

Approval process report

University of Plymouth, Occupational Therapy, 2022-23

Executive summary

This report covers our review of the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Route at the University of Plymouth. Through our review, we did not set any conditions on approving the programme, as the education provider demonstrated it met our standards through documentary evidence. This report will now be considered by our Education and Training Panel who will make a final decision on programme approval.

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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 detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the 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 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:

Jennifer Caldwell	Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist
Shaaron Pratt	Lead visitor, Radiographer
Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 23 HCPC-approved programmes across nine professions. It is a higher education institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1995.

The University of Plymouth is a well-established institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1995. The School of Health Professions is the home to most of the health and care related professions. They are based at the Peninsula Allied Health Centre, which is purpose built for these professions and provides learners with the following profession specific facilities.

There are currently plans for the School to be moved to InterCity Place, which is a 12 storey building being renovated for the University of Plymouth and is scheduled to open in 2023. This new building will provide state of the art facilities and equipment for the HCPC approved programmes.

The Diagnostic Radiography programmes are based in the Peninsula Medical School where learners have access to the Clinical Skills Resource Centre and replicas of NHS wards and emergency departments.

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	Biomedical scientist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2014
	Chiropodist / podiatrist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2015
	Dietitian	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2004
	Occupational therapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2008
	Paramedic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2008
	Physiotherapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2004
	Practitioner psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	1995
	Radiographer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2019
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing		2019	

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	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	1016	994	2022	The actual number enrolled is slightly lower than the benchmark. Visitors identified no issues within the submission which needed to be considered further.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	3%	2022	This percentage meets the benchmark and there are no concerns in this area.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	98%	2022	The percentage in employment / further study is higher than the benchmark, which indicates graduates make good progress with securing employment opportunities and progressing to further study.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Silver	2022	This award rating is good and indicates consistent high-quality teaching and learning.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	74.5%	74.9%	2022	This is above the benchmark. It is worth noting how the education provider has maintained their apprentices satisfaction levels during the pandemic and how they adjusted to remote teaching/learning.

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 admissions policy is institution-wide and application to the proposed programme will be through the University Apprenticeship Hub. Information for applicants will be available at open days, recruitment events online and at the interview. Based on the information provided, the proposed programme aligns with the institution-wide policies and procedures.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** – Apprentices will be required to demonstrate their English language proficiency and hold a GSCE English qualification C/4 or above or have International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with an overall average score of 7.0. This is included in the admissions policy and is institution-wide. Alongside this, apprentices will also be required to complete a Disclosure and Baring Service (DBS) check and occupational health screening prior to commencing the proposed programme.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** – The education provider has policies in place to assess applicants' prior learning and experience, which are part of the admissions procedure. APEL is assessed on an individual basis against the 20 credit modules delivered on the apprenticeship route. The Apprenticeship Hub and the academic team assess the applications individually to ensure all qualifications are considered. This will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – The education provider has several policies to cover this area such as the Equality, Diversity and inclusion policy and Dignity and Respect policy. These policies have been considered when designing the apprenticeship route with the aim to widen participation and encourage applications from a wider population. The policies are institution-wide and will apply to the proposed programme.

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** – There is an experienced team who are responsible for mapping the programmes against the standards to ensure threshold levels are met for entry to apply to the Register. The proposed programme will be managed by this team to ensure consistency and alignment with institution-wide policies and procedures.
- **Sustainability of provision** – The proposed programme will sit within the Faculty of Health, which is one of the largest Faculties the education provider has. The Faculty is financially stable and has sufficient resources to support and sustain the proposed programme and this will be strengthened further with the use of some of the teaching and practice links from the BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy programme. Agreements are in place with service managers to assist the sustainability of the proposed programme and to work collaboratively.

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

- **Effective programme delivery** – The proposed programme will be part of the suite of programmes for Occupational Therapy and some of the teaching from these programmes will be used. The team comprises of 15 members of staff, however there are additional resources in place for the proposed programme, which will be reviewed and increased according to the cohort size. The institution wide policies and procedures will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Effective staff management and development** – The Academic Lead and Programme Leads for the Occupational Therapy programmes will be responsible for monitoring staffing levels for the proposed programme. There are institution-wide policies that will apply where further development of expertise and knowledge is required, and these are available on the University Educational Development website. The Performance Development Review is an institution-wide policy and applies to all staff.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** – The Apprenticeship Hub team are an institution-wide team and support all partnerships at institution level. They work with employers and clinical partners on agreements and contracts and ensure expectations are clear. This team will manage the partnerships for the proposed programme, which will align with the institution-wide policy.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality** – All programmes are required to produce an Action Plan, which is a requirement of the Annual Programme Monitoring Committee and is an institution-wide policy. Other policies and processes covering this area at institution level are Academic Regulations, Subject Assessment Panels, Award Assessment Boards and Annual Programme Monitoring. External Examiners will be appointed in line with provider regulations and policy. These policies will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** – There are regular meetings and training sessions with practice educators and managers and a link tutor system is used to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. Processes for monitoring the quality of placements are already established and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Learner involvement** – Learners are encouraged to be involved with the programme through the Staff Student Liaison Committee, Programme Committees and the Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS). Learners can also become learner representatives and ambassadors. These are institution-wide policies and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Service user and carer involvement** – The education provider has a service user and carer group in the School of Health Professions who are involved with the programmes and provide input on curriculum development and teaching. This group will have the same level of input into the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support** – There are institution wide policies to support learners, which can be accessed via The University of Plymouth Student Hub. Some of the services available are the Disability Service, Careers Service, Mental Health Support and Health and Medical Wellbeing Services. These policies are set at institution level and will apply to the proposed programme, however in addition to this, learners on the proposed programme will also be allocated a personal tutor who will provide them with academic and pastoral support.
- **Ongoing suitability** – Suitability is considered through the University Disciplinary Procedures, Fitness to Practise Procedures and Attendance and engagement policy. All these policies are institution wide and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** – The education provider is committed to inter professional learning and has established the Plymouth Integrative Health and Social Care Education Centre to support this and provide further learning opportunities for learners. Inter professional learning opportunities have also been built into the modules at each level and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded within the teaching and is monitored in the annual programme reviews. The Equality, diversity and inclusion policy is an institution wide policy and will apply to the proposed programme.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity** – To ensure assessments are objective all programmes follow the guidance set out in the Assessment policy, Anonymous Marking policy, Extenuating Circumstances policy and the External Examiners policy. These policies and procedures ensure objectivity and clear quality processes for assessment and marking and will apply to the proposed programme.
- **Progression and achievement** – Marks are reviewed by the Subject Assessment Panel and Award Assessment Board, which the external examiners attend. For the proposed programme the board and panel will be held separately, however the Academic Regulations and Assessment Policy will still apply, as these are institution wide policies and procedures.
- **Appeals** – The appeals procedure is an institution wide policy and allows learners to appeal their marks. This policy will apply to the proposed programme.

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

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) Occupational Therapy Apprenticeship Route	Full time	Occupational therapist	5-10 per year	19/09/2022

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.

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.

Quality theme 1 – Resources

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted there were plans to move to new premises in 2023 and were unclear what resources would be available in the new building and whether learners would continue to have access to the current resources. Visitors therefore requested further evidence relating to the new premises and details of the resources that will be available. They specifically wanted to view a plan detailing the range of facilities in the new building and a timeline of when the new building would be open to apprentices.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors thought the email clarification would be the most effective method to view the plans for the new building and the range of facilities and timeline.

Outcomes of exploration: In their response, the education provider has confirmed the proposed programme will be delivered in the Peninsula Allied Health Centre (PAHC) in the first year and apprentices will have access to all the facilities on the University of Plymouth main campus. From September 2023, all health programmes will be based on the main campus. This will allow apprentices to access additional facilities, such as the hospital simulation areas and the Charles Seale- Hayne Library.

A YouTube link was also included for visitors to virtually view the new facility, which allowed them to view the shared / multi-professional spaces. Visitors noted resources would be integrated when all the programmes move to the main campus and how this would allow for interprofessional education to develop further. The visitors were therefore satisfied with the explanation and evidence provided and considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

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

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

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register**
 - This standard is covered through institution-level assessment.

- **SET 2: Programme admissions**
 - The selection and entry criteria in both the handbook and the website were clear and sufficient and were set at an appropriate level for an apprenticeship programme. The criteria included qualifications at GCSE level or equivalent, an Enhanced DBS check and occupational health clearance.

- The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership –**
 - Visitors noted there was clear communication and collaboration between the education provider and practice providers in the Operational Specification document.
 - There was clear evidence of the process in place, which will ensure all learners have access to adequate practice-based learning.
 - Visitors noted there was an adequate number of staff to deliver the proposed programme.
 - It was noted educators would already be in place with the relevant specialist knowledge and expertise due to the Occupational Therapy programmes that are already being delivered and approved by the HCPC.
 - The visitors therefore consider the relevant standards within this SET area are met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery**
 - Visitors noted the learning outcomes were clear and achievable within the specified timeframe for learners to meet the standards of proficiency for occupational therapists.
 - Expectations of professional behaviour, standards of conduct and performance and ethics were clear in the selection process, practice handbook, programme handbook and the Fitness for Practice Committee.
 - The philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base were clearly articulated in module descriptors and in the presentations, which were made available as part of the evidence.
 - There was clear evidence of the curriculum being relevant to current practice. Theory and practice were clearly linked to the learning that the apprentices will undertake in the workplace.
 - Teaching methods were clear and were appropriately cited within the module descriptors. The module descriptors also outlined how reflective thinking would be supported and developed and provided clear examples, e.g., through the portfolio, assessments and ongoing discussions between tutors, students, and workplace mentors.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning**
 - Evidence was provided in the Operation Specification document, Programme and Placement Handbooks, which outlined the learning in relation to practice-based learning.
 - Visitors were satisfied with the evidence provided relating to appropriately qualified staff. This was based on the overall number of learners, including apprentices not exceeding 95 across the occupational therapy provision at the provider.

- Sufficient evidence was provided of the training offered to practice educators to ensure they understood the programme and the providers expectations of their role.
- The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.
- **SET 6: Assessment**
 - Reflection exercises with practice educators, completion of the portfolio document, essays and presentations were some of the assessments used within the modules and demonstrated learners would meet the standards of proficiency upon completion.
 - Visitors noted the variation of assessments used within the modules to allow students to develop and demonstrate a range of knowledge and skills. These are cited within module descriptors and the Operation Specification document.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

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

Section 5: Referrals

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

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process

Recommendations

We include recommendations when standards are met at or just above threshold level, and where there is a risk to that standard being met in the future. They do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

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

- All standards are met, and therefore the programme should be approved

Appendix 1 – 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			01/09/2020
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2019
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography with Foundation Ultrasonography	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2021
BSc (Hons) Dietetics	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			01/02/2004
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Blood Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2014
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Cellular Science)	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2014
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2008
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/08/2018
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2004
BSc (Hons) Podiatry	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/09/2005
BSc (Hons) Podiatry (degree apprenticeship)	WBL (Work based learning)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/01/2021
Independent and Supplementary Non-Medical Prescribing (Level 6)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/09/2019

Independent and Supplementary Non-Medical Prescribing (Level 7)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/09/2019
MDiet (Hons) Dietetics	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			01/08/2022
MOccTh (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2020
MPhysio (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2020
MSc Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2013
MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2021
MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/01/2021
MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)	PT (Part time)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/01/2021
PgDip Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2020
Post Graduate Diploma Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2013
Professional Doctorate in Clinical Psychology	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Clinical psychologist		01/01/1995