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HCPC approval process report

Education provider	University of Plymouth
Name of programme(s)	MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration), Full time
Approval visit date	16 September 2020
Case reference	CAS-15957-Y0Z2M1

Contents

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 approval 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.

Through undertaking this process, we have noted areas that may need to be considered as part of future HCPC assessment processes in section 6 of this report.

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). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make 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 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:

Angela Duxbury	Radiographer - Therapeutic radiographer
Emma Supple	Chiropodist / podiatrist (Prescription only medicines – sale / supply)
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit
There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Sheela Agarwal	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Plymouth
Phil Gee	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Plymouth
Summer Ashbury	Student representative	University of Plymouth

| Lynn Harvey | Internal panel member | University of Plymouth |
| Kahila Smith | Internal panel member | University of Plymouth |

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	MSc Podiatry (Pre-registration)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Chiropodist / podiatrist
Entitlement	Prescription only medicines – administration Prescription only medicines – sale / supply
Proposed first intake	01 January 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02242

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we ask for 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.

Type of evidence	Submitted
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes

Internal quality monitoring documentation	This was a new programme so this documentation was not available.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Not Required	Remote visit – the visitors did not have any outstanding concerns that could not be addressed through other meetings.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	Remote visit – the visitors did not have any outstanding concerns that could not be addressed through other meetings.
Facilities and resources	Yes	This was done virtually
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors
In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the virtual approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

Conditions
Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 06 November 2020.

3.18 The education provider must ensure learners, educators and others are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that learners are aware that the step-off awards do not provide eligibility to apply for registration with the HCPC.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation that there were certain exit awards available for learners, who accumulated certain amounts of credit on the programme.

However, the visitors were not clear how it would be clearly communicated to learners which awards did not confer eligibility to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require that the education provider provide further evidence of how all learners will be enabled to understand that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility to apply for admission to the HCPC Register.

5.8 Learners and practice educators must have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must clarify how they will ensure that learners who have any concerns about the use of their sensitive data in the practice-based learning context will have a means of raising them.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the documentation provided and from discussions during the visit that there was certain sensitive information pertaining to learners that might sometimes be shared between the education provider and the learners' employer.

However, it was not clear to the visitors how a learner who had a concern about the use of sensitive data in practice-based learning would be enabled to do so. The guidance for this standard states that learners must be "aware of what to do if…they have a concern about their practice-based learning experience". While it would not be proportionate or reasonable to expect a specific policy for this situation, the visitors considered that the education provider could, for example, flag the issue as a possible concern in materials supplied to learners. They therefore require additional evidence showing how learners will be informed of what to do if they have a concern about their personal data that arises from practice-based learning.

6.4 Assessment policies must clearly specify requirements for progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that assessment methods will be clearly communicated to learners.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the review of programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team that a variety of assessment methods would be used – for example, both written essays, tests and more practical methods involving learner interaction. They were satisfied that these methods were appropriate but they did note that in the information provided to learners, it was not always clear which learning outcomes were to be assessed by which methods. The visitors therefore considered that it was not clearly specified to learners how they could achieve and progress within the programme, and as such they require the education provider to submit further evidence of how they will meet the standard.

6.7 The education provider must ensure that at least one external examiner for the programme is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence relating to the process of appointing an external examiner.

Reason: The education provider had not yet completed the appointment of an external examiner. From discussions at the visit, the visitors were aware that an appointment was planned and that suitable candidates had been discussed. However, they did not see formal evidence relating to how this appointment would be made, or when it was intended to be made, or what criteria would be used in the decision, for example what qualifications and experience would be required. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether an appropriately qualified and experienced external examiner would be appointed, and require additional evidence that clarifies what criteria and process will be used in the selection of this person.

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. Recommendations do not need to be met before programmes can be approved, but they should be considered by education providers when developing their programmes.

2.5 The admissions process must ensure that applicants are aware of and comply with any health requirements.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how they ensure that learners are aware there are arrangements in place to inform applicants with a disability of how they can be supported on the programme.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the programme documentation that the education provider had plans to place to make the admissions process accessible to potential applicants with disabilities, and so considered that the standard was met at threshold. However, they were not sure of how the education provider would make applicants aware of these arrangements, and therefore suggest that the education provider review how they make applicants aware of how they would be included on the programme and how reasonable adjustments would be made.

Section 5: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 04 December 2020 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available on our website.

Section 6: Future considerations for the programme(s)

We include this section to note areas that may need to be considered as part of future HCPC assessment processes. Education providers do not need to respond to this section at this time, but should consider whether to engage with the HCPC around these areas in the future.

The visitors considered that all the standards were met at threshold. They did note, however, that with regard to SET 6.4, concerning learners being fully informed about how to progress and achieve within the programme, there were some minor errors within the documentation. They therefore suggest that documentation available to learners be reviewed to ensure that all information is correct and complete.