- The provider should next engage with monitoring in five years, the 2026-27 academic year, because:

o Visitors are satisfied with the submission and confirm the education provider is performing to a satisfactory standard. There are no risks or issues identified.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. The education provider is engaging with the performance review process for the first time.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be.
Next steps	Subject to the Panel's decision, the provider's next performance review will be in the 2026-27 academic year.

Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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

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

Our standards

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

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:
- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

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

The performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:
- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible, and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

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

Thematic areas reviewed

We normally focus on the following areas:
- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

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 a review of this education provider:

Jennifer Caldwell	Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist
Janet Lawrence	Lead visitor, Physiotherapist
Catherine Rice	Service User Expert Advisor
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers five HCPC approved programmes across four professions. It is a higher education institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2002.

This is the first time the education provider has engaged with the performance review process, however they have previously engaged with the HCPC monitoring processes under the previous quality assurance model. There are no outstanding issues from the previous processes.

Currently the education provider is going through the approval process for the Independent Prescribing programme, which is due to commence in September 2023.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

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

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Occupational therapy	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2020
	Operating Department Practitioner	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2002
	Paramedic	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2015
	Physiotherapist	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	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.

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	119	119	06/07/2022	The number of learners is the same as the benchmark. This is the number of learners the education provider was approved for and indicates the programmes are

				sufficiently resourced to support the learner numbers. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided in the portfolio by the education provider in relation to this data point.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	4%	2019-2020	This data point is from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). It shows the percentage of learners not continuing is higher than the benchmark. Visitors have reviewed this data point and have noted the education providers reflection on this and why this data point is higher. Overall, visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	83%	2018-2019	This data point is from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and shows the percentage in employment / further study is lower than the benchmark, which indicates the education provider is performing lower than expected in relation to this data point. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided in the portfolio by the education provider in relation to this data point.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	Silver	N/A	2017	The TEF awards range from Bronze to Gold. The education provider has been awarded a Silver award, which indicates consistent high-quality teaching and learning. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided in the portfolio by the education provider in relation to this data point.

National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	76.1%	68.6%	2021	The National Student Survey (NSS) is completed by all learners on Undergraduate programmes. This score indicates the percentage of learners who are satisfied with their learning at this institution is lower than the benchmark. Visitors explored this data and the information relating to it and were satisfied with the information and reflection provided in the portfolio by the education provider.

Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. 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 was performing well against our standards.

Quality theme 1 – Understanding the balance between virtual and actual practice-based learning

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the difficulties the education provider experienced with placement availability. They noted how the education provider had been resourceful in developing new placement opportunities and were currently developing virtual placements. However, the balance between virtual and actual placements was not clear to them and they were unable to determine how they contributed to the programmes. Visitors therefore requested a narrative to understand how the education provider had considered what a virtual placement would look like in comparison to the traditional model of placements and how they would contribute to the programmes and the learners experience.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors considered the email clarification would be the most effective method for the education provider to respond to the queries they had.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider confirmed they were currently not using virtual placements. They explained how this option was explored during lockdown to enable learners to access more opportunities and to reduce the impact the suspension of actual placements had on learners and their experience. Fortunately, virtual placements were not required, as lockdown restrictions were removed, and learners were able to return to their normal placements. Staff were, however still provided with training on the Peer Enhanced E Placement (PEEP) model training, which is a model being used by many Higher Education Institutes. PEEP allows learners to access learning resources such as real-life case studies, guest speaker uploads and service user videos, however it is not a model to replace actual placements. In the response received it was clear the purpose of virtual placements was not to replace actual placements and they reflected on how the additional learning resources would enhance the learning experience for learners.

Visitors were satisfied with the explanation and evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised and no further questions were raised.

Quality theme 2 – Impact of digital poverty on learner performance

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted the education provider identified issues regarding digital poverty and how some learners had limited access to facilities and equipment, which had impacted their learning significantly. Further information was requested on how this affected learner results, what programme leaders did in response to this and how this approach was reflected upon.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors considered the email clarification would be the most effective method for the education provider to respond to the queries they had.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider recognised digital poverty would impact their learners during the pandemic, however they had policies and processes in place to support those learners. Learners were able to take advantage of the laptop loan policy and had access to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) equipment across the campus. In the narrative provided, the education provider confirmed digital poverty did not impact any learners and reflected on how the Allied Health Professionals programmes and results were not affected.

Visitors were satisfied with the explanation and evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised and no further questions were raised.

<u>Quality theme 3 – Identifying learners at risk and establishing a policy to support this.</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted the education provider had a policy to identify learners who were at risk on their programmes, however they were unable to determine how this was monitored and if any action had been taken forward. Further information was therefore requested on how these learners were monitored and if there was a plan or any data gathered.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors considered the email clarification would be the most effective method for the education provider to respond to the queries they had.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider confirmed the 'Student at Risk' policy and processes apply to all learners. As part of the policy a tool (StREAM) from SolutionPath was used to monitor learners. SolutionPath is a pilot project funded by Health Education England (HEE) to monitor learner engagement and progress. Student Retention, Engagement Attainment Monitoring (StREAM) allowed academic tutors to monitor learner engagement and progress and produced reports, which included data on engagement across all programmes. They reflected on how learners at risk were identified through this tool and then discussed this at the fortnightly Course Meetings where, and when, necessary action was taken to support these learners.

Visitors were satisfied with the explanation and evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised and no further questions were raised.

<u>Quality theme 4 – Analysis of data from the practice-based learning audits and surveys.</u>

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged the education providers good relationships with practice educators and their involvement with meetings and sharing feedback. However, they were unable to identify evidence of the placement and quality audit of practice-based learning and placement evaluation surveys. Further information was therefore requested on how this data was analysed and actioned to improve practice-based learning and the learner experience.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors considered the email clarification would be the most effective method for the education provider to respond to the queries they had.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider confirmed all placement feedback was gathered and managed by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) platform. Data from this survey was analysed and discussed at the Quality Education Partnership Liaison (QEPL) meeting. Where necessary, the data was discussed with individual practice partners and appropriate action was taken. In addition to this, the data was also shared with the Health and Social Care

Quality Assurance Group (HSCQA) who monitor the health care provision within the school.

Visitors were satisfied with the explanation and evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised and no further questions were raised.

Section 4: Summary of findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Overall findings on performance

Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Resourcing, including financial stability** –
    - The education provider has experienced some staffing issues and until recently, has had difficulties with recruiting experienced staff to the Operating Department Practice Team. They noted how this impacted staff workloads and how it has been a challenging period for the team.
    - There is a clear commitment to growing the Allied Health Professionals provision. The education provider recognised this growth must be gradual to ensure sustainability of the provision, hence the small cohorts. It was noted learner numbers were limited due to placement capacity but there is evidence of the education provider developing new placement opportunities with NHS Trusts.
    - Visitors noted the education provider experienced difficulties with securing placements across several programmes. COVID also affected this, however the visitors noted the issue was being addressed. There was evidence of the education provider working closely with placement providers to develop new opportunities within the NHS and private sectors.
    - A detailed business plan outlined the future financial aspects and objectives.
    - We were satisfied the education provider was performing well.
- **Partnerships with other organisations** –
    - The education provider demonstrated strong relationships with the practice partners. Practice partners support the provision through various ways, such as, practice-based assessments, placement provision, partnership meetings, partnership day events, cause for concern panels and the recruitment and selection of learners. Despite this level of involvement from practice partners, it was noted some difficulties were experienced with engagement during COVID, however this is now back to normal.

- o In response to the low placement capacity, a Task and Finish group was created to develop new placements across the provision. There was evidence of new placements and partnerships being developed with Central and Northwest London NHS Trusts, Harefield Hospital and Papworth and other alternative practice settings such as homeless shelters.
  - o Visitors noted the various activities partners were involved with and were satisfied with the information provided in this section. This demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Academic and placement quality** –
  - o The education provider reflected on the challenges they have experienced with academic quality, such as the volume of assessments and reduction in clinical hours.
  - o Similarly, the education provider reflected on various challenges they had experienced with placement quality. Some of these challenges included the availability of placements, delayed placement start dates and the distance some learners had to travel for placement.
  - o An online placement allocation package was introduced to go live in October 2022. The purpose of this system was to allow learners to plan and have access to their placement allocations and any material relating to placement.
  - o In response to concerns raised by practice partners, the Operating Department Practice programme was updated. They worked collaboratively with the practice partners to do this and held several meetings where partners were able to feedback the issues. As part of this process the Operating Department Practice programme lead has completed a mapping exercise against the new standards, reviewed course content and delivery patterns. These changes have had a positive impact on the programme and feedback from both learners and practice partners has been positive.
  - o The development of new placements in different settings has enhanced the learner experience. For example, on the Operating Department Practice programme learners, were able to gain experience in thoracic surgery and intensive care medicine.
  - o Through Quality theme 1 the education provider recognised the benefits of virtual placements, as they increase placement capacity and relieve placement pressure from the NHS Trusts. The placement Task and Finish group therefore continue to develop new opportunities, including virtual placements.
  - o We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Interprofessional education** –
  - o There was evidence of a variety of interprofessional education opportunities available within the school, which includes the Allied Health Professionals provision, Public Health and Social Work programmes.
  - o The education provider acknowledged some difficulties were experienced with developing these opportunities due to the variations with the profession specific timetables and some concerns about different expertise and knowledge. These have now been overcome

and the various teams work collaboratively to develop interprofessional learning opportunities. Some of these opportunities have included joint field trips and involvement with profession specific events.

- o In addition to the opportunities available through teaching and events, the school are exploring further opportunities to bring learners together from different professions in the Course Coordinator meetings. The benefit to this approach is to give learners the opportunity to share experiences and offer peer support.
- o An increase with interprofessional learning opportunities meant staff with different expertise and knowledge have taught across the provision. Learners welcomed this approach and provided positive feedback.
- o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

- **Service users and carers** –
  - o Service user and carer involvement was affected on the programmes due to COVID. Most programmes were designed to have face to face service user and care involvement with the teaching, assessment, and practice elements, however due to lockdown this was not possible. The education provider noted the delay with training service users and carers to use online platforms and the slow transition. In hindsight, they recognised the service users and carers should have received training at the same time as the staff.
  - o The lack of service user and carer involvement impacted the Operating Department Practice programme significantly and placed additional pressure on staff with assessments and interviews during COVID. However, a normal level of involvement resumed when lockdown restrictions were lifted. The education provider has continued to provide service users and carers with online training, as some elements of the provision have continued to be delivered online.
  - o To ensure there is a consistent approach to service user and carer involvement across the School, a Task and Finish group was created. The purpose of this group is to involve service users and carers at strategic levels, with research, new initiatives, and curriculum development.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

- **Equality and diversity** –
  - o There is a clear commitment to equality and diversity and recently the education provider has updated their Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity (EDI) Strategy in light of the Black Lives Matter movement.
  - o Although there is a commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity the education provider acknowledges the majority of learners on the Allied Health Professionals programmes are 'white'. They have also faced some 'criticism' from learners on sessions relating to racism being delivered by 'white staff'. The education provider attempted to resolve this issue by making some changes to their advertising policies and widening their recruitment pool.
  - o The faculty also created a Faculty Inclusivity Project (FIP) to ensure all learners needs were catered for, which applies to all the Schools within

the Faculty. This project has enhanced other areas of the education provider, such as assisting with applying for the Race Equality Charter status and decolonising the curriculum.

- o Belong@Beds is another initiative, which will be embedded in the Faculty Inclusivity Project. This was created to support learners needs and improve their experiences. The purpose of this project is to provide learners with a sense of belonging, especially those from diverse backgrounds.
- o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

- **Horizon scanning** –
  - o The education provider recognises the Allied Health Professionals provision cannot expand unless placement capacity increases, however there are several barriers to this.
  - o Competing with other education providers who already have a well-established provision and strong partnerships is one of the significant difficulties to increasing placement capacity. The education provider is confident that with the help of the Placement Task Force Group, placement capacity for the Allied Health Professionals programmes will increase within the year.
  - o Other developments the education provider is working on is the development of the Operating Department Practice and Occupational Therapy apprenticeship programmes. They are also considering offering a postgraduate programme in Physiotherapy. These developments are in response to local demand; however, the education provider is mindful of staffing and resources and continue to monitor learner numbers.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Impact of COVID-19** –
  - o The education provider reflected upon difficulties with regards to learners requiring COVID vaccinations, which the visitors acknowledged. Implementing this was challenging, as some learners had made the decision not to have the vaccine and because of this, they were unable to continue with their placements until restrictions were lifted. This meant these learners experienced delays with their placements, which had a significant impact on the relationship they had with the education provider.
  - o During this period, learners required more support with their mental health, which the education provider recognised. They also noted that offering this level of support impacted staff. They highlighted the need to train staff on how to provide learners with relevant support for their

well-being. In response to this the education provider established an Integrating Higher Education and Mental Health Support Working Group' with East London NHS Foundation Trust and are developing some mental health training for all staff. Visitors acknowledged this and commended the education provider for how they responded.
- o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods** –
    - o Based on feedback obtained from learners, many benefits were identified regarding digital learning. Learners noted the 'flexibility' and 'convenience' online learning provided, however they also acknowledged the difficulties in engaging with online lectures, workshops, simulation activities and peers.
    - o In addition, learners have also experienced some difficulties with navigating the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) due to the way it was structured and access to digital equipment was a problem. The education provider responded to this feedback and changes were made to the VLE to make it easier and clearer for learners to navigate. Online lectures were also reviewed, and a blended approach taken forward based on the content the education provider believes requires face to face delivery.
    - o Thought [Quality theme 2](#), the visitors recognised how digital poverty impacted learners and explored this further. The education provider offered a loan scheme to support those learners who experienced difficulties with accessing laptops. To continue the developments with digital learning the Digital Learning Infrastructure Working Group was established.
    - o It is recognised that simulation was used across the Allied Health Professionals provision to prepare learners for practice, however due to lockdown, access to simulation equipment was limited and learners had to rely on videos. Since the return to campus, learners now have full access to simulation equipment and can also access additional learning tools digitally to support their learning.
    - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Apprenticeships** –
    - o Currently there are no Apprenticeship routes in the Allied Health Professionals provision, however the education provider is considering developing an apprenticeship route for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. They are also intending to run the Operating Department Practice apprenticeship programme from September 2023.
    - o Visitors recognised the challenges the education provider reflected upon regarding their experience developing the Operating Department Practice apprenticeship route.
    - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: We noted the education providers creation of a 'Virtual Placement Unit', which incorporated simulation and digital learning tools for learners to support them with practice learning. Access to these tools enhanced the learner experience and allowed for their skills to be developed further.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education** –
    o The education provider recognised the importance of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) standards and noted how these standards must be maintained alongside the professional standards. There are various processes in place to ensure these are maintained, for example the Periodic Review process, annual monitoring process and the external examiner reports.
    o Visitors did not highlight any issues and noted how the education provider have demonstrated continued improvement and enhancement of the provision.
    o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies** –
    o The partnerships regularly provide the education provider with updates about external body feedback and inspection outcomes. There is a clear process to record these issues with the Director of Practice Learning, however it is noted that no issues had occurred.
    o There was evidence of the education provider working collaboratively with practice placement providers during the pandemic to implement the Care Quality Commission (CQC) regulations on COVID vaccinations and personal protective equipment (PPE).
    o Visitors did not highlight any issues and were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes** –
    o There were some variations within the National Student Survey (NSS) scores and whilst the Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy programmes did not have any NSS scores, due to them not meeting the number of learners threshold, the Operating Department Practice programme had an overall satisfaction score of 75%. The score for Paramedic Science had an overall satisfaction score of 63.16%, however this was an improvement on the previous year's score which was 38%. Staff sickness has impacted the low scores and during this period the team were heavily dependent on hourly paid lecturers.
    o The reduced scores were mainly received in the management and organisation area and other scores were impacted due to the pandemic. This resulted in learners expressing dissatisfaction with the online learning platforms and placements, however the education provider recognised these issues were linked to COVID restrictions.

- o To address the low satisfaction scores a School Enhancement Lead was appointed. The aim of this role was to identify concerns and issues and address them in the early stages of the programme to improve the learner experience.
  - o There is evidence of the education provider's efforts to improve the areas where concerns have been raised by learners and to provide learners with a platform to raise issues and concerns.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Office for Students monitoring** –
  - o The education provider is registered with the Office for Students (OfS), however interaction with them was for reporting purposes only. The education provider ensured they were compliant with OfS regulations and monitored the guidance to ensure they are making the necessary amendments to their internal processes.
  - o Improving access and participation for learners from minority backgrounds is a priority for the education provider. To achieve this, various initiatives were developed, such as, mandatory training on inclusive recruitment and the Belong@Beds project.
  - o Visitors noted the education provider was student orientated and how a targeted outreach programme had been funded to ensure underrepresented groups were included in the health group.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies** –
  - o The education provider demonstrated how they engaged with several professional bodies, such as the Royal College of Occupational Therapy (RCOT), The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP), The College of Occupational Departmental Practice (CODP) and the College of Paramedics (COP). The education provider reflected on this and provided examples of ongoing engagement and challenges experienced with the professional bodies.
  - o Visitors did not highlight any issues and were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Curriculum development** –
  - o The Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy programmes are relatively new and no major curriculum developments were identified. The Operating Department Practice programme was revised in 2017 and an apprenticeship route was approved in June 2021. The revisions to the programme included updating the course content to 'reflect contemporary practice'.

- o Visitors did not highlight any issues and were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance** –
  - o There is clear evidence of the education provider engaging with professional bodies and responding to changes. For example, the Physiotherapy programme are preparing to adopt the CSP Physiotherapy Common Placement Assessment Framework (CPAF) and the Operating Department Practice programme is updating programme documentation to reflect the CODP's new Standards for Supporting pre-Registration Operating Department Practitioner Education in practice placements.
  - o Visitors acknowledged there was clear evidence of the education provider working with and responding to professional body standards.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Capacity of practice-based learning** –
  - o The education provider acknowledged the continued difficulties they experienced with placement capacity. Due to these difficulties learner numbers were capped. However, there was evidence of placement capacity increasing through recent developments.
  - o Visitors noted an ongoing concern with securing good quality placements for the Allied Health Professionals programmes. However, they recognised this issue was being addressed with the development of the Placement Task and Finish Group.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Learners** –
  - o The education provider demonstrated a commitment to receiving and responding to learner feedback, which was gathered through various mechanisms. The Bedfordshire Unit Survey (BUS) was relied upon heavily, as this survey is completed by all learners when they complete a unit of study. This was then reviewed by the Unit Leads who are responsible for responding to any feedback that required actioning. This is a transparent process and learners can access the results on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).
  - o It is noted some difficulties were experienced with learners completing the BUS and the engagement with this has been low. To increase the engagement, staff built the completion of the survey into their teaching sessions.

- o Feedback was also gathered via the Course Representatives at Course Committee meetings and Student Union forums and through placement surveys.
  - o There was evidence of the education provider responding to feedback they have gathered from learners. For example, learners requested to express a preference in placement which the education provider responded to with a placement choice form. Other examples include moving units to reduce the pressure on learners in the first semester and making changes to the placement course structure.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **Practice placement educators** –
  - o Practice educators expressed frustrations with the education providers paper version of the practice assessment document (PAD), which was particularly an issue during COVID. The education provider acknowledged the difficulties both learners and practice educators experienced with this and invested in a digital version of the PAD.
  - o Based on feedback from practice partners the education provider made changes to the delivery pattern and course content of the Operating Department Practice programme.
  - o The education provider recognised the importance of receiving feedback from practice educators. The Course Team met with practice educators regularly to discuss learner placements and share feedback via the Quality Education Practice Liaison (QEPL) meetings. In addition to this, practice educators also used the PAD feedback forms.
  - o Visitors were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.
- **External examiners** –
  - o The education provider demonstrated good working relationships with the external examiners. There are robust processes in place to ensure external examiners are involved with the teaching and assessment of learners and provide appropriate feedback.
  - o Visitors noted all external examiner reports were positive and were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel:
The education provider reflected on why the learner continuation rates were higher at level 5 than what they were at level 4. They expected this as learners change their minds in the first year. In comparison to the overall School continuation rates, the Allied Health Professionals rates were positive. The education provider noted this could be due to the programmes being small and therefore learners having more access to one-to-one support. It is also worth noting, learner numbers were capped on all Allied Health Professionals programmes due to the issue with placement

capacity. The percentage of those learners who completed the programmes and were in employment was 100% for the school, which is most likely due to the requirements of the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) programmes. The education provider reflected that overall, learner satisfaction scores were satisfactory. Based on the data gathered, the visitors noted the education provider has continued to develop NSS action plans and respond to them to enhance the learner experience.

Visitors noted the low learner numbers and acknowledged this was due to the cohort numbers being capped. Visitors did not highlight any issues and were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Section 5: Issues identified for further review

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

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

Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

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

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2026-27 academic year

Reason for this recommendation: Visitors are satisfied with the submission and confirmed the professions and courses regulated by the HCPC were performing to a satisfactory standard. There are no risks or issues identified that have been referred to another process. Visitors have therefore recommended a five-year performance review monitoring period for the education provider.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2020
BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2016
BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice Integrated Apprenticeship	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2021
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/04/2015
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2020