Performance review process report

Abertay University, Review Period 2018 - 2023

Executive summary

This is a report of the process to review the performance of Abertay University. This report captures the process we have undertaken to consider the performance of the institution in delivering HCPC-approved programmes. This enables us to make risk-based decisions about how to engage with this provider in the future, and to consider if there is any impact on our standards being met.

We have:
- Reviewed the institution's portfolio submission against quality themes and found that we needed to undertake further exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Undertaken quality activities to arrive at our judgement on performance, including when the institution should next be reviewed
- Recommended when the institution should next be reviewed
- Decided when the institution should next be reviewed

- Through this assessment, we have noted that quality activity was required. The areas we explored focused on:
    o How the education provider has reflected on and responded to challenges around recruitment and sustainability;
    o How the feedback from placement quality mechanisms is considered and implemented;
    o How interprofessional education has been organised and delivered during the review period;
    o How the education provider has engaged with HCPC standards on service user involvement;
    o How the education provider has integrated the revised standards of proficiency (SOPs).
- The following are areas of best practice:
    o The education provider's use of a Train The Trainer initiative to support healthcare staff involved in teaching and training is to be commended.
- The education provider should next engage with monitoring in three years, the 2026-27 academic year, because:
    o The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were practice educators, learners and the professional body.
    o The education provider engaged with professional bodies. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision.

- o The education provider engaged with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Institute of Biomedical Science.
- o The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way.
- o Data for the education provider is available through key external sources. Regular supply of this data will enable us to actively monitor changes to key performance areas within the review period
- o From data points considered and reflections through the process, the education provider considers data in their quality assurance and enhancement processes.
- o There are some of areas of the portfolio where the visitors consider that an update on the education provider's progress towards essential improvement and development is required, to maintain the HCPC's confidence in the programme. This is reflected in the set review date.

Previous consideration	N / A as this case did not emerge from a prior process
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide 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 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 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:

Pradeep Agrawal	Lead visitor, Biomedical scientist
Beverley Cherie Millar	Lead visitor, Clinical scientist, Clinical Microbiology
Jenny McKibben	Service User Expert Advisor
Niall Gooch	Education Quality Officer
Abigail Kwakye-Fosu	Advisory visitor, Biomedical scientist

We encourage reflections through portfolios to be made at the institution level wherever possible. The performance review process does not always require profession level scrutiny which requires all professionals to be represented in the

assessment panel. Rather, the process considers how the education provider has performed at institution level, linked to the themes defined in section 1. Lead visitors have the option to appoint additional advisory partners where this will benefit the assessment, and / or where they are not able to make judgements based on their own professional knowledge.

In this assessment, we were able to focus on biomedical science as that is the only programme delivered by the education provider.

Section 2: About the education provider

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers one HCPC-approved programmes across one profession. It is a Higher Education provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2012.

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	Biomedical scientist	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2012

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[1].

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date of data point	Commentary
Numbers of learners	15	8	February 2024	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

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[1] An explanation of the data we use, and how we use this data, is available here

| | | | | assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. The value figure was presented by the education provider through this submission.

The education provider is recruiting learners below the benchmark.

We explored this by considering through quality activity how the education provider was planning to ensure that the programme remained sustainable in the medium- to longer term. The education provider gave assurances about the future of their recruitment. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learner non continuation | 3% | N / A | Null 2020-21 | This Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data was sourced from a data delivery.

This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects.

When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 5%.

The learner figures are sufficiently low for the single programme that we cannot generate meaningful data We did explore this general issue by asking the education provider to expand, through quality activity, on their analysis of learners' reasons for leaving the programme. |

Outcomes for those who complete programmes	93%	98%	2021-22	This HESA data was sourced from summary data. This means the data is the provider-level public data. 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 been maintained. We explored this by considering how well the education provider was helping learners understand next career steps.
Learner positivity	77.9%	86.5%	2023	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.

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.

<u>Quality theme 1 – impact of learner recruitment challenges on sustainability of the programme.</u>

Area for further exploration: In the portfolio, the education provider noted that they had experienced some issues with recruitment of learners during the review period. They suggested that these issues were linked to the Scottish funding climate, and difficulties with overseas recruitment following the UK leaving the European Union. They did not reflect in depth on how they had managed and addressed these difficulties. This meant that the visitors could not fully understand performance in this area. There was a risk that the programme would not be sustainable in the longer term.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this area through a virtual meeting with the education provider. This was to facilitate useful and constructive discussion

Outcomes of exploration: During the virtual meeting, the education provider explained the actions they had taken in response to concerns about sustainability of the programme. In particular they were seeking to improve the attractiveness of the programme for learners and to avoid learners leaving the programme. The actions were as follows:
- Pooling resources with other programmes and sharing teaching staff where possible;
- Upgrades to laboratories and significant investment in equipment, amounting to around £500,000;
- Re-organisation of teaching and workload modelling to reduce the staff-student ratio, meaning more attention for individual learners;
- New modules and new programmes rolled out to expand the breadth of professional development for the learners.
- Institution-level plan to improve recruitment.

In light of these actions, the visitors considered that the education provider had clearly reflected on the challenges in programme sustainability, and that performance was overall satisfactory. The issues discussed in this part of the virtual meeting also addressed some concerns that the visitors had around horizon scanning, specifically how the education provider had considered upcoming challenges during the review period. However, they did take into account, when recommending a three-year review period, the fact that there was still some uncertainty about resourcing and sustainability.

<u>Quality theme 2 – Monitoring of placement quality and actions taken in response to feedback</u>

Area for further exploration: In the portfolio the education provider noted that they had worked with Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HCIS) to develop placement quality. However, there was not enough detail of this co-operation for the visitors to understand what exactly had been done, and how they had reflected on placement

quality through this partnership. Additionally, the education provider did not reflect in detail on how they gathered feedback from learners and practice educators.

The visitors were therefore unable to understand how the education provider had reflected on placement quality during the review period. They explored this area through quality activity, in order to make an informed judgement about the education provider's performance.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this area through a virtual meeting with the education provider. This was to facilitate useful and constructive discussion.

Outcomes of exploration: In the virtual meeting the education provider outlined in more detail how they ensured the quality of practice-based learning. They noted their partnership with the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), who themselves draw on relevant frameworks from organisations like HCIS. They noted an occasion on which they worked with the IBMS to place a learner into an appropriate placement.

The education provider also noted that they provide training for practice educators and offer practice educators joint liaison meetings to discuss their input into practice-based learning. Surveys also take place at the mid-point and endpoint of modules to gather the views of practice educators and learners. In response to visitor questions, they also gave examples of when they had dealt with issues around learner suitability for placement swiftly and appropriately.

After the quality activity, the visitors considered that performance in this area was satisfactory, because the education provider had explained in much more detail how they had reflected on academic quality, and used appropriate partners to do so.

Quality theme 3 – Lack of clarity around interprofessional education

Area for further exploration: In the portfolio the education provider stated that they did not have formal opportunities for interprofessional education (IPE) integrated into the curriculum, and used practice placements to deliver IPE. Their intention has been that learners be part of multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) in placement, and to undertake IPE via that involvement. The education provider did not offer any additional reflection on their IPE performance during the review period.

With this lack of reflection, the visitors could not make any kind of judgement about education provider performance.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this area through a virtual meeting with the education provider. This was to facilitate useful and constructive discussion.

Outcomes of exploration: In the virtual meeting the education provider elaborated their approach. They clarified that IPE opportunities were within MDTs and that the learning from these experiences were fed into learner portfolios during the placements. In terms of reflection on their provision during the review period, the education provider noted that they were working to develop their delivery of IPE by expanding their use of MDTs for learners in practice-based learning. They also stated that they had invited graduates from their programmes to deliver IPE teaching

activities, and that they were considering more formal involvement of nursing learners with clinical skills IPE.

The visitors considered that this was evidence of useful reflection. However, they did take into account, when recommending a three-year review period, the fact that IPE was still an area requiring development.

Quality theme 4 – Underdevelopment of service user and carer involvement

Area for further exploration: The education provider stated through the portfolio that they did not have organised and systematic service user involvement. They justified this by reference to the basis of the nature of the biomedical science profession. They did note that they involved some external professionals in workshops and teaching activities, but it was not clear whether this was the result of the education provider's reflection on how service users could best be used for the programme.

The visitors considered that this was a serious issue with programme performance. They were aware of the difficulties faced by biomedical science programmes in identifying and involving appropriate service users. However, they noted too that education providers have had a long period to adapt to the requirement that all HCPC-approved programmes involve service users. Without more elaboration and reflection, the visitors could not determine whether the education provider's performance in this area was appropriate.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this area through a virtual meeting with the education provider. This was to facilitate useful and constructive discussion.

Outcomes of exploration: In the virtual meeting the education provider confirmed the visitors' understanding that they did not involve service users in a systematic way. They did suggest that learners would have contact with some service users through their practice-based learning. They also noted their plans to potentially involve patients at the Ninewells Clinic in programme delivery, through a Liaison Group.

Following this quality activity, the visitors considered that this area was in need of development, and this determination fed into their decision to recommend a three year review period.

Quality theme 5 – Lack of clarity around integration of the revised standards of proficiency (SOPs) into the programme

Area for further exploration: The education provider's reflection on how they had integrated the revised SOPs into their programme was uneven. In several areas it was not clear to the visitors how the education provider had considered the integration of the SOPs, and therefore it was impossible for them to make an informed judgement about performance. If the SOPs had not been integrated into the programme, there was a risk that graduates from the programme would not be fit for safe and effective practice.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We explored this area through a virtual meeting with the education provider. This was to facilitate useful and constructive discussion.

Outcomes of exploration: In the virtual meeting the education provider discussed how they had integrated the revised SOPs into the programme. Most of the revised SOPs were covered. For example, they noted that for 'promoting registrants' mental health', they had introduced life skills training and rolled out a Wellbeing app.

Overall, the visitors considered that there seemed to have been an appropriate and effective process for considering the revised SOPs. However, they did also note that they had seen little specific detail around several particular revised SOPs: 'Digital skills and new technologies'; 'Further centralising the service user' and 'Promoting public health and preventing ill-health'. They therefore recommended that this area be considered again during the next performance review.

Section 4: 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 reflected on the size of their provision and the number of learners. They noted that they had made specific efforts to increase the number of learners on the programme, in line with growing national demand in Scotland, despite challenges such as Brexit and restrictions on their funding. They note through the reflection that they have taken specific actions during the review period to ensure sustainability, including investment in additional staff with varying expertise.
  - The visitors considered that the education provider had significant challenges in this area, and that they had not adequately reflected on them. They explored these through quality activity 1.
  - The visitors noted the education provider is facing common funding restrictions in the Scottish university sector and having few overseas students, experiences financial challenges. They agreed the education provider ensures programme resourcing through annual reviews and operational planning, they continue to actively seek investments.
  - Following the quality activity, the visitors were reassured to some degree. They considered that performance was acceptable, but still wished to note for the next performance review that resourcing and sustainability should be a key focus for the visitors.
- **Partnerships with other organisations** –

- o The education provider submitted very limited information on how well they had been managing and developing relevant partnerships. They provided a Service Level Agreement between themselves and NHS Tayside Health Board. Their key strategic partner is this Board, who provides their learners and deploy those learners once they have become practising biomedical scientists.
  - o The visitors considered that this was useful to a certain extent, but that it did not provide sufficient information for them to make a decision about performance. They therefore requested clarification from the education provider of who their key partners were during the review period. The education provider noted they were involved with NHS Fife, Newborn Screening Labs, Queen Elizabeth Hospital, NHS Strathclyde, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, NHS Tayside Health Board and Institute of Biomedical Science, programme accreditation.
  - o Following the clarification, the visitors considered that performance in this area was good because the education provider has shown that they liaise regularly and closely with stakeholders to deliver effective partnership working.
- **Academic quality** –
  - o The education provider had reflected on their quality assurance processes. They noted that they have ongoing review of all modules, and that they use external examiner reports as a basis for module leader reflection. Areas that have been changed as a result include assessment, teaching activities, and programme content.
  - o The visitors noted the education provider's reflection on how internal restructuring and enhanced clinical staff in teaching have been positive. However, this reflection was quite limited, so in quality activity 2 the visitors explored how academic quality was maintained.
  - o The education provider gave appropriate additional reflection, focused on the various methods they used to improve the programme. After the quality activity, the visitors considered that performance was good because the education provider had a clear pathway for reflecting on the feedback gathered about academic quality.
- **Placement quality** –
  - o The education provider's reflection in this area focused on their laboratory placements.. They stated that their placement quality processes, based on the IBMS approving laboratory placements, had not identified significant concerns.
  - o The visitors considered that they needed to explore this area further and used quality activity 2 to do so. They were concerned with understanding the feedback from placement educators. This feedback would provide insights into the strengths and areas for improvement in the placement experience.
  - o Following the quality activity, the visitors considered that performance was good in this area because the education provider was clearly able to monitor the quality of placements and was engaged in an ongoing process of improvement.
- **Interprofessional education** –
  - o The education provider's reflection in this area was very limited, as discussed in quality activity 3 above. The aim of the quality activity was

to understand how they had delivered IPE during the review period, and what changes were being made in the area.

- o Following the quality activity, the visitors considered that performance in this area was overall appropriate. However, they also considered that IPE should be considered in detail in the next review, as it was an area where the education provider needed to make considerable progress.

- **Service users and carers** –
  - o The portfolio noted that the education provider had very limited service user involvement, and the visitors considered that there had been limited reflection on this involvement. They also considered that there had been insufficient consideration by the education provider of who the service users were for the programme.
  - o The visitors considered that the lack of engagement with service users was a potential missed opportunity to enhance the programme by incorporating valuable insights and feedback from those who directly benefit from the services provided.
  - o For this reason we undertook quality activity 4, to explore how the education provider would develop and improve service user involvement. Following the quality activity, the visitors concluded that there was a considerable way to go for the education provider and that this issue would be a focus of the next performance review.

- **Equality and diversity** –
  - o The education provider's reflections are in the context of the university-level strategy on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). The key part of their reflection focused on their attempts during the review period to decolonise their curriculum and ensure that they were encouraging anti-racist practice, as well as making sure that the programme was a welcoming environment.
  - o The education provider noted significant successes in this area, including increases in recruitment from ethnic minorities and from areas with a high rate of economic deprivation.. They provided data to support this.
  - o The visitors considered that performance in this area appeared generally acceptable, because the education provider have continuously looked for opportunities to improve. However, they did seek clarification around the progress of the education provider's work on equality and diversity.
  - o The education provider noted some key areas of progress in this area such as the establishment of a neurodivergence support programme, the addition of new EDI information to programme handbooks, and a paper on EDI distributed to all staff. A "Tell Us" initiative has also been rolled out, to encourage reporting of issues.
  - o The visitors considered this clarification helpful and considered that performance in this area was good, because the education provider was committed to continuous improvement and alignment with best practice.

- **Horizon scanning** –
  - o The delivery of the programme is under continuous review, according to the portfolio. The education provider demonstrated this by reflecting on how well their programme meets emerging needs and the changing

landscape. They also have ongoing discussions with relevant health authorities to ensure that they are fit for purpose in the future.

o [Quality activity 1](#) had some bearing on this portfolio area as horizon scanning was linked thematically to the sustainability of the programme. Following that quality activity, the visitors considered that performance in this area was good as they had seen clear evidence that the education provider was looking forward and anticipating likely changes and developments in the sector. They did however note sustainability as an issue for visitors to consider in the next performance review.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: The visitors noted that the possible fall in learner numbers, identified by them and then discussed through quality activity 1, could pose a longer-term risk to the sustainability of the programme.

Outstanding issues for follow up: The visitors considered that during the next performance review the HCPC should examine in particular the following areas:

- The education provider's development of their service user involvement;
- The education provider's planned improvements IPE;
- The progress of the education provider's plans to ensure sustainable resourcing for the programme; and
- The successful and sustainable integration of the revised SOPs into the programme.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Embedding the revised Standards of Proficiency (SOPs) –**
    o The education provider submitted some reflection on how they had embedded the revised SOPs. The visitors considered that this did not seem to have been done in a very systematic way, and the education provider did not submit reflection on all the relevant SOPs.
    o We therefore explored how they had integrated the revised SOPs across the board through [quality activity 5](#). In a virtual meeting the education provider explained that they had worked on this in various ways, through reviewing parts of the portfolio where they might be an impact.
    o Following this quality activity, the visitors considered the performance in this area was acceptable, but they did note this issue as something to be considered through the next review. There were particular revised SOPs where the education provider could not really explain their approach and its justification.
- **Learning and developments from the COVID-19 pandemic** –
    o The reflection in this area was brief. The education provider noted that they had been forced to move to majority virtual programme delivery, while retaining essential in-person sessions, and had reviewed their curriculum to ensure this was being done appropriately. A new virtual simulated learning package was purchased.

- o The visitors considered that this was useful reflection, but incomplete because it did not give a clear idea of what the education provider had learned from the pandemic, and how they had facilitated placements during the restrictions. In a virtual meeting the education provider clarified that COVID-19 had come at a point when learners were "already halfway through their placements" and had a good amount of lab experience.
  - o They noted also that a hybrid approach was developed combining physical placements on specific days and the use of Teams. A simulation package was obtained and used as part of this hybrid approach.
  - o In terms of post-pandemic learning, the programme has mostly reverted to the pre-pandemic status quo, as the hybrid learning approach was considered impractical for the longer term by learners and practice educators.
  - o The visitors considered that this was effective reflection because it showed the education provider had adapted well to the pandemic, and also reflected on what should be done afterwards.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods** –
  - o The education provider noted that they had issues with detecting use of AI with the sole use of the TurnItIn virtual learning environment (VLE). They addressed this by providing additional training to staff showing them how to detect abuses of AI. They were also working towards more sophisticated detection of AI usage in assessments.
  - o The blended learning delivery continues to be developed and refined, for example by encouraging and supporting innovation from staff as an adjunct to teaching.
  - o The visitors considered performance in this area was good because the education provider had clearly shown their responsiveness to changes and developments.
- **Apprenticeships in England** – Not applicable as this is a Scottish institution.

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** –
  - o The education provider reflected on how they ensure ongoing compliance with relevant guidance. They noted their ILR and Periodic Programme Review processes, which are "the primary means by which this is addressed by the University, alongside annual review by the School Academic Committee".
  - o The programme lead found an external panel member for these processes. The School Academic Committee has overall oversight of compliance in this area.
  - o The visitors considered that performance was good, because the education provider had clearly shown itself able to consider the

requirements in this area via defined processes, and to update as necessary.

- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies** –
  - o The education provider reflected on recent discussions intended to ensure that clinical supervision continues to be effective and appropriate. In particular they noted changes to the assessment required by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). These changes involved on-campus invigilated exams rather than remote assessments. This was to maintain quality.
  - o The education provider noted that they had to prepare learners for these changes, and explain to them the context in which they had been made. They stated also they continue to work on how assessment integrity can be maintained in a remote working context, and to help learners understand the changing professional context.
  - o The visitors asked for some additional clarification in this area, around the specific conditions set by the IBMS. The education provider expanded on this by giving more information about their relationship with the IBMS and how this is managed.
  - o Following the clarification, the visitors considered that performance in this area was broadly good, as there was evidence of communication with the IBMS and compliance with their requirements.

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** –
  - o The education provider submitted limited reflection on this area, noting that there "have been no significant changes in practice". They did not provide much additional information here to supplement their limited reflections above on the integration of the revised SOPs. The visitors therefore sought to explore what had been done in this area. This exploration is addressed and discussed in more detail in quality activity 5 above.
  - o Following the quality activity and related discussions, the visitors considered that performance in this area was broadly acceptable. However, the education provider's integration of the revised SOPs was one of the matters that they flagged for a future review (see Section 5 below).
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance** –
  - o The education provider undertook changes to their teaching materials and their assessment approach, in response to new guidance issued by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS).
  - o The education provider worked with their practice partners to ensure that clinical supervision reflected the new guidance.
  - o The visitors sought clarification of the detail in this area. In a virtual meeting, the education provider noted that they had taken into account "the new QAA benchmark statement, HCPC SOPs and the feedback

from the IBMS at revalidation". The specific changes mentioned included updates to the handbook, changes to modules, and revision of the programme specification.
- o Following the clarification, the visitors considered performance in this area was good because the education provider had demonstrated their ability to adapt and develop in light of changing professional expectations.
- **Capacity of practice-based learning (programme / profession level)** –
  - o Capacity of practice-based learning is a less significant concern for this education provider because of the small number of learners and the wide range of partners (laboratories).
  - o However, the education provider did note a possible tension between laboratories' role as placement providers and their role as clinical service providers within the NHS. This leads to fluctuations in placement availability, and so imposes a limit on how many learners can come onto the programme.
  - o These tensions have overall been managed through the education provider's partnerships with partner laboratories. However, the visitors did wish to clarify what the education provider had done during the review period to maintain placement capacity.
  - o In the discussion the education provider noted that they have "ongoing discussions" with current placement partners, and that they are always seeking opportunities to expand capacity.
  - o The visitors considered that overall performance in this area was satisfactory, as the education provider were maintaining sufficient capacity and constantly engaged in efforts to grow that capacity. A specific liaison officer was in place.

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** –
  - o The education provider gave some examples of the mechanisms they used to reflect on learner feedback during the review period. These included a new computer system known as Unitu – discontinued after a trial – and an institutional review system aligned with the Scottish Ombudsman's Framework.
  - o The education provider stated there had been generally satisfactory engagement with the learner feedback, but the visitors considered that there was insufficient detail of what issues had been raised and how these had been addressed. In particular they wanted to understand what was meant by "only occasional and isolated issues", and whether any specific improvements were planned. Therefore we requested clarification from the education provider during a virtual meeting.
  - o The education provider submitted some additional information, noting that module leads are responsible for convening meetings at the end of modules to discuss, and take action on, learner feedback. This action

is part of their role description. Class representatives are also a key part of this mechanism.
- o In light of this clarification, the visitors considered that performance in this area was good, as the education provider had demonstrated that they could both gather, and take action on, learner feedback.
- **Practice placement educators** –
  - o The reflection in this area focused on the education provider's efforts to maintain a sufficient number of appropriately qualified practice educators, and to support the quality of placements. As a result of this reflection, during the review period the education provider rolled out new support for training officers. These officers encourage and support qualified staff to become better equipped to deliver mentorship and similar training. Staff can become, for example, registered portfolio verifiers and gain other advanced supervision qualifications.
  - o We requested some additional reflection about how feedback from practice educators is used in programme improvement and development. The education provider gave further information around his area, noting that practice educator feedback has been strongly positive and that the education provider consider they have strong working relationships.
  - o Following the clarification, the visitors considered the education provider was performing well in this area. This was because they had given examples of how they liaised with practice educators, and how they gathered, used and improved the feedback from practice placement educators.
- **External examiners** –
  - o The education provider submitted some information about their two external examiners. However, the visitors requested additional clarification about how the education provider reflected on information received from the external examiners.
  - o The education provider provided information about their external examiners, noting that at least one was a registered biomedical scientist. An example of an issue raised was the multiple assessments of the same learning outcomes.
  - o Overall, the external examiners had no concerns about how the programme was delivering the curriculum, or the feedback given by other stakeholders. The education provider noted that they reflected closely on external examiners' input.
  - o The visitors considered that performance in this area was good because the education provider had clear engagement with the external examiner.

- **Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None.

- **Outstanding issues for follow up:** None.

Data and reflections

Findings of the assessment panel:
- **Learner non continuation:**

- o The education provider did not highlight any serious issues with continuation and the data did not suggest problems in this area.
  - o We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Outcomes for those who complete programmes:**
  - o The education provider noted they have performed well here. They stated in the portfolio that they were still seeking to understand why they had performed well, but in general they noted they have a strong culture of professional support, and have amended assessments to ensure congruence with current professional practice.
  - o We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Learner satisfaction:**
  - o The education provider, stated their score was strong overall. Our own data, noted in the table above, shows that the education provider is well above benchmark, although because the NSS changed their methodology we cannot make accurate comparisons with previous learner satisfaction data. We did not have any specific concerns based on the data in this area.
  - o We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.
- **Programme level data:**
  - o The education provider did not highlight any specific concerns in this area. They provided strong programme level data in several area of the portfolio, so we were confident that they were gathering and analysing such data to drive improvements.
  - o We were satisfied with how the education provider is performing in this area.

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

Development of service user involvement

Area(s) of practice applicable to: Biomedical science

Programme(s) applicable to: BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science

Summary of issue: The education provider's engagement of service users appeared to the visitors to need significant development and improvement. They considered that when the education provider next undergoes performance review,

the visitors should pay particular attention to how the education provider have sought to improve the involvement of service users with the programme.

<u>Development of interprofessional education</u>

Area(s) of practice applicable to: Biomedical science

Programme(s) applicable to: BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science

Summary of issue: The education provider's approach to IPE appeared to the visitors to need significant development and improvement. They considered that when the education provider next undergoes performance review, the visitors should pay particular attention to how the education provider have sought to improve IPE.

<u>Ensuring the sustainability of the programme</u>

Area(s) of practice applicable to: Biomedical science

Programme(s) applicable to: BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science

Summary of issue: The visitors were aware from the quality activity discussions that the education provider was taking specific steps to ensure the appropriate resourcing of the programme in the medium-term. The impact of these measures will not be fully clear for two or three years, and the visitors considered it would be appropriate for the next performance review to take them into account.

<u>Integration of the revised SOPs</u>

Area(s) of practice applicable to: Biomedical science

Programme(s) applicable to: BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science

Summary of issue: The visitors [used quality activity](#) to explore how the education provider had integrated the revised SOPs into the programme. They considered that performance in this area was broadly satisfactory but noted that there had been limited reflection on some of the areas. They therefore suggested that in the next performance review the visitors should consider how the education provider has continued to integrate the revised SOPs.

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 2026-27 academic year
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report

Reason for next engagement recommendation
- Internal stakeholder engagement
  - The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were practice educators, learners and the professional body.
- External input into quality assurance and enhancement
  - The education provider engaged with professional bodies. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision.
  - The education provider engaged with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Institute of Biomedical Science.
  - The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way
- Data supply
  - Data for the education provider is available through key external sources. Regular supply of this data will enable us to actively monitor changes to key performance areas within the review period
- What the data is telling us:
  - From data points considered and reflections through the process, the education provider considers data in their quality assurance and enhancement processes.
- In summary, the reason for the recommendation of a three year monitoring period is:
  - There are a number of areas of the portfolio where the visitors consider that an update on the education provider's progress towards essential improvement and development is required, to maintain the HCPC's confidence in the programme.

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 2026-27 academic year.

Reason for this decision: The Panel agreed with the visitors' recommended monitoring period, for the reasons noted through the report.

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 the next steps for the provider. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation (including their reasons) and any referrals.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Review period recommendation	Reason for recommendation	Referrals
Abertay University	CAS-01363-C0H9J6	Beverley Cherie Millar Pradeep Agrawal	Three years	• Internal stakeholder engagement The education provider engages with a range of stakeholders with quality assurance and enhancement in mind. Specific groups engaged by the education provider were practice educators, learners and the professional body. • External input into quality assurance and enhancement The education provider engaged with professional bodies. They considered professional body findings in improving their provision. The education provider engaged with Healthcare Improvement Scotland and the Institute of Biomedical Science.	Development of service user involvement Development of interprofessional education Ensuring the sustainability of the programme Integration of the revised SOPs • All these will be referred to the next performance review

				The education provider considers sector and professional development in a structured way • Data supply Data for the education provider is available through key external sources. Regular supply of this data will enable us to actively monitor changes to key performance areas within the review period • What the data is telling us: From data points considered and reflections through the process, the education provider considers data in their quality assurance and enhancement processes. • In summary, the reason for the recommendation of a three year monitoring period is: There are a number of areas of the portfolio where the visitors consider that an update on the education provider's progress towards essential improvement and development is required, to	

				maintain the HCPC's confidence in the programme.	

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/09/2012