

---

## Performance review process report

### AECC University College, Review Period 2018-2023

---

#### Executive summary

This is a report of the process to review the performance of AECC University College. This report captures the process we have undertaken to consider the performance of the institution in delivering HCPC-approved programmes. This enables us to make risk-based decisions about how to engage with this provider in the future, and to consider if there is any impact on our standards being met.

We have:

- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission against quality themes and found that we needed to undertake further exploration of key themes through quality activities.
- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission to consider which themes needed to be explored through quality activities.
- Undertaken quality activities to arrive at our judgement on performance, including when the institution should next be reviewed.
- Recommended when the institution should next be reviewed.

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The areas we explored focused on:
  - Quality theme 1 – The education provider's growth from four programmes in 2017 to 32 in 2024 involved significant investments. Visitors sought to understand the impact on processes, delivery, and sustainability. Through quality activity, we confirmed appropriate resource allocation for growth.
  - Quality theme 2 – The education provider adapted practices due to program growth. Visitors wanted insights into staff-student ratio, workload, and support for new programmes. The quality activity process revealed similar staffing models to other institutions.
- The provider should next engage with monitoring in five years, in the 2028-2029 academic year, because:
  - The visitors were satisfied with the overall performance of the education provider across the themes. Data shows the education provider is performing comparably to benchmarks across the different areas. The education provider responds to recommendations from external regulators and professional bodies. There were no risks identified which could suggest the need for an earlier review.

---

<a href="#">Previous consideration</a>	Not applicable. This is the education provider's first interaction with the performance review process.
--	---

---

Decision

---

The Panel agreed with the visitors' recommended monitoring period, for the reasons noted through the report.

Next steps

- 
- Subject to the Panel's decision, the provider's next performance review will be in the 2028-29 academic year.
  - The education provider is currently seeking approval for three further programmes. They are MSc Dietetics, MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) and Supplementary and Independent Prescribing.
-

## Included within this report

Section 1: About this assessment.....	4
About us .....	4
Our standards .....	4
Our regulatory approach.....	4
The performance review process.....	4
Thematic areas reviewed .....	5
How we make our decisions.....	5
The assessment panel for this review.....	5
Section 2: About the education provider.....	6
The education provider context.....	6
Practice areas delivered by the education provider.....	6
Institution performance data.....	7
Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes .....	9
Portfolio submission.....	9
Quality themes identified for further exploration .....	9
Quality theme 1 – How programme level resource requirements are identified and approved .....	9
Quality theme 2 – Impact of rapid growth on staff student ratio, staff workload and staff support .....	10
Section 4: Findings .....	11
Overall findings on performance .....	11
Quality theme: Institution self-reflection .....	11
Quality theme: Thematic reflection .....	16
Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection.....	19
Quality theme: Profession specific reflection .....	20
Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions.....	22
Data and reflections .....	24
Section 5: Issues identified for further review.....	25
Referrals to next scheduled performance review .....	25
Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes .....	25
Assessment panel recommendation .....	25
Education and Training Committee decision .....	26
Appendix 1 – summary report.....	27
Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution.....	28

## 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 performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) 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 performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see,

rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

### **Thematic areas reviewed**

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

### **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 a review of this education provider:

Fleur Kitsell	Lead visitor, Physiotherapist
Patricia McClure	Lead visitor, Occupational therapist
Ian Hughes	Service User Expert Advisor
Joanna Goodwin	Advisory visitor, Occupational therapist
Louise Winterburn	Education Quality Officer

We encourage reflections through portfolios to be made at the institution level wherever possible. The performance review process does not always require profession level scrutiny which requires all professionals to be represented in the assessment panel. Rather, the process considers how the education provider has

performed at institution level, linked to the themes defined in section 1. Lead visitors have the option to appoint additional advisory partners where this will benefit the assessment, and / or where they are not able to make judgements based on their own professional knowledge.

In this assessment, we considered we required professional expertise across all professional areas delivered by the education provider. We considered this because there were areas within the portfolio which the lead visitors could not make judgements on with their professional knowledge or expertise. These areas were thematic reflection, embedding the revised HCPC standards of proficiency, profession specific reflections and developments to reflect changes in professional body guidance.

## Section 2: About the education provider

### The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers seven HCPC approved programmes across six professions. It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2020.

The education provider engaged with the approval review process in the current model of quality assurance in 2021. They were introducing the MSc Occupational Therapy; MSc Speech and Language Therapy; MSc Dietetics, and MSc Podiatry programmes. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards were met, and the programmes were approved by the Education and Training Committee in 2022.

The education provider engaged with the approval review process in the legacy model of quality assurance in 2020. They were introducing the BSc (Hons) Radiography (Radiotherapy and Oncology), and BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging) full time programmes. This review involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time. After considering the education provider's response to the conditions set, we were satisfied that the conditions were met, and the programme was approved in 2020.

### Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Chiropodist / podiatrist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2023
	Dietitian	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2023

	Occupational therapist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2023
	Physiotherapist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
	Radiographer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2020
	Speech and language therapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2023

### Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes<sup>1</sup>.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date of data point	Commentary
Numbers of learners	180	143	2024	<p>The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments.</p> <p>Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure was presented by the education provider through this submission.</p> <p>The education provider is recruiting learners below the benchmark.</p> <p>We explored this by reviewing information related to resourcing of the education provider's provision. We were</p>

<sup>1</sup> An explanation of the data we use, and how we use this data, is available [here](#)

				satisfied their financial and resource planning/ modelling has ensured sustainability of their provision.
Learner non continuation	3%	2%	2020-21	<p>This Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered based on HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 3%.</p>
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	93%	100%	2020-21	<p>This HESA data was sourced from summary data. This means the data is the provider-level public data.</p> <p>The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has been maintained.</p> <p>We did not explore this as the education provider's performance in this area is above the benchmark.</p>
Learner satisfaction	70.2%	45.8%	2022	This National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score data was sourced at the [summary]. This means the data is the provider-level public data.



				<p>The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms.</p> <p>When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 9%</p> <p>We explored this through the visitors' assessment of the education provider's reflection. The visitors were satisfied there are sufficient plans in place to address learner satisfaction rates moving forward.</p>
--	--	--	--	---

### Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

#### Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

#### Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. 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 was performing well against our standards.

#### Quality theme 1 – How programme level resource requirements are identified and approved

**Area for further exploration:** The education provider reflected on how they have grown from four taught programmes in 2017 to 32 programmes in 2024. They highlighted the need for continuous review cycles and the development of professional support resources and academic staffing. The visitors acknowledged

the growth and significant investments made. They wanted to understand how these investments directly impacted processes and the delivery of programmes. They wanted to understand how this links to sustainability and how programme level resource requirements are identified, considered, and approved.

**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 and to seek clarification of our understanding on the above query.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The education provider explained how they prepare a comprehensive business case for every new programme implementation covering academic, administrative, physical, and financial needs over a five-year period. This is approved by Senior Management Group. Resources are then reviewed annually, with provision for capital expenditure on facilities and equipment. Based upon specific needs, or in response to growing learner numbers, individual cases can be submitted for staffing, significant equipment / facility investment. All new programmes have an investment budget factored into the wider School budget to fund investment throughout the academic year.

The visitors were satisfied with the detailed reflection provided. They acknowledged the education provider successfully demonstrated that they appropriately consider and resource their growth and expansion. They understood how this links to sustainability of the programmes and the institution. We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.

#### Quality theme 2 – Impact of rapid growth on staff student ratio, staff workload and staff support

**Area for further exploration:** The education provider reflected on how growth in the number and diversity of programmes had required them to adapt existing academic and administrative practices. They reflected on how they have considered the design and provision of their academic quality policy and procedure framework more broadly. Visitors highlighted the education provider's rapid growth plan. They sought insights into its impact on staff-student ratio, workload, and staff support for new programmes.

**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 and to seek clarification of our understanding on the above query.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The education provider reflected that the rapid growth, whilst creating exciting future opportunities, also highlighted potential future challenges where budgeting and work-load planning processes were crucial. They explained that academic staff are allocated time for a range of activities, with time also allocated for new developments such as new programmes or professional body approval submissions. Academic staff also get an allocation of time for future, unassigned, work during the academic year. This is because the education provider recognises that there will be additional activities that will emerge in-year. Planning for

new programme developments, and therefore additional staff, is also agreed ahead of the budgeting process to ensure there is no impact on staff student ratios.

The visitors were satisfied with the reflections provided and therefore satisfied with how the education provider is performing relating to this area. This is because their work-load model/processes are similar to other institutions. It was also noted as a positive that they also include allocated hours for yet unassigned work. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

## Section 4: Findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

### Overall findings on performance

#### Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

#### Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
  - The education provider reflected on how they have grown from four taught programmes in 2017 to 32 in 2024. Programme level resource requirements are considered at initial proposal and approval stage, via a business case, and reviewed via routine monitoring activities. For successful growth and diversification, they emphasised the need for continuous review cycles and the development of professional support resources and academic staffing.
  - The education provider stated how they have continued to invest in teaching facilities and have equipped these with the latest technology. They have upgraded their clinical skills teaching space and created a Podiatry Suite and a new simulation lab. They reflected that these investments were the result of the growth in learner numbers across their programmes.
  - The visitors acknowledged the growth and significant investments made as a result. They wanted to understand how these investments directly impacted processes and the delivery of programmes. They queried how this links to sustainability of the provision and how programme level resource requirements are identified, considered, and approved. We explored this under quality theme 1.
  - The education provider explained that they prepare a comprehensive business case for new programme implementation covering academic, administrative, and physical needs over five years. Senior Management Group approval is required. Resources are annually reviewed, with provision for capital expenditure on facilities and equipment.
  - The visitors agreed the education provider successfully demonstrated they appropriately resourced an increase in their provision. They understood how this links to sustainability of the programmes and the institution. We

were therefore satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.

- **Partnerships with other organisations –**

- The education provider reflected on the formal relationships developed with local NHS Trusts, profession-specific providers, key regional stakeholders and other higher education providers. The relationships should help address the challenge of securing appropriate placement opportunities for the newly approved programmes.
- They have reflected on the learning from the challenges of implementing practice placements. This has enabled them to develop an institution wide placement infrastructure and develop relationships with placement providers and external stakeholders. They have used recommendations from NHS England's Placement Sustainability Framework to explore options such as a placement exchange.
- To help facilitate partnerships the education provider has implemented mechanisms and recruited new staff. These include a Head of Practice Related Learning, and programme specific Practice Learning Leads. They are responsible for liaising with profession focussed aspects such as placement organisation. The Head of Academic Enterprise and Engagement will develop more structured and systematic systems to ensure the high quality and consistency of placements across programmes.
- The education provider plans in place to recruit more learners to the MSc Physiotherapy programme by exploring other markets for placements. They are developing a partnership with an education provider based in Dublin. They have also expanded on the clinical services they provide to NHS Trust University Hospitals Dorset, including first contact practitioner and physiotherapy referrals.
- The visitors were satisfied there are established positive relationships with other organisations which support the delivery of provision. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

- **Academic quality –**

- The education provider reflected a key challenge was the continuous review and changes needed to operational academic administration processes. These underpin the quality assurance framework. The review and changes to process were required due to their growth in provision. To address this, they reviewed their administrative practice and management processes to ensure they remain effective and efficient. They implemented a cloud-based method of sharing information with staff and have updated and shared the guidance relating to key processes. The review and enhancement activities are ongoing, and they are using feedback from key stakeholders to develop these further.
- They have established additional Assessment Boards which are held post-placement to oversee and confirm progression decisions. These enable the education provider to support learners who may be required to repeat placement/practice-based learning elements. This means they act in a timely way to support additional placement opportunities if required. Updated peer review activities and a full-scale review of the Course Design Framework have been undertaken and utilised as key indicators of quality. The Framework sets out how the curriculum should be designed to ensure high quality teaching and learning. This review was in progress at

- the time of their portfolio submission and aims to ensure alignment with new process and developments in the curriculum.
- The education provider has reflected on how they have set up two additional groups to oversee procedures, ensure action is taken and updates are provided to all academic staff. These are the School Academic Quality and Standards Group (SAQSG) and the Course Leaders Forum. The SAQSG feeds information from individual programme level committees to the University Academic Standards and Quality Committee. The Course Leaders Forum shares best practice, support, and ideas generation and feeds into the Head of Learning and Teaching. There are plans to conduct an impact review as part of standard annual monitoring.
  - The visitors were satisfied that there are quality assurance processes in place for monitoring academic quality and to drive improvements. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
  - **Placement quality –**
    - The education provider reflected on their mechanisms for ensuring placement quality. These include:
      - a Practice Learning Reference Group,
      - a Practice Learning Advisory Group,
      - a new practice learning policy; and
      - an improved processes for mandatory training reporting.
    - The Practice Learning Reference Group meet quarterly to review and share information on processes, successes, issues, and policies which may impact the quality of practice placements. The new practice learning policy was created to reflect changes in policies and procedures and as a response to their growing provision. The education provider's new process on mandatory training reporting focuses on collecting end of placement evaluation data. They work with regional NHS England teams to explore how they can enhance existing provision further.
    - The education provider reflected on a successful way to help learners feel connected whilst away on long placements. They did this by creating a Practice Learning Lounge. This initiative offers learners a drop-in session on campus or virtually where they can come together to talk about their placement experiences. They can ask for advice and offer their perspective on issues relevant to them. They reflected on how this has proved popular and was well received. They plan to build on this success by training peer facilitators and link these to help support learners transition into qualified practice.
    - The visitors were satisfied that the education provider has an effective process in place to ensuring the quality of placement quality. Therefore, they considered the education provider has performed well in this area.
  - **Interprofessional education –**
    - The education provider reflected on the challenges of delivering interprofessional education due to limited alignment with other allied health profession programmes. This led to limited opportunities for interprofessional learning and teaching across programmes. In response, they brought all their HCPC approved programmes under one academic area to provide greater opportunity for structured interprofessional learning. They also appointed a postgraduate pre-registration academic lead. This role coordinates all programme leaders across postgraduate

provision to ensure consistency in their approach to interprofessional education.

- The education provider has also introduced an 'Interprofessional Learning Week'. They use a problem-based learning approach covering a learning outcome from each programme running across those five days. They reflected on how these measures have improved the interprofessional education experiences of learners across programmes.
- They plan to take forward the periodic review of programmes to provide greater structured alignment of interprofessional learning across programmes and to create more opportunities. All programmes are required to clearly state how interprofessional learning will take place as part of the approval process.
- The visitors acknowledged the significant work to embed interprofessional education. They wanted to understand the move beyond shared teaching and learning experiences to interprofessional learning that is learning with, from and about other professions. It was important for the visitors to understand how learners recognise the purpose and importance of undertaking this and how this learning is informing and enhancing their professional development and future practice.
- The education provider explained that there is a specific requirement for all learners to engage in interprofessional education as part of their practice placements. Interprofessional learning forms part of the assessment paperwork for all placements and is part of the agreed learning outcomes negotiated between the learners and their practice educators. The visitors were satisfied the education provider have appropriately embedded interprofessional education across provision. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Service users and carers –**
  - The education provider reflected on the challenges of embedding formal service user and carer involvement in the curriculum. They also acknowledged the challenges of developing an infrastructure to support this. They have worked to combine the separate service user engagement processes, that were already in place, to form the Sharing Patient and Community Experience (SPaCE) group. This group works to collaborate more with patients and carers, to improve all aspects of clinical care and education services. They have worked to develop innovative methods of teaching, learning and assessment, curriculum design and development and admissions processes.
  - The education provider reflected that the initial SPaCE group was set up as a single entity. They have developed this over several years to the creation of subgroups, and now each subgroup has a specific focus. This is on either clinical services, research, or academic provision. The education provider has reflected that the development of the subgroups has enabled them to create closer alignment between them and SPaCE and to provide greater opportunity for volunteers to offer support. This benefits the service users & carers and learners.
  - The visitors noted the education provider's developments and reflections in this area but asked for some clarification around how programme teams assessed and received feedback on the impact and benefits of SPaCE on learners and service users.

- The education provider explained via a clarification email that the SPaCE group was developed to facilitate patient, carer, members of the public, clinician, academics, and learners to work together. The aim was to ensure person-centred care is provided to patients in the local community, and to ensure a first-class education is delivered to healthcare learners. The visitors acknowledged that the education provider had provided a clearer explanation of what SPaCE does but suggested that they provide more details and reflections during their next performance review.
- **Equality and diversity –**
  - The education provider reflected that identifying trends in learner characteristics data was difficult due to small numbers of learners on programmes during the reporting period. However, they have been able to establish that their learner demographic across allied health profession programmes is broadly in line with the institution data. They have plans to review their data in this area across provision and have been working on an 'Access and Participation Plan'. This is led by the Access and Participation Manager working in collaboration with other teams to explore how data capture can be improved and what additional data can be sourced. This is further underpinned by the review of Course and Unit Monitoring Policy and Procedure. This review made sure access to meaningful data leads to an enhanced level of continuous reflection on practice and curriculum design to further support inclusive learning and teaching practices.
  - The education provider reflected on how equality and diversity considerations are embedded in their decision-making processes and considered when developing key policies and making key decisions. Their success in this area allowed them to achieve a 'Two Ticks' employer status as a Disability Confident Employer and a Mindful Employer. They demonstrated an inclusive environment for learners through their Academic Support Tutors and the Student and Wellbeing Services team who are there to provide support, and be visible, to all learners. They have also developed a Student Engagement Strategy where a key theme is developing an inclusive culture and sense of belonging for learners.
  - The visitors noted the education provider's reflections but wanted some further clarification around how the programme teams measured differential attainment and their plans to mitigate against this in advance.
  - The education provider explained that they undertake annual attainment evaluation at an institutional level. They do this by considering learner entry, progression, and attainment across a range of different criteria including ethnicity and disability. The Senior Management Group review the data to determine what, if any, action is required, and then appropriate action or mitigation plans are developed. The visitors were satisfied that the education provider showed a plan for continuous improvement to ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion policies are complied with and further developments made in this area.
- **Horizon scanning –**
  - The education provider reflected on how the growth in the number and diversity of programmes required them to adapt existing academic and administrative practices. They also reflected on how they have considered the design and provision of their academic quality policy and procedure framework more broadly. It was a challenge to ensure all information

within the framework remained current and consistent with sector practice while still ensuring information is accessible and easily understood. They implemented plans to focus on progressing how they align information provision with the broader institution digital strategy to ensure their framework meets regulatory standards.

- The visitors noted the education provider's plan for rapid growth but wanted greater reflection on what consideration had been given to the impact of such rapid growth on staff student ratio, staff workload and the challenges of supporting staff to deliver the programmes. We explored this under quality theme 2.
- The education provider reflected that the rapid growth, whilst creating exciting future opportunities, also highlighted potential future challenges where budgeting and work-load planning processes are crucial. They explained that staff are allocated time for a range of activities, with time also allocated for new developments such as new programmes or professional body approval submissions. Staff also get an allocation of time for future, as yet unassigned, work during the academic year. This is because the education provider recognises that there will be additional activities that will emerge in-year. Planning for new programme developments, and therefore additional staff, is also agreed ahead of the budgeting process to ensure there is no impact on staff student ratios.
- Following this, the visitors were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area as their model/processes are similar to other institutions. It was noted as a positive that they also include allocated hours to academic staff for yet unassigned work. We were therefore satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** How the education provider measures the benefit of direct service user and learner interaction. Service user feedback and actions taken. The visitors considered this to be an area for the education provider to reflect upon in the next performance review.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Embedding the revised Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) –**
  - The education provider reflected on how they were required to review the revised standards of proficiency (SOPs) for relevant professions. They submitted changes to existing programmes via their standard processes for modification to units and programmes. All proposed changes were considered by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) in November 2023. All changes that were approved were implemented with immediate effect. As many programmes had been recently created, most had been developed using the revised SOPs, and changes needed were therefore minimal.
  - The education provider stated that promoting public health and preventing ill-health are a core part of the professional practice component of each HCPC approved programmes. Many programmes are in their infancy with



programmes including Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Podiatry having just completed their first year. The education provider reflected that the Radiography programmes have recently been through periodic review and as a result they have enhanced the public health content as part of the review process.

- The education provider stated that equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is already embedded across all programmes. They have done this by including learner reflections on EDI in the placement portfolio. They have also created an interprofessional education programme between courses that focuses on this aspect of the curriculum. They stated this is also true of integrating the service user where programmes have been designed to place the service user at the centre of the curriculum. They reflected that this has led to greater service user and carer involvement in the curriculum.
- Learners are supported in their physical health and mental wellbeing via the Student and Wellbeing Services and the Practice Related Learning teams. They also offer learners advice and guidance on budgeting and finance as well as more practical support. There is a 'Practice Learning Lounge' which was set up by the Practice Related Learning team. This offers a weekly drop-in (in person or online) for learners on placement to get support or to talk about the challenges they may be facing on placement.
- Leadership skills development is embedded within taught content and in placement objectives across all programmes. This is also enhanced through a buddy/mentor system where learners in their first year are supported and guided by final year learners. The visitors noted the education provider's reflections however they wanted greater reflection on how the development of learners' leadership skills is integrated across the provision to deliver the revised SOPs. We explored this via an email request for further information and clarification.
- The education provider explained that all programmes include leadership and leadership development in the core curriculum. All programmes also offer 'leadership placements' as part of the placement provision. Changes and modifications to programmes were achieved through periodic reviews. The visitors felt the education provider's response could have been more detailed to include how learners will develop their leadership skills and how this will be taught or how learners are facilitated to become leaders and perceive themselves as leaders. Therefore, the visitors requested that the education provider further reflect on this when next they engage with the performance review process in 2026/27 academic year.
- **Learning and developments from the COVID-19 pandemic –**
  - The education provider reflected on the challenges of the Covid pandemic and how they were able to successfully address them. They did this by ensuring continuity of experience for learners and supporting them in meeting their programme learning outcomes and their ability to graduate.
  - The education provider reflected on how the restrictions imposed during the pandemic led to them developing changes to the curriculum and how programmes were delivered. During the pandemic, many of their programmes and units of study were still being written and content agreed on. This allowed them to develop new material and allowed them to work within the constraints of the pandemic to continue to facilitate learning.

- They did this by increasing the use of technology to deliver theory and an increased use of virtual and classroom-based simulation. Link tutor visits were moved online, and placement models became more creative by moving away from traditional supervision to more innovative ones. Weekly activity guides were issued to learners, with a greater focus on asynchronous learning. The education provider took forward some of these measures, including a hybrid approach to link tutor visits, only meeting face to face when needed, the continued use of asynchronous learning and a blended approach to teaching and learning.
- The education provider stated that their developments and practices during the pandemic were recognised by the QAA Quality Matters Conference as being an example of best practice. They have embedded the learning gained during the pandemic into their teaching practice. The visitors were satisfied the education provider successfully adjusted to the challenges of the pandemic, supporting learners and staff. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**
  - The education provider reflected on the challenge of developing appropriate technological platforms and equipment to underpin the developing curriculum in each of the relevant programme areas. They reflected on how this led to a need for focused strategic planning to identify what equipment and facilities were required, and when the associated investments needed to be made. As a result, they made a successful bid to Health Education England to help fund immersive virtual reality simulation equipment and mannequins. Learners can use the equipment to develop diagnostic skills. They do this through case study-based approaches to ensure they have experienced simulated complex, acute and emergency situations not often experienced in clinical training.
  - In response to the growth and accessibility of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, such as ChatGPT, the education provider revised their Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct policies. They plan to keep their policy and guidance under review as sector understanding of AI increases.
  - The visitors noted the education provider's reflections on new resources and simulation equipment but sought clarification on how the simulation equipment was used to enhance learning. They wanted to understand how the increased accessibility of artificial intelligence continues to be managed.
  - Following this, the visitors were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area. This was because they explained how they focus on practical simulation equipment to simulate service users, the service user experience, and relevant clinical environment.
- **Apprenticeships in England –**
  - During the reporting period, the education provider was added to the Register of Approved Training Providers. This means they can offer Higher Degree Apprenticeships and Integrated/Non-integrated Degree Apprenticeships. To prepare for this development, the education provider, updated their governance structures and academic policies, and procedures through their internal Academic Board. They reflected the additional requirements of apprenticeship provision as part of their updates to policies including 'Course Design Framework'. They plan to undertake

further updates to policy and procedures to ensure the quality assurance framework meets the additional requirements needed for apprenticeship provision.

- Their first apprenticeship programme, the MSc Advanced Clinical Practice (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship) was approved in September 2023. They plan to develop this as well as an MSc Dietetics (Integrated Degree Apprenticeship) programme for delivery in September 2024. Preparing for these new developments enables the education provider to reflect on and develop their institutional practice in relation to the overall development, approval, and running of apprenticeship programmes.
- The visitors were satisfied the education provider responded to challenges appropriately and effectively monitored their apprenticeship provision. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** How are leadership skills developed during clinical placements in the NHS. How are practice educators prepared to facilitate development of learners' leadership skills.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education –**
  - The education provider stated no formal assessment activity by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) had been undertaken during the review period. However, they have continually reviewed their provision in line with the requirements of the QAA to ensure compliance.
  - They have engaged with the QAA, in relation to the development of the new Quality Code, by attending workshops and information sessions. They plan to continue to engage in the resources and training materials provided by the QAA to support their practice and maintenance of their quality and standards. They have used the QAA 'Definition of Quality' as a reference for reviewing and enhancing their provision. This ensures they can use the relevant resources in the best capacity and are responsive to change.
  - The visitors were satisfied the education provider is responding appropriately to changes to ensure they comply with the QAA. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Office for Students (OfS) –**
  - The education provider stated they were not monitored by the OfS during the review period. They have however made a submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework in January 2023 in accordance with requirements which focussed on the integrated Masters programme (Master of Chiropractic). They have also submitted relevant HESA and Student Returns monitoring data to relevant bodies, including the OfS.
  - The education provider reflected on how they used their sub-group of the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) to review and update their quality framework policies and procedures. They did this by undertaking a full review of programme lifecycles from approval to closure. This enabled them to make changes and updates to their programmes

whilst retaining academic standards and quality learner experience. This also ensured that conditions of Registration continued to be met.

- The visitors were satisfied the education provider is responding to and continuing to meet the OfS conditions, despite not having been directly monitored during this period. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies –**
  - The education provider's reflections showed that all programmes engaged with relevant professional bodies including Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP), Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), Royal College of Podiatrists (RCPoD), Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), College of Radiographers (CoR), British Dietetics Association (BDA).
  - They reflected on the challenges of gaining initial programme approval from each relevant professional body for the HCPC registered programmes. This was because each professional body had different criteria and timings for approval which added a further layer of complexity to the process. This was further complicated by the new focus on developing apprenticeships in allied health profession areas and trying to understand different requirements and criteria as required by the relevant professional bodies.
  - The education provider reflected on the success of their approval with professional bodies, where they demonstrated they had appropriate equipment and resources to support the relevant programmes. They held onsite relationship building events where several professional bodies attended. They also plan to host a research conference for the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) to further enhance their relationship. These examples demonstrated the collaborative relationships they have with professional bodies and regulators.
  - The visitors were satisfied the education provider is working effectively to communicate with and respond to other relevant professional regulators and bodies. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Curriculum development –**
  - A detailed reflection was submitted showing different developments around the curriculum for each programme, specifically related to new and revised HCPC Standards of Proficiency (SOPs). For example, the structure of the Radiography programmes was changed to remove the placement elements that had been previously embedded in taught units. This was in response to learner and placement provider feedback. Unit content and learning outcomes were also updated to meet the revised (SOPs and Standards of Education and training (SETs) for the

- Radiography profession because of feedback from external stakeholders and external examiner reports.
- The education provider reflected on their first full cycle of the Physiotherapy programme which had its first cohort graduating in November 2023. They reflected that the programme went through periodic review and a re-mapping of SOPs has been undertaken in greater detail. Following the review, they concluded the programme did not require any major changes. The education provider stated that Podiatry, Speech and Language Therapy, Dietetics and Occupational Therapy programmes did not require changes to the curriculum as the revised SOPs were embedded as part of the new programme development.
  - The visitors wished to understand, as regards the Radiography programme, greater reflection on how the education provider went about making changes in response to feedback and how the internal review processes were used. It was important for the visitors to understand these key areas of change. We explored this via an email request for further information and clarification. Following this, the visitors were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area as appropriate evaluation processes are in place involving a range of relevant internal and external stakeholders. The visitors were satisfied the education provider is continuing to respond to external influences on their curriculum development.
  - **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
    - The education provider reflected that there had been only limited changes to specific guidance and requirements of the relevant professional bodies over the past four years, as all programmes have been through initial approval processes during this period. There have been updates to guidance documents although these have related more to the process of delivery rather than programme content.
    - The education provider reflected on the engagement challenges with professional bodies, and the differing requirements between programmes. For example, they stated that the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) require annual returns for their programmes whereas the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) do not. The College of Radiographers (CoR) require tripartite agreements to be in place with specific placement providers before learners can go on placement. The education provider found these differing requirements a challenge however, this has resulted in closer working relationships and greater overall engagement with those professional bodies. They are involved in professional body sub-groups so that they can share best practice with other education providers and can share information on new developments. In this way, the education provider has been involved in shaping the future direction of programmes and their engagement with each of the professional bodies.
    - The visitors were satisfied the education provider has reflected on developments to reflect changes in professional body guidance appropriately. There was sufficient reflection provided to determine the education provider has close working relationships with different professional bodies and organisations.
  - **Capacity of practice-based learning (programme / profession level) –**

- The education provider reflected upon the challenges of securing practice-based learning opportunities across the programmes during the review period. They stated that there were challenges with local placement capacity, learners facing costs associated with travel and accommodation for placement. There was a need for greater diversity in placement and the difficulties in preparing learners for their first placement experience. To address this, the education provider has reduced pressure on placement capacity by combining them into joint placements. They have developed 'inhouse' placement provision using problem-based learning as well as direct patient treatment, increased diversity amongst placement provision. They have regular briefings and feedback gathering sessions between learners and practice educators to ensure any problems can be addressed and supported.
- The education provider has invested in and developed their simulation facilities and equipment across their provision. This includes the use of simulation software packages and virtual simulation with manikins. This enables a broad range of practice-based scenarios to take place. They plan to develop these methods further to ensure case studies focus on a wider area ensuring focus on EDI accessibility and inclusion. They also plan to develop the use of simulation resources across all programmes as well as developing a split role placement co-ordinator to enhance the links between the institution and local hospitals. Local clinicians will contribute to teaching which helps increase communication between placement teams and local placement providers. Programme teams are building upon this success to see if this can be rolled out across more programmes.
- We were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area as demonstrated by the partnerships and relationships with practice educators and the development of new placement areas.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Learners –**
  - The education provider reflected on the challenge of addressing concerns raised by learners regarding the structure and content of the Physiotherapy programme. To address this, the education provider held sessions with learners to listen to their concerns and to assure them of improvements made. During these sessions, the programme structure and delivery was clarified. Learners were given a clear explanation as to how they were able to demonstrate and evidence meeting professional body requirements.
  - They implemented actions to further enhance the learner voice and learner input to the programmes. The education provider has explained how they have various methods of capturing and acting on learner feedback. They use the National Student Survey (NSS) for undergraduates on the final year of their programme. They have learner focus groups for new programme developments and they carry out periodic reviews.

- The visitors understood the methods for obtaining learner feedback however, the education provider did not refer to any specific policies or processes to show what happens to that feedback and whether learners take up these opportunities to close the feedback loop.
- The visitors wanted to understand the education provider's reflections on whether the processes and procedures around learner feedback are effective and how the education provider reviews these. Through clarification, the visitors were able to understand how the education provider checks with learners to ensure they take up the opportunities available to them to provide feedback and to close the feedback loop.
- Following this, the visitors were satisfied how the education provider is performing relating to this area. They have processes in place to collect feedback from learners and take appropriate actions in response to that feedback.
- **Practice placement educators –**
  - The education provider reflected that their most significant challenge was in gaining support from practice placement providers and practice educators. They faced challenges in recruiting new non-NHS practice placement providers across multiple programmes. They also faced challenges in developing and implementing effective practice educator training, support, and monitoring processes. They addressed these challenges by planning placement blocks around other institutions schedules to avoid overlapping and increased pressure on services. They also held regular high-level meetings between academic staff and practice-based learning leads to discuss placements. They developed easy to use placement assessment documents to be as efficient as possible through using an e-portal. They also created a visiting tutor role to act as a point of call for support, and to help ensure consistency of learner experience across different placements. They also plan to continue with the work on developing practice educator training, monitoring, and support.
  - The education provider has reflected on their ongoing collaboration with the practice placement educators. The objective has been to effectively engage them in planning and shaping programme delivery to ensure it meets the needs of the professions.
  - The visitors were satisfied the education provider appropriately supported placement educators. They agreed the education provider has appropriate measures in place to address the challenges in engagement with placement providers. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **External examiners –**
  - The education provider reflected that during the period of review, only three programmes had been running long enough to receive external examiner reports. They were MSc Physiotherapy, BSc Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging) and BSc Radiography (Radiography and Oncology).
  - The education provider reflected on the recommendations made by the external examiners to make changes to some processes and procedures. This included making changes to arrangements for the moderation of practical assessments, changes to practice placements, and the opportunities for external examiners to meet with learners.

- The themes from external examiner reports were further reflected on by the education provider and has enabled them to make changes to HCPC approved programmes and those across the wider institution.
- The visitors were satisfied the education provider is addressing external examiner feedback appropriately and working to improve on areas highlighted. We were satisfied how the education provider is performing in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None.

### Data and reflections

#### **Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Learner non continuation:**
  - The education provider is performing broadly in line with the benchmark being only 1% below the benchmark figure. There was sufficient reflection provided to determine the education provider has performed well in this area.
- **Outcomes for those who complete programmes:**
  - As noted in the institution performance data table in Section 2, the education provider had a data point of 100% against a benchmark of 93%. The education provider is performing above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. Therefore, the visitors agreed the education provider has performed well in this area.
- **Learner satisfaction:**
  - As noted earlier under National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes, learner satisfaction rate was below sector norms. The education provider reflected on the challenges of interpreting data accurately when there are small learner numbers. They also reflected that small cohort sizes can pose a risk to the learner experience, whilst also providing a high level of pastoral support and individual attention.
  - They have put a number of remedial actions in place to improve learner satisfaction going forwards. We were therefore satisfied the education provider is performing well in this area.
- **Programme level data:**
  - The education provider reflected on data for all HCPC programmes and highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of small learner numbers. Learner numbers for 2024 entry are higher and they fully expect numbers to continue growing, as the programmes become more established.
  - The visitors were satisfied programmes are being monitored appropriately and resources managed suitably. We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None.



## Section 5: Issues identified for further review

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval or focused review process).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

### **Referrals to next scheduled performance review**

**Summary of issue:** The visitors noted the education provider's developments and reflections in service user and carer involvement but asked for some clarification and further reflection. This was specifically around how programme teams assessed and received feedback on the impact and benefits of the Sharing Patient and Community Experience (SPaCE) group. They wanted to understand how the education provider measured the benefit of direct service user and learner interaction and service user feedback and actions taken. The visitors considered this to be an area for the education provider to reflect upon in the next performance review.

**Summary of issue:** The visitors noted the education provider's reflection that all programmes include leadership and leadership development in the core curriculum. All programmes also offer 'leadership placements' as part of the practice placement provision. However, the visitors felt that reflection in this area could have been more detailed to include more about how learners are facilitated to become leaders and see themselves as leaders. The visitors considered this to be an area for the education provider to reflect upon in the next performance review.

## Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

### **Assessment panel recommendation**

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2028-2029 academic year.
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report.

### **Reason for next engagement recommendation**

- Internal stakeholder engagement
  - The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were NHS England, local NHS Trusts, NHS Trust University Hospitals Dorset, and other education providers.
- External input into quality assurance and enhancement
  - The education provider engaged with a number of professional bodies. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision.

- The education provider engaged with a number of professional bodies including, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP), Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy (RCSLT), Royal College of Podiatrists (RCPoD), Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), College of Radiographers (CoR), British Dietetics Association (BDA). They considered professional body findings in improving their provision.
- The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way.
- Data supply:
  - Data for the education provider is available through key external sources. Regular supply of this data will enable us to actively monitor changes to key performance areas within the review period.
- What the data is telling us:
  - From data points considered and reflections through the process, the education provider considers data in their quality assurance and enhancement processes and acts on data to inform positive change.

### **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 education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2028-29 academic year

**Reason for this decision:** The Panel agreed with the visitors' recommended monitoring period, for the reasons noted through the report.

## Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on the next steps for the provider. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation (including their reasons) and any referrals.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Review period recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Referrals
AECC University College	CAS-01476-V3Z1J9	Fleur Kitsell Patricia McClure	Five years	The visitors were satisfied with the overall performance of the education provider across the themes. Data shows the education provider is performing comparably to benchmark across the different areas. The education provider responds to recommendations from external regulators and professional bodies. There were no risks identified which could suggest the need for an earlier review.	How the education provider measures the benefit of direct service user and learner interaction. Service user feedback and actions taken. The visitors considered this to be an area for the education provider to reflect upon in the next performance review

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Annotation</b>	<b>First intake date</b>
MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist			16/01/2023
MSc Dietetics (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			16/01/2023
MSc Occupational Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			09/01/2023
MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/01/2021
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic Imaging)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2020
BSc (Hons) Radiography (Radiotherapy and Oncology)	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer		01/09/2020
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist			09/01/2023