

## HCPC approval process report

Education provider	The University of Bolton
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, Full time MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration), Full time
Approval visit date	25-26 September 2019
Case reference	CAS-14792-R7R0R0

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### Executive Summary

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

The following is a report on the 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.

## 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:

Roseann Connolly	Lay
Anthony Power	Physiotherapist
Helen Best	Radiographer - Diagnostic radiographer
Ismini Tsikaderi	HCPC executive

### Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Gill Waugh	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	University of Bolton
Angela Nuttall	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	University of Bolton
Joe Gazdula	Internal Panel Member	University of Bolton
Susan Rabbitt	Internal Advisor	University of Bolton

Jackie Hollowell	External Panel Member	University of Nottingham
Meksha Burrun	Student Panel Member	University of Bolton
Nina Patterson	Representative of CSP	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists
Angela Glynn	Representative of CSP	Chartered Society of Physiotherapists

## Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Physiotherapist
First intake	01 September 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02103

Programme name	MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Physiotherapist
First intake	01 January 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02105

We undertook this assessment of two new programmes proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programmes meet our standards for the first time.

We also considered a part time version of the BSc (Hons) programme before and at the approval visit. This programme is not included in this report because the education provider withdrew their request for us to consider this programme following the approval visit.

## 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	The proposed programmes are new, so this documentation has not been produced.

We also usually ask to meet the following groups at approval visits, although there may be some circumstances where meeting certain groups is not needed. In the table below, we have noted which groups we met, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	Yes	We met with learners currently on the BSc Sports and Rehabilitation programme.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes	
Facilities and resources	Yes	
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 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 December 2019.

### **2.3 The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revise their admissions and advertising information to reflect the correct IELTS score required for admission to the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme.

**Reason:** From the documentation the visitors noted that for applicants to the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme, the entry requirement for those whose first language is not English is a "Secure English Language Test at IELTS 6.5 or equivalent". From discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that this information was not correct in the documentation, and that these applicants will need to provide an IELTS test score of 7.0 (with no element below 6.5) or equivalent on entry to the programme. The visitors noted that this IELTS test score was a reasonable requirement for entry to the programme, but require that the programme documentation is updated to reflect the correct IELTS test score required for these applicants.

### **3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.**

**Condition:** The education provider must show definite partnership agreements with employers, ensuring sustainability for both programmes.

**Reason:** In their submission, the education provider provided minutes from consultation with The Highfield Hospital for both the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy and MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programmes. At the visit the education provider shared a 'programme approval form' which confirms the business case for both programmes. During discussions with practice educators at the visit, the visitors understood that there is an established partnership with Bolton NHS Foundation Trust. However, the visitors were not provided with formal agreements with employers, to show that partnership arrangements are in place to ensure employer support, and that therefore the programmes are sustainable. In order to meet this standard, the education provider must show definite partnership agreements with employers ensuring sustainability for both programmes.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate ongoing communication with partner organisations to ensure regular and effective collaboration for both programmes.

**Reason:** In their mapping document, the education provider has provided the agenda of a student employability conference and minutes from the Industrial Advisory Board (IAB) for the School of Sport and Biomedical Sciences. The visitors were unsure of the relevance of this evidence with regards to the purpose of this standard, which is to ensure that education providers work in partnership with those who provide practice-based learning, as a way of making sure that they provide ongoing quality and effectiveness. We also expect this partnership working to influence the way the programme as a whole is designed and delivered. From discussions with practice

educators, the visitors understood that there is an established partnership with the Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, although nothing specific to these programmes. At the visit, the visitors were told that there is willingness from the practice educators to support the education provider relating to the programmes. These practice educators were from the local HHS trust, and a local rehab clinic.

The visitors noted two issues in this area:

- Firstly, the visitors were not provided with information that showed collaboration with the range of employers that would be needed to support this programme. For example, the visitors were not made aware how the education provider would collaborate with employers other than the Highfield Hospital. The visitors noted that some practice based learning would be able to take place at this employer, but that this was one setting in which physiotherapists might work in practice, and that there was limited placement availability considering the number of learners proposed across the programmes.
- Secondly, due to the limited number of placement sites identified, the visitors were unclear how the education provider would be able to place all learners, or how they would ensure an appropriate range of practice experience. This issue is linked to the condition for SET 3.6.

Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine whether there is regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and an appropriate range of practice education providers. The education provider must demonstrate ongoing and effective communication with other partner groups, to ensure regular and effective collaboration for the programmes.

### **3.6 There must be an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the revised learner numbers and demonstrate appropriate availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners on both programmes.

**Reason:** The education provider has provided minutes which mention willingness of The Highfield Hospital to provide practice placements. From discussions with the senior team and the programme team, the visitors understood that the education provider has reduced their intended learner numbers for the MSc programme from 30 to 15. Practice educators noted that they were willing to support their employers (Bolton NHS Foundation Trust, and a local rehab clinic) in providing practice based learning for the programmes. However, the visitors were not provided with evidence, such as signed agreements, to secure the provision of practice-based learning for all learners on the programmes.

Linked to the condition above, the visitors also noted that they were unclear how the education provider had secured practice based learning that would support learners in the range of settings required for safe and effective practice. As part of their considerations in this area, the visitors noted that the practice educators in attendance at the visit were from a limited geographical region, and were unclear whether there would be sufficient placement availability in the region.

Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine whether there is availability and capacity of practice-based learning in an appropriate range of settings. In order to meet

this standard, the education provider must formally clarify the revised learner numbers for both programmes, and demonstrate appropriate capacity of practice-based learning for all learners on the programmes, in the range of settings required by the programmes.

**3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that all learners and educators can access online and other learning resources in practice-based learning.

**Reason:** In the submission, the education provider has provided a list of learning resources. From discussions with the practice educators, the visitors noted the employers have not planned with the education provider how learners and educators will access online and other learning material in practice-based learning for both programmes. Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine how the resources will be accessible to learners and educators in practice-based learning. In relation to this issue, the visitors noted that they were not shown a system that ensures the quality of practice-based learning (linked to the condition for SET 5.3). The visitors would expect that this system would include information to audit this area. In order to meet this standard, the education provider must show arrangements with employers to enable access to online and other learning resources for learners and educators in practice-based learning.

**3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that programme documentation supports learners to understand the HCPC's professional and regulatory requirements.

**Reason:** From their review of the documentation, the visitors noted that there were limited references to the HCPC, and that where there was reference, there was sometimes incorrect information about its role in the landscape of the profession as the statutory regulator. For example:

- For the BSc (hons) programme, the visitors noted that there was limited information about the HCPC in the programme specification, and that the 'programme aims' from the programme handbook focused on outcomes required by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP). Whereas this is not an issue in itself, the visitors considered that it was important that learners understood how the requirements of the regulator fit within the aims of the programme.
- For the MSc programme, the visitors noted that the programme specification document notes that the programme "allows graduates... to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to be eligible to register as a Chartered Physiotherapists with both the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC)". The visitors considered that this might be misleading for learners, because completion of HCPC-approved programmes confers eligibility to apply for admission to the Register, rather than granting an automatic right to be admitted. They also noted that chartered status is given by the professional body, not the HCPC.

Therefore the visitors require that the education provider:

- ensures there are references to the HCPC and its role in the profession and statutory regulation where appropriate; and
- that where there are references, they are clear and correct.

#### **4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for physiotherapists will be delivered by both programmes once the learning outcomes are revised.

**Reason:** The visitors were satisfied that the learning outcomes provided through the initial submission would ensure that learners would meet the SOPs for physiotherapists. However, the visitors understood that the education provider will revise the module descriptors and the learning outcomes for both programmes following scrutiny of the programme by the internal panel and the professional body. The visitors will need to consider the revised modules to ensure that the SOPs for physiotherapists are appropriately contained, to ensure those who complete the programme will meet the standards of proficiency on completion of the programme.

#### **4.2 The learning outcomes must ensure that learners understand and are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics are consistently embedded throughout the learning outcomes for both programmes.

**Reason:** Prior to the visit, the education provider submitted additional documents which included reference to the standards of conduct performance and ethics (SCPEs) in the learning outcomes of modules on both programmes. The visitors also had discussions with the programme team, who mentioned that there will be further changes to integrate the SCPEs throughout modules on both programmes. From this information, the visitors were unable to determine how the education provider will ensure that learners understand and are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the SCPEs. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate how the SCPEs are consistently embedded throughout modules on both programmes.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must show how their approach to interprofessional learning ensures that learners are able to learn with and from professionals and learners in other relevant professions.

**Reason:** In their submission, the education provider has noted that several modules on the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy programme and one module on the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme offer 'integrated shared learning' with other professionals. From the documentation provided and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors understood that the education provider has a policy that covers interprofessional learning which will apply across programmes. The visitors also noted that there was a



suggestion by the programme team that interprofessional learning would take place in the practice setting. However, specifically to these programmes, the visitors were unclear how interprofessional learning would be embedded. The visitors noted that they had limited specific information about how interprofessional learning will be implemented and managed by the programme, and how learners would be assessed in related modules, in relation to the learning outcomes and professional expectations. In relation to interprofessional learning in the practice setting, the visitors noted that they were not clear how this would work in a structured (rather than ad hoc) way, and that practice educators were also not clear about this as they had not discussed interprofessional learning with the education provider. The visitors note that the education provider must demonstrate how the programmes ensure learners will learn with and from professionals and learners in other relevant professions. This learning should have a focus on improved outcomes for service users. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate how their approach to interprofessional learning meets this standard.

#### **4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will gather consent from service users and learners when they participate in the programmes.

**Reason:** In their submission for the MSc programme the education provider provided a consent form from the Service User Policy, and a university-wide Data Protection of Students policy. For the BSc (Hons) programme, the education provider referenced three modules in their mapping. From this evidence provided, the visitors were unsure whether there is a process in place for obtaining consent from service users and learners when they participate in the programmes. The visitors noted that it seemed the education provider has misunderstood the purpose of this standard, which is to respect individuals' rights and reduce the risk of harm, while also making sure learners understand what will be expected of them as health and care professionals. Particularly this means that education providers must:

- Get appropriate consent from service users who interact with learners. This includes service users who contribute to the programme, and for service users where learners are directly involved in providing care, treatment or services (for example, in practice-based learning).
- Get appropriate consent from learners in situations where they take part as service users themselves in practical and clinical teaching (for example in role plays or patient-positioning activities).

In discussions with the programme team, the visitors noted that there is a consent form for Sports Rehabilitation learners, in which they consent to be “research subjects”, but the visitors noted that this did not cover the areas noted above. Therefore, in order to show that this standard is met, the education provider must demonstrate how they will gather consent from service users and learners when they participate in the programmes.

### **5.3 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate that they have a thorough and effective system in place to approve and ensure the quality of practice-based learning for both programmes.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, the education provider provided several documents which the visitors consider did not show a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning. The visitors considered this for the reasons below:

- The practice placement assessment document, used by programmes at Manchester Metropolitan University, is aimed at ensuring learner competence.
- The Faculty of Health Work based learning strategy – linked to the education provider’s website which did not include reference to the proposed physiotherapy programmes
- The Placement Handbook, particularly the section for learners about raising concerns. The visitors noted that this might be helpful in considering the ongoing quality of practice-based learning, but could only form part of the picture about placement quality.
- University Code of practice for Work based learning, which sets out expectations for all parties in placement learning, but does not note how compliance with these expectations will be achieved.

At the visit, the education provider noted that there is a standard practice audit tool used by physiotherapist training providers in the region, but there was no evidence or information provided that showed that the education provider would be able to use this tool. The education provider also had no access to existing audits undertaken by other institutions, so it was unclear how the education provider would be able to use this tool to ensure the quality of practice-based learning.

Therefore, the visitors noted that there is not a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning for these programmes. In order to meet this standard, the education provider must show how their system in place to ensure quality in practice-based learning is thorough and effective.

### **5.4 Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure practice-based learning will take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learner and services users.

**Reason:** To evidence this standard, the education provider provided information about health and safety requirements for learners, raising concerns, and how learners make up time while they are on practice-based learning. During discussion with the programme team, the visitors noted that there will be changes to the approach to practice-based learning on the programmes. From this information, the visitors were unsure how the education provider ensures learner and service user safety in practice-based learning. Particularly, linked to the condition for SET 5.3, the visitors noted that information which ensures practice-based learning takes place in a safe and supportive environment would normally be gathered via a placement audit. Therefore, the visitors

were unable to determine how the education provider will ensure there is an environment safe and supportive for learners and service users in practice-based learning. The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure practice-based learning will take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learner and services users.

#### **5.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning, including clarity about their requirements for HCPC registration status of these staff members.

**Reason:** The education provider was unable to provide further details of staff in practice-based learning as this is linked to their limited evidence of partnership agreements with other employers in practice-based learning. From discussions with the practice educators, the visitors noted there are experienced staff already working in the Bolton NHS Foundation Trust and at the rehab clinic who are willing to support the proposed programmes. However, from the information provided, the visitors were unsure whether these individuals are adequate in number and appropriately qualified and experienced to be involved in practice-based learning. Linked to the condition for SET 5.3, the visitors also noted that information which ensures there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place would normally be gathered via a placement audit. Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff involved in practice-based learning, or how the education provider would ensure this. The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that the number of qualified and experienced staff in practice-based is adequate to support learning for learners on both programmes. The education provider must also clarify their requirements for HCPC registration status of these staff members.

#### **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 demonstrate how they ensure staff in practice-based learning are prepared to support learners prior to them commencing practice placements.

**Reason:** From discussions with the practice educators, the visitors noted that the education provider has shared limited information with them regarding their role on the proposed programmes. The visitors were unsure how the education provider will ensure staff in practice-based learning are prepared to support learners prior to them starting practice based learning. Therefore, the visitors were unable to determine whether practice educators have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning. The education provider must show how they will ensure that staff in practice-based learning are prepared to support learners.

## **6.2 Assessment throughout the programme must ensure that learners demonstrate they are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.**

**Condition:** The education provider must demonstrate how the standards of conduct, performance and ethics are consistently embedded throughout the assessments for both programmes.

**Reason:** Prior to the visit, the education provider submitted additional documents which included reference to the standards of conduct performance and ethics (SCPEs) in the assessments for both programmes. The visitors also had discussions with the programme team who mentioned that there will be further changes to integrate the SCPEs throughout modules on both programmes. From this information, the visitors were unable to determine how the education provider will ensure that learners demonstrate they are able to meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the SCPEs. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate how the SCPEs are consistently embedded throughout the assessments on both programmes.

### **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.

## **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.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should ensure that at least one suitable external examiner for the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme is appointed in due time before the programme starts.

**Reason:** The education provider has provided the external examiners policy and the job description to appoint a suitable individual for this role. The visitors considered the evidence and they note that the standard is met. However, the visitors considered the start date on the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme and they recommend that the education provider should ensure that at least one suitable external examiner is appointed in due time before the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme starts.

## 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 satisfied that the conditions for several of the standards were met. However, they 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.

## **2.3 The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revise their admissions and advertising information to reflect the correct IELTS score required for admission to the MSc Physiotherapy (pre-registration) programme.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** In response to this condition, the education provider provided updated programme and advertising documentation. However, from their review of this documentation, the visitors noted that there were still inconsistencies in the International English Language Test System (IELTS) requirements for the programme. Specifically, the website information notes that applicants whose first language is not English will “need IELTS 7.0 with normally no less than 6.5 in any band (or equivalent)”, but the programme specification notes an “additional [entry] criteria” of “EILTS of above 7 or equivalent qualification”. The visitors noted that the information on the website appeared to be correct, from what they understand of the education provider’s requirement in this area. However, the information in the programme specification was not clear in three ways. Firstly, it is an IELTS (not EILTS) test. Secondly, the requirement is to be “above 7” would suggest a score of 7.5 would be required, and it is not clear that there should be no elements below 6.5 (as is stated on the website). Thirdly, it is not clear that this requirement only applies to those whose first language is not English. Therefore, the visitors consider that this condition is not met at this time.

**Suggested documentation:** The programme specification document for the MSc, updated to show correct information about the English language test score requirements, and who those requirements apply to.

## **3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.**

**Condition:** The education provider must show definite partnership agreements with employers, ensuring sustainability for both programmes.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** In response to this condition, the education provider provided documents showing how they have consulted with several employers in the course of developing the programmes. In these documents, potential employer partners have commented on aspects of the programme, such as “the extent to which the proposed programme is likely to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and expertise”. Particular to this condition, the document asks employers to comment on “whether your organisation would seek to provide work-based learning (placements) for students to undertake, in your workplace, during their studies”. In answering this question, some employers have confirmed that they may be able to place learners. In order to consider that this condition is met, the visitors required that the education provider showed their partnership agreements with employers, which in turn showed that the programmes are supported by employers and are therefore sustainable. The information provided was part of the consultation with employers as part of programme development, but does not show whether or how employers have committed to the programmes since this consultation. Therefore, the visitors considered that condition has not been met at this time.

**Suggested documentation:** Information that shows formal partnerships with employers, including how they will provide practice-based learning, to show that the programmes are sustainable.

### **3.6 There must be an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the revised learner numbers and demonstrate appropriate availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners on both programmes.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** In response to this condition, the education provider several documents. The visitors have reviewed these documents as follows, and have provided comments specific to each document:

- A document showing the placement pattern (and increasing requirements for placements, as the programmes take new cohorts in each year) for both programmes from January 2020 to the end of the 2022-23 academic year. From this, the visitors understood when placements would be required.
- A document titled 'Strategy to increase Placement provision for Physiotherapy students'. Although this was presented as a strategic document, the visitors note that it contains practical steps that the education provider has taken / is taking to secure practice based learning opportunities for learners. Therefore, it is more of a summary narrative of the current position than a strategic document. In relation to its contents, the visitors note that the document does not show that placements have been formally secured, but rather shows that the education provider is taking steps to achieve this goal. This is underlined by statements noting the "potential placements available", and that an employer is "[c]onfident that there would be potential in many areas to increase capacity".
- Bolton FT students matrix – this document appears to give information about numbers of placements available for other education providers in the region, but in it there is no mention of placements for the University of Bolton. The visitors were unclear why this document had been provided, or how it supports that there is capacity for learners on these programmes.
- New clinic map and finance avenues for staff support – this, coupled with information about the University Sports and Spinal Injuries Clinic from the 'Strategy' document suggests that there is investment and plans to expand the operation of this Clinic. However, it is not clear from this document how this will translate to formally agreed specific practice-based learning opportunities for learners.

The visitors noted that the education provider is currently working with an NHS Trust, a private physiotherapy practice, a voluntary sector organisation, and a military rehab centre. The visitors noted that this is a relatively small number of organisations to be working with, and were unclear from the information provided how these organisations would be able to supply the number of placements in the range required. This is not to say that there should be more placement providers, as it may be possible to resource placements with these four organisations. Rather the visitors are noting that the education provider has not shown how these organisations are able to support all learners.

The visitors also noted that the condition required the education provider to clarify the number of learners planned for each programme, but that this information was not

provided through the conditions response. Therefore, the visitors are not clear of the number of learners that will need to be placed.

Taking this evidence and information together, the visitors were clear when placements would be required (from the placement pattern document). However, from their review of the other information and evidence supplied, they were not provided with assurances that placements had been formally arranged and / or agreed with placements sites, or of the number of learners that would need to be placed. This means that they are not satisfied that the education provider has evidenced that they have availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners on both programmes.

**Suggested documentation:** Formal agreements with practice educators which show that all learners on the programme have access to practice-based learning, which is appropriate to their studies.

### **3.12 The resources to support learning in all settings must be effective and appropriate to the delivery of the programme, and must be accessible to all learners and educators.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that programme documentation supports learners to understand the HCPC's professional and regulatory requirements.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** From the evidence provided, the visitors note that the MSc handbook has been updated to meet the condition. However, the BSc handbook does not make the HCPC's role in professional regulation clear (ie an aim of the programme being to allow graduates to apply for HCPC registration and practice as a physiotherapist). Instead the aims of the programme focus on Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) requirements. Whereas including the requirements of the CSP is not an issue in itself, the visitors considered that it is important that learners also understand how the requirements of the regulator fit within the aims of the programme, considering graduates will need to be registered to practice. Therefore, the visitors consider that the condition is not met for the BSc programme at this time.

**Suggested documentation:** An updated BSc programme handbook, which includes information about the HCPC and its role in the profession and statutory regulation, including what this means for learners on completion of the programme.

### **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 demonstrate how they ensure staff in practice-based learning are prepared to support learners prior to them commencing practice placements.

**Reason condition not met at this time:** In response to this condition, the education provider supplied information that shows that all education provider in the region will use the same placement audit tool (which is already being used for other approved programmes in the region). They also supplied minutes from a meeting about the physiotherapy programmes which noted that there are plans for the education provider to share training for practice educators with other education providers in the region. The education provider also supplied information about preparing learners for practice

placements, but the visitors noted that preparedness of learners was not an issue contained in the condition.

The issue in this condition was that the visitors were unclear how placement educators would be prepared for taking learners from the University of Bolton. From the response, there was no information provided that specifically addressed how practice educators would be prepared to take learners from this programme. Particularly, the visitors were not clear how practical information (such as names of learners, and when the placement would start), and information about the learning to be achieved by individuals, would be communicated to specific practice educators before taking learners. Therefore, the visitors consider that the condition is not met at this time.

**Suggested documentation:** Information which shows how practice educators will be prepared for taking specific learners on placement, including how practical arrangements will be communicated, and what learning is to be achieved.

## 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 25 March 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](#).