

HCPC major change process report

Education provider	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, Full time MSc Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration), Full time BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Degree Apprenticeship, Full time
Date submission received	18 March 2021
Case reference	CAS-16951-Y7B4K1

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Executive Summary

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

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

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

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

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

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC).

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

HCPC panel

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

Rebecca Khanna	Occupational therapist
Joanna Goodwin	Occupational therapist
Temilolu Odunaike	HCPC executive

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Occupational therapist
First intake	01 May 1995
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 60
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	MC04835

Programme name	MSc Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Occupational therapist
First intake	01 September 2003

Maximum learner cohort	Up to 60
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	MC04836

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Occupational therapist
First intake	01 September 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	MC04864

We undertook this assessment to consider whether the programme continues to meet our standards, following changes reported to us via the major change process. The following is an overview of the changes from the information received via this process.

The education provider intends to introduce a degree apprenticeship programme alongside their existing approved BSc (Hons) and MSc provision. Additionally, the education provider is planning to restructure all modules and reduce the number of practice-based learning modules within their existing BSc (Hons) and MSc Occupational Therapy programmes.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

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

Required documentation	Submitted
Major change notification form	Yes
Completed major change standards mapping	Yes

Section 4: Outcome from first review

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission, the visitors were not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence that our standards continued to be met at this time, and therefore require further evidence as noted below.

Further evidence required

In order to determine whether the standards continue to be met, the visitors require further evidence for the following standards for the reasons noted below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programme(s), and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the standards.

3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

Reason: The visitors reviewed sections of the programme specification and the commitment statement amongst other documents as evidence for this standard. The visitors saw that employers are committed to providing resources for the degree apprenticeship (DA) programme. However, there was no evidence to demonstrate how the education provider would ensure there is a continued supply of applicants from the employers. In addition, the visitors noted that there was no evidence of the mitigations put in place by the education provider to manage risks or threats in extending the portfolio, to also include the DA programme. As the visitors did not see any evidence of how the number of learners from the employers would be sustained, they were not assured the programme's future is secure and therefore request further information demonstrating the education provider's plan to ensure the DA programme is sustainable.

Suggested evidence: Evidence demonstrating the degree apprenticeship programme would remain sustainable. Examples could be a memorandum of understanding from employers or their 5-year workforce plan.

3.6 There must be an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Reason: From reviewing the documentation submitted, including the Practice Placement Report – Interim Report for the Programme Committee Meeting January 2021, the visitors noted evidence of meetings with practice education providers to discuss availability and capacity of practice-based learning. The visitors noted from the evidence provided, that there already exists pressure on practice education providers due to the impact on service provision during the Covid-19 pandemic and increased learner numbers enrolled in the BSc (Hons) cohort of 2020. The evidence also showed additional pressure on practice-based learning has resulted from increase in demand for placements in the region due to new education providers of pre-registration Occupational Therapy programmes.

Although the visitors are aware that there is an existing process in place for the existing BSc and MSc programmes, they noted that the education provider had not evidenced how they would use the existing framework to obtain a greater number of placements considering the addition of the DA learners. Given there may be risk to securing an increased number of placements as noted above, the visitors considered that the education provider would need to show evidence of the mitigations or controls they have put in place to ensure all learners have access to practice-based learning.

Suggested evidence: Further information on how the education provider will ensure availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners, including the DA learners.

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

Reason: The visitors noted the evidence provided identified access to Technology Enhanced Services, Nursing, Midwifery and Health facilities and the Clinical Skills Centre. They also noted that the simulation video detailed the intention to make these facilities accessible during non-timetabled use to external organisations. In addition, the visitors noted that staff within the NHS may have access to the NHS library and information facilities. However, they were unclear about access by non-NHS employed staff. For example, how practice educators in hospices, care homes and third sector mental health charities would have access to resources and how this is explained to them. Given the information provided identified the intention of the education provider to continue to extend the scope of placements beyond the NHS, the visitors require further information on how educators and learners in these settings would access the resources they need to support learning.

In addition, the visitors noted that the degree apprenticeship would be delivered using a flexible blended learning approach including online learning materials. However, they could not determine how the education provider will assure digital equality to learners and educators. They also could not determine how the existing quality assurance mechanisms ensure technology effectiveness to appropriately deliver all the Occupational Therapy programmes as the use of technology becomes significant. The visitors noted that there are no arrangements to ensure all learners have access to the right equipment to use for their learning. The visitors understood from their documentation review that both apprentices and employers would use a document referred to as “workbook”. However, it was unclear what its role is, what module it is part of, what help is given to complete it or how it will be marked.

Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to submit additional evidence to address all these areas before they can determine whether this SET is met.

Suggested evidence: Evidence showing how resources to support learning (as highlighted above) would be used to effectively and appropriately deliver the programme and how they will be accessible to all learners and educators.

5.2 The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning must support the achievement of the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency.

5.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

Reason: The visitors saw in their review of the documentation submitted that there has been a reduction in placement occurrences for the existing programmes, from four to three.

Given the reduction in the number of placements, the visitors had concerns how the reduced number of placements would still allow learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for occupational therapists. The visitors considered that the education provider will need to ensure their process for allocating placement to learners will ensure learners gain a range of experiences to enable them to meet the SOPs. Therefore, the education provider must submit evidence demonstrating that the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning would allow learners to achieve the learning outcomes of the programme and the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for occupational therapists.

Taking into consideration the increased number of learners requiring placements due to the proposed BSc (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship programme, plus further pressures as identified in SET 3.6, the visitors are unclear how the education provider justifies there is enough support for the total number of learners, including any specific support some learners may need. The visitors therefore require that the education provider justify how they will ensure a suitable number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in practice-based learning to support all learners including those with specific needs.

Suggested evidence: Evidence showing how the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning would support the achievement of learning outcomes and the SOPs for occupational therapists. Evidence of adequate staffing in practice-based learning.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the request for further evidence set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that there is sufficient evidence that the standards continue to be met and recommend that the programme(s) remain approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 25 August 2021 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).