Approval process report

University of Hertfordshire, dietetics, 2023-24

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve dietetics programme at the University of Hertfordshire. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) are fit to practice.

We have:
- Reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area.
- Reviewed the programme(s) against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programme(s) should be approved
- Decided that all standards are met, and that the programme(s) are approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The areas we explored focused on:
- Ensuring regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers – we noted signed practice partner agreements and an employer engagement strategy, but it was not clear how the education provider ensured regular and effective collaboration. Through employer feedback, staff training, and minutes of meetings, we were able to determine that collaboration was regular and effective.
- Ensuring there is an effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners – we noted a practice training strategy and the programme structure which included practice-based learning. However, it was less clear who the employers were and how suitable practice-based learning will be provided in case of disagreement between a learner and their employer. Through the quality activity, clarification was received on seeking alternative practice-based learning, and through further email clarification, employer commitment was confirmed.
- Ensuring practice educators are appropriately qualified and experienced and have the relevant knowledge and skills to support safe and effective learning – we noted reference to practice-based learning in care settings or other settings where learners were placed outside of their primary employment. Through the quality activity, we received clarity on how the education provider will ensure staff in practice-based learning settings are appropriately qualified and have the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to support learners in practice-based learning.

- The programme(s) meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable as the approval did not arise from a previous process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programme(s) is approved
Next steps	• The provider's next performance review will be in the 2026-27 academic year

Included within this report

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) approval / 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:

Duane Mellor	Lead visitor, Dietitian
Helen Catherine White	Lead visitor, Dietitian
Temilolu Odunaike	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers 15 HCPC-approved programmes across seven professions. It is a Higher Education Institution and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1993. This includes two post-registration programmes for independent prescribing and supplementary prescribing annotations.

The education provider already runs dietetics programmes, alongside other allied health professions programmes most of which sit within the School of Health, Medical and Life Sciences. The new programme will sit within this school. The education provider already delivers degree apprenticeships in several AHP programmes including radiography, occupational therapy and speech and language therapy.

In 2024, the education provider had three programmes approved. These included BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Degree Apprenticeship), BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography (Degree Apprenticeship) and BSc (Hons) Therapeutic Radiography (Degree Apprenticeship). In November 2024, our Education and Training Committee were satisfied that all three programmes demonstrated that our standards were met and were therefore approved. The education provider also engaged with the approval process in 2023 for the MSc Paramedic Science (Pre-registration), full time accelerated programme. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards were met, and the programme was approved by the Education and Training Committee in June 2024.

In the 2021-22 academic year, the education provider engaged with the performance review process for the first time. The outcome of this was that the education provider was performing well across all areas and there were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process. The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process will be in the 2026-27 academic year. We were satisfied with the education provider's reflection, and the Education and Training Committee agreed the programmes remain approved in March 2023.

The education provider also engaged with the approval process in the legacy model of quality assurance in 2021 to introduce their MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration), Full time accelerated, and the MSc Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging (Pre registration), Full time accelerated programmes. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards were met, and the programmes were approved by the Education and Training Committee in August 2021.

The education provider engaged with the major change process in 2021 to introduce the BSc (Hons) Dietetics with a Year Abroad to their existing, approved BSc (Hons) Dietetics programme. The new programme was an opportunity given to learners to undertake a study abroad year between levels 5 and 6 and became available to learners in the 2020-21 academic year. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence that the standards continued to be met, and the Education and Training Committee agreed the programme remains approved in April 2021.

The education provider completed a periodic review of the MA Art Therapy, Full time, and Part time programmes. They engaged with the major change process in 2021 to report the changes. As a result, the part time programme was spread over four years, rather than three. Part-time versions of full-time modules are no longer available, and learning outcomes were amended and reflected in the standards of

proficiency. There were also new module learning outcomes, and changes to delivery and assessment. We were satisfied that there was sufficient evidence that the standards continued to be met, and the Education and Training Committee agreed the programme remains approved in July 2021.

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	Arts therapist	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2002
	Biomedical scientist	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2013
	Dietitian	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2006
	Occupational therapy	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2021
	Paramedic	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2004
	Physiotherapist	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	1993
	Practitioner psychologist	☐Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2000
	Radiographer	☒Undergraduate	☒Postgraduate	2000
	Speech and Language Therapy	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2025
Post-registration	Independent Prescribing / Supplementary prescribing			2006

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	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary

Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	1362	1387	2024/25	The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision.

The education provider is recruiting learners to their programmes as expected. |
| Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing | 3% | 15% | 2020-21 | This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is significantly above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 9%.

This was flagged to visitors to consider in their review. However, as we are running a concurrent focused review to consider significant changes in performance data, we will consider this change through that focused review. |

Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	92%	89%	2021-22	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects. The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 4% We did not explore this data point through this assessment because it is currently being considered via the focused review process.
Learner positivity score	79.2%	86.2%	2024	This National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 3%.
HCPC performance review cycle length	N/A	5 years	2021/22	The education provider engaged with the performance review process in 2021-22 academic year. The outcome of this was that they were performing well across all areas and as such they received the maximum review period of five years.

				Their next review is in 2026/27 academic year.

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.

<u>Admissions</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Information for applicants** –
  - o The education provider noted that information regarding the programme will be made available on their website. This will include a copy of the Programme Specification and Course Factsheet documents. Details of the teaching, learning and assessment methods will be published in these documents.
  - o As the programme is a degree apprenticeship, information will also be available to applicants through employers, webinars and engagement events.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this because the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** –
  - o The education provider noted that English language competency will be assessed through the attainment of relevant qualifications, for example GCSE English. Applicants will be required to provide evidence of Level 2 English and Maths before they can be offered a place on the programme.
  - o Applicants will be required to have a current Disclosure Barring service (DBS) check and an Occupational Health check. As this is a degree apprenticeship, the employer will be responsible for these.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the institution functions.
  - o We think this because the education provider has noted there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** –

- o The education provider noted they have an established process to assess Recognition of Prior Learning through their Flexible Credit Framework which provides advice in relation to application and assessment for AP(E)L. They noted this process is detailed in their Apprenticeship Policy and is delivered via their Apprenticeship management System, Aptem.
  - o As part the onboarding processes, all applicants to the programme will have an initial needs assessment prior to the start of the programme to assess their prior learning. This will help to ensure that all learning on the programme is new learning.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this because the education provider has noted that there are no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
  - o There is equality, diversity and inclusion information available on the education provider's website. The information demonstrates the education provider's aim to ensure that the admission and recruitment process ensures that no one receives less favourable treatment because of characteristics protected by UK legislation.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the institution runs.
  - o We think this because the education provider has informed us there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

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 Register[1]** –
  - o The education provider's internal validation process helps to ensure all aspects of the programme including aims, learning outcome and programme specification; curriculum design, currency of content and organisation; learner guidance and learner support etc have been considered.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Sustainability of provision** –
  - o The education provider noted they have a Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) process that supports the quality assurance of their taught programmes and enhances the learner experience through

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[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

incremental and focused improvement. The CEP supports programme teams in:

- maintaining academic standards;
- improving the quality of learning opportunities;
- enhancing the learner learning experience by an ongoing, evidence informed monitoring process; and
- allowing school and education provider oversight to identify and develop strategic improvement initiatives.

  o As part of ensuring the sustainability of provision, all programmes offered by the education provider and their collaborative partners undergo a process of periodic review every six years. Through this process, re-development and re-approval of the programme is done.
  o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

- **Effective programme delivery** –
  o All of the above as noted under Sustainability of provision also help to ensure effective programme delivery.
  o In addition, the education provider has a Student Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG) which is a group of academic data experts that consider all university-level and subject-level learner entry and performance-related data. This also includes data on provision delivered by its collaborative partners.
  o Programme Specifications, and Annual Monitoring and Evaluation Reports consider the management of the programme and support for learner learning; external examiner reports; module and programme outcomes; and learner feedback.
  o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

- **Effective staff management and development** –
  o Human Resources (HR) policies and procedures ensure advice on people management issues is available from a dedicated HR Business Partner. The education provider's appraisal policy ensures new academic staff undergo a 12-month probation period. All staff then take part in an annual appraisal process.
  o The education provider's HR Learning and Organisational Development helps to ensure staff have access to a wide range of professional and personal development. This is done through a staff development process and access to the resources offered by the Learning and Organisational Development team and Centre for Education and Student Success.
  o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.

- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** –
  - o The education provider noted this is not applicable, meaning there are no partnerships relating to the new programmes which are managed at the institution level.
  - o The education provider has structures and processes that support partnerships which are managed at institution level. These include Collaborative Partnerships, Handbook and Apprentices, Partner Approval, Placement Agreement, and National Education & Training Survey.
  - o The education provider noted they have a recognised process for considering and managing collaborative partners both overseas and in the UK. Each collaborative partner has an identified University Link Tutor to provide support and guidance.
  - o There is a legal signed placement agreement in place with each provider that supports learners on placements. Health and Social Care learners engage with the National Education & Training Survey providing feedback on their respective placement experience
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Academic quality** –
  - o Continuous Enhancement Planning, Structure and assessment regulations – undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, Programme Specifications, Student and Applicant Complaints are some of the policies and processes that the education provider uses to ensure academic quality.
  - o Structure and assessment regulations – undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes are developed to give effect to a resolution by the Academic Board that Common Assessment Regulations and a Common Academic Structure should be adopted for all taught programmes, modules and credit-bearing short courses capable of leading to awards at the education provider.
  - o Programme staff are supported day-to-day in all matters of academic quality by an Associate Dean (Education and Student Success). The University Centre for Academic Quality Assurance provides oversight of all academic quality matters.

- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
    - o The Placement Audit Tool, Practice Complaints Policy and Placement Feedback surveys are the policies and procedures that the education provider uses to ensure practice quality.
    - o There is a health placements team that supports the administration of placements. There is a placement agreement in place with all the Trusts and private, independent and voluntary organisations (PIVOs) that provide placements. This agreement outlines both party's responsibilities, including quality of placement and safety.
    - o Monitoring of placement provision is led by the Clinical Lead with oversight from the Associate Dean (Education and Student Success).
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Learner involvement** –
    - o Student Representatives are appointed each year to represent learners' academic interests. They will listen to their peers' feedback on academic issues and work in partnership with academic staff to improve and enhance the programme. The representatives will be members of the Programme Committee, ensuring the learner voice is heard.
    - o Health & Social Care learners use the National Education and Training survey as a mechanism to provide feedback on their practice placements and is managed at National level.
    - o Programme level audit is another mechanism to collect learner feedback on their practice placement experience. Learners can also complete the Student Voice questionnaire for each module to provide their feedback.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Service user and carer involvement** –
    - o The education provider has a Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) strategy. This ensures service users are engaged in the development of programmes (through a series of focus groups) from the outset of the development.
    - o The education provider noted that service user and carer involvement will be embedded through the programmes including appropriate

teaching and learning experiences, assessments and programme monitoring and evaluation.
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

<u>Learners</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Support** –
  - o There is a wide range of support available to learners on these programmes. Some of these include Student wellbeing which supports learners with any emotional, mental health, disability and health related issues which they may experience throughout their time at the education provider.
  - o Other support provided include accommodation support, student safety, medical centre, financial support, carer and parent support, careers and employment service, chaplaincy, and student union.
  - o At programme level, learners will be supported by a Year Tutor, and a named personal tutor.
  - o Academic skills advice is available within the School and at the education provider level provided by the Student Success and Academic Skills team.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
  - o The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) procedure ensures learners declare to their employer, who work in partnership with the education provider to deliver the programme. The declaration would provide information that shows if the learner has acquired a positive record related to any criminal activity which is after their initial DBS enhanced disclosure.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** –
  - o The education provider noted their IPE strategy in the School of Health, Medical and Life Sciences which details the IPE provision and expectations for all programmes leading to professional registration. There is an IPE steering group that ensures adherence to the strategy,

shares good practices, and develops new IPE activities within the school.

- o The education provider also noted that inter-professional learning will be embedded through the programme and opportunities to learn together and about other professions will be a feature of the programme as it is developed.
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
    - o The education provider has an Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy which ensures they are committed to advancing equality of opportunity, embracing and celebrating the diversity of their community, and fostering a cohesive and inclusive culture.
    - o Best practice EDI principles are embedded into teaching and learning activities and learners on the programme will be able to contact the education provider's EDI team.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Objectivity** –
    - o The Assessments and Examinations (undergraduate and taught postgraduate) and conferment is a policy that is set at institution level and applies to all programmes. The policy provides information around the setting, review, submission, marking and moderation of examinations and assessments.
    - o Regulations and Procedures relating to the setting, review, submission, marking and moderation of examinations and assessments ensure learners are "assessed effectively" in accordance with the expectations of the Office for Students Ongoing Condition of Registration B4. This means the learners are assessed in a challenging and appropriately comprehensive way, consistent with the level of study.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Progression and achievement** –

- o The education provider noted that results of assessments will be considered by a Module and Programme Board of Examiners. We understood this process ratifies and confirms academic credit attained, to enable the Exam Board to determine the learner's progress to the next year of study (if appropriate), or an academic award as appropriate.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.
- **Appeals** –
  - o Assessments and Examinations - Regulations for Students (including requests for the review of assessment decisions (Appeals Procedure)) (University - delivered provision) is the policy that ensures learners are made aware of the informal and formal appeals process. This information will also be provided in their Programme Handbook.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there will be no changes to how the new programme meets this area.

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.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:
- Staff - Additional staff are being recruited and will be in place prior to the start of the programme.
- Physical resources - Existing space available to the standard Dietetics programme will be used which includes simulation suites and Dietetics Laboratory.
- The education provider has been successful in an Office for Student bid to develop new Degree Apprenticeship programmes and they have provided additional funding to assist with the development of the new programme.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

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) Dietetics	WBL (Work based learning)	Dietitian	25 learners, 1 cohort	19/05/2025

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.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the Findings section.

Quality theme 1 –regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers

Area for further exploration: In the SETs mapping and Apprenticeship Employer documents, the visitors noted the description of how practice education providers have been engaged with during the development of the programme. We noted:

- o Signed practice partner agreements
- o A practice training strategy
- o Employer engagement strategy that outlines the frequency of meetings

However, it was not clear if this extended beyond existing training. Therefore, the visitors requested further evidence to assure that collaboration is regular and effective. As an example, they requested evidence outlining collaborative meetings

with practice education providers. The visitors considered that evidence from the minutes of such meetings would help them to understand that there is regular and effective collaboration for the programme and how it was informed by employers, particularly as it is a degree apprenticeship programme. The education provider noted they did not yet have employer commitment to supply learners on to the programme, therefore we were unable to determine whether collaboration with them will be regular and effective.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through email response and additional evidence. We considered these the most appropriate way for the education provider to address the issues raised by the visitors.

Outcomes of exploration: As part of their response, the education provider submitted several pieces of stakeholder feedback from employer events held which showed further collaboration with employers and their involvement in shaping the programme. We understood an employer representative, who is also a practice education provider, was part of the development team and played a crucial role in designing the programme.

We also noted that the employer liaison group, chaired by the programme lead, will meet quarterly to support employers, gather feedback, and provide necessary training. Employer representatives, including practice educators, will participate in the Programme Committee to help shape the programme. An employer representative will also join the School Apprenticeship Working Group to share feedback at the School level. Additionally, practice educator meetings will be held to discuss practice-based learning and programme views, support development, and address their needs.

From further email correspondence later in the approval process, the education provider noted the employers and their learner commitment as:
- Bedfordshire Hospitals Foundation Trust – two learners
- Milton Keynes University Hospital – one learner
- East Suffolk and North Essex Foundation Trust – one learner

They also noted they are working with Whittington Health to get another learner on board and continue to have conversations with employers to see if they can get others on board before proposed programme start date in May 2025.

The visitors were satisfied with the response and determined that there is regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and their practice education providers.

Quality theme 2 –effective process in place to ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

Area for further exploration: In their Placement process document and the Practice Placement agreement, there was a description of practice-based learning being identified by employers and the need to have a separate place for practice-based learning to the place of work. The visitors noted:

- o A practice training strategy was in place which identifies the requirement to ensure the capacity of practice-based learning. This was understood to be the responsibility of the employer.
- o The programme structure included practice-based learning opportunities that are outside of the practice-based learning weeks required for the current full-time Dietetics programme – enabling employers/apprentices to utilise practice-based learning weeks not otherwise used. This was understood to be the responsibility of the employer and the education provider.
- o Trusts must source their own practice-based learning although reciprocal arrangements for practice-based learning between Trusts was advocated – supported/facilitated by the education provider. This was understood to be the responsibility of the employer.

However, as the education provider had not confirmed who the committed employers were, we were unclear about those Trusts who will utilise the degree apprenticeship.

In addition, it was less clear what might happen if there was disagreement about suitability of a practice-based learning and how practice-based learning in different workplaces might be supported from an NHS Human Resources (HR) perspective. Therefore, the visitors requested further clarification on the above.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through email response and additional evidence. We considered these the most appropriate way for the education provider to address the issues raised by the visitors.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider submitted a list of Trusts who have been involved in the development of the programme. From further information received later in the process, we were provided with a list of Trusts who have given their commitment to sending learners to the programme.

We understood that due to high engagement during development within the East of England, the first cohort is expected to be mainly from this area. However, the predominantly online nature of the programme allows for Trusts from a wider area to enrol apprentices, especially since there are currently few undergraduate dietetic apprenticeships in England. They noted one Trust from outside the area is already on board.

The education provider explained that if a proposed practice-based learning was deemed potentially unsuitable, the employer and the practice education provider will be approached to discuss the concerns. Practice education providers will be reminded of their responsibilities as outlined in the Practice Placement Agreement, and support will be offered to develop the practice-based learning through training and other ideas. If the practice-based learning remains unsuitable, the employer will

be supported in providing an alternative practice-based learning, either in a different area or through a reciprocal arrangement with another Trust.

We understood apprentices placed at another Trust, due to a lack of availability of suitable practice-based learning at their own Trust, will follow the same HR procedures as any other learner dietitian. This includes having an honorary contract, undergoing induction and mandatory training, and adhering to Trust policies and procedures. Dietetic managers are expected to discuss reciprocal arrangements initially, with HR departments potentially assisting by reaching out to local Trust contacts when seeking an arrangement.

In addition, as noted in [quality theme 1](#), we were also satisfied that there is now a level of employer commitment to send learners to the programme. Following the quality activity the visitors were clear about how the education provider will ensure appropriate alternative practice-based learning is sought if a practice-based learning is deemed unsuitable.

<u>Quality theme 3 –practice educators are appropriately qualified and experienced and have the relevant knowledge and skills to support safe and effective learning</u>

Area for further exploration: In their Practice Placement Agreement and their Practitioner Training, Strategy 2024, clear stipulations and agreements were noted with practice educators. These demonstrated the education provider's responsibility and commitment to ensure staff in practice-based learning are appropriately qualified and experienced. Some of the areas covered within the agreement included:

- o A designated lead (mentor) in practice
- o 39 Trusts/departments identified within the current cluster
- o The education provider had funded an employer liaison tutor

We also noted reference to practice-based learning in care settings or other settings where learners were placed outside of their primary employment. It was not clear who the practice-based learning staff would be in these cases to ensure they are appropriately qualified and experienced to support learners in practice-based learning. With the description that learners will be placed in a different area of work to their daily work, it was unclear how this will be managed to ensure the suitability of practice educators to support and develop learners in a safe and effective way.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this through an email response and additional evidence. We considered these the most appropriate ways for the education provider to address the issues raised by the visitors.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider noted that practice educators for apprentices will receive the same training as those supervising practice-based learning on the full-time dietetics programme, ensuring equitable practice and quality assurance. Apprentice mentors and line managers will also have access to the training provided by the education provider to prepare them for their roles. We understood this training is organised both centrally by the education provider's apprenticeships team and locally by the dietetics team, based on specific needs.

The education provider further explained that practice educators would be separate dietitians from the learner's mentor and/or line manager if the practice-based learning is within the same Trust as their employment. They must be fully trained using the education provider's dietetics team's training packages to ensure a high-quality practice-based learning experience, unaffected by daily work interactions. Supervisors assessing learner dietitians on practice-based learning must be registered dietitians. Practice-based learning will be audited and quality assured in line with existing non-apprenticeship processes, with a focus on the specific area or department hosting the apprenticeship practice-based learning to ensure the quality of the apprentice's experience.

The visitors were satisfied with the education provider's response and determined it had adequately addressed their concerns in this area.

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 and further areas to be followed up.

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 is stipulated within the programme validation document and the programme specification. For example, learners will be required to have GSCE Maths and English

qualifications (minimum grade 4) at commencement of the programme, in line with the apprenticeship standards.

- o In addition to the standard requirements, there are other entry criteria for applicants to this programme. For example, apprentices must be nominated by their employer and have a permanent or fixed-term contract of employment for a minimum of 30 hours per week or more. Fixed term contracts must be long enough for apprentices to successfully complete the apprenticeship.
- o In relation to employer involvement in admissions, the education provider explained that when interviewing candidates for apprentice positions, employers have the option to conduct a joint interview process with them. This helps to ensure the candidate only goes through one interview. This collaborative approach allows both parties to make a joint decision. The education provider noted they have developed interview resources in collaboration with employers, including potential questions, key factors to consider, and the use of situational judgement and stakeholder panels in recruitment. These resources support both the employers' and education provider's interview processes.
- o The education provider further explained that if they conduct interviews separately from employers, they use templates that help to maintain a standardised and employer-informed process. Additionally, the education provider noted they involve service users in their interviews to represent the needs of that stakeholder group in the admissions process, whenever appropriate and possible. This helps to ensure a comprehensive and inclusive approach to candidate selection.
- o The visitors were satisfied that both the academic and professional entry criteria are appropriate to the programme content and will in turn ensure learners can meet the standards of proficiency by the time they complete the programme. The visitors were also satisfied that employers are involved in the admissions process.
- o The visitors therefore determined that standards within this SET area are met

- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
  - o The education provider noted there will be ongoing collaboration between the programme lead, clinical lead, trust links, and employers as practice education providers.
  - o This collaboration will occur through quarterly Employer Liaison group meetings, Programme Committee Meetings, educator training, the admissions process, 12-weekly tripartite progression meetings, annual audits, and practice-based learning site visits. Additionally, there will be unscheduled contact and support as needed. As noted in quality theme 1 above, evidence of stakeholder feedback from employer events further demonstrated effective collaboration between the education provider and their practice-education providers.
  - o We understood practice-based learning will be arranged by employers and they will be supported by the Employer Liaison Tutor/Programme

Leader in discussion. As noted in [quality theme 2](#), further evidence was provided to reassure that suitable alternative practice-based learning will be sourced if required to ensure availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners.

- o There is an appropriate process in place that would ensure adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver an effective programme. The education provider noted 95% of staff, including visiting lecturing staff, have a PGCert teaching qualification.
- o Staff have complementary PhD subjects (65% of staff) or MSc qualifications across nutrition, public health, immunology, microbiology biochemistry, biology, genetics. This means staff have relevant and high-level knowledge and expertise across all key delivery/modules within the programme. In addition, almost all staff having a teaching qualification provides a sound basis for teaching as their PhD areas are wide ranging and applicable to the dietetic modules.
- o Increased staff resource has been considered and agreed (an additional 3.75 work time equivalent (WTE) over three years).
- o There is a clear description of the education provider's educators, specialist areas and expertise. This is evidenced by the information from staff Curriculum Vitae (CVs) indicating qualifications and professional membership and expertise in their assigned modules. There are also visiting lecturing staff from practice with relevant clinical expertise.
- o A range of resources are evident for resourcing staff, learning, health, study skills evidenced by:
    - Securement of funding to develop the apprenticeship structures.
    - Dietetics laboratory, simulation rooms and the learning resources centre. Other dietetic resources include Anthropometry and virtual consultation lab, dedicated diet lab with extensive kitchen equipment, anthropometry equipment, and a computer lab. These will all be available to the learners when they are on campus. Learners will also have full access to library services with extensive online resources.
    - A range of online resources including APTEM - an online apprenticeship platform where learners log their off the job learning, progress review meetings etc. Learners will also have access to Studynet – the education provider's learning environment, where learners are able to access all resources that are used for teaching, work with others in discussion boards, submit assignments and access other resources such as recordings and set activities.
    - Information Databases and Journal Collections, research and study skills support.
    - Microsoft Teams will be used for online classrooms and where possible, other technology such as 'inspera' to secure computers for online tests and pebble pad for practice-based learning portfolios will be used.

- o The visitors were satisfied with the evidence submitted including the response to quality activity. They therefore determined that the standards within this SET area are met.
- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The programme content has been mapped to the HCPC SOPs, HCPC standards of conduct performance and ethics (SCPEs), KSBs within the apprenticeship standards, and the British Dietetics Association (BDA) standards. It is also based on the education provider's experience of delivering non-apprenticeship programme in dietetics.
  - o We noted integration of professional behaviour expectations from the first module transition into the degree apprenticeship and across the programme.
  - o We also noted the mapping of KSBs within the apprenticeship to the SOPs. There is a comprehensive list of professional standards and legal requirements listed with approaches to cover material and log them.
  - o The apprenticeship degree aligns with the BDA curriculum and is clearly mapped. The education provider noted the programme's rationale, philosophy, and aims were developed with input from learning and teaching specialists to ensure the curriculum is appropriate and effective.
  - o To ensure the curriculum remains relevant to current practice, we noted the programme has been co-designed with employers. It contains modules such as contemporary nutrition. The apprenticeship has been structured to have employer meetings three times yearly and includes the agreement that employers will contribute to programme review and design.
  - o Theory and practice are integrated clearly throughout the programme through the structure of the apprenticeship itself (80/20) off and on the job learning, programme structure integrating practice-based learning and academic blocks, and the use of simulation.
  - o We noted appropriate learning and teaching methods:
    - Integrate on/off the job learning, online academic module delivery, simulation, and practice-based learning.
    - have been co-designed with practice partners to address learning outcomes in a practical way.
    - Include a range of assessments that directly address the KSBs.
  - o The programme supports and develops autonomous and reflective thinking. This is evidenced through the inclusion of self-appraisal with planning and writing action plans, workshops, practice simulation and debriefing, reflective diaries, and personal-development plans. The programme scaffolds learning, starting with the integration of the learner into apprenticeship learning and developing their skills as they progress through the programme.
  - o Modules are scaffolded to develop University Graduate Attribute Evidenced based and Ethical i.e research strands from level 5 to level

6, clinical strands from levels 4 - 6, the structure of practice-based learning, culminating in a leadership practice-based learning.
- o The visitors were satisfied that all standards within this SET area are met.
- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o Practice-based learning is clearly integrated within all three years of the programme and highlighted within the Dietetic Degree Apprenticeship handbook.
  - o The education provider noted learners must complete a minimum of 1000 hours of practice to be eligible for the final award. The visitors identified four practice-based learning including a third sector and a leadership practice-based learning. These include:
    - ▪ Level 4: Care setting (3 weeks)
    - ▪ Level 5: 10 week practice-based learning (with simulation included prior to practice-based learning)
    - ▪ Level 6: two practice-based learning;
      - • 12 week clinical practice-based learning
      - • further 2 week leadership practice-based learning
  - o The range of practice-based learning, including third sector, clinical and leadership practice-based learning provides learners with a holistic learning experience that complements their own workplace. Therefore, we determined that the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning will support the achievement of learning outcomes.
  - o As outlined in quality theme 3, we understood how the education provider ensures staff at practice-based learning are adequate and appropriately qualified and experienced. It is also clear how the education provider ensures practice educators have the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to support learners in practice-based learning. For example, we received further clarity on how staff in care settings will be trained on apprenticeships and how the long arm supervision will work.
  - o The visitors were satisfied that practice-based learning is integral to the programme and that staffing is appropriate to ensure learners are well supported in practice-based learning. The visitors therefore determined that standards within this SET area are met.
- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - o As evidenced in the programme documentation the assessment strategy is varied and incorporates viva, presentation, Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), exam, written essay and other types of assessment.
  - o The education provider noted that the programme learning outcomes encompass professional behaviours and values and the assessment learning outcomes are such that would ensure learners are able to meet the requirements for professional practice.
  - o The visitors noted a comprehensive assessment within the Assessment Landscape and Assessment Strategy documents. We

also noted some Apprenticeship KSBs that resided with the employer. From seeking further clarification, we noted the KSBs had been appropriately mapped to the modules and now completely assessed within the education provider. This followed the validation event where there were changes made to address concerns regarding standardisation of KSBs in the practice setting

- o The visitors were satisfied that the assessment criteria and the methods used will ensure clinical skills are assessed fairly and consistently in practice-based learning to ensure all learning outcomes are met.
- o Therefore, the visitors were able to determine that the standards within this SET area are met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Section 5: Referrals

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

Recommendations

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

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that all standards are met, and therefore the 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 visitors' recommendation that the programme should receive approval.

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Quality of provision	Facilities provided
University of Hertfordshire	CAS-01514-Q6M5C6	Duane Mellor Helen Catherine White	• Through this assessment, we have noted: • The areas we explored focused on: • Ensuring regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers – we noted signed practice partner agreements and an employer engagement strategy, but it was not clear how the education provider ensured regular and effective collaboration. Through employer feedback, staff training, and minutes of meetings, we were able to determine that collaboration was regular and effective. • Ensuring there is an effective process in place to	• Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities: • Staff - Additional staff are being recruited and will be in place prior to the start of the programme. • Physical resources - Existing space available to the standard Dietetics programme will be used which includes simulation suites and Dietetics Laboratory. • The education provider has been successful in an Office for Student bid to develop new Degree Apprenticeship programmes, and they have provided additional funding to assist with the

			ensure the availability and capacity of practice-based learning for all learners – we noted a practice training strategy and the programme structure which included practice-based learning. However, it was less clear who the employers were and how suitable practice-based learning will be provided in case of disagreement between a learner and their employer. Through the quality activity, clarification was received on seeking alternative practice-based learning, and through further email clarification, employer commitment was confirmed. • Ensuring practice educators are appropriately qualified and experienced and have the relevant knowledge and skills to support safe and effective learning – we noted reference to practice-based learning in care settings or other settings where learners were placed	development of the new programme. • Additional resources include dietetics laboratory, simulation rooms and the learning resources centre. Other dietetic resources include Anthropometry and virtual consultation lab, dedicated diet lab with extensive kitchen equipment, anthropometry equipment, and a computer lab. • These will all be available to the learners when they are on campus. Learners will also have full access to library services with extensive online resources. • A range of online resources including APTEM - an online apprenticeship platform where learners log their off the job learning, progress review meetings etc. Learners will also have access to Studynet – the education provider's learning environment, where learners are able to access all resources that

| | | | | outside of their primary employment. Through the quality activity, we received clarity on how the education provider will ensure staff in practice-based learning settings are appropriately qualified and have the relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to support learners in practice-based learning.
• The programme(s) meets all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved. | are used for teaching, work with others in discussion boards, submit assignments and access other resources such as recordings and set activities.
• Information Databases and Journal Collections, research and study skills support.
• Microsoft Teams will be used for online classrooms and where possible, other technology such as 'inspera' to secure computers for online tests and pebble pad for practice-based learning portfolios will be used. |

Programmes		
Programme name	**Mode of study**	**Nature of provision**
BSc (Hons) Dietetics	Work based learning	• Apprenticeship

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
MA Art Therapy	FT (Full time)	Arts therapist	Art therapy		01/09/2002
MA Art Therapy	PT (Part time)	Arts therapist	Art therapy		01/09/2002
BSc (Hons) Dietetics	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			01/09/2006
BSc (Hons) Dietetics with a Year Abroad	FT (Full time)	Dietitian			01/09/2021
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy (Degree Apprenticeship)	WBL (Work based learning)	Occupational therapist			01/01/2021
BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science	FT (Full time)	Paramedic			01/09/2004
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/1993
MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Physiotherapist			01/01/2022
Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Clinical psychologist		01/01/2000
BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/09/2000
MSc Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging (Pre-registration)	FTA (Full time accelerated)	Radiographer	Diagnostic radiographer		01/01/2022
BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology	FT (Full time)	Radiographer	Therapeutic radiographer		01/09/2000
BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy (Degree Apprenticeship)	FT (Full time)	Speech and Language Therapist			20/01/2025
Practice Certificate in Supplementary Prescribing for Diagnostic Radiographers and Dietitians	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing	01/01/2017

Practice Certificate in Independent Prescribing for Allied Health Professionals	PT (Part time)			Supplementary prescribing; Independent prescribing	01/09/2018