

## HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Queen Margaret University
Name of programme(s)	Master of Dietetics (MDiet), Full time BSc (Hons) Dietetics, Full time
Approval visit date	30 April-01 May 2019
Case reference	CAS-14356-V3X9C8

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### Executive Summary

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

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

## Section 1: Our regulatory approach

### Our standards

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

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

### How we make our decisions

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

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

### HCPC panel

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

Julie Leaper	Dietitian
Susanne Roff	Lay
Tracy Clephan	Dietitian
Shaista Ahmad	HCPC executive
Jamie Hunt	HCPC executive (observer)

### Other groups involved in the approval visit

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

Richard Bent	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University
Sheila Adamson	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Queen Margaret University
Mairghread Ellis	Internal panel reviewer	Queen Margaret University

Gail Carin-Levy	Internal panel reviewer	Queen Margaret University
Fiona Reid	Internal panel reviewer	Queen Margaret University
Jacki Bishop	Professional body representative	British Dietetic Association
Jane Wilson	Professional body representative	British Dietetic Association
Menna Wyn Wright	Professional body representative	British Dietetic Association
Catherine McGibbon	Professional body representative (observer)	British Dietetic Association

## Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Master of Dietetics (MDiet)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Dietitian
Proposed First intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 27 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02057

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Dietetics
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Dietitian
Proposed First intake	01 September 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 27 across both programmes
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02060

We undertook this assessment of two new programmes proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

## 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
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	Yes

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	We met with learners on the HCPC approved programmes at Queen Margaret University, BSc (Hons) Dietetics (Full Time) and MSc Dietetics (Part Time).
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice education providers	Yes	
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	We met with individuals who provided services for service users.
Programme team	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	

## Section 4: Outcome from first review

### Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

### Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 12 June 2019.

## **2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that appropriate information about the associated costs of the programmes is provided to potential applicants, to ensure that they can make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programmes.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, a link was provided to the education provider's website which provided some information about the programmes including details such as entry requirements, structure of the programme and information about practice-based learning. The visitors noted from the documentation that practice-based learning settings would be secured for learners by the education provider. The visitors also noted that applicants were not provided with information that explained what the associated costs of the programmes might be, including accommodation costs whilst on practice-based learning. The programme team informed the visitors that this information is contained within the prospectus but is not currently available on the education provider's website. They noted that applicants would be made aware how practice-based learning would be allocated at open days, and when they are offered a place on the programme. In discussions with existing learners they explained that they were unaware of how practice based learning would be allocated, and the additional costs that they would incur, prior to being offered a place on the programme, despite attending open days. As such, the visitors were not able to establish how information about potential additional costs associated with the programmes, and details about practice-based learning, would be made available to potential applicants prior to taking up an offer of a place on the programmes. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate how they inform all prospective applicants of any additional costs on the programmes, and how learners will be allocated practice-based learning opportunities, to ensure they can make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programmes.

## **2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that appropriate information about the criminal conviction checks and health requirements is provided to potential applicants, allowing them to make an informed decision about taking up a place on a programme.

**Reason:** From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that information regarding requirements for criminal conviction checks and health requirements were available within the student handbook. As this information, was contained within the student handbook the visitors could not see how applicants would have access to this information prior to securing a place on the programme. In discussions with the programme team, the visitors were told that this information was initially contained on the website but this has now been removed following a review of the information. The learners informed the visitors that the information about health requirements were outlined within the offer letter that they received but this information was not contained on the website at the point of admission. As such, the visitors could not determine how applicants would have all the information they require to make an informed decision about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programmes. The

visitors require further evidence as to what information will be made available to potential applicants and how this information will be provided. In this way, the visitors will be able to determine how the education provider ensures that applicants have all the information they require in order to make informed decisions about taking up a place on the programmes.

## **2.2 The selection and entry criteria must include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how the selection criteria used to assess value based statements completed by applicants as part of the admissions process is appropriate, and allows the education provider to make admissions decisions.

**Reason:** From the documentation provided, the visitors noted that there were specific entry requirements which need to be met before applicants could be offered a place on the programmes. The visitors understood that as part of the admissions process, the education provider does not conduct interviews to determine the suitability of applicants for the programmes. In discussions at the visit, the programme team informed the visitors that instead of conducting interviews, all applicants are required to write a “value based statement” to demonstrate their ability to be a suitable applicant for the programme. If the admissions criteria are met, the value-based statement is assessed by an admissions panel to determine whether the applicant has demonstrated the skills required for the diverse role of a dietitian. However, the visitors were not able to establish how the value-based statements would be assessed by the education provider to determine if the applicants are suitable for the programmes as they did not have sight of the assessment criteria. Therefore, the visitors require evidence which demonstrates the criteria which will be used to assess the value based statements in order to determine if the selection criteria are appropriate to the level and content of the programmes.

## **3.3 The education provider must ensure that the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate what arrangements are in place to ensure that the individual holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, the education provider provided the name and curriculum vitae of the individual with overall professional responsibility for the programmes. In discussions with the senior team, the visitors were given verbal assurances that the individual appointed to this role would always be registered with the HCPC. The team explained that there were plans to create a succession plan to identify and develop a replacement for the programme leader if this was required in the future. Following this meeting, the visitors were provided with a programme lead descriptor which outlined the roles and responsibilities of the programme leader, which seemed reasonable to the visitors. However, considering all of the information provided, the visitors were unable to determine what arrangements would be in place on these programmes to ensure that the person appointed to the role would be appropriately

qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register. Therefore, the visitors require evidence of how the education provider will ensure that the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programmes is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

### **3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how service users and carers will be involved to contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of the programmes, and demonstrate how this involvement is monitored and evaluated.

**Reason:** In the documentation, the visitors understood that the views of service users had been gathered through online questionnaires and patient stories which had helped the education provider develop their admissions processes, practice placements and the curriculum content. At the visit, the visitors were able to meet with individuals who provided services for service users. These individuals explained that service users had been involved in “Dementia cafes” where they help to develop learner’s communication skills and consider the impact of nutritional care for people living with dementia.

The programme team explained that there were various projects where they plan to involve the service users on for these programmes. An example of this includes the development of a “Health issues in the community” module where learners would have the opportunity to visit community groups and communicate with service users. From these discussions, the visitors gained an insight of how the education provider planned to involve service users within this programme. However, the visitors considered that some of this ‘involvement’ was actually learners working with service users, rather than service users contributing to the programme itself in some way (for example, in programme development). As such, the visitors were not able to determine whether service users are meaningfully involved in the programmes, or how the education provider would continue to ensure service user and carer involvement. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate how they will involve service users in the programmes, so they are able to contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme.

### **3.14 The programme must implement and monitor equality and diversity policies in relation to learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence of how equality and diversity policies are made available to learners.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation provided, the visitors noted that there is an equality and diversity policy in place for the programmes. The visitors were satisfied that the content of the policy, if implemented and monitored appropriately, was appropriate to ensure equality and diversity in relation to learners. At the visit, the programme team outlined the process of how equality and diversity policies would be implemented and monitored for the programmes. However, the learners told the visitors they were not clear what the equality and diversity policies were and how they would access these should they need to use them. As such, the visitors could not determine how learners would be able to access the policy and what they would need to do if they felt discriminated against. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence as to how the

education provider will make equality and diversity policies available to learners on the programmes

#### **4.6 The learning and teaching methods used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how peer assisted learning (PAL) will be used throughout the programmes, to ensure it is appropriate and effective in supporting the delivery of the learning outcomes.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation, the visitors understood that learners on the programme would complete Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) in Placements A, B and C. This involves working in collaboration with other learners to develop knowledge and skills throughout each practice-based learning element of the programmes. The visitors understood that all learners would be asked to provide feedback to their peers on their performance. In discussions with the practice educators, the visitors were informed that PAL is used within a group format. Another practice educator explained that this is used on a one to one basis with learners, to reflect the environment of a patient care setting. In the programme team meeting, it was explained that the PAL was intended to be a learning activity designed to ensure that learners can give each other feedback and reflect on what they had learnt. Due to the disparity in the understanding of different groups of how PAL would be used in the programmes, the visitors were not able to establish whether PAL would be an appropriate teaching method to support the delivery of the learning outcomes. Therefore, the education provider must provide clarification on how PAL will be used as a teaching method on the programmes and how this will ensure the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.

#### **5.3 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how the programmes continue to ensure quality of practice-based learning.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation, the visitors understood there was a process in place that the education provider uses to approve and monitor practice-based learning. The visitors understood that the practice-based learning opportunities are approved on a 5 year basis using the quality standards for practice placement audit (QSPP), which is a Scotland-wide scheme. The practice-based learning environments are then continually reviewed on an annual basis where the practice educators would confirm if any changes have been made to the practice-based delivery in the health board or report if no changes had been made. As part of the submission the visitors reviewed the “Scottish cluster Dietetic Placements” website which contained information about the placement profiles for each of the NHS boards used to provide practice-based learning opportunities for these programmes. The visitors read information about various placement providers, some of which had no details of when initial approval had taken place, or whether they had been monitored since approval. The visitors understood that as the QSPP tool is a national scheme provided by NHS Scotland the education provider may not have direct control over the information produced on their website. However, the visitors were not able to determine how the education provider would use the information from the QSPP audit, plus any other relevant information, to ensure the quality of practice-based learning for their learners. Therefore, the education



provider must demonstrate how the information from the QSPP audit, plus any other relevant information, is used to ensure the quality of practice-based learning.

### **Recommendations**

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

### **3.4 The programme must have regular and effective monitoring and evaluation systems in place.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should review the contributions that external examiners make to the programmes.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors had seen evidence of the processes in place to monitor and evaluate the programmes' quality and effectiveness. However, when reviewing the external examiner reports, the visitors noted that the responses provided by the external examiner were limited to responding to a series of questions with a tick box and a short comment. The form was structured to allow the external examiners to provide further comments on the programmes including the strengths and the suggested areas of development. However, in the example provided, this section was not completed with feedback which would be beneficial to the programme team. As such, the visitors recommend that the education provider monitors and evaluate the contributions made by the external examiner to the programmes through the report to enable the programme team to benefit from any feedback provided.

## **Section 5: Visitors' recommendation**

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 22 August 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).