
Performance review process report

The SMAE Institute, 2018 - 2021

Executive summary

Visitors have completed their review and have explored several themes through quality activities and are recommending a monitoring period of two years.

Through the reflection provided, the education provider demonstrated how unique their provision was and how there was no reliance on other external partners. One of the main features of their provision is that all teaching and practice-based learning is delivered in-house. In addition to this, they have small cohorts, which is in line with the learner numbers they have been approved for by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). The education provider has benefitted from small cohorts in various areas, such as practice-based learning and teaching and have had adequate resources to deliver the programmes during this review period.

This report has been considered by our Education and Training Panel who have agreed the final decision on the review period.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. The education provider is engaging with the performance review process for the first time.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: <ul style="list-style-type: none">when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be.
Next steps	Subject to the Panel's decision, the provider's next performance review will be in the 2023-24 academic year.

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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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

This is a report on the performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) ongoing approval.

Our standards

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Our regulatory approach

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

The performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

Thematic areas reviewed

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

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 a review of this education provider:

Jason Comber	Lead visitor, Paramedic
Rosie Furner	Lead visitor, Independent Prescribing
Ann Johnson	Service User Expert Advisor
Niall Gooch / Saranjit Binning	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers three HCPC-approved programmes across three professions. It is a specialist non- higher education institution (HEI) provider, delivering only podiatry and related programmes and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2012.

Although The SMAE Institute is a non-higher education institution (HEI), the way they deliver their programmes is not significantly different from HEI approaches.

The key distinctive approach is that they have their own podiatry clinics, seeing 14,000 patients every year, meaning that they are not dependent on outside partners to provide practice-based learning. The opportunities offered in these clinics are supplemented by other placement opportunities.

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	Chiropodist / podiatrist	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2021
Post-registration	Prescription Only Medicine – Administration			2012
	Prescription Only Medicine – Sale / Supply			2013

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.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	60	60	2022	The number of learners is the same as the benchmark. This is the number of learners the education provider was approved for and indicates the programmes are sufficiently resourced to support the learner numbers. Visitors were satisfied with

				the information and reflection provided in the portfolio by the education provider in relation to this data point.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	Null	2019-20	This data point is from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The value for this data point is not available. The education provider has provided a narrative in relation to this in the portfolio. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	Null	2018-19	This data point is from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The value for this data point is not available. The education provider has provided a narrative in relation to this in the portfolio. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	N/A	2022	This data point is from the Office for Students (OfS). The value for this data point is not available. The education provider has provided a narrative in relation to this in the portfolio. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	Null	Null	2022	This data point is from the Office for Students (OfS). The value for this data point is not available. The education provider has provided a narrative in relation to this in the portfolio. Visitors were satisfied with the information and reflection provided.

Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. 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 was performing well against our standards.

Quality theme 1 – External examiner recommendation to respond to changes in professional body guidance

Area for further exploration: Visitors noted the comments the external examiner made in relation to professional body guidance changes in the External Examiner report LA 2020-21 'Given these developments, the changes to the assessment components of the diploma in local anaesthesia have been understandably delayed, however, I have been assured the team will give some time to reviewing this and making changes they deem necessary to improve the quality of programme assessment.' Based on these comments, further information was requested on how this area will be developed and maintained to keep up to date with professional body changes.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We agreed to explore this area further by requesting email clarification from the education provider. The visitors considered the email clarification would be the most effective method for the education provider to respond to the queries they had.

Outcomes of exploration: The education provider stated these were recommendations made by the external examiner. During this review period the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme was in the process of being developed and a decision was made not to make the changes to the POM-A and POM-S programmes and to apply them to the degree.

They confirmed the programmes are regularly reviewed to ensure they are current and are being delivered in line with the professional body guidance from the British Chiropody and Podiatry Association (BCPA).

Section 4: Summary of findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Overall findings on performance

Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
 - The education provider recognises the challenges with low learner numbers on the Diploma in Local Anaesthesia for Podiatry Practice (POM-A) and Diploma in Prescription Only Medicines for Podiatric Practice (POM-S) programmes. Due to the low numbers, the income generated from the programmes and the contribution to the education providers financial stability is minimal.
 - Despite low numbers the education provider notes how beneficial the programmes are to learners and how they enhance learning and contribute to the learners practice.
 - Visitors noted education was a small part of the education providers organisation and therefore would expect learner numbers to be low while remaining financially secure and ensuring appropriate resourcing.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Partnerships with other organisations –**
 - Due to the nature of the provision the education provider noted how they had not developed any partnerships during the review period and therefore were unable to provide a reflection in this area. This was because the HCPC provision is delivered by The SMAE Institute and does not offer any external placements.
 - The BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme was approved in 2021 and the external placement provision is now starting to develop. Partnerships and processes are therefore developing in this area and the new external placement providers have been quality assured through the completion of the audit forms. It is worth noting there is still a significant amount of training still being delivered in-house. Due to the timeframes of this review, reflection on how this is working is not reflected in this review. Therefore, we recommend this is taken forward in the education providers next performance review submission.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Academic and placement quality –**
 - The education provider has reflected on academic and clinical training quality and have invested in the development of their practice educators to ensure their knowledge is current. Learners have also

been provided with access to patients through the education providers private clinic.

- They stated how there were no significant developments to reflect on, apart from the changes to the health and safety policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes mainly affected the clinical screenings and the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- The external examiner reports support the robustness of the assessments and provide assurance that academic quality is good.
- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Interprofessional education –**

- The education provider acknowledged the challenges with developing interprofessional education and the difficulties with offering this to learners, as there are no other programmes that the teaching can overlap with. The distance-learning format of the provision also creates a barrier for interprofessional education to be developed.
- It was noted, how the education provider uses practice educators from different backgrounds, which provides learners with a 'multi-disciplinary perspective'. In addition to this, programmes are also part delivered by Pharmacists and Advanced Nurse Practitioners. This demonstrates the education providers commitment to provide learners with a varied learning experience. We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Service users and carers –**

- Service users and carers are involved with various elements of the provision. For example, they provide feedback on learner performance, interface with patients used within their case studies and use patient focus groups to obtain feedback. The education provider has acknowledged there are some challenges with arranging patient focus groups and are considering alternative ways of involving service users and carers.
- The education provider recognises the introduction of the BSc (Hons) Podiatry programme has had a positive impact on service user and carer involvement. The development of this programme has allowed them to involve service users and carers with the interview panels at the admissions stage.
- Service user feedback was provided for the programmes that were being delivered during this review period. Service user and carer input with the designing of the programmes and student learning was however, limited for the POM-A and POM-S programmes, which the education provider recognised. They have reflected on this and have explained how for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme they will be creating a service user review group who will be able to provide input into all aspects of the programme, including the interview panels.
- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Equality and diversity –**
 - There is a commitment from the education provider to ensure all learners are treated equally. The Equality, Diversity and Disability Committee monitor this for the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme to ensure there is no discrimination within the recruitment of staff and progress of learners.
 - Equality impact assessments were also used to identify discrimination across the provision. In situations where discrimination was identified, the education provider addressed this, and the necessary policies and procedures have been applied to ensure it does not happen again.
 - Despite the low numbers, they have noted how they have been able to recruit learners from diverse backgrounds and are confident they will continue to do this in future.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Horizon scanning –**
 - Health Education England have identified Podiatry as a profession is 'at risk' and the education provider recognises this, however they acknowledge this is a problem impacting the whole sector. The work being undertaken by Health Education England to support the profession and overcome the challenges is positive. The education provider reflects on this and notes how the Podiatry degree programme could be a route to 'managing the wider challenges that face the profession'.
 - The development of the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme is a positive development and the education provider envisage learner numbers increasing on this programme. They are expecting a large number of learners who have qualified as foot health professionals to join the programme to enable them to follow a career in Podiatry.
 - There is evidence of the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme not experiencing any issues with recruitment. The education provider has noted how they expect this programme to grow, as the POM-A and POM-S programmes are gradually phased out.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Impact of COVID-19 –**
 - The education provider acknowledges they experienced some challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was partly because their provision was unique as prior to the pandemic they were already offering a distance-based model and there was a blended approach to

teaching. Changes to the way they deliver their programmes were therefore not required.

- The only changes that were required during this period involved the development and use of video conferencing facilities to enable staff to connect with learners and carry out internal meetings.
- Practical training was impacted during the pandemic, however the delay was minor, as the education provider identified policies which enabled learners to continue with their training safely. This demonstrates the impact of COVID-19 on the education provider and the learners was minimal.
- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**

- It is noted the education provider relies on the use of technology due to the distance-based learning model they use and as referenced in the previous section the pandemic did not have a significant impact on this area.
- The key developments in this area have been with video conferencing facilities and the uploading of recordings on Moodle e-learning environment. Both these developments have provided learners with additional support, which they have welcomed.
We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Apprenticeships –**

- The education provider recognises the benefits of apprenticeships, as they provide another route into the profession, which is already experiencing difficulties with recruiting.
- It is noted how some learners have chosen to transfer from an apprenticeship route to the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme. This is mainly because learners considered this programme to be better suited to their requirements.
- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education –**

- The education provider has confirmed the programmes delivered during the review period have not been assessed against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies –**
 - Due to the nature of their provision, the assessment of practice education providers by external bodies does not apply to the education provider.
We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes –**
 - Due to the nature of their provision, the education provider does not engage with the National Student Survey (NSS) and instead, they gather feedback internally.
 - Based on the feedback gathered through the evaluation form there is evidence of learners positively engaging with the programmes and benefitting from live meetings and remote learning.
We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Office for Students monitoring –**
 - The education provider has confirmed they have not engaged with the Office for Students during this review period, as their programmes are post-registration courses.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Curriculum development –**
 - The current programmes delivered by the education provider are up to date and fit for purpose. The education provider recognises the continued need for programmes to reflect changes, however currently no changes are required.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
 - The education provider demonstrated their engagement with the British Chiropractic and Podiatry Association (BCPA) and confirmed the requirements were reflected in the curriculum.
 - They stated there were no changes to professional body guidance and confirmed the programmes were reviewed regularly by both the programme team and external examiners to ensure their 'appropriateness' for the learners to develop their skills.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Capacity of practice-based learning –**
 - The education provider has their own private patient clinic and offer learners practice-based learning via the clinic. The clinic offers up to 14,000 appointments annually and provides learners with varied practice-based learning opportunities.
 - Due to the volume of patients the clinic receives there is no need for the education provider to seek external placements, as the opportunities generated in-house provide all learners on the programmes with sufficient and appropriate practice-based learning.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Learners –**
 - It is noted learner numbers were low and therefore the volume of feedback received was relatively low. The feedback received by the education provider from the small number of learners overall was positive. One issue that was raised, related to the old live tutor chat system, however this was resolved easily as the system had been updated.
 - Visitors noted the positive comments but requested some further clarification on how anonymous feedback was gathered given the small number of learners. The education provider explained how the quality assurance manager collected and collated the feedback for the POM-A and POM-S programmes and the nominated learner representative did this for the degree programme, which ensured anonymity.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

- **Practice placement educators –**
 - Practice placement educators are in-house clinical tutors and are part of the programme team. They are involved with both the teaching and practice elements of the programmes. This in-house model provides them with oversight of all the programmes, which is beneficial for learners. Feedback from them therefore applies, as there is a crossover with the role of practice placement educator and staff.
 - Visitors noted most practice placement educators were in-house and queried how quality was maintained. The education provider explained how there is an ongoing continued professional development programme that all practice placement educators must undertake. In addition to this the external examiners are also responsible for ensuring the ‘appropriateness’ of the provision. In terms of external practice placement educators, they are required to go through a vetting

process and the programme lead and quality assurance manager lead on this.

- We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.
- **External examiners –**
 - The education provider demonstrated good working relationships with the external examiners. There are robust processes in place to ensure external examiners are involved with the teaching and assessment of learners and provide appropriate feedback.
 - The external examiner noted how the Diploma in Local Anaesthesia for Podiatry Practice (POM-A) and Diploma in Prescription Only Medicines for Podiatric Practice (POM-S) programmes provided an element of professional development for the profession, which learners were able to benefit from. They also acknowledged how the content, delivery and assessment were current. The feedback received from the external examiner was positive.
 - We were satisfied with the information provided in this section, which demonstrated the education provider was performing well in this area.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel: The education provider's continuation rate was 84.5%. It is noted that if learners do not continue with the programmes, it is either because they have had to withdraw for personal reasons or due to them not progressing. All learners on the post-registration programmes are HCPC registrants and in employment when they complete the programmes. We noted the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award and the National Student Survey (NSS) do not apply to the education provider, as they are a private education provider delivering post-registration programmes.

They have however, referred to the internal feedback they gathered from learners and reflected on this, which is positive overall. Visitors noted the reflections provided in the portfolio and did not highlight any specific areas, however they were mindful of the fact that the information provided was anecdotal and there was no evidence to support this.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

Outstanding issues for follow up: None.

Section 5: Issues identified for further review

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval or focused review process).

Referrals to next scheduled performance review

Future developments

Partnerships with other organisations - Due to the timeframes of this review, reflection on how partnerships are developing since the BSc (Hons) Podiatry degree programme started was not reflected in this review. It is recommended the development in this area is reflected upon during the providers next performance review.

Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2023-24 academic year.

Reason for this recommendation: Visitors were satisfied with the submission and confirmed the professions and courses regulated by the HCPC were performing to a satisfactory standard. There were no risks identified, however there is an issue that has been mentioned in section 5, which we have asked the education provider to reflect on in the next performance review. Due to the lack of comparable data points available for this provider, the visitors recommend a review period of two years.

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 education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2023-24 academic year

Reason for this decision: The committee agreed with the findings of the visitors during this review and were satisfied with the recommended review period.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Podiatry	DL (Distance learning)	Chiropodist / podiatrist		POM - Administration; POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/08/2021
Diploma in Local Anaesthesia for Podiatry Practice	DL (Distance learning)			POM - Administration	01/09/2012
Diploma In Prescription Only Medicines for Podiatric Practice	PT (Part time)			POM - sale / supply (CH)	01/09/2013