
Approval process report

Birmingham City University, Speech and language Therapy, 2021-22

This report covers our review of the BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy Degree Apprenticeship programme at Birmingham City University. 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 and the quality activity.

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached. Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that the programmes are approved.

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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) 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:

Lucy Myers	Lead visitor, speech and language therapist
Wendy Smith	Lead visitor, chiropodist / podiatrist
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 26 HCPC-approved programmes across six professions in addition to Independent and Supplementary Prescribing programmes which are also HCPC approved. It is a Higher Education provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1993.

The education provider considers adding the programme to their portfolio will grow and diversify their provision as it will provide an alternative route into the profession that may be more accessible for some applicants. The education provider has said this is not a collaborative / partnership course but one where they will be working in partnership with their core employer partners.

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	Dietitian	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2018
	Operating Department Practitioner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2016
	Paramedic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2014
	Physiotherapist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2018
	Radiographer	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	1993
	Speech and language therapist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2001
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing		2007	

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	1567	1117	2022	There is a disparity here with the value below the expected learner figures. The visitors did not flag any issues around enrolment, cohort sizes or recruitment.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	4%	2019-2020	The disparity of 1% here is not of a scale that should raise concerns. The visitors did not raise any concerns about this.

Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	94%	92%	2019-2020	This is 2% below benchmark and, as above, there were no specific issues identified by the visitors or the provider relating to HCPC provision specifically.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Silver	June 2017	Silver suggests a high level of teaching quality.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	73.8%	48.5%	2022	The value is over 20% lower than the benchmark. The visitors considered this as part of their review and identified no specific issues relating to learner feedback.

We also considered intelligence from others, as follows:

- Health Education England (HEE) Midlands - but we did not receive information which would impact on the review.

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** – Employers are required to advertise the apprenticeship role and provide a job description for the post. Information about the entry criteria will be detailed on the education provider website, within marketing materials, at open days and available on request. This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs degree apprenticeship programmes. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** – The education provider has defined the policies, procedures and processes that apply to the degree apprenticeship programmes it delivers. Individual programmes have some of their own policies depending on professional requirements. This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs degree apprenticeship programmes. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** – The institution has a defined Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Process. This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – At an institutional level, the BCU Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25 and BCU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020 – 2025 apply. This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

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 has a range of policies, procedures and processes that apply to the programmes delivered within it. For example, BCU Course Approval / Re-approval Policy and Procedures. This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Sustainability of provision** – Work has been carried out at a national, regional, and local level to scope the sustainability of this route to ensure it is a viable option for the profession and the education provider. The provider has worked with the professional body and Health Education England (HEE) to engage employers and seek their commitment to this route of entry into the profession. There has been a high level of interest and commitment from employers both regionally as well as at a national level. There are currently only three education providers who plan to run the apprenticeship, all of which are spread out geographically across the country. This would further support a high demand for this route from employers and prospective apprentices. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Effective programme delivery** – The institution has defined the policies, procedures and processes (such as Course Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) Policy and Procedures) that apply to the programmes delivered within it. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Effective staff management and development** – Periodic reviews are undertaken every five years to assess the work of individual Schools (this is an institution wide policy). There are clear expectations laid out in the Individual Performance Review Policy and the Staff Learning and Development Policy around support for and development of staff. These are used to monitor, develop and improve performance. The team will draw on

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

existing expertise from within the education provider and further afield to support the development of its existing staff group. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** – The education provider outlined this is not a collaborative / partnership programme. Rather one where they work in partnership with their core employer partners. Existing processes are in place and will be used in relation to this programme. The school regularly liaises with clinical partners and employers, and host regular programme and department level clinical placement group meetings. The programme team have also developed wider networks, with employers from the region and national level. They have been extremely supportive and actively involved in the development of the course. Within the provider, there are teams such as the Apprenticeship Partnership Unit in place to support apprenticeships. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality** – There is a large suite of institution wide procedures, processes and mechanisms in place, including the following: CME Policy and Procedure, Course Quality Day Events, Academic Appeals Process, and the Assessment and Feedback Policy. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** – The institutional audit process has been designed with the input of internal quality experts and with external bodies with a relevant interest, for example professional and statutory bodies. It is designed to be multidisciplinary and to give the learners clear guidance on what to do in a range of situations. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Learner involvement** – This is monitored and developed by the institution wide CME Policy and Procedure, the Course Quality Day Events and the guidelines governing learner feedback within programme documentation. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution. This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs.
- **Service user and carer involvement** – There is an institutional Service User and Carer Involvement Process. This governs all aspects of service user and carer involvement and ensures that individual programmes are doing what needs to be done to maintain high quality involvement. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support** – The education provider has a range of defined institutional policies, procedures and processes in place to support learners (such as the Student Disability, Mental Health Policy and Personal Tutors). This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Ongoing suitability** – The key institution wide policies in this area are the Fitness to Practice Procedure, the Student Disciplinary Procedure, Personal Tutor and Academic Misconduct Policy. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** – School level processes are in place and will be used in relation to this programme. There will be a range of opportunities to learn with, and from, learners and apprentices from a range of professions, for example, through joint simulation and collaborative working activities at the academic setting, on practice-based learning placement and in the workplace. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** – There is an institution wide policy in this area which all programmes are expected to follow. Access and Participation Plans are in place for all faculties. Centralised support facilities are available for individual programmes to draw upon, just as with the existing HCPC-approved provision. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is constituent with the definition of their institution.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity** – Centralised academic regulations underlay the institutional approach. There is an Assessment and Feedback Policy in place, with a particular focus on taught provision, which acts in concert with the academic regulations. Fairness and inclusivity are central to the design of these regulations. At the school level, codes of practice are used to set out principles of best assessment practice. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.
- **Progression and achievement** – The institutional CME Policy and Procedure ensures learners are progressing through programmes appropriately and are being given appropriate opportunities to show they have learned the necessary parts of the curriculum. We determined the proposed

programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

- **Appeals** – These are managed, governed and guided by an Academic Appeals Procedure and an Extenuating Circumstances Procedure. This process is led by the Student Governance team. This is in line with existing HCPC understanding. We determined the proposed programme would be managed in a way that is consistent with the definition of their institution.

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) Speech and Language Therapy Degree Apprenticeship	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist	20 learners per cohort, one cohort per year	09/01/2023

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 – selection and entry criteria via the portfolio route

Area for further exploration: The education provider informed us that minimum entry requirements have been agreed with employers, Health Education England

(HEE) and admissions staff. In line with other Allied Health Professions (AHP) apprenticeship courses within the faculty, a portfolio entry route is offered to appropriate candidates. The visitors reviewed the route onto the programme through the successful completion of a portfolio. They sought more information about what criteria the provider is applying through this route, and what is being looked for. The visitors also sought more detail about how the assessment of entry requirements is fair.

The visitors noted as part of meeting the entry requirements the applicant needs to be currently working in the NHS or the private sector where they are being exposed to the work of a speech and language therapist. They also noted it does not specifically state the nature of the applicant's employment, and whether the employer is signed up to the apprenticeship model. The visitors sought clarification about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The visitors noted the portfolio expectations document and the apprenticeship entry requirements outlined who is eligible to apply through the portfolio route onto the programme. This option is only open to those who have recent relevant experience. Hence, why the education provider stated applicants need to be working in the NHS or private sector if they are applying using the portfolio route.

The visitors noted that if an applicant qualifies for entry via the portfolio route, the portfolio is sent to the applicant and their employer. The applicant has one month to complete this and return the portfolio. The document is reviewed and scored by two members of education provider staff, in line with the criteria agreed with the admissions team and employers. This is outlined in the document. To pass, the applicant needs to achieve an overall mark of 40 per cent or more. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 2 – education provider and practice education provider collaboration

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the education provider has established a clinical placement team who facilitate regular meetings with the West Midlands Placement Educator Group (WMPEG). However, they were unclear about the membership of the group, how often it meets, and what its remit is.

The visitors noted the education provider said they collaborate, with placement educators in regular continuous professional development sessions called BiteSize, and through the placement team's attendance at the National Placement Educator's forum. The visitors sought more information about how regularly the education provider collaborates, and with whom through these sessions. The visitors recognised these communications channels. They sought further information about

who attended these meetings, and how the institution collaborated at the highest levels.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The WMPEG is formed of placement leads from all organisations the education provider works with. They represent the organisation they work for in terms of speech and language therapy practice education and meet three times a year. It also meets on an ad hoc basis if there is a need to discuss something specific. For example, a small group may come together to discuss the professional body new eating and drinking competencies. The group also discusses issues via email as necessary, for example problem solving an approach to placement expansion. The group is to act as a forum for discussion, consultation, problem-solving, sharing good practice and peer support across the West Midlands.

Team members represent the education provider and the profession by attending key faculty meetings. Placement provision, expansion and workforce development is a key focus for these meetings. They are also attended by allied health profession (AHP) placement leads from other NHS organisations. Representatives from all education providers within the Integrated Care System (ICS) are invited to attend these AHP faculty meetings. The education provider has representation across the wider Midlands region.

The education provider has signed up to the Health Education England (HEE) education contract, and regularly meets with HEE as part of contract review meetings. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 3 – clarification about different types of clinical experience

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the course specification stated, “the placement cannot take place in the same setting as their [the learners] workplace”. However, the mapping document stated the programme “is employer led”, and that learners “will be in work-based learning”. The visitors were unsure what learning takes place in the learner’s workplace and required clarity about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider described how learners will be in the academic setting one day a week for teaching. In addition, one day is ringfenced for placement and / or guided learning and three days for work-based learning. When learners are in the workplace, they are carrying out their primary job under supervision of a mentor (as an employee).

The provider confirmed, practice-based learning needs to occur outside of a learner's typical work setting. This is to ensure learners have the range and depth of clinical experience to be able to meet the standards of proficiency. Visitors therefore noted it is possible for learners to undertake their practice-based learning in the same organisation as their normal work setting. However, it would need to be in a different setting, with different supervisors. The education provider added it will be easier for learners to focus on the achievement of learning outcomes in a different environment with an independent placement educator who can support their learning in a specific clinical area and carry out an objective assessment. Following the review of the clarification, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 4 – adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver the proposed programme and specialised subject areas

Area for further exploration: The visitors recognised the education provider successfully delivers speech and language programmes at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. They took assurance from this to conclude the staff for the proposed programme are appropriately qualified with the specialist knowledge. The visitors noted the approval of the proposed programme will mean there is an additional cohort of learners for the staff to teach. The visitors therefore sought more information about the capacity for these staff to take on an additional 20 learners.

The visitors noted the apprenticeship resource document indicated 1.0 work time equivalent (WTE) staff were to be appointed. They were unclear whether this had been approved. Also, the visitors could not find information about the recruitment plans for more staff as the programme rolls out. They required more details about what the plans, if any, are and if so, how many, when, and on what basis.

The visitors also noted learners will be on campus for one day a week. They therefore wondered if timetabling requirements would impact negatively on the availability of staff and resources. They also sought clarity about whether any modules on the apprenticeship programme shared teaching with other programmes.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider stated that recruitment of the 1.0 WTE staff has been approved and is in progress. As a new programme, a business case was submitted for the recruitment of staff to support the delivery of the programme. The business case aligned to proposed learner recruitment numbers. The visitors noted the providers workload allocation model which is a core requirement for all academic team members. The model is reviewed regularly for each team member, and feeds into discussions about team workload levels.

The education provider said they have negotiated with teaching staff when specific modules should run so this works for the teaching team delivering sessions on these modules. If a staff member is not available, the education provider will be able to

draw on alternative staff members who specialise in this area. For example, the education provider has three linguists who can support the module Linguistic Description of Human Communication, as well as registered speech and language therapy staff. The education provider informed us other speech and language therapy programmes run modules on the same set day each week. Therefore, as a team they have existing long-standing experience of managing this.

The education provider stated there will not be any shared modules with other learners on other programmes as the apprenticeship delivery pattern is structured differently due to the nature of the work-based learning element of the programme. Following the review of the clarification, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 5 – access to physical resources

Area for further exploration: The education provider said they have multiple forms of physical resources (such as a speech and language clinic; telehealth suite; and library services). The visitors noted the education provider has considered that learners will need to access resources during the one day a week they are on campus. Due to the increased numbers of learners studying speech and language therapy, and timetabling requirements of the apprenticeship learners, the visitors were unsure how the physical resources will be accessible to learners when they are on campus. They considered this particularly relates to the skills suite and simulation spaces as these resources are being used by several programmes of study.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider outlined their timetabling team are used to managing the needs of a wide range of programmes and work with the programme team to support their requirements. The education provider has very recently expanded the resources it has. Further simulation and telehealth suites have been built to meet the demand of new and expanding programmes. A simulation lead for the School of Health Sciences, which incorporates all allied health professions provision, has been appointed and is working with programme teams to develop the way simulation is delivered. Following the review of the clarification, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 6 – how learning outcomes ensure the speech and language therapy standards of proficiency (SOPs) are met

Area for further exploration: The visitors initially identified a small number of the module descriptors were missing from the submission. Following the submission of these, the visitors noted they did not receive a list of the modules undertaken in each year, so were unsure whether they have received the most up-to-date, module descriptors across the programme.

The visitors raised queries about the following specific documentation:

- The Course specification was dated December 2021. The visitors wondered whether this was the most up-to-date version.
- In addition, they noted Acquired Conditions and Their Impact was listed as a Level 4 and 5 module and were unclear in which year this would be delivered.
- The Linguistic Description of Human Communication module descriptor. Learning outcomes 1 and 2 included being able to 'identify and describe' analytical skills. The visitors sought information how learners will carry out analysis to meet these learning outcomes.
- Intervention for Developmental Conditions module descriptor. The visitors understood this built on the knowledge and skills acquired in the Assessment of Developmental Conditions module in Level 5. However, they were unable to confirm this as they did not receive a copy of this module descriptor.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email documentary response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a request for additional documentation and clarity.

Outcomes of exploration: From the additional documentation, the visitors recognised the education provider supplied final versions of all module specifications. These demonstrated the learning outcomes and therefore how the standards of proficiency could be met. The education provider outlined the date of the course specification relates to the date the template was generated by the provider, and not when it was completed by the programme team.

The provider confirmed Acquired Conditions and Their Impact module is taught at level five. The course specification was updated and included as further evidence.

The education provider clarified the learning outcomes for the Linguistic Description of Human Communication module. For learning outcome 1, learners will be expected to show an understanding of basic concepts in phonetics and phonology, such as the sounds of the International Phonetic Alphabet and sociolinguistic variation. They will need to recognise analytical approaches to these concepts rather than focusing on carrying out the analysis themselves. For learning outcome two, learners will be taught to recognise techniques to enable them to carry out analysis of linguistics. For example, basic concepts in grammar and semantics. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 7 – how the curriculum remains relevant to current practice

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the programme is reviewed annually to ensure content remains current. They sought more information about how the annual review process makes sure the programme reflects current practice. They were also unclear whether there any engagement with employers, practice partners, and alumni to ensure the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered

this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider outlined how all staff are required to develop throughout their careers to be able to practise safely and effectively and how this transfers to their teaching. In annual individual performance reviews, staff members identify their development needs. Lecturers review their content on an annual basis and, where necessary, update materials through their own research or with clinicians. Staff embed current examples from practice to illustrate their teaching where possible.

Each programme in the school holds a joint quality day at the end of each academic year where staff, learners and practice educators meet to review and discuss the programme and identify how it can develop. The education provider's course monitoring and enhancement process ensures schools within the faculty critically review and reflect on the delivery of programmes to ensure the standards of the awards and the academic quality of the programmes are maintained and the learner experience is continuously enhanced. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 8 – adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the audit process ensures practice-based learning staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. However, they were unable to determine what the education provider considers to be an adequate number. We do not state how many staff must be present at practice-based learning or how exactly they must be involved. However, the education provider must be able to justify what they consider to be a suitable number of staff for the number of learners and the level of support specific learners need. The visitors therefore required more information to understand why the education provider considers there to be an adequate number of staff.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider said an adequate number of qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning would equate to all learners having a placement secured for them at relevant points of the programme. The programme team and employers have close links with placement coordinators as well as professional managers. These links, along with other networks such as the allied health profession faculties, will be used to find new placements for learners. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 9 – practice educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience

Area for further exploration: The education provider stated placement educators are expected to regularly undertake placement educator training to develop and refresh skills. Additional continuous professional development and networking opportunities are also provided. The visitors noted all placement educators must be qualified speech and language therapists registered with HCPC. However, the visitors were unclear about what knowledge, skills and experience the education provider expects practice educators to have, and how this is checked and audited.

In the SETs mapping document, the visitors noted all practice educators had to be speech and language therapists. In the module descriptor for Consolidating Management Skills in Clinical Practice, they noted the first part of the module, provides learners with an opportunity to engage in a role emerging placement. They therefore sought clarity whether the requirement that practice educators are speech and language therapists still applied, or, whether alternate requirements in areas where registrants were less available.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider stated they are following the key recommendations within the professional body practice-based learning guidance are placement educators are qualified speech and language therapists and have achieved their newly qualified practitioner goals framework.

The education provider outlined how they deliver practice educator training to those who have learners on placement. In addition, the team run monthly BiteSize sessions. These are on-line drop-in sessions for practice educators. The goal is to provide continuous professional development to practice educators within new and innovative areas relating to placement education to ensure they have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Through additional clarification, the education provider outlined how learners in role-emerging placement could be supported by individuals who were not speech and language therapists. However, their competences would be assessed by a registrant to ensure practice educators signing off competences had the appropriate knowledge, skills and experience. Following the review of the additional documentation, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issues raised.

Quality theme 10 – maximum period of study to complete the programme

Area for further exploration: The visitors noted the assessment regulations for the degree apprenticeship were clear and enabled progression through the programme. However, they were unsure whether there was a maximum period of study for learners. They sought further information about this to ensure that successful graduates from the programme would be able to meet the relevant standards of proficiency while their knowledge and experience remained current.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this area by requesting an email response from the education provider. We considered this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider confirmed the maximum period of study is seven years, in line with the education provider wide academic regulations. Based on this point of clarification, the visitors considered the quality activity adequately addressed the issue 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** –
 - Selection and entry criteria are set at an appropriate level for a degree apprenticeship programme having been agreed with a range of stakeholders. These policies include occupational health clearance, vaccination requirements, enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service checks. These are made clear to potential applicants on the website, and via an Open day.
 - Through the quality activity, the provider clarified the portfolio application route applicable to applicants who are already in employment in the NHS or private sector.

- The visitors identified sufficient evidence to determine that selection and entry criteria would allow learners to be able to meet the standards for proficiency upon successful completion of the programme.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards in this area were met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership –**
 - Through the quality activity, regular collaboration between the institution and practice-based learning providers was demonstrated.
 - In addition, the professional body facilitate a National Placement Educator's (NPE) forum which the placement team attend. This allows the sharing of best practice and discussion of current issues.
 - As a degree apprenticeship programme, learners will be employees. An employer working group has been established to support the development and implementation of the programme.
 - There was evidence of appropriately qualified and experienced teaching staff, including Casual workers (deliver sessions on a sessional basis) and Visiting teachers (contracted for a set number of hours per year).
 - Through the quality activity, the provider demonstrated they had an adequate number of staff with the right mix of knowledge, experience and capacity to develop and deliver the programme effectively, to successfully deliver the programme.
 - The programme demonstrated the wide range of learning and teaching activities which would be utilised within the academic and practice environment. Through the quality activity the provider demonstrated how learners on campus one day a week will have access to physical resources to support their learning.
 - The visitors therefore considered the standards in this area were met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**
 - Through the quality activities, the institution demonstrated how successful graduates meet the standards of proficiency for speech and language therapists.
 - The programme ensures learners understand the expectations and responsibilities of being a registered professional via a Professional Practice stream running throughout the programme and in practice-based learning.
 - The structure and delivery of the programme reflects the core philosophy and associated core values, skills and knowledge base as outlined by the professional body.
 - Through the quality activity, the provider demonstrated how the programme reviews the content on a yearly basis to ensure currency of content.
 - The design of the programme allows class-based teaching to be run in parallel with practice-based learning and work-based learning.
 - There was evidence the range of learning and teaching methods are appropriate to the design and delivery of the programme.
 - All years of the programme include Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) modules. Autonomous and reflective thinking are also embedded

through the curriculum with a greater level autonomy developing as the learner progresses.

- The visitors identified sufficient evidence that demonstrated the design and delivery of the programme allows learners, who successfully complete the programme, to meet the relevant standards of proficiency.
- The visitors therefore considered the standards in this area were met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**
 - The visitors were satisfied that practice-based learning is a central part of the programme and there are effective systems and processes in place to support its delivery.
 - Through the quality activity, the visitors received clarification about the definitions of practice-based learning and how this was different from work-based learning.
 - The structure and duration of practice-based learning, as well as the types of placements, demonstrate learners are able to achieve the learning outcomes and the standards of proficiency for speech and language therapists.
 - Through the quality activity, the visitors were satisfied how the education provider ensures an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff in place at the placement sites.
 - Through quality activities, the visitors were satisfied how learners will be supported / supervised / assessed in emerging placements by appropriately qualified individuals.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards in this area were met.

- **SET 6: Assessment –**
 - Through the quality activity the provider confirmed the maximum length of time a learner can take to complete the programme in.
 - The assessment strategy is designed to help learners demonstrate they have gained the necessary skills and knowledge to be eligible, on completion of the programme, to apply to the Register.
 - The expectations and assessment of professional behaviours, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics, are embedded through the programme and reflected upon through the clinical evidence portfolio.
 - A range of assessment tools are utilised through the programme, which reflect the development of the learner's skills and knowledge as they progress to ensure they meet the standards of proficiency.
 - The visitors therefore considered the relevant standards in this area were met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Areas of good and best practice identified through this review: The availability of drop-in monthly 'BiteSize' sessions provided practice educators with opportunities to gain relevant and current knowledge and share best practice. As these were on-line activities, it was easier for practice educators to fit these voluntary and short

meetings into their monthly calendar. The visitors considered this was an area of good practice that others could learn from.

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 the programmes should be approved subject to the conditions being met.

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 programmes should be approved

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The programmes are approved

Reason for this decision: The Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the provider and its programmes should receive continued approval.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Note – this list is valid as of 14 November 2022. It does not contain those programmes who are going to the education and training committee meeting of 30 November 2022 for approval.

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
MSc Dietetics (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			01/01/2018
BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/08/2016
BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice (South West) Degree Apprenticeship	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/03/2021
BSc (Hons) Operating Department Practice Degree Apprenticeship	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/03/2021
BSc Hons Operating Department Practice (South West)	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/01/2020
DipHE Operating Department Practice	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/09/2001
DipHE Operating Department Practice (South West)	FT (Full time)	Operating department practitioner			01/01/2018
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2014
Dip HE Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2012
MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/01/2018
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/1993

BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography	PT (Part time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer	01/09/1993	
BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer	01/01/2003	
BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy	PT (Part time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer	01/09/2003	
BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist		01/09/2001	
BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy	PT (Part time)	Speech and language therapist		01/09/2001	
MSc Speech and Language Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Speech and language therapist		01/01/2020	
Non-medical Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals	FT (Full time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/09/2007
Non-medical Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/09/2007
Non-Medical Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Undergraduate)	FT (Full time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014
Non-Medical Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Undergraduate)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014
Non-Medical Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Undergraduate) (Conversion)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014
Principles of Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Post Graduate)	FT (Full time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014

Principles of Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Post Graduate)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014
Principles of Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals (Post Graduate) (Conversion)	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/02/2014
Principles of Prescribing for Health Care Professionals	FT (Full time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/10/2010
Principles of Prescribing for Health Care Professionals	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/10/2010