

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Huddersfield
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy, Full time
Approval visit date	12-13 January 2021
Case reference	CAS-16192-Z7X4D4

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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:

Elspeth McCartney	Speech and language therapist
Lorna Povey	Speech and language therapist
Niall Gooch	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.

Sara Eastburn	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Huddersfield
Aneela Simms	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Huddersfield
Carol Fairfield	Reviewer	Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Speech and language therapist
Proposed first intake	01 September 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 30
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02271

We undertook this assessment of a new programme 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 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

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
Learners	Yes
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes
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 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 March 2021.

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 demonstrate how they will ensure that appropriate information about the programme is available to all applicants to enable them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the documentation and from discussions at the visit that learners on the programme might well incur additional costs associated with practice-based learning, for example, travel and accommodation. They were not clear how these additional costs would be communicated to applicants so that they would be able to make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme. The visitors considered that this was especially important in light of the conditions outlined below regarding the lack of certainty about the practice-based learning settings. They therefore could not be sure that the standard was met and require further evidence demonstrating that applicants will have access to clear information about the costs associated with the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will use the governance structures to ensure the quality of the programme.

Reason: The visitors had been provided with information about various committees and working groups on the programme, but it was not clear to the visitors how they would work together to ensure effective monitoring and evaluation. They were not sure, for example, what the lines of communication between the various groups were and what actions they would take to make specific amendments to the programme where required. In addition, it was not clear which responsibilities around programme quality were allocated to each group. The visitors therefore require further clarity about how the education provider will ensure that monitoring will be effective in terms of institutional follow-up and accountability to ensure the quality of the programme.

3.5 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

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

The following condition applies to the above standards. For simplicity, as the issue spans several standards, the education provider should respond to this condition as one issue.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will use effective collaboration with placement partners to ensure availability and capacity of practice-based learning..

Reason: The visitors reviewed the visit documentation and so were aware that the education provider had close relationships with many local placement partners. There was evidence in the documents of various meetings and the visitors were aware that the education provider had reached out to a wide variety of providers. However, the visitors were aware that the education provider had not yet reached final agreements with their intended placement partners. The visitors also recognised that there were various local competitors, existing speech and language therapy programmes, who would add to the demand for practice-based learning in the region.

Additionally, the visitors were not clear how the education provider would ensure clear lines of internal accountability regarding the securing of placements. There was not, for example, a named person who was the institutional lead for relationships with placement partner, although several senior staff were involved, and several university-level initiatives were ongoing to secure placements. At the strategic level, the visitors were not clear what the arrangements were for senior oversight over the relationships with practice partners. In the meeting with practice educators, it was clear that practice educators from various organisations understood what kind of settings the education provider was seeking, but the discussions indicated that the details had not been finalised.

The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the education provider's collaboration with placement partners was effective in terms of whether they could

finalise arrangements considering the regional context, and therefore whether the process for ensuring sufficient capacity was effective. The visitors could therefore not determine whether these standards were met, and require the education provider to clarify the collaboration with placement providers and process by which they would reach placement agreements with their partners.

6.3 Assessments must provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure equity in the marking undertaken by visiting lecturers.

Reason: The visitors were aware that some of the marking in years two and three would be undertaken by staff from outside the permanent teaching faculty of the programme. The visitors were not clear how the education provider would ensure that these individuals would be appropriately prepared to mark learners' work, and what process was in place to ensure that the assessment was appropriately moderated. This was important because there needed to be some means by which the risk of unfair or unreliable marking could be mitigated, and by which marking which was not aligned to the programme's expectations could be adjusted. This matter was discussed at the visit, and the programme team gave verbal reassurances of their confidence in the visiting lecturers. However, the visitors considered that there needed to be a formal process for preparing visiting lecturers for assessment, and they therefore require further evidence demonstrating that the education provider can ensure fair and reliable measurement of progression and achievement by visiting lecturers.

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 27 April 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](#).