Approval process report

University of Bedfordshire, Occupational Therapy (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship), 2023-24

Executive Summary

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

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

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This approval was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programme is approved
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • The provider's next performance review will be in the 2026-27 academic year. • The programme has been approved and will be delivered by the education provider from September 2025.

Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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

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

Our standards

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

Our regulatory approach

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

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

The approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:
- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programme(s)

- Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme

Through the approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

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

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint partner visitors to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view on our website.

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support this review:

Rachel Picton	Lead visitor, Radiographer
Jennifer Caldwell	Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers seven HCPC-approved programmes across four professions. It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2002. This includes one post-registration programme for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations.

The education provider is a well-established higher education institution with three faculties and the business school. All HCPC approved programmes are based in the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences, which consists of three schools: School of Applied Social Sciences, School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health Education and School of Society, Community and Health. The proposed programme will be based in the School of Society, Community and Health.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process last academic year where they achieved a five-year review period. Therefore, their next engagement with the performance review process will be in 2026-27.

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
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2023

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programme(s).

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary

Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	244	269	2023	The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision. The value here is above the benchmark, however this figure does include the additional learners they are proposing. Their currently enrolled learner numbers therefore meet the benchmark and there is no reason to explore this further.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	5%	2020-21	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 1%.

				We did not explore this data point through this assessment because it was considered through a separate focused review process in 2024-25.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	88%	2020-21	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 4%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because it was considered through a separate focused review process in 2024-25.
Learner positivity score	76.2%	56.6%	2023	This National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because it was considered through a separate focused review process in 2024-25.

HCPC performance review cycle length	N/A	Five years	2018-2021	The education provider has engaged with the HCPC previously and a five-year review period was agreed.

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

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

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

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Information for applicants** –
  - o Information related to admissions is available on the education providers website. The Admissions policy and procedure outlines the institution wide policies covering information for applicants. The proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship. The programme details will be added to the education provider's website and the prospectus with a note to indicate 'pending approval'.
  - o The education provider will work closely with stakeholders and applicants to ensure recruitment and selection processes are clear. Information about the proposed programme will also be shared through events organised in collaboration with stakeholders.
  - o There are programme specific policies which apply to individual disciplines and can be found on the programme specific webpages. The information includes programme applicant guides, programme information and programme specifications.
  - o This information will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** –
  - o The English language requirement policy is available online and outlined in the course information forms.
  - o The admissions policy and procedure relating to this area is institution wide and applies to all programmes.
  - o For all HCPC approved programmes, applicants are required to complete criminal conviction checks via the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and occupational health checks.

- o All applicants must meet the suitability criteria at the admissions stage and are therefore required to complete the pre course declaration forms. Thereafter applicants are required to complete annual declarations during their period of study.
  - o These policies and procedures are institution wide and will apply to applicants for the proposed programme.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** –
  - o The Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning Policy assesses applicants' prior learning and experience and this can be accessed on the education providers website.
  - o Applicants can submit a portfolio of evidence of their prior learning and experience. This can then be considered at course level with input from stakeholders.
  - o This policy will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
  - o The education provider demonstrates they are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion and has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy that applies to all staff, learners and stakeholders.
  - o There are several other policies covering this area, such as the Access and Participation Plan and Admissions Policy. The Health and Wellbeing Team are available to offer support to learners with disabilities and other additional learning requirements.
  - o These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register[1]** –
  - o The proposed programme will align with the current Occupational Therapy programme the education provider delivers. Learners will be required to complete all elements of the programme to ensure they are eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC.
  - o Ongoing compliance with the HCPC standards is monitored through the Course Enhancement Plans, which are reviewed at school level. In addition to this, the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) university monitoring report is reviewed by the Teaching Quality and Standards Committee at both Faculty and University level.
  - o External Examiners are involved with all assessment processes and regularly review and have oversight of all the programmes. This ensure PSRB standards are being met.

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[1] This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Sustainability of provision** –
  - o All programmes are included in the Faculty's Business Plan and the HCPC programmes are mapped against the relevant HCPC SOPs.
  - o To ensure the curriculum is current and there is sufficient placement capacity there is a Health and Social Care Academy within the Faculty, which is made up of senior members of staff who meet regularly to review programmes and placement capacity.
  - o For the proposed programme, the course team will work closely with a range of stakeholders across the region to develop additional placement opportunities. To support this work, they will attend the Allied Health Professions networking meeting to discuss placement capacity across the region.
  - o This process will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Effective programme delivery** –
  - o The education provider ensures they recruit appropriately qualified staff who are HCPC registered professionals, in line with the requirements outlined in the Quality Handbook.
  - o The proposed programme has been mapped to ensure it meets the Apprenticeship Standards, the Standards of Education and Training and the Standards of Proficiency for the Occupational Therapy course.
  - o The delivery and performance of the proposed programme will be monitored through the Course Enhancement Plans. These are reviewed every month by the Faculty Teaching Quality and Standards Committee (FTQSC), who highlight any concerns that need to be addressed. Placement activity is reviewed separately by the Health and Social Care Quality Assurance group.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Effective staff management and development** –
  - o Staff must engage with the personal development review process annually. To undertake their duties, they are provided with relevant training and development opportunities as outlined in the Staff Handbook.
  - o The School Apprenticeship Lead will support staff who are involved with the proposed programme. They will identify any specific apprenticeship training requirements staff may have and source this training for them.
  - o All staff are required to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching. In addition to this, they are also encouraged to engage with CPD and develop their skills and knowledge further.
  - o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** –

- o The education provider has collaborative partnerships in place, which are supported by members of the Faculty Executive.
- o The Associate Dean for External Relations specifically supports the HCPC provision with partnerships and practice-based learning.
- o These policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation
Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Academic quality** –
  - o The policies and procedures for quality and monitoring programmes are outlined in the Quality Handbook. Some of the mechanisms used to monitor academic quality include continuation, progression and attainment data, NSS results, external examiner reports, and feedback from students, placement providers and service users These policies and procedures ensure the continuous improvement of the programmes.
  - o External Examiners are involved with reviewing all programmes and provide input into all aspects of assessments.
  - o These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** –
  - o All practice-based learning sites are audited annually, and additional guidance and support is provided where needed. There are appropriate processes in place to gather learner feedback, such as the National Student Survey (NSS), the End of Semester review and the Bedfordshire Unit Survey.
  - o The education provider is committed to ensuring sufficient support is in place for learners and ensure all learners have access to a link lecturer and personal academic tutor. These tutors visit placement sites and use the visit as an opportunity to discuss learner progress, concerns and any other issues related to placements. For the proposed programme, these visits will be built into the 12-weekly tripartite schedule.
  - o As part of the Fitness to Practice policy there is a Cause for Concern form that can be completed if there are concerns relating to a learner's performance.
  - o These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Learner involvement** –
  - o The education provider requires learners to be involved and have input into the design and delivery of new programmes, which is outlined in

the Quality Handbook. They also encourage learners to be involved with recruitment events and undertake mentoring roles.

- o The Student Union work closely with learner representatives and support their involvement with Student Voice Forums.
- o There are various policies and procedures to support this area, such as the Tell Us Scheme, Bedfordshire Unit Survey and Course Enhancement Plans.
- o These policies and procedures apply at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Service user and carer involvement** –
  - o Service users and carers are involved with recruitment, teaching and the development of programmes. They also participate in stakeholder meetings and events and have input into clinical sessions.
  - o This level of service user involvement will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support** –
  - o The Student Information Desk (SID) offers a range of services to support learners, such as financial advice, counselling, career advice and disability and dyslexia support. In addition to this they also provide learners with advice and signpost them to relevant services, including arranging appointments.
  - o All learners are allocated a Personal Academic Tutor to provide them with pastoral and academic support, which includes referral to specific support services, such as the Study Hub Team.
  - o Other policies to support learners include the Student Complaints Policy and Faculty Student at Risk Policy.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Ongoing suitability** –
  - o Learners are required to complete criminal conviction checks at the admissions stage and report any changes through the duration of the programme to their personal academic tutor.
  - o Suitability concerns, such as learners competence, suitability to continue their learning and health issues are considered through the Fitness to Study Policy. The same processes will apply to the proposed programme, however the apprentices employers will be responsible for ensuring ongoing suitability to learn.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** –

- o Inter-professional policies are currently programme specific, however course teams are developing this across other programmes.
  - o They recognise the importance of teaching across programmes and how this will provide learners with a better understanding of roles in other disciplines and prepare them to work in multidisciplinary teams.
  - o These policies will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
  - o The education provider demonstrates they are committed to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and note it is a key performance indicator for this academic year, which they will be focussing on.
  - o EDI is embedded in the teaching and curriculum across all programmes.
  - o The University of Bedfordshire Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and Race Equality Charter are institution wide policies and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: We acknowledged the education provider is in the process of developing a programme specific inter-professional learning policy, however no timeframe has been specified for this. The development of this policy should be considered further and referred to the education provider's next performance review in 2026-27.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Objectivity** –
  - o The education providers assessment procedures are outlined in the Quality Handbook and are applied to all assessments to ensure consistency and transparency across all programmes.
  - o External Examiners are involved with all elements of assessments and provide independent input into the assessments to ensure quality and academic standards are maintained.
  - o These policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Progression and achievement** –
  - o The Progression and Achievement Policy applies to all programmes and therefore all course teams have a Progression and Achievement Lead. The Progression and Achievement Lead is responsible for identifying and monitoring learners at risk and providing them with relevant support.
  - o For the proposed programme, although the apprentices will be line managed by their employer, they will still have access to the same support systems that other learners will have access to.
  - o This policy is an institution wide policy and will apply to the proposed programme.

- **Appeals** –
  - o The University Appeals Policy allows learners to submit an appeal against the decision of an examination board and is overseen by the Student Adjudication Team.
  - o This policy is an institution wide policy and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

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:

- Currently the resources to deliver the programme consist of four Paramedic Science lecturing staff, three Operating Department Practice lecturing staff, three Occupational Therapy staff lecturing staff, three Physiotherapy lecturing staff and eight Hourly Paid Lecturers. A course co-ordinator, specifically for the Occupational Therapy apprenticeship will be recruited as part of the course approval process.
- The education provider has various sites in Bedford, Luton, and Aylesbury and simulation suites are available for all healthcare courses. These resources are utilised regularly as part of the teaching blocks and for additional study days. Apprenticeship learners will join the non-apprenticeship students in the classroom and simulation suite as part of their scheduled teaching.

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) Occupational Therapist (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist	15 learners, 1 cohort	16/09/2025

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 with practice education providers to ensure commitment to provide practice-based learning

Area for further exploration: The education provider supplied evidence of how they had involved practice education providers with the development of the programme via the Stakeholder meeting agendas and calendar. Based on the information provided, visitors acknowledged evidence of engagement with a range of practice education providers. There was, however, insufficient evidence of collaboration with a specific employer, including a confirmed commitment regarding the number of learners they intend to supply the programme with. As learners are also employees, employers are fundamental to the design, sustainability and delivery of the programme to ensure those who complete programmes can meet the HCPC requirements for registration. Visitors therefore requested further details about the employer the education provider would be working with and evidence of any commitments or agreements in place of the approximate number of apprentices they plan to send onto the programme. In addition to this, they also requested evidence of any meetings taking place and a narrative outlining how they will continue to work with practice education providers to ensure ongoing effective collaboration.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email and documentary evidence from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the programme demonstrated this area.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider explained how the Occupational Therapy team had worked closely with a range of stakeholders to develop the programme. They had engaged with these stakeholders on a regular basis via online and face to face meetings where they discussed the programme

design, development and delivery. They explained how they would continue to provide practice education providers with formal updates and training and host online stakeholder meetings every six weeks. This would be used as a key communication channel and would ensure continued collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

Alongside this, the education provider has also recently engaged with the accreditation process with the Royal College of Occupational Therapy and have received accreditation. We noted through this process; stakeholders were required to meet with the panel and demonstrate their commitment to the programme. Visitors acknowledged the narrative and evidence, which demonstrated the practice education providers who were committed to supporting the programme. This was evidenced in the 'Buckinghamshire NHS Trust Intention to Support' and 'Luton and Dunstable (Beds Trust) Intention to Support' documents.

The visitors acknowledged the additional information provided and were satisfied the education provider had appropriate plans in place to ensure ongoing engagement with practice education providers and a commitment to provide practice-based learning.

Quality theme 2 – ensuring there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver the programme over three years.

Area for further exploration: The education provider submitted staff CVs, which provided an overview of the team's qualifications and experience to deliver the programme. Visitors acknowledged these and noted there were an adequate number of staff to deliver the programme but queried how staffing would be managed with the growth in learner numbers. Visitors therefore requested further information to understand the education providers plans on how staffing would be increased through the duration of the programme and how they would ensure they had relevant specialist knowledge and experience.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email and documentary evidence from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the programme demonstrated this area.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider explained how the Occupational Therapy Staffing Strategy 2024-2029 outlined the plans for ensuring the programme was adequately staffed and monitored. Visitors were assured by this, as it supported the development of the proposed programme. In addition to this, it was also noted the education provider used the staff:student ratio to monitor staffing levels.

Visitors acknowledged a senior lecturer post had also been approved, and the new member of staff would be joining the team in September 2025. The team currently consists of five senior lecturers, and some elements of the programme will be

delivered by members of staff from the Physiotherapy team. Additionally, some hourly paid lecturers with experience and knowledge of specialised subjects within occupational therapy will be recruited to deliver the programme. It was noted these individuals would also be HCPC registered. This will enhance the learning experience for the learners and ensure the staff delivering the programme offer a range of expertise and knowledge.

The visitors acknowledged the additional information provided and were satisfied the education provider had appropriate plans in place to ensure there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver the programme.

Quality theme 3 – ensuring and monitoring the number of qualified and experienced practice educators to support practice-based learning

Area for further exploration: Visitors acknowledged there were an adequate number of experienced and qualified staff to support practice-based learning. From the information provided however, it was not clear to visitors how the education provider captured any data relating to training and any other updates for practice educators. There was also no evidence of how this data was monitored to ensure there were an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff. Visitors therefore requested further information to explain how this data is recorded, specifically whether it includes all updates and training completed by practice educators. They also requested to see the processes in place for monitoring this data to ensure there is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email and documentary evidence from the education provider. We considered this would be the most effective method to understand how the programme demonstrated this area.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider explained how practice educators completed a self-disclosure form annually. This form enabled the education provider to track updates of any recent training, including continuing professional development that practice educators had undertaken and update their data accordingly. Although the self-declaration form tracked individual training, we noted the education provider were working on a system which would enable them to ensure there were a sufficient number of appropriately qualified practice educators. Visitors acknowledged this system was in the process of being developed and were assured there were appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor practice educator training and ensure they were all appropriately qualified and experienced to support learners with practice-based learning.

Visitors noted the education provider offered a range of training options for practice educators, such as half day refreshers. The mentors and assessors were also qualified occupational therapists and registered with the HCPC. Trusts had oversight of all training completed by the mentors and assessors and maintained records,

which ensured they had undertaken the relevant training and were current. This information was also shared with the education provider, which enabled them to also maintain their records.

The visitors acknowledged the additional information provided and were satisfied the education provider had appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure practice educators were appropriately qualified and experienced. They considered the support and auditing mechanisms for mentors and assessors were adequate.

Section 4: Findings

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

Overall findings on how standards are met

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

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** – this standard is covered through institution-level assessment.
- **SET 2: Programme admissions** –
  - The selection and entry criteria were clear and set at an appropriate level for an apprenticeship programme. The entry criteria are available on the education provider's website and accessible to applicants.
  - The Course Information Form provided clear information and confirmed appropriate academic and professional entry standards would be applied fairly and consistently.
  - The information available includes academic grade requirements and criminal and health check requirements.
  - The proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship. Employers will therefore be involved with the recruitment and selection process and will apply the policies and procedures outlined in the Course Information Form and the Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Rationale document.
  - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standard within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
  - There was evidence of collaboration with a wide range of practice education providers across the profession. They were involved with the development of the programme and will continue to be involved when the programme commences. Through Quality theme 1 we noted the education provider had received a commitment from Buckinghamshire

NHS Trust and Luton and Dunstable Hospital (Bedfordshire Hospital Trust) to support the programme and provide practice-based learning opportunities.

- o There were appropriate processes in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning. Visitors noted availability and capacity were monitored through the Quality Education Practice Liaison meetings, which took place regularly and the Faculty Quality Lead. Through clarification, we noted all practice-based learning opportunities were quality assured before learners engaged with the setting. Visitors acknowledged the education provider ensured a Practice Learning Educational Audit had been completed for all practice-based learning opportunities.
- o Through Quality theme 2 we explored how the education provider would ensure there were an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver the programme over three years. In addition to this we also sought further information from the education provider outlining how they would ensure educators had relevant specialist knowledge and experience.
- o Visitors acknowledged there were a wide range of resources available to support the effective delivery of the programme. These included the library, academic support, disability and dyslexia service and mental health and wellbeing services. In addition to this, learners would also have access to simulation facilities on campus. In addition to the resources and support available from the education provider, apprentices will also have access to their own work based resources via their employer.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The learning outcomes were mapped against the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) mapping document and outlined in the module descriptors. The structure of the modules ensured learners could meet the SOPs upon successful completion.
  - o Professional behaviours and the Standards of conduct, performance and ethics were embedded throughout the programme to ensure learners understand the expectations. The programme has been mapped against the HCPC Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics to ensure it reflects the current requirements. It was noted learners were required to complete the declaration of good health and character process annually. Alongside this there were also appropriate processes to address concerns regarding behaviour and conduct in the 'University's Student Conduct Policy' and the Cause for Concern' process.
  - o The philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base were clearly articulated in the structure and delivery of the programme and reflected the apprenticeship standards. This was evidenced through the module

outcomes and programme specification, which clearly outlined how these would be delivered and assessed throughout the programme.

- o There were appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure the curriculum remained relevant to current practice, which included reviewing the programme three times a year. It was noted the programme had been designed to reflect the HCPC Standards of Proficiency (2023).
- o The structure of the programme ensured the integration of theory and practice throughout the programme, which was demonstrated through the programme specification. Visitors noted there was a practice-based learning approach throughout levels 4, 5 and 6 of the programme.
- o A range of learning and teaching methods were being used, which visitors considered were appropriate. These methods included a combination of webinars, simulated learning, which included a ward and a flat to create real life scenarios and self-directed learning. It was noted the programme was reviewed three times a year with learners to ensure the teaching methods being used were appropriate.
- o Autonomous and reflective thinking were embedded in a range of learning outcomes and assessments, including the practice modules. The programme design ensured learners were able to develop this throughout the programme at each level and reflect on their learning. It was noted the 'Collaborative Therapies for Apprentices' module specifically enabled learners to develop these skills further and encouraged them to solve problems independently.
- o Evidence based practice is demonstrated in various modules, which are delivered throughout the programme. Visitors noted learners were supported to develop their research skills at the beginning of the programme, which continued through the programme via specific modules and assessments.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o Practice-based learning was integrated throughout the programme. The evidence demonstrated the programme had been structured to ensure learners could gain knowledge and skills through practice-based learning, which they could then apply to their academic modules.
  - o There was evidence of an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to support practice-based learning, which included practice educators. Through Quality theme 3 further clarification was provided on how they ensured practice educators had the relevant skills, knowledge and experience to support learners.
  - o There was evidence to demonstrate the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning was appropriate to enable learners to meet the SOPs and achieve the learning outcomes. Visitors acknowledged the range of placements available and noted this reflected current practice.

- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - o The programme was mapped against the HCPC standards of proficiency and had a varied assessment design, which provided learners with the opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Visitors noted there were a good range of assessments to support the development of learners.
  - o Visitors acknowledged the standards of conduct performance and ethics were clearly embedded in the learning outcomes of the modules and the practice-based learning assessments. This enabled learners to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
  - o There were a range of appropriate assessment methods used to measure the learning outcomes across the modules. These included essays, reports, presentations and authentic assessment, which supported the development of competencies across a range of communication methods, such as individual and group work. It was noted this was due to avoiding disadvantaging learners within a specific group that have varying ways of learning.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Section 5: Referrals

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

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

Recommendations

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

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:
- All standards are met, and therefore the programme should be approved.

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observations they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:
- The programme is approved.
- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2026-27 academic year.

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

Appendix 1 – summary report

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

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Quality of provision	Facilities provided
University of Bedfordshire	CAS-01499-L6F2V1	Rachel Picton & Jennifer Caldwell	Through this assessment, we have noted: • The programme meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.	Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities: • Currently the resources to deliver the programme consist of four Paramedic Science lecturing staff, three Operating Department Practice lecturing staff, three Occupational Therapy staff lecturing staff, three Physiotherapy lecturing staff and eight Hourly Paid Lecturers. A course co-ordinator, specifically for the Occupational Therapy apprenticeship will be recruited as part of the course approval process. • The education provider has various sites in Bedford, Luton, and Aylesbury and

				simulation suites are available for all healthcare courses. These resources are utilised regularly as part of the teaching blocks and for additional study days. Apprenticeship learners will join the non-apprenticeship students in the classroom and simulation suite as part of their scheduled teaching.
Programmes				
Programme name			**Mode of study**	**Nature of provision**
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapist (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)			Full time	• Apprenticeship

Appendix 2 – 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 Practitioner (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2021
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/04/2015
BSc (Hons) Paramedic (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			25/09/2023
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2020
Non Medical Prescribing	PT (Part time)			Independent prescribing	01/09/2023