Approval process report

Newman University, Birmingham, physiotherapy, 2022-23

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve a physiotherapy programme at Newman University, Birmingham. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) are fit to practice.

We have:
- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through the documentary submission for stage 2 of the approval process
- 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
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the institution and programme should be approved
- Decided that all standards are met, and that the institution and programme is approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The following are areas of best practice:
  - sharing the newly developed clinic facility with other education providers.
- The provider should next engage with monitoring in three years, the 2025-26 academic year
- The provider and programme meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This approval process was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the institution and programme are approved, and • when the provider's first engagement with the performance review process should be
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • The provider's next performance review will be in the 2025-26 academic year • The education provider has an active approval case for both an occupational therapy and paramedic programme

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 institution and programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) approval / ongoing 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:

Carol Rowe	Lead visitor, physiotherapist
Fleur Kitsell	Lead visitor, physiotherapist
Catherine Rice	Service User Expert Advisor
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider does not currently deliver any HCPC-approved programmes. It is a higher education institution.

The route through stage 1

This institution is new to the HCPC, and therefore we needed to make a judgement that they met all institution-level standards by directly assessing them through a visitor-led review.

Stage 1 assessment – provider submission

The education provider was asked to demonstrate how they meet institution level standards. 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.

Outcomes from stage 1

From their review of the documentary submission, and on exploring themes through quality activity, the visitors were satisfied that most institution-level standards are met, and that assessment should continue to stage 2 of the process.

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** –
  - Programme webpages state on successful completion of the programme, graduates will be eligible to apply for entry onto the HCPC register.
  - General Academic Regulations state all modules within three- and four-year full-time programmes are core modules and must be undertaken and passed to achieve the undergraduate programme, as well as the required professional elements. It also states aegrotat awards are not acceptable for providing eligibility to apply for registration with the HCPC.
  - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 2: Programme admissions** –
  - Selection and entry criteria are clear and set at an appropriate level for an undergraduate programme. The criteria includes three B grades at A-level, and General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) English language and maths grades 9-4 / A*-C or equivalent.
  - A satisfactory enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is a mandatory requirement for entry onto a programme. Applicants are also required to satisfy health requirements prior to enrolling on a

programme. This includes undergoing an occupational health review for physical and mental health and immunisations.

- o The education provider has processes and policies in place to promote Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The content and level of earlier accredited learning is analysed. The final decision regarding the RPL approval is made by the Associate Dean, following the recommendation of the Head of Subject.
- o The Recruitment Strategy Group has overall responsibility for monitoring learner recruitment. The Admissions Policy outlines the principles for admission and the education provider's approach to fairness, non-discriminatory practice and a commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusivity.
- o The visitors therefore considered the standards within this SET area, which reflect the above information, to be met.
- o However, the visitors were unclear about the information available for applicants from outside the United Kingdom. This was referred to stage 2 of this approval process.

- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
  - o The person with responsibility for the programme needs to be registered with the HCPC in the relevant profession. Other essential criteria included having experience of developing and delivering programmes within higher education, and teaching at undergraduate and / or postgraduate level.
  - o The education provider has an induction, training, and ongoing development programme for all staff. Staff development is identified at annual and mid-year appraisal.
  - o The education provider has sufficient support services available for all learners. Support services include counselling services, study advice, and individual assistance for learners with dyslexia and dyscalculia.
  - o Successful completion of the proposed programme ensures eligibility to apply for entry onto the relevant part of the Register. Documentation states aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility to apply for registration with the HCPC.
  - o The University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Quality Committee has overall responsibility for programmes' academic quality, standards, and enhancement.
  - o The education provider has an active service user and carer group, named Experts by Experience (EBE). They are involved in programmes' design, development, and delivery.
  - o Learners have opportunities to feed back during each stage of their programme. They are members of the Curriculum Development Review Committee, and Partnership Forum. The Raising and Escalating Concerns Procedure outlines how learners can raise a concern about their welfare and of patients, service users and staff.

- o Learners' virtual learning environment (VLE) and the Student Handbook include information about the support available to them. The learner services team offers guidance and support.
- o The education provider has systems and processes for monitoring and responding to learner data.
- o The General Academic Regulations outlines the need for learners to be suspended from their studies due to health and or misconduct issues. Learners need to inform the education provider should there be a change to their health or DBS status.
- o The visitors therefore considered the standards within this SET area, which reflect the above information, to be met.
- o However, the visitors were unsure how the education provider ensured there is effective management and clear responsibility for the programme. This was referred to stage 2 of this approval process.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The education provider works with stakeholders in the co-production of curricula to ensure programmes are fit for purpose.
  - o The education provider has emphasised the importance for programmes to have interprofessional values and philosophy. They are developed, designed, and delivered to ensure learning is collaborative with other learners and professions.
  - o Both learners and service users give informed consent before engaging in practice and clinical teaching.
  - o The education provider has processes for monitoring learner engagement and attendance. They use specific software to look at learners' interactions, and VLE for analytical data.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o Practice educators who are involved in the delivery of the practice placement elements have an induction and staff development programme within their Trusts. Placement providers ensure staff involved in teaching are aware of their responsibilities and the issues that need to be considered when undertaking their roles.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the standards within this SET area, which reflect the above information, to be met.
  - o However, the visitors were unsure how the education provider maintained responsibility for the approval of practice-based learning. They were also unclear what information was given to both learners and practice educators so they are prepared for practice-based learning. The visitors were unsure what the practice placement educator training for new placement providers and the study day for experienced practice placement educators involved. These areas were referred to stage 2 of this approval process.

- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - There is a two-stage process to making an academic appeal. The education provider has an Academic Appeals Procedure. The Students Union provide support for learners who are considering or have made an academic appeal.
  - There will be at least one external examiner for the programme. They will be on the relevant part of the register and will be experienced in their field.
  - The visitors therefore considered the standards within this SET area, which reflect the above information, to be met.
  - However, the visitors were unsure how the education provider clearly specified the requirements for progression and achievement within the programme. They were also unsure about how the education provider intended to ensure assessments provided an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement. These areas were referred to stage 2 of this approval process.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: As reflected in the findings of the assessment panel section above, there were some areas the visitors were unsure about and sought further information. However, the visitors considered the areas may be answered indirectly through the education provider's stage 2 submission and therefore they did not need to explore them at stage 1. They therefore considered it was most appropriate to progress to stage 2 of the process.

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) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist	Learner number 25, and frequency 1	04/09/2023

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.

Data / intelligence considered

We also considered intelligence from others (eg prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England, formerly HEE (Health Education England) Midlands, informed us of pressures related to the availability of practice-based learning in the Midlands. We passed this information to the visitors who were undertaking this assessment for them to consider alongside the education provider's documentary submission. The visitors were satisfied the education provider had the processes to ensure all learners on the proposed programme will have access to practice-based learning appropriate to their needs.

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, and how the provider meets the outstanding standards from stage 1, through the [Findings section](#).

Quality theme 1 – Ensuring educators have the necessary knowledge and expertise

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the education provider planned recruitment of lecturers from 2024 onwards. The visitors understood associate lecturers will also be recruited for their subject-specific knowledge and expertise. The visitors were unable to find job descriptions for both the lecturer and associate lecturer roles. The visitors were therefore unsure what skills and knowledge the individuals recruited for these roles will need to have. The visitors sought evidence of what skills and knowledge the individuals recruited for these roles will have, so subject areas are delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The visitors noted the education provider provided job descriptions for both the associate lecturer and lecturer roles. They were satisfied the skills and knowledge required of both roles was appropriate. The visitors were

therefore assured subject areas will be delivered by educators with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise. We were satisfied with the evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

<u>Quality theme 2 – Access to physical resources</u>

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the details of investments and planned new resources, for example the simulation suite and the learner clinic. The education provider informed us these spaces were not exclusive for physiotherapy learners and were for programmes within the wider school. However, the visitors were unsure about how the education provider planned to ensure the physical facilities have capacity for all learners, including those from other programmes. The visitors therefore sought further information about how the education provider ensured access to the physical spaces between different programme teams to ensure appropriate access for all learners.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The visitors were informed the Heads of Subject work collaboratively when timetabling. The education provider outlined how the Senior Skills and Simulation Technician liaised with academic staff to determine skills and simulation bookings, ensuring spaces were allocated to physiotherapy-timetabled bookings. The visitors were informed the Head of Subject for Placement and Simulation supervises this process, ensuring skills rooms bookings are allocated appropriately. They were satisfied the education provider had the mechanisms to ensure all learners can access the physical resources on the programme. They were satisfied with the evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

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.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

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 admissions policy clearly details the selection and entry criteria for the programme. The criteria are set at an appropriate level for an undergraduate programme, including qualifications at GCSE level or equivalent, an enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) check and occupational health clearance.
  - The education provider's admissions process stated applications from international applicants are assessed against the standard entry criteria.
  - The process to apply for the programme was clearly outlined.
  - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
  - The education provider collaborates regularly and effectively with practice education providers to discuss placement issues. For example, they hold monthly Teams meetings.
  - The programme has clear lines of responsibility and management. Role descriptors outline the relevant experience and requirements for registration with the relevant professional body and a requirement to remain on that register as well as engage with revalidation and continuous professional development (CPD) activity.
  - The education provider has adopted a regional and coordinated approach to the sourcing and allocation of practice-based learning. The education provider has created additional capacity for learners to undertake practice-based learning by developing a learner-led clinic on campus. The education provider allocates all learners to appropriate practice-based learning through the ARC placement management system.
  - Through [quality activity 1](#), subject areas are delivered by educators with relevant specialist experience and knowledge. The education

provider ensures there is an appropriate number of staff to effectively deliver the proposed programme.

- o Through [quality activity 2](#), the education provider has sufficient resources available for all learners, including physical teaching spaces. The education provider has invested in specialist clinical teaching facilities equipment, teaching and learning resources, staffing and IT support. The education provider has created a learner-led physiotherapy clinic by refurbishing a large teaching space. This facility will be made available to other education providers in the region.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The module descriptors and learning outcomes indicate learners successfully completing the programme meet the standards of proficiency for physiotherapists.
  - o Professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics, is taught throughout the programme.
  - o There is evidence of the programme being relevant to current practice using external frameworks, such as learning and development principles, from the professional body, the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy.
  - o The education provider's quality assurance and risk management systems and processes ensure programmes reflect contemporary and up to date evidence-based practice. The curriculum philosophy ensures the programme is designed to develop autonomous and reflective thinking throughout. Evidence-based practice is outlined through the module descriptors.
  - o The programme is designed to ensure there is appropriate integration of theory and practice-based learning.
  - o The programme uses a wide variety of teaching and learning methods, as outlined in the programme specification. The module descriptors also outline the learning activities.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o The curriculum structure depicted in the programme planner demonstrates how practice-based learning is integral to the programme.
  - o Practice education providers ensure there are an adequate number of staff involved in the teaching of learners, and they are aware of their responsibilities and the issues which need to be considered when undertaking their roles.
  - o A series of training sessions for practice educators is delivered either online or in person. These training sessions include ensuring they

understand their own and others' roles, and details of the programme and personal development sessions. Topics covered include encouraging and enabling reflection and clinical reasoning.

- o Quality assurance processes ensure practice-based learning settings are a safe environment. This was evidenced in the Practice Environment Profile and Educational Audit Tool. The education provider uses practice environment profiles through ARC software, the placement management system, to evaluate practice-based learning.
- o The Practice Partnerships Department plans, monitors, and allocates practice-based learning opportunities to ensure learners have a range of learning opportunities. Learners receive as a minimum, practice-based learning in a community setting, an outpatient setting, and an inpatient setting.
- o The programme plan states when and for how long each practice placement block will be. Information about learners is shared with practice educators eight weeks in advance of practice-based learning. Learners are also provided with details of their placement including location, type of service delivery, shift patterns, directions, uniform requirements, accommodation, and recommended reading.
- o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - o Assessments ensure learners who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for physiotherapists. This is evidenced through the module descriptors.
  - o Assessments also ensure learners demonstrate systematic knowledge of professional regulation of the laws, ethics, values, and behaviours that underpin professional practice and meet the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
  - o The assessment strategy in every module descriptor describes how it will enable learners to be assessed against the learning outcomes. It also specifies how the knowledge, skills, behaviours, and values required of a physiotherapist are relevant to the assessment.
  - o The General Academic Regulations state the threshold for passing assessments at levels four, five and six was 40% for undergraduate programmes.
  - o Programme assessments are varied and inclusive. All marking is anonymous, except for objected structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) and practice assessments. External examiners provide external scrutiny of learner performance.
  - o The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: The visitors noted the education provider was awarded a grant for placement expansion from Health Education England to refurbish a large teaching space into a learner-led physiotherapy clinic. This facility will provide additional practice-based learning capacity for learners, as well as those at other education providers. The visitors consider sharing their newly developed clinic facility with other education providers demonstrates innovative good practice.

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 institution and programme should be approved
- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2025/26 academic year

Reason for next engagement recommendation: To remain confident with provider performance, we rely on regular supply of data and intelligence to help us understand provider performance outside of the periods where we directly engage with them. The provider is new to delivering HCPC-approved programmes, and is included in external data returns to the HCPC. Although the provider is included in these supplies, there will be a period where data directly related to the programme(s) approved will not be available.

As HCPC programmes will not be included in data supplies, we have recommended that the provider should next engage in the performance review process in three years. The visitors considered there was no risk to the education provider's performance, and they had highlighted an area of best practice. The visitors understood that after three years we would have had data from one full cohort of the programme. This would give us information about the initial performance of the programme.

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 observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:
- The institution and programmes are approved
- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2025-26 academic year

Reason for this decision: The Committee accepted the visitor's recommendation the provider and its programme should receive approval.