
Education and Training Committee (Panel) – 22 May 2019

Annual monitoring audit decision – University of Southampton, Hearing Aid Aptitude Test, Distance learning

Executive summary and recommendations

At its last meeting of 24 April 2019, the Committee made a decision to visit this programme, based on an outstanding issue identified through the annual monitoring process. The decision notice is provided as Appendix 2.

Since this decision was made, it has been brought to the Executive's attention that there were issues with:

- the communication of the visitors' recommended outcome to the education provider; and
- the recommendation of the visitors contained in the report (Appendix 1).

Unfortunately, the Executive did not communicate the visitors' recommended outcome until after the meeting of the Panel. This meant that the education provider were not aware of the recommended outcome, and were not able to provide comment on this recommendation. Although there is not a formal part of the annual monitoring process that allows submission of 'observations' to the Committee, the comments provided by the education provider in this case cast doubt on the reasoning in the report.

The education provider's comments relate to the evidence asked for by the visitors in section 4 for SET 4.9. In the suggested evidence section, the visitors ask for evidence that demonstrates how "learners on the programme are able to learn with and from professionals **or** learners in other relevant professions..." (bolding added for emphasis). In their response to this request, the education provider provided evidence of how learners learned from professionals in other relevant professions, as requested, which the visitors were happy with.

In section 5, the visitors' reasoning for why this standard was not met focuses on how "learners were able to learn with and from **learners** in other relevant professions" (bolding added for emphasis). Therefore, the visitors reasoning as to why a visit was required focused on an area they did not note through their original requirements.

Additionally, the purpose of SET 4.9 is to prepare learners to "work with other professionals for the benefit of service users"¹. The executive notes that this programme is an aptitude test programme, where no practice-based learning is required (the programme is exempt from SET 5) as all learners are already practising in the NHS. The programme is intended for NHS audiologists to undertake a small amount of training around specific hearing aid dispenser proficiencies, and test whether these

¹ [Standards of education and training \(SETs\) guidance](#) (2017), page 35

individuals meet the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers to enter the Register.

With this considered, the executive recommends that a visit should not be required to consider how this programme meets SET 4.9. The nature of this programme means that its learners are already working with other professionals for the benefit of service users, and that therefore SET 4.9 is met. The executive also notes that through the annual monitoring submission, the provider has acted in good faith in responding to the visitors' requests.

The Executive will undertake a detailed review of this case to identify where errors were made, to work with individuals where required, and to develop our internal quality assurance processes where possible with the aim to prevent similar errors in the future.

Decision

- The Committee is asked to consider whether:
 - an approval visit is required to assess the ongoing approval of this programme, or
 - the outcome of the annual monitoring process should be to reconfirm approval of this programme.

Background information

- Appendix 1 – the visitors' report, including the recommendation to visit the programme, with reasoning.
- Appendix 2 – the decision notice from the Panel meeting of 24 April 2019.

Resource implications

- None

Financial implications

- None

Date of paper

17 May 2019

HCPC annual monitoring process report

Education provider	University of Southampton
Name of programme(s)	Hearing Aid Aptitude Test, Distance learning
Date submission received	21 January 2019
Case reference	CAS-13915-Q9T1T9

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Executive Summary

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The following is a report on the annual monitoring process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as ‘our standards’). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC).

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports. The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Catherine Smith	Chiropodist / podiatrist (Prescription only medicines – sale / supply)
Elizabeth Ross	Hearing aid dispenser
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Hearing Aid Aptitude Test
Mode of study	DL (Distance learning)
Profession	Hearing aid dispenser
First intake	01 July 2014
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	AM07896

We undertook this assessment to consider whether the programme continued to meet our standards over the last two academic years. This assessment formed part of our regular monitoring required of programmes on a cyclical basis.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we require certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Required documentation	Submitted
HCPC annual monitoring audit form, including completed standards mapping	Yes
Internal quality reports from the last two years	Yes
External examiner reports from the last two years	Yes
Responses to external examiner reports from the last two years	Yes
Practice based learning monitoring from the last two years	Yes
Service user and carer involvement from the last two years	Yes

Section 4: Outcome from first review

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission, the visitors are not satisfied that there is sufficient evidence that our standards continued to be met at this time, and therefore require further evidence as noted below.

Further evidence required

In order to determine whether the standards continue to be met, the visitors require further evidence for the following standards for the reasons noted below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programme(s), and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the standards.

3.3 The education provider must ensure that the person holding overall professional responsibility for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Reason: For this standard the education provider named the current programme lead, and stated that they would be able to replace her with an appropriate person if necessary. However, as per the requirement for this standard, they did not submit any evidence relating to a process for ensuring that a suitable replacement could be

identified if necessary. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence.

Suggested evidence: Evidence demonstrating that the education provider has a process for ensuring that the person appointed to have overall professional responsibility and a replacement if necessary, for the programme are appropriate.

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

Reason: The education provider stated that they had not made any change to how they met this standard. However, in their review of the other hearing aid dispenser programmes at the education provider, the visitors considered external examiners' reports for the academic years 2016-17 and 2017-18, and these external examiner reports gave feedback on all three hearing aid dispenser programmes at the education provider. It was not clear to the visitors what the mechanism was for ensuring that programme-specific feedback could be used to deliver improvement at the programme level, and as such they were not able to determine whether the monitoring and evaluation systems specifically for the Hearing Aid Aptitude Test were effective. They therefore require further evidence of how the education provider ensures this effectiveness.

Suggested evidence: Evidence demonstrating how the education provider ensures that differentiated programme-level feedback is available for this programme, the Hearing Aid Aptitude Test.

4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

Reason: In the mapping document attached to their audit, the education provider stated that no changes had been made to their approach to inter-professional education. From the information provided it appeared to the visitors that the education provider had not previously had opportunities for learners to learn with and from professionals and learners in other relevant professions. This would have been a reasonable approach under the old standards, which did not require programmes to include such opportunities. However, the revised HCPC standards of education and training do include such a requirement. It was not clear to the visitors how the education provider was ensuring that learners were able to learn with and from learners and professionals in other relevant professions, or how they had determined which professions were relevant, or how best to design and deliver inter-professional education. They were therefore not able to determine if the standard was met.

Suggested evidence: Evidence demonstrating

- how the education provider ensures that all learners on the programme are able to learn with and from professionals or learners in other relevant professions, and
- how they determine which professions are most relevant.

Section 5: Outcome from second review

Recommendation of the visitors – approval visit required

The education provider responded to the request for further evidence set out in section 4. Following their consideration of this response, the visitors were not satisfied that

there was sufficient evidence that the following standards continue to be met, for the reason(s) detailed below.

4.9 The programme must ensure that learners are able to learn with, and from, professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

In their response to the request for further evidence under this standard, the education provider submitted a narrative explaining that during the programme a range of professionals contribute to the teaching and learning activities. These include audiologists, hearing aid dispensers, and representatives from hearing aid manufacturers, all of whom learners are likely to work with during their practice.

The visitors were satisfied from this evidence that learners were able to learn with and from professionals in other relevant professions. However, they could not see from the evidence submitted how the education provider ensured that learners were able to learn with and from learners in other relevant professions. No evidence was provided relating to this, but the visitors noted that learning with and from other learners is a requirement of the standard that must be met by this programme. The HCPC does not mandate how programmes must meet this standard. There are various ways in which an education provider might organise interprofessional education (IPE) that could meet the requirements of the standard, including the use of virtual learning environments. From reviewing the response, the visitors were not aware of any plans for developing IPE such that it would meet the standard.

Therefore, the visitors were not satisfied that this condition is met.

Section 6: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the request for further evidence set out in section 4, the visitors are not satisfied that there is sufficient evidence that the standards continue to be met for the reason(s) noted in section 5 and recommend that an approval visit is undertaken to consider the approval of the programme(s).

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 24 April 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).

Education and Training Committee Panel

Programmes which have subject to annual monitoring audit and for which an approval visit is recommended

Programme name	Hearing Aid Aptitude Test
Education provider	University of Southampton
Mode of delivery	DL (Distance Learning)
Assessment ref	AM07896
Date of decision	24 April 2019

Panel: Stephen Wordsworth (Chair) Sonya Lam
Maureen Drake Penny Joyce
Luke Jenkinson

Decision
That the programme has been subject to an annual monitoring audit and that an approval visit is required to determine how the programme continues to meet the SET 4.9.
Reasons
<p>The Panel agreed with the conclusion reached by the visitors through the annual monitoring audit process that a visit is required to ensure the standard continues to be met. A visit provides the most effective opportunity for the education provider to demonstrate how all relevant education standards continue to be met. This process will also provide visitors with the evidence needed to make further recommendations to the Panel regarding the ongoing approval of the programme.</p> <p>The visit should be held along normal timescales and should involve a review of SET 4.9 of the Standards of education and training (SETs).</p>

Signed: Stephen Wordsworth, Panel Chair