
Approval process report

University of Wolverhampton, Podiatry (degree apprenticeship), 2024-25

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve a podiatry programme at the University of Wolverhampton. 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
- Reviewed the programme(s) 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 programme(s) should be approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:

- The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment:
 - The education provider has not fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme. As these relationships have not been fully finalised, the visitors recommended that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake, to:
 - determine which employer(s) are involved in the delivery of the programme;
 - understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities, based upon confirmation of the education provider and employer relationship; and
 - if so, consider how the changes may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.
- The programme(s) 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.
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Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether the programme(s) is approved• whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how
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Next steps

Outline next steps / future case work with the provider:

- The provider's next performance review will be in the 2027-28 academic year
 - Subject to the Panel's decision, we will undertake further investigations as per section 5
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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 programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the 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:

Paul Bates	Lead visitor, paramedic
Wendy Smith	Lead visitor, podiatry
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 14 HCPC-approved programmes across six professions. It is a higher education institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2004. This includes two post-registration programmes for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations.

The proposed programme is an apprenticeship programme. The education provider currently runs a HCPC-approved degree apprenticeship programme in occupational therapy.

The proposed programme sits within the Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing. Most HCPC-approved programmes sit in this faculty. The exception is the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science, full time programme, which sits in the Faculty of Science and Engineering.

The education provider engaged with the performance review process in our current quality assurance model in 2022. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence that the standards continued to be met, and the Education and Training Committee agreed the programmes remain approved in August 2023. We recommended that the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process would be in the 2027-28 academic year.

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 2](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Biomedical scientist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2010
	Chiropodist / podiatrist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
	Occupational therapy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
	Paramedic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2015
	Physiotherapist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2017
	Practitioner psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2004
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2006

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.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programme(s).

Data Point	Bench- mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Learner number capacity	639	749	2024-25	<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. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision.</p> <p>We assessed whether the education provider has the resources in place for the proposed programme and were satisfied with the information provided.</p>
Learner non-continuation	3%	5%	2020-21	<p>This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.</p> <p>The data point is above 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</p>

				<p>performance has dropped by 2%.</p> <p>We reviewed learner's experience on programmes and potential for progression and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
Outcomes for those who complete programmes	93%	98%	2020-21	<p>This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.</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 improved by 2%.</p> <p>We did not explore this data point through this assessment because the education provider is performing above sector norms.</p>
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Bronze	2023	<p>The definition of a Bronze TEF award is "Provision is of satisfactory quality."</p> <p>We reviewed learner's experience and outcomes and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
Learner satisfaction	80.2%	77.0%	2024	<p>This data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects.</p>

				<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 improved by 7%.</p> <p>We reviewed the learner experience at the education provider and were satisfied with the information provided by the education provider.</p>
HCPC performance review cycle length	n/a	2027-28	2022-23	<p>In 2022-23, the decision was made to next review the education providers performance in five years. This means we will consider this in 2027-28.</p>

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programme(s), the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants –**
 - The education provider's Admissions Policy and Process (2023) is followed during the admissions process. Programme entry requirements are available on programme webpages.
 - Applicants apply once they are sent a link to complete an application. The employer informs the education provider which applicants they wish to enrol on the programme.
 - Applicants must be employed within an appropriate healthcare setting and have the support of their employer for the duration of the

programme. If a learner is made redundant during their studies, depending on how much of their programme they have completed, they may be able to self-fund to continue.

- Learners must have at least five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs) including Maths, English and a science at grade C+ / 4 or above or equivalent qualifications. They must have an A-level qualification or equivalent level 3 qualification.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**
 - International English Language Testing System (IELTS) language requirements are advertised on programme's webpages. All HCPC-approved programmes undertake values-based interviews with applicants before offering a place. Where English is not an applicant's first language, assessment is undertaken during the admissions process to confirm they either possess an appropriate IELTS or equivalent certificate or possess a master's degree completed in a UK institution.
 - Applicant suitability is carried out by the education provider's Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) team through an enhanced DBS clearance.
 - Assessment of health is undertaken through the Occupational Health (OH) Service. Applicants accepted onto programmes complete a 'fitness to train' questionnaire, which is provided to the OH team. The OH team follow up any self-declarations. Information and timescales for vaccinations are provided for learners who have practice education in NHS settings.
 - The education provider holds an interview with the employer and applicant.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**
 - Learners must meet the requirements for entry as stated on the Course Specification Template.
 - Applicants need to submit an academic piece and will be asked questions during their interview, related to their experience in professionally related roles, for example, as a foot health practitioner, podiatry technician or foot care assistant.
 - Applicants will not automatically be rejected if their grades are lower than expected, and if they have a guarantee from their employer. Recruitment and advertising will take into consideration prior learning.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) –**
 - The education provider is fully committed to equality and eliminating unlawful and unfair discrimination. The EDI committee monitors whether the education provider is fulfilling its obligations.
 - All staff involved in the admissions process need to complete EDI training. Reasonable adjustments are made for applicants where necessary, and those applicants are supported by the education provider's inclusion team. Applicants are asked at interview about any additional learning needs. The education provider carries out an initial assessment review which identifies any additional needs.
 - All staff complete mandatory EDI training. The education provider has a Speak Up policy which supports learners with discrimination, harassment and bullying.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹ –**
 - The education provider is responsible for academic standards and quality of its programmes and awards. Regulations specify award titles, and information regarding the standards for each award.
 - Programme content is mapped to the standards of proficiency (SOPs) and knowledge, skills and behaviours. This is demonstrated to Office for Standard in Education, Children's Service and Skills (Ofsted) as part of the monitoring process. The programme will meet the funding terms set out by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).
 - The education provider is registered with the Office for Students as having degree awarding powers. There is continuous monitoring to ensure the programme meets apprenticeship accountability requirements.
 - Apprenticeship leads within the faculty meet quarterly to discuss recruitment, employer events, quality of programmes, engagement, quality assurance etc.

¹ This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Sustainability of provision –

- University Strategy 3000 outlines the vision, purpose, and values that underpin all the programmes. The strategy requires the education provider to ensure inclusivity is at the heart of learning. The strategy sets out the aim to recruit ambitious learners from all backgrounds, to inspire and support them to achieve.
- Schools have monthly senior leadership meetings which examine critical performance indicators across all programmes. This includes examination of data on recruitment, progression, retention, outcomes, and employability. This meeting also enables the senior leadership team to identify challenges and opportunities.
- The education provider invests in staffing and staff development and learning spaces. Academic staff are on permanent contracts. Workload of lecturers is monitored through workload planning this is part of the process to ensure there is the correct ratio of staff in place.
- Data about enrolment, progression, completion and Staff:Student ratios (SSRs) is monitored at school, faculty and education provider level.
- The education provider has close working relationships with employers. For example, they have contract reviews with employers and training days for employers' clinical education staff.
- Internal validation involves assurance around facilities and being able to deliver the programme. Skills laboratories on campus are less than four years old.
- Minimum entry requirements are to be met in line with ESFA funding rules, there will also be an initial assessment and review at the start of the programme.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- The proposed programme will run initially as an 'infill' programme. This means it will be integrated with the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme for the first three years. Following this, the education provider will review it to see if the apprenticeship programme can be run independently. Learners will share teaching and access the same module content as learners on the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme, as opposed to separately. The policies applicable to the approved programme will therefore apply to the proposed programme. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship and this model of delivery, and involvement of an employer, means there are likely to be different policies and processes in place. Therefore, we will need to consider how the proposed degree apprenticeship can be delivered alongside the currently approved direct entry BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme.

We will need to consider this as part of stage 2 of the approval process.

- **Effective programme delivery –**

- Each programme has a programme director who has oversight of delivery. All programme directors are HCPC registrants who hold relevant teaching qualifications and have academic study at a level appropriate to their role.
- They are aided by a senior management team which comprises of a Head of Department and Head of School. Other co-ordinating roles are held by programme staff.
- Each school has senior leadership which ensures the quality and effectiveness of delivery of all programmes within their remit. There are weekly programme director meetings to share good practice, identify areas of concern, and respond to internal and external quality process requirements.
- The education provider undertakes peer teaching observations. There is a community of practice scheme through the apprenticeship team to share best practice.
- Alignment of learning outcomes is checked through the quality process of internal validation.
- The education provider undertakes monthly attendance monitoring. The benchmark set at 95% attendance, and learner's attendance is reported to their employer.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Effective staff management and development –**

- The education provider is committed to a positive and supportive environment where staff, learners, and other stakeholders are valued and respected.
- Staff management is determined by institutionally set policies. Within the teams these policies are implemented to ensure full attention is given to staff development and support, including Continued Professional Development (CPD). All staff receive an annual performance development review, which sets development targets for the year ahead. Staff are required to have appropriate HCPC registration for leadership roles on a programme.
- Programme staff are encouraged to engage with Knowledge, Understanding, Development, Opportunities and Standing (KUDOS), the education provider's CPD scheme. This is accredited by Advance HE for the recognition of professional academic practice.
- The University Capability policy enables the education provider to monitor staff fitness to work, and to support them to ensure they are well positioned to contribute to the programme.

- All staff have managed workloads, using a workload model agreed at the education provider-level. The workload model has tasks and targets implemented for the year ahead in consideration of learner numbers and work commitments.
- Lecturers receive 21 days of scholarly leave to develop their knowledge.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
 - The education provider has strong links with regional partners. Key relationships involve working with practice education partners for practice education, and research and training. For example, they collaborate with Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust.
 - The education provider has an External Partnership team who maintain quality assurance of practice education through audits, evaluations. Each programme has a Placement Lead who works with the External Partnerships team to develop and maintain practice education.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: The proposed programme will run initially as an 'infill' programme. This means it will be integrated with the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme for the first three years. Following this, the education provider will review it to see if the apprenticeship programme can be run independently. Learners will share teaching and access the same module content as learners on the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme, as opposed to separately. The policies applicable to the approved programme will therefore apply to the proposed programme. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship and this model of delivery, and involvement of an employer, means there are likely to be different policies and processes in place. Therefore, we will need to consider how the proposed degree apprenticeship can be delivered alongside the currently approved direct entry BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme. We will need to consider this as part of stage 2 of the approval process.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality –**
 - Programmes are subject to academic regulations and processes to ensure academic quality. Programmes are monitored via a continuous monitoring process with four touch points at key times during the academic cycle. The Heads of School have overall responsibility for

this process. Each programme has an external examiner who is on the appropriate part of the HCPC register.

- All academic work is marked, moderated, and externally verified.
- The education provider has a peer observation scheme for lecturers to feedback. Learners can feed back through mechanisms such as early module and end of module evaluations, and an apprenticeship survey. Feedback is taken to Course Committee meetings for discussion if appropriate.
- Programme content is mapped against Ofsted apprenticeship knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
 - Practice education is managed using structured approval, monitoring, and reporting. Learner competence is considered at various stages on the programme and during practice education.
 - The Placement Handbook, policies, and procedures involve approval of each practice education site for quality and suitability of the learning experience. Approval criteria include appropriate supervision, line management, risk management policies, and expectations for both supervisors / educators and learners. Monitoring includes contracting, logbooks, progress and competency reports, and final evaluation. Processes are reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose.
 - All new practice education providers are required to undergo approval. The requirement for length of experience of a practice educator varies according to the profession. Practice educators who can sign off competencies normally have a minimum of two years post-qualification. They also have a recognised supervision / mentoring / educator qualification, or extensive experience in supervision equivalent to a formal certification. Learners are allocated a mentor who has undertaken mentor training with their employer.
 - Placement Leads ensure the education provider responds to any issues in practice. Placement Leads and Link Tutors work to ensure learners receive the level of exposure and support required to gain their competencies. They also work with practice educators to help manage learners who struggle to meet their outcomes.
 - Learners can raise concerns about the quality of the learning experience or their supervisor's expertise.
 - The education provider has a clinical practice team who support and guide learners. This includes an academic and administrative support.
 - Most practice education partners are NHS providers, and a growing number are non-NHS private providers. The education provider will set their expectations with employers through the Placement Provider Handbook and practice educator training days.

- The above aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship, which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. This is particularly the case regarding practice-based learning as the learner will likely be gaining experience in their working environment. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to practice quality as part of stage 2 of the approval process.
- **Learner involvement –**
 - The education provider's strategy is to ensure greater inclusivity and ensure equity of outcome. Consequently, the Inclusive Framework has been developed to inform how learners are involved as co-creators of programmes.
 - The learner voice is important for the education provider and there are a variety of ways learners can feedback regarding aspects of their programme and their experience at the education provider. These include learner representatives, programme committees, informal meetings with Programme Leads, and meetings with Heads of Department and the Head of School. Learners receive opportunities to feedback on modules at both mid- and endpoint of the module. Staff review the feedback and comment on their end of module summary form to include any actions taken. The education provider notifies the learner of actions taken as a result of their feedback.
 - Learner representatives are invited to represent their cohorts at Allied Faculty Programme Committee meetings which are held twice a year. They provide feedback and input from a learner perspective.
 - The programme teams reviews module and programme surveys on a regular basis. Data is gathered in various forms to inform and improve programmes. For example, NSS data and Graduate Outcomes survey.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Service user and carer involvement –**
 - The education provider has a service users and carers team called Service Users and Carers Contributing to Educating Students for Services (SUCCESS), who contribute to admissions, teaching, and skill training such as scenarios and practical examinations.
 - A representative from SUCCESS is invited to faculty programme meetings to provide a service user perspective.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: The above aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship, which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. This is particularly the case regarding practice-based learning as the learner will likely be gaining experience in their working environment. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to practice quality as part of stage 2 of the approval process.

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support –**
 - Learners are supported across the education provider's programmes in a variety of ways. For example, by signposting to appropriate teams.
 - Learners are supported through their studies through the mental health and training strategy (2022-2023). The virtual learning environment signposts learners to sources of support. For example, there is a podiatry option with links to different needs.
 - For specific academic support learning and study support is provided by library services. For example, study skills guides for learning.
 - Online career space for the learners to access and support their development of personal development.
 - Learners have a personal academic tutor and, for first year learners on an undergraduate programme, an academic coach. The personal tutor gives pastoral and tutorial support. The academic coach helps learners to define their own learning plan and works with them to help them develop over their first year of study.
 - Programmes have a "buddy" scheme, where more senior learners pair up with newer learner. Welfare is monitored and supported by personal tutors, programme tutors and practice educators.
 - The education provider has a mental health and wellbeing support team. Signposting for mental health services is provided at the end of all taught sessions.
 - The education provider has extenuating circumstances processes which enable learners with unexpected ill health to defer assessment and continue their programme. Any request for extenuating circumstances for a practice education module must be granted in consultation with the Programme Lead to ensure the validity of the claim. If the learner is experiencing extenuating circumstances, then their assessments can be delayed extension be granted.
 - Learners can access the mental health and wellbeing services at any of their practice education providers. Learners can take a leave of absence if appropriate.
 - While in practice education learners have support from their employer and the education provider's wellbeing support. Learners have an allocated skills coach / personal tutor and mentor while in the

workplace. There is also specific academic support, for example, learning and study support provided by library services.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Ongoing suitability –**

- Tracking of a learner's progress is completed through academic boards. There are held at the end of each academic year.
- Learners are observed while on campus, and by their mentors and peers while in practice education. Issues are raised through their employer feedback / contact while in practice education. Learners undertake midway reviews.
- Learners studying a professional programme are expected to meet the standards of conduct performance and ethics set by the profession. Learner's fitness to practise is explored when their conduct, health or competence raises a serious or persistent cause for concern about their ability or suitability to continue the programme.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**

- Interprofessional teaching takes place across subjects using staff from different professions.
- The extended project module allows for exchange of ideas and experience between learners through group supervision.
- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**

- The education provider's strategic aims include principles of widening participation and inclusion. These are mirrored within the equality and diversity procedures operating across the education provider and their programmes. The inclusivity aims are embedded into the curriculum.
- The Tutor Awareness Sheet (TAS) outlines the adjustments academic staff and service departments are required to make. This is based on the individual needs and assessment of learners with physical, psychological or sensory impairments. The TAS is made available to module leaders and other relevant staff members.
- Learners can make complaints about their programme, services or facilities provided by the education provider through the Student Complaints System. This includes an informal route, and if the concern has not been properly addressed or where the complaint is particularly serious or confidential, then learners should make a formal complaint.

- The above aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as part of stage 2 of the approval process.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: The above aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes. However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship, which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as part of stage 2 of the approval process.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity –**
 - Summative assessments are moderated in line with academic regulations. This involves the use of an external examiner. The education provider uses blind marking wherever possible.
 - Marking rubrics are used for most modules and the education provider's generic guidelines may also be applied. The education provider gives learners these rubrics in advance so they can understand the marking criteria. There is both an internal moderation process and external moderation process which aid with objectivity and consistency.
 - The assessment handbook outlines the procedures for marking of all assignments, including anonymity in the marking process. The assessment policy applies to all summative assessments.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Progression and achievement –**
 - Each learner will complete four tripartite interviews each academic year. This is undertaken between a skills coach from the education provider, the employer and the learner. Part of this process will include reviewing their progress, what they have achieved and their next steps.
 - At the end of each academic year there is:
 - an academic board that approves a learner's progression into the next year or programme completion, and
 - a degree board at the end of the programme to agree their award and whether they are to put forward as suitable for the

HCPC register. To meet the apprentice requirements this includes a gateway board and an endpoint assessment.

- This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Appeals –**
 - The academic appeals process is applied across all programmes. If a learner wishes to appeal, full details are sent by the programme team with a recommendation to contact the Students Union for further advice. Learners can access the process through the education provider's website.
 - This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
 - We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1, due to the clear alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- Staffing: the programme teams and senior staff are in place. For example, the senior lecturer and programme lead, and Head of Department. At times the education provider employs visiting lecturers. There is an academic lead for practice education and a faculty lead for apprenticeships. There are skills technicians to support the usage of skills labs.
- The education provider has facilities with specialist equipment in place. For example, two dedicated podiatry skills laboratories.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: There are three areas we will need to review through stage 2 of the process:

- The proposed programme will run initially as an 'infill' programme. This means it will be integrated with the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme for the first three years. Following this, the education provider will review it to see if the apprenticeship programme can be run independently. Learners will share teaching and access the same module content as learners on the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme, as opposed to separately. The policies applicable to the approved programme will therefore apply to the proposed programme.

However, the proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship and this model of delivery, and involvement of an employer, means there are likely to be different policies and processes in place. Therefore, we will need to consider how the proposed degree apprenticeship can be delivered alongside the currently approved direct entry BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme. We will need to consider this as part of stage 2 (SETs 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.7, 4.8, 5.2) of the approval process.

- The proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship, which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. This is particularly the case regarding practice-based learning as the learner will likely be gaining experience in their working environment. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to practice quality as part of stage 2 (SETs 5.3 and 5.4) of the approval process.
- The proposed programme is a degree apprenticeship, which means learners will also be employees. Therefore, academic and employment processes and policies will apply. We will therefore need to consider the role of the employer for the proposed programme relating to equality, diversity and inclusion as part of stage 2 (SETs 2.7 and 3.14) of the approval process.

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: None.

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) Podiatric Practice	FT (Full time)	Podiatry	10 learners, one cohort per year	01/09/2025

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 (Midlands) – we received information considering current pressures regarding practice-based learning for physiotherapy in the Midlands. The information was reviewed but we considered it would not impact on this assessment.

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, through the [Findings section](#).

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** –
 - Applicants to the proposed programme must have a minimum of five GCSEs at grade C+/ 4 to include an English, Maths and Science or equivalent qualifications. They must also have qualifications which add up to at least 112 UCAS points, or the equivalent. As part of the recruitment process, they undergo a values-based recruitment process. Applicants also need to have a satisfactory disclosure and barring service clearance, satisfactory occupational health clearance, and the support of their current employer.
 - The education provider has an Equality and Diversity Unit to ensure applicants are treated fairly and equally. The education provider ensures equality and diversity policies related to applicants are in place, implemented and monitored effectively. Admissions staff receive regular training on unconscious bias and inclusive recruitment practices. The admissions process is reviewed annually for compliance with these policies. The education provider collects and analyses data on applicants, which is broken down by protected characteristics. Regular audits identify potential patterns of underrepresentation, and these inform activities to address barriers.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
 - The education provider has monthly meetings with practice-based learning providers within the West Midlands as part of the Birmingham and Solihull (BSOL) group. They also attend a Task and Finish group, which gives updates and points of learning, and finds solutions related to podiatry apprenticeship programmes in the Midlands. This involves all education providers in the Midlands who run a podiatry apprenticeship programme.
 - Learners undertake practice-based learning within several partner organisations. For example, the University Hospitals Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust, local third sector organisations and other providers. Practice-based learning is overseen by the Head of Practice. All practice-based learning has a Placement Profile, a Placement Agreement and a Placement Audit in place which identifies capacity. Capacity will be a part of the biennial audit of practice-based learning. It will also be an agenda item in Education Review Meetings which are held biannually with each practice-based learning provider. The Faculty of Education, Health and Wellbeing, in which the proposed programme sits, hold six-weekly meetings with practice partners to ensure the ongoing quality and capacity of practice-based learning.
 - The proposed programme will have a staff:student ratio (SSR) of 1:17. The programme team numbers will increase each year until the

maximum learner numbers have been achieved. The core programme team will be supported by additional internal and external staff with specific expertise. This will deliver specialist lectures as necessary. For example, some of the programme content is interprofessional, so some content lecturers come from other areas such as paramedic science, physiotherapy and mental health. The proposed programme is supported by technical staff whose role is to ensure all skills laboratory equipment used in simulated learning is maintained to required health and safety standards.

- The education provider has appointed an HCPC registered podiatrist as programme lead. They have experience of teaching and learning, and most of the teaching will be delivered by HCPC registered podiatrists. All core programme staff will be HCPC registered podiatrists.
- The proposed programme has specialist equipment. For example, two podiatry skills laboratories, a simulation suite and a two-bedroomed mock house. There are teaching rooms including IT suites, lecture theatre and a virtual dissection table. The programme is based at Walsall and the campus has a library, Student Union and Student Support Services. The campus also delivers sport and exercise programmes whose specialist resources and facilities are also appropriate for teaching and learning of podiatry learners. For example, specialist biomechanics, and analysis laboratories with video recording equipment. The virtual learning environment has accessible information about the programme, including recorded lessons. The education provider also has campuses in Wolverhampton, Walsall, and Telford, all of which have library facilities accessible to learners.
- The education provider has an Equality and Diversity Unit to ensure learners are treated fairly and equally. Stakeholders including learners input into policy development and evaluation to ensure improvements. The education provider will make reasonable adjustments for learners who have a disability recognised under the Equality Act 2010. Each member of staff undertakes mandatory equality and diversity training. To monitor implementation the education provider collects and analyses data on enrolments, which is broken down by protected characteristics. Regular audits identify patterns of underrepresentation, and this informs activities to address them. The education provider engages with underrepresented communities and offers accessible resources for learners with additional needs.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
 - The learning outcomes of the modules have been mapped to the SOPs. The education provider has provided module descriptors which provide information about the teaching to meet the learning outcomes. They have also provided a SOPs mapping document, where we can see how each SOP is met.

- Professional behaviours are taught throughout the programme. For example, teaching activities and assessment of professional behaviours are embedded in module Professionalism Level 4. Learning outcome 3 is 'Explore your professional responsibilities and scope of practice'. Teaching activities include exploring the HCPC standards and guidance, applying the standards to case studies, and demonstrating them during simulation scenarios.
- The programme is mapped to the Royal College of Podiatry (RCP) standards, and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) apprenticeship standards. Throughout the programme learners need to reflect the core values, skills and knowledge based required to meet the RCP requirements in the module assessments.
- The education provider ensures the programme reflects current practice in a number of ways. They actively engage with key stakeholders, including practice-based learning providers, learners and employers, to gain insight into emerging trends and evolving practice. They have regular programme and module reviews to ensure the content remains current and reflective of real-world practice. The education provider continuously reviews technological advancements in podiatry and incorporates training in specialist areas on new diagnostic tools and treatments into teaching where possible. Programme staff attend conferences, engage with research, and maintain clinical practice to stay up to date with developments, and any insights are incorporated into teaching.
- The programme structure uses a spiral curriculum which allows the integration of theory and practice. Learners attend blocks of practice-based learning throughout the programme. This allows learners to be taught the theory and then go out into clinical practice to apply it. Module specifications outline how teaching and learning activities and assessments are related to practice when appropriate. For example, Clinical Skills 1 has a learning outcome of 'Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of assessment and diagnosis of a range of routine podiatry conditions'.
- There are a range of teaching and learning activities to reflect the needs of profession and the programme learning outcomes. For example, lectures, tutorials, seminars, problem-solving, workshops, and independent study. These are reflected in the course specification and module descriptors.
- Reflection and autonomous decision-making are central to the programme. For example, the Skills Coach Review supports reflective practice as learners reflect on how they are progressing towards meeting the knowledge, skills and behaviours related to the apprenticeship standards. Learners are expected to undertake more responsibility as they progress through the programme. Work-based learning targets and personal development targets are set with increasing challenges as the programme progresses.

- The programme is designed to ensure evidence-based practice is understood and applied throughout. Module assessment criteria reflect the need for learners to use up to date information. For example, module Evidence-Based Practice and Research 1 has a learning outcome of 'Demonstrate how to undertake a structured literature search using recognised electronic databases'. Clinical Practice modules expect learners to be able to apply and demonstrate evidence-informed practice.
- We considered how the proposed programme can be delivered alongside the currently approved direct entry BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme in order for the programme to meet SETs 4.1, 4.2, 4.5, 4.7 and 4.8 and were satisfied these SETs was met.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**
 - Practice-based learning is linked through the duration of the programme with learning. There is a module each year of clinical skills which ensures the development of skills and achievement of proficiencies.
 - Practice-based learning modules are built into all levels of the programme. Learners will complete 1000 of practice-based learning while on the programme. Practice-based learning takes place in learners' place of employment. Learners complete a skills scan each academic year. This helps the learner, their employer and the education provider identify areas that require development. Further practice-based learning will also take part within a simulated setting. The structure of practice-based learning allows learners to fulfil programme requirements while still supporting their employer.
 - Before practice-based learning settings can be used for learners they have to meet certain quality standards. This is assessed by an initial audit of the area, and thereafter biennial audits are carried out. The area is monitored on an ongoing basis through evaluation feedback gained from the learner, practice educator and external quality assurance mechanisms, such as National Student Surveys. The education provider and practice-based learning partners work together to ensure a satisfactory audit has been completed. The Practice Lead at the education provider ensures audits of practice-based learning are completed to ensure quality standards are met or being met.
 - Practice-based learning providers provide health and safety documents for the education provider as part of eligibility checks that are completed before learners can use the practice-based learning setting. Learners can notify the Placement Team of issues in practice-based learning by submitting a completed Placement Enquiry form. They can also raise issues and concerns about practice-based learning during their tripartite reviews. The education provider is committed to safeguarding, which is overseen by a dedicated Safeguarding Team. They promote and implement the Safeguarding Policy, and ensure it is

reviewed regularly. Programme staff working with learners are trained in safeguarding and can access additional information, advice, support and training when appropriate. Prior to their first practice-based learning, and before each practice-based learning, learners undertake training sessions or a recap which include patient safety, safeguarding, and general health and safety.

- The number of practice educators in practice-based learning is continuously monitored through Placement Audit and Education Review meetings. This is to ensure learners are adequately supported by a practice educator who has the appropriate expertise.
- The education provider will support the development of practice educators by giving them an initial preparation session and biennial updates thereafter. All practice educators are HCPC registered podiatrists who are working in podiatry. They are required to complete a practice educator preparation module on the E-learning for Healthcare website.
- We considered how the proposed programme can be delivered alongside the currently approved direct entry BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme in order for the programme to meet SET 5.2 and were satisfied this SET was met.
- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment –**
 - The learning outcomes of the modules have been mapped to the SOPs. The education provider has provided module descriptors which provide information about the assessments to meet the learning outcomes. They have also provided a SOPs mapping document, where we can see how each SOP will be assessed.
 - Professional behaviours are assessed throughout the programme. For example, teaching activities and assessment of professional behaviours are embedded in module Professionalism Level 4. Learning outcome three is 'Explore your professional responsibilities and scope of practice'. This is assessed through a practical exam, a ten-minute simulated patient encounter plus five minutes for additional questions.
 - Assessments within the programme are based on a spiral curriculum, with each year of study building on the last. There are a range of assessments to reflect the needs of the module content and the abilities of the learner. The assessment methods have been designed to measure the learning outcomes of the modules.
 - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: Across this assessment, the visitors noted the standards of education and training were met at a threshold level and as such, recommend the programme is approved. However, they also

recognised the education provider had not yet fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme.

The visitors recognised the education provider runs a HCPC-approved degree apprenticeship programme, and there is evidence of policies and processes in place. We also understand employers cannot formally sign up to the programme until once it is approved.

As employers are fundamental to the design, sustainability and delivery of a degree apprenticeship programme, it is important for us to understand this relationship. Through our model, education providers retain overall responsibility, however the nature of degree apprenticeships means there is a much greater role played by the employer than in traditional models of delivery.

As these relationships had not been fully finalised, the visitors also recommend a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake to the programme, to:

- determine which employer(s) are formally involved in the delivery of the programme;
- understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities of the education provider or employer(s), based upon confirmation of the formal relationship; and
- if changes have occurred, consider how they may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.

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).

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.

Referrals to the focused review process

Summary of issue: Across this assessment, the visitors noted the standards of education and training were met at a threshold level and as such, recommend the programme is approved. However, they also recognised the education provider had

not yet fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme.

The visitors recognised the education provider runs a HCPC-approved degree apprenticeship programme, and there is evidence of policies and processes in place. We also understand employers cannot formally sign up to the programme until once it is approved.

As employers are fundamental to the design, sustainability and delivery of a degree apprenticeship programme, it is important for us to understand this relationship. Through our model, education providers retain overall responsibility, however the nature of degree apprenticeships means there is a much greater role played by the employer than in traditional models of delivery.

As these relationships had not been fully finalised, the visitors also recommend a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake to the programme, to:

- determine which employer(s) are formally involved in the delivery of the programme;
- understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities of the education provider or employer(s), based upon confirmation of the formal relationship; and
- if changes have occurred, consider how they may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training.

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 programme should be approved
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this 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 approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	University of Wolverhampton		
Case reference	CAS-01737-Z8F7B8	Lead visitors	Paul Bates and Wendy Smith
Quality of provision			
<p>Through this assessment, we have noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The following areas should be referred to another HCPC process for assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The education provider has not fully finalised who the employer, or employers, will be to deliver this degree apprenticeship programme. As these relationships have not been fully finalised, the visitors recommended that a focused review is undertaken, within three months of the first intake, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> determine which employer(s) are involved in the delivery of the programme; understand if any of the policies / processes have changed, including changes to the responsibilities, based upon confirmation of the education provider and employer relationship; and if so, consider how the changes may impact how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training. The programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved. 			
Facilities provided			
<p>Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:</p> <p>The programme team and senior staff are in place. For example, the senior lecturer and programme lead, and Head of Department. At times the education provider employs visiting lecturers. There is an academic lead for practice education and a faculty lead for apprenticeships. There are skills technicians to support the usage of skills labs.</p> <p>The education provider has facilities with specialist equipment in place. For example, two dedicated podiatry skills laboratories.</p>			
Programmes			
Programme name	Mode of study	First intake date	Nature of provision

BSc (Hons) Podiatric Practice	FT (Full time)	01/09/2025	Apprenticeship
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Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2010
BSc (Hons) Podiatry	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/09/2021
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Integrated Degree) Apprenticeship	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/04/2021
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2021
MSc Occupational Therapy	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Occupational therapist			12/09/2022
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2016
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science (Professional Pathway)	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Paramedic			06/06/2022
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2017
MSc Physiotherapy	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Physiotherapist			12/09/2022
Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DcounsPsy)	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Counselling psychologist		01/01/2004
Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DcounsPsy)	PT (Part time)	Practitioner psychologist	Counselling psychologist		01/09/2014
Independent / Supplementary Non-Medical Prescribing (V300)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/09/2020

Independent / Supplementary Non-Medical Prescribing (V300)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/09/2020
Independent / Supplementary Non-Medical Prescribing (V300) Level 7	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/09/2020