

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Manchester Metropolitan University
Name of programme(s)	Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Psychology Practice, Flexible
Approval visit date	26 November 2020
Case reference	CAS-15832-Z3J1H1

Contents

Section 1: Our regulatory approach.....	2
Section 2: Programme details.....	3
Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment.....	3
Section 4: Outcome from first review.....	4
Section 5: Outcome from second review.....	7
Section 6: Visitors' recommendation.....	8
Section 7: Future considerations for the programme(s).....	8

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 7 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:

David Houlston	Biomedical scientist
Jacqueline Bates-Gaston	Practitioner psychologist - Forensic psychologist
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.

Lisa Coulthwaite	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Joanne Elson	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Karin Spenser	External panel member	University of Derby
Rachel Forsyth	Internal panel member	Manchester Metropolitan University
Yasmin Gulcicek	Learner panel member	Manchester Metropolitan University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma in Forensic Psychology Practice
Mode of study	FLX (Flexible)
Profession	Practitioner psychologist
Modality	Forensic psychologist
Proposed first intake	01 March 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 10
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP02198

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	Comments
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	Not Required	New programme so 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	We determined prior to the visit that we could discuss learner matters with the programme team
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Not Required	We determined prior to the visit that we could discuss learner matters with the programme team
Facilities and resources	Yes	There was a separate discussion about this with the programme team.
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	No	Practice educators were not made available at the visit, this was the education provider's decision. Learners bring their own placement on to the programme and the education provider therefore determined that it was not possible to invite partners at this stage.
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 22 January 2021.

3.5 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that their partnerships with employer partners continue to be effective at ensuring the practice-based learning components of the programme continue to be sustainable.

Reason: The visitors were aware from programme documentation, and from discussions both prior to and during the visit, that the intention was for learners to bring their own placements with them on to the programme. They considered that this was a reasonable approach within the overall landscape of the profession. However, they noted that in the documentation there was limited evidence about how the education provider would sustain formal relationships with practice partners. They were also unable to meet with representatives of practice educators at the visit, which meant that they did not have the opportunity to ask questions that would enable them to understand the employers' side of the working relationship. In particular the visitors were not clear about what plan was in place to ensure that there was regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and organisations such as Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service, who would be employing learners on the programme. They therefore require further evidence relating to how these relationships will be maintained and developed, to ensure that the programme would be sustainable. This is especially important in light of the fact that learners are coming on to the programme with their own placement and so the education provider may not have an existing relationship with all those partners.

3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must clarify their plans for the involvement of service users and carers in the programme.

Reason: In the documentary submission the education provider stated that they were in negotiations with a charity with a view to gaining access to a pool of relevant service users and carers for the programme to use. At the visit, the programme team said that the discussions were still ongoing. The visitors were not able to speak to any potential service users or carers at the visit. They were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, because the service users and carers had not been identified and the nature of their involvement in the programme was still undefined. It was not clear what support would be offered and how their involvement would be evaluated. They therefore require the education provider to submit additional evidence showing that they have a sustainable relationship with any organisation that is involved in managing or providing service users and carers, and that there will be appropriate service user and carer input to the programme.

3.8 Learners must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that their plans for the involvement of learners on the programme are appropriate.

Reason: The education provider's plan for learner involvement, as laid out in the documentation, was that each cohort would identify one representative, who will be on a student representative team for the programme. This team will meet four times a year on a quarterly basis with the programme lead, the Head of Department and the

programme management team (PMT). The visitors considered that this was broadly appropriate, but the documentation did not contain any further detail about what kind of input the learners would have into the programme. For example, it was not clear how points raised by learners would be put into action, or what the powers and remit of the representative team would be. Discussions with the programme team did not clarify this further. The visitors were also unable to view the latest learner survey and any plan for action that emerged with respect to this programme. They were therefore unable to determine the process by which learners' involvement would translate into action. They require further evidence demonstrating that the student representative team will have appropriate input into the programme as described in the standard.

5.7 Practice educators must undertake regular training which is appropriate to their role, learners' needs and the delivery of the learning outcomes of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that practice educators have undergone regular appropriate training.

Reason: Both in the documentation and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were aware that practice educators were intended to receive regular training to ensure that they continued to be able to deliver the programme effectively. However, they were unable to determine whether the standard was met, because without evidence around the detail of the training content they were not able to be clear that the regular training would be appropriate to learners' needs and the delivery of the programme. They therefore require further evidence demonstrating that this training will ensure practice educators' ongoing suitability in line with the standard.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will define the competencies to be assessed in practice-based learning, such that the assessment strategy and design enable learners to meet the standards of proficiency.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the documentation and from discussions at the visit that the education provider's intention for practice-based learning was that learners would agree the competencies by which they would be assessed, as part of an individual learning plan. However, in the documentation the visitors were not able to view the competencies that would be used at the start of this process, and at the visit the programme team confirmed that they had not yet been fully developed. This meant the visitors were unable to gain a full understanding of how assessment in practice-based learning would work. They were therefore unable to determine that the standard was met, and therefore require further evidence demonstrating that the overall assessment plan will be appropriate to the programme and enable learners to meet the standards of proficiency.

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.

2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should review how they make applicants aware of the details of occupational health and criminal convictions checks.

Reason: The visitors considered that this standard was met, because the information available to applicants gave a clear indication of what the application process was, what its requirements were, and what they could expect from the programme. However, the visitors did note that it was not made clear in some documents for applicants what would be involved in occupational health checks, and under what circumstances applicants who already had a Disclosure & Barring Service check might need to get a new one. The visitors therefore suggest that the education provider review the documents available to applicants to make sure that these matters were clarified.

Section 5: Outcome from second review

Second response to conditions required

The education provider responded to the conditions set out in section 4. Following their consideration of this response, the visitors were not satisfied that the following conditions were met, for the reasons detailed below. Therefore, in order for the visitors to be satisfied that the following conditions are met, they require further evidence.

3.7 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must clarify their plans for the involvement of service users and carers in the programme.

Reason condition not met at this time: In their response to this condition, the education provider submitted a narrative of how they would work with organisations that would act as conduits to appropriate service users. These organisations were focused on bodies that worked with offenders. The visitors understood this provided information about the overall high level planning for service user and carer involvement. However, it was not clear from this information how exactly service users would be involved in the programme, on an individual basis, at an operational level. The visitors were also unclear how their involvement would be supported, planned and evaluated to contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme. For this reason the visitors were not able to determine whether the standard was met.

Suggested documentation: Documentation such as module specifications or plans for particular activities which show what exactly service users and carers will be doing on the programme and how they will be supported in becoming involved. In addition, documentation such as the internal quality information to demonstrate how this involvement would be evaluated.

Section 6: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, and the request for further evidence set out in section 5, 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 16 March 2021 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 7: 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 the standards were now met at threshold, and that the programme could run effectively as planned. However, they did want to flag certain areas where they felt that, going forward, it would be appropriate for the education provider to maintain close monitoring to ensure that the standards were and continued to be met as the programme began. They also considered that it would be useful for visitors in future HCPC monitoring processes to review these areas. These were as follows:

- Collaboration with practice-based learning partners
- Training of practice educators
- Development of competences, and in particular how the education provider would ensure that those developing the competencies were suitable people to do so.