

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Manchester Metropolitan University
Name of programme(s)	MSc Dietetics, Full time
Approval visit date	10 June 2021
Case reference	CAS-16152-Z5G3Q1

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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:

Catherine Mackenzie	Speech and language therapist
Fiona McCullough	Dietitian
Temilolu Odunaike	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit

There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Carol Ainley	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Vanessa Smithson	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Amanda Avery	Professional body representative	British Dietetic Association
Jane Wilson	Professional body representative	British Dietetic Association

Menna Wyn-Wright	Professional body executive	British Dietetic Association
Raquel Revuelta Iniesta	External assessor	University of Exeter
Anna Kime	University validation panel	Manchester Metropolitan University
Amber Gavin	Student representative	Manchester Metropolitan University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Dietetics
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Dietitian
Proposed first intake	01 January 2022
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 24
Intakes per year	1

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual 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 ask for certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Type of evidence	Submitted	Comments
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes	
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes	
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes	
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes	
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes	
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes	

Internal quality monitoring documentation	Not Required	Only requested if the programme (or a previous version) is currently running
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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Not Required	As this was a virtual visit and, because the visitors did not have areas to address with this group, we decided that it was unnecessary to meet with them.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	As this was a virtual visit and, because the visitors did not have areas to address with this group, we decided that it was unnecessary to meet with them.
Facilities and resources	Yes	
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	
Programme team	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 virtual 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 29 July 2021.

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

Condition: The education provider must clarify the academic and professional entry criteria for the programme and how this is communicated to applicants.

Reason: The visitors reviewed documentation relating to admissions and discussed the subject with the programme team. Prior to the visit, the visitors were referred to the webpage for the postgraduate virtual open day, which listed the dates for forthcoming open day events. The visitors were also informed that applicants must hold an Honours degree in a relevant subject such as biological sciences, physiology, biochemistry, chemistry and psychology at 2:1 or above or equivalent to be eligible for admission to the programme. The information provided also stated that all candidates go through a two-stage admissions process:

- scoring of personal statement and academic check; and
- values-based interview with an academic member of staff.

However, there were no details provided about what the interview would entail or what applicants need to achieve in order to get on the programme. For example, what experience, in addition to their previous degree, would help them in getting a higher score.

At the visit, the programme team explained that they will organise campus or online tours, where applicants can find out more about the requirements to get onto the programme. The team also mentioned that a member of staff runs a series of open days for both undergraduate and post graduate programmes, where they would provide links to additional information about the entry requirements. However, they confirmed that the links are not yet visible. As the visitors did not see details of the selection and entry requirements that will be provided to applicants or how applicants will be signposted to this information, they could not determine that this standard was met. Therefore, the education provider must provide detailed information about the academic and professional entry criteria for the programme and that it is clearly set out and accessible to all applicants.

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 they will maintain a thorough and effective system for ensuring the quality of practice-based learning on the programme.

Reason: From reviewing the information provided prior to the visit, the visitors understood that a new quality assurance framework, the North West Practice Education Group has been set up amongst Higher Education institutions (HEIs) in the North West region of England to ensure the quality of practice-based learning. From reviewing the documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors understood that this audit system will also be utilised by other Allied Health Professions. However, there was no detail provided about how the system will work specifically for the dietetic programme at Manchester Metropolitan University.

The practice educators informed the visitors that there are ongoing discussions on how Quality Assurance (QA) monitoring will be collected. They also mentioned that all three

education providers within the region will use the same QA tool. However, they did not yet have details of how it will work for this particular programme. The visitors noted a lack of clarity around how, when and where the new QA system will be used for the proposed dietetic programme. As such, they request that the education provider provide further information detailing how they will ensure the quality of practice-based learning for the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.

Reason: From the information provided prior to the visit, the visitors understood that the education provider is working with other higher education institutions who have dietetics as part of their suite of programmes. The information provided, also stated that a detailed mapping has been done to establish how many learners will be in practice at any given time and that placements have been located to ensure consistency in the number of learners, so as not to overwhelm staff in practice-based learning. The visitors noted however, that there was no broad outline of how this will be achieved.

In their meeting, the practice educators informed the visitors about the difficulties they had been experiencing in recruiting dietetic staff to practice-based learning. Although the staff stated that they are fairly confident that they will be ready to take learners in practice-based learning by July 2022 when learners undertake their first placement, the visitors noted that there was no evidence of how they will achieve this. The visitors considered that the education provider will need to provide a timeline showing how an adequate number of staff will be recruited to practice-based learning to support all learners, including those with specific learning needs. In this way, the visitors can determine that practice-based learning will be adequately resourced for the programme.

5.7 Practice educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that practice educators undertake mandatory regular training required to enable them assess the learning outcomes.

Reason: The visitors reviewed documentation relating to training for practice educators and were able to discuss the topic with practice educators and the programme team. Through their documentation review, the visitors were aware that other HEIs offer training opportunities for practice educators; that there are opportunities to engage in updates; and that the facility is offered through an online platform. In their meeting, the programme team informed the visitors that discussions about what the training would look like have started. However, the visitors were unsure how this education provider will be involved. The programme team confirmed that it will be a blended approach of both online and work based learning. However, the practice educators were not aware of any of these training arrangements or whether they are mandatory.

For training specific to assist practice educators to assess learners reliably and consistently, the programme team explained that there would be live sessions to support a failing learner and that aspects of the online training relate to assessment. The team also explained that they will use the same training document that other HEIs within the region will use and that details of in-training will be provided in the practice educator's handbook. The visitors noted that the practice educator's handbook was not yet available. As no documentation was provided demonstrating the training requirements for practice educators and how these requirements will be communicated to them, and due to the lack of awareness by the practice educators, the visitors could not determine that this standard is met. They therefore request that the education provider provide further evidence of how they will ensure practice educators undertake regular training, particularly that which would enable them to assess the learning outcomes. The education provider must also demonstrate how they will ensure practice educators are aware of the mandatory training.

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 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](#).