

Approval process quality report

Education provider	University of Wolverhampton
Name of programme(s)	MSc Occupational Therapy, full time accelerated MSc Physiotherapy, full time accelerated MSc Podiatry, full time accelerated
Date Assessment commenced	20 January 2021
Visitor recommendation made	24 November 2021
Case reference	CAS-01026-H1B8Y9

Summary of findings from this assessment

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

The outcomes of this process were as follows:

- Further Stage 1 assessment was not required based on the new programme(s) being proposed for delivery.
- The visitors recommended the programme(s) be approved as all programme level standards were met through their Stage 2 assessment.

The Education and Training Committee will now meet to consider the visitors recommendations and make a decision regarding programme approval.

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Section 1: Background information

Who we are

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.

Our standards

We approve institutions 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 standards are divided into two levels based on their relevance to the institution and programme(s). The following considerations were made when splitting standards between institution and programme level:

- Where accountability best sits, with either the accountable person for the institution or programme
- How the standard is worded, with references to the education provider and processes often best sitting at the institution level, and references to the programme or profession often best sitting at the programme level
- We have preferred seeking assurance at the institution level, to fit with our intention to put the institution at the centre of our quality assurance model.

Our approach to quality assuring education

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of institution 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
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards

Institutions 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

We take a staged approach to quality assurance, as we need to understand practices which will support delivery of all programmes within an institution, prior to assessing the programme level detail. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we assess to be assured 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 process we will initially review the proposal and then design our assessment based on the issues we find. As such the assessment methods will be different based on the issues which arise in each case.

How we make 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 of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make 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 meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

Section 2: Our assessment

Stage 1 assessment: The institution

Education provider	University of Wolverhampton
Key contact	Joanne Carruthers

As part of the initiation of the process the education provider indicated that the proposed programmes would be part of the University of Wolverhampton. This institution is well established with HCPC and currently delivers approved programmes in:

- Biomedical scientists
- Counselling psychologists
- Occupational therapists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists / chiropodists
- Independent and supplementary prescribing
- Supplementary prescribing

In previous standards assessments of these programmes, visitors have established the institution level standards are met. The provider has also demonstrated this through ongoing monitoring carried out by the HCPC.

As part of the provider's definition of their institution, they have defined the policies, procedures and processes that apply to the programmes delivered within it. These relate to the institution level standards we set which ensure the following areas are managed effectively:

Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information for applicants• Assessing English language, character, and health• Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)• Equality, diversity and inclusion
Governance, leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective programme delivery• Effective staff management• Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level
Quality, monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic components, including how curricula are kept up to date• Practice components, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments• Learner involvement• Service user and carer involvement
Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support• Ongoing professional suitability

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) • Equality, diversity and inclusion
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectivity • Progression and achievement • Appeals

Assurance that institution level standards are met

As part of this stage we considered how the proposed programmes fit into the named institution by considering any notable changes to the policies, procedures and processes related to the areas above.

We considered how the proposed programmes are assimilated with the management of existing approved programmes in the institution. We determined the proposed programmes would be managed in way that was consistent with the definition of their institution. On this basis, we were satisfied it is appropriate for the programme to sit as part of the University of Wolverhampton and take assurance the institution level standards will continue to be met by its introduction.

Stage 2 assessment: The programmes

Education provider	University of Wolverhampton
Accountable person (for the programmes)	Joanne Carruthers
Programmes	MSc Occupational Therapy MSc Physiotherapy MSc Podiatry
Profession	Occupational Therapy Physiotherapy Chiropody / Podiatry
Mode of study	All programmes full time accelerated
Learner numbers	20 per programme, one cohort per year
Type of programme	Pre-registration
Qualification level	Masters
Start date	12 September 2022

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.

We sought insight from the professional body, but we received no insight from them.

Performance area	Data point / comparison	Benchmark	Data	Score
Performance indicator	Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	389	1030	-0.15
Performance indicator	Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	2%	0.01
Performance indicator	Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	91%	-0.03
Teaching quality	TEF award	n/a	Silver	-0.033
Learner / graduate satisfaction	NSS overall satisfaction score (Q27)	74.6	63.6	-0.14
Total				0.657

Visitors appointed to undertake this assessment

We appointed the following panel to assess the above information against our programme level standards:

Registrant visitors	Dawn Blenkin – occupational therapy
	Fleur Kitsell - physiotherapy
	Wendy Smith – chiropody / podiatry

Assessment of the proposal

Initial review:

- The visitors reviewed the education provider's submission and considered their approach to each standard
- This first review culminated in a virtual HCPC meeting in which the visitors discussed and made decisions around the standards they considered to be met and the areas they required further information around
- Following the finalisation of areas to explore the visitors discussed and finalised the most appropriate quality activity to undertake this investigation.

Quality activity:

We design our assessment to be proportionate and appropriate to the issues identified and to seek input from relevant stakeholders when necessary. We considered that it was appropriate and proportionate to request additional documentary evidence to address the issue that was outstanding prior to the quality activity. The theme we explored is as follows:

Theme	Reason for additional evidence
Selection and entry criteria including academic and professional entry standards.	<p>Documents related to entry criteria mentioned a 'related subject'. There was a lack of clarity about what a related subject is. The visitors were also unsure whether applicants need to have evidence of related study. And if so, to what timeframe and what standard of study. The visitors wanted to know where a prospective applicant would find information about related subject and study.</p> <p>The visitors wanted to explore the rationale behind one of the interview questions, which was related to health and social care. They considered that someone may come from an appropriate background but not be able to answer the question. An impact of this would be that there is a risk the programmes do not reflect diverse backgrounds as not everyone would have the ability to answer.</p>
The collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers.	<p>The visitors did not receive evidence to reassure them the collaboration between the education provider and practice education providers is effective. The evidence did not show the full breadth of meetings which are held between the two. The visitors consequently asked for more information about any action plans the education provider may have for collaboration with practice education providers, and how it is monitored. The visitors also asked for information about any meetings which may have already taken place between the education provider and placement providers. The visitors wanted to know whether the education provider has any mechanism for when / if a placement provider does not attend these.</p>
The number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.	<p>The visitors received a plan for recruiting extra staff. The visitors were aware the education provider had undergraduate programmes in each profession under review. However, they were unclear whether the provision of new staff will impact on staffing of the undergraduate programme. The visitors required more information about the timescale for recruitment of these additional staff, and how the education provider will ensure they are appropriately qualified and experienced to complement the existing team and skills mix. The visitors asked for clarification whether the new staff will be teaching across the Masters portfolio or specific to individual programmes.</p>
The delivery of subject areas.	<p>The visitors were unsure about the use of existing staff and visiting lecturers. The visitors requested clarity about which member of staff was going to be teaching and leading each module. The visitors required more information about how the education provider will ensure they are appropriately qualified and experienced to complement the existing team and skills mix.</p>

<p>The resources to support learning in all settings.</p>	<p>The visitors were unsure whether the information about resources for the programmes reflected total resources or additional resources. The visitors also needed clarity about whether resources were split by programme, or if they were used across programmes. The visitors noted the refurbishment of the campus but would like more information about when the building will be completed, and whether there is a contingency plan should the works encounter an issue.</p>
<p>For the occupational therapy programme, the learning and teaching methods used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the learning outcomes.</p>	<p>The visitors had a broad understanding of how the education provider will be using differing learning activities. All modules give the same or very similar list of 'Learning Activities' and 'Blended Learning'. However, the visitors were unsure in which occupational therapy module(s) problem-based learning takes place and what activities will be used at what time.</p>
<p>The delivery of the programme must support and develop autonomous and reflective thinking.</p>	<p>The visitors recognised that reflective thinking was represented in the general documentation. However, they needed more detail about the pedagogical approach to develop autonomy.</p>
<p>For the physiotherapy programme, the delivery of the programme must support and develop evidence-based practice.</p>	<p>The visitors wanted more information about what journals are required reading for each module. The visitors were unclear how modules are underpinned by current research, and required more information to understand the reasoning for the lack of links to research articles in module descriptors. The visitors also wanted more information about whether the education provider includes learning about entrepreneurial approaches in the teaching, and where in the programme evidence-based practice was taught.</p>
<p>The structure, duration and range of practice-based learning.</p>	<p>The visitors could not access information about the range or types of placements, nor any guidance on how the placement tutor ensures a learner's placement profile is balanced through the allocations process. The visitors consequently wanted more information about the setting and nature of practice-based learning opportunities which are going to be available for the learner.</p>
<p>Practice-based learning: how the education provider ensures its availability,</p>	<p>The visitors were aware there had been discussions and that there were 75 new places within practice-based learning. However, they wanted more information about whether these 75 were solely for learners at the University of Wolverhampton, and for these programmes under assessment specifically.</p>

and the number of staff involved.	The visitors needed more information about how the education provider ensures there are enough placements in the system for learners to be supported. The visitors were consequently unsure whether there is a suitable number of practice educators, and how the education provider monitors that number.
Practice educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning and, unless other arrangements are appropriate, must be on the relevant part of the Register.	The visitors saw that practice educators seem to be invited to attend the training by the education provider. However, the visitors were unsure and needed further information whether they need to complete the training. They wanted to know how the education provider ensures they have completed any required training, and how frequently practice educators need to complete training. The visitors wanted more information about what skills practice educators need to have and whether there is a person specification related to the practice educator role. The visitors wanted more information about how the education provider ensures quality assurance of practice educator's abilities. The visitors would like more information about whether practice educators need to be on the HCPC Register. If not, the visitors wanted more information about the rationale to choosing to use practice educators who are not registered, and how are they ensured they are appropriate to carry out the role, including how their experience, qualifications and training are relevant to the practice-based learning they are involved in.
Assessment policies and requirements for progression and achievement within the programme.	The visitors were unsure whether the programmes have an exit or step-off award which the completion of which means graduates are eligible to apply to register with HCPC. The visitors needed clarification whether the education provider wanted any step-off awards to give graduates eligibility to apply to the Register. If so, it must be clear to learners that these do not lead to eligibility to apply for registration. The visitors needed further information which qualification level gives the graduate eligibility to apply to register with the HCPC.
For the occupational therapy programme, the assessment methods used to measure the learning outcomes	The visitors were aware that in the module Foundations of Occupational Therapy Practice learners had the option of either a 30-minute presentation or a 3,000 word essay. The visitors were unsure whether the two were equitable and needed more information about the education provider's reasoning behind the choice.

Summary of visitor findings

SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register

The visitors were satisfied that the programmes align with the level of qualification expected for entry onto the Register as either a podiatrist / chiropodist, occupational therapist or physiotherapist.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 2: Programme admissions

The visitors could see that a related subject is one which would provide some underpinning knowledge and / or experience of the course for which the applicant has applied. They also noted that applicants without a related subject at degree level will be considered on an individual basis as the applicant may have other related and relevant qualifications. The visitors also were aware that recent study is defined as within the past five years.

The visitors were informed that there are a several ways in which a prospective applicant could check the suitability of their previous qualification at the University of Wolverhampton.

The visitors noted the primary rationale for the interview question is to assess the applicants understanding of appropriate communication, their ability to give their opinion based on their understanding of the situation, to raise concerns to those in authority when needed, and their appreciation of respecting patient choice.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership

The visitors considered the education provider had demonstrated that there is a cohesive process to ensure effective collaboration between themselves and practice education providers. Appropriate resources are provided to all learners. The education provider demonstrated that the information within the documentary submission was the total resources for each programme. The visitors saw that when appropriate, the resources will be utilised across the programmes. The visitors noted that the building is now complete and students for other programmes have occupied the building from September 2021.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 4: Programme design and delivery

The visitors could see how problem-based learning will be embedded in several modules throughout the occupational therapy programme using case study examples. The visitors could also determine that the education provider develops decision-making and autonomous practice both in the academic setting and practice-based learning as learners progress.

The visitors saw that evidence-based practise will be included throughout the course with research underpinning the content for all modules. Research articles are utilised within modules as there is opportunity to add additional resources within the VLE reading list content either as a web link or as an article. Relevant journals will be added to the module descriptors and will include relevant specialist publications. The visitors saw that learning of entrepreneurial opportunities as a physiotherapist is included in two modules.

The visitors could see that evidence-based practise will be taught and assessed throughout the course, with research underpinning the content for all modules. It is not usual practice for the University to provide links to research articles in the module descriptors due to the possibility of the link expiring, however, They saw that research articles are utilised within modules as there is opportunity to add additional resources within the VLE reading list content either as a web link or as an article. Relevant journals will be added to the modules for all modules and will include a range of specialist publications. Learning of entrepreneurial opportunities as physiotherapist is included in the two modules on the programme.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 5: Practice-based learning

The visitors could see that learners on the programmes will undertake the required placements to achieve their professional competencies outlined in the respective practice assessment documentation. The placements may be face to face or virtual and will include a range of specialist and non-specialist settings such as the NHS, private practice, and charitable organisations. Learners will also have opportunity to undertake a range of placement opportunities in non-traditional settings such as leadership and research roles.

The visitors saw that the 75 new placement areas are to be found from increasing capacity in existing placement areas for all AHP learners, for all HEIs. In addition to an increase in capacity from existing placement providers, new placement provider partners are also being sought in the locality and it is anticipated there will be additional new AHP placement provision by 2023 when placements are required.

The visitors could see that placement capacity is managed by the respective course team and the external partnerships team manage the compliance, organisation, recording and monitoring of the placement areas. They also saw there is additional work to expand the number of AHP placements in the region using funds from the HEE Clinical Placement Expansion Programme (CPEP).

The visitors were aware of the numbers of staff involved in practice-based learning. They were informed that the education provider is delivering practice educator preparation sessions to promote more practice educators for these programmes in

readiness for the first placements starting in 2022. The number of practice educators is monitored through a database held at the University for each programme. Practice educators who are supporting students on placement who have undertaken practice educator preparation at another education provider are asked for proof of attendance and are added to the database prior to the start of each placement. The placement audits undertaken every two years include a record of the number of practice educators in the placement area for monitoring purposes. All staff who are responsible for supporting and assessing students during their placement must have attended a practice education preparation session either at the University of Wolverhampton or at another education provider. Those who have undertaken their practice educator preparation at another HEI are expected to attend a two-hour practice educator refresher session to learn the specific requirements from the University of Wolverhampton prior to taking their first student from the University. Each practice educator is required to complete the practice educator refresher training within three years of completing their initial training and within three years thereafter.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

SET 6: Assessment

The visitors were able to see that the assessment strategy is clear and ensures that the learning outcomes are effectively assessed so learners who successfully complete the programmes meet the standards of proficiency for their profession.

The visitors were able to see that none of the programmes have a step-off award which provides eligibility to register with the HCPC. Learners must successfully complete all elements of the programme, including the practice placement requirements, in order to be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC.

The visitors could see the choice of a 3000 word essay or 30 minute presentation was guided by the education provider's Guidelines for Assessment. The indicative assessment tariff suggests written assessment at Level 7 should be 3,000-4,000 word in length and that oral assessment at Level 7 should be 20-25 minutes. The 30 minute presentation was agreed at the University's internal validation event to enable students who choose this option to fully explore all the assessment requirements.

On this basis, there were no conditions set in relation to this area of the standards.

Section 3: The visitors' recommendations

Based on these findings the visitors made the following recommendations to the Education and Training Committee:

Programme approval

The programme is recommended for approval, without conditions.

Recommendation to other process

The visitors considered the numbers of staff on the programmes to be satisfactory. The visitors note the information about the generic job descriptions which the education provider used. However, the visitors wanted clarification about how the education provider ensures they appoint an individual with the right skillset and speciality skills to complement the existing team and skills mix. The visitors were informed that the skill mix of staff is considered at school level and would be decided in conjunction with the course lead, the Head of Department and the Head of School. The workload planning process assists in this process as it helps to identify where there are gaps in staff skills, and if staff with specific skills are being utilised more than others, which would indicate more staff are needed with this skill set. Although there are generic job descriptions and person specification for each grade of staff, there is also scope within these generic job descriptions to add specific requirements where necessary to attract applicants with the required skills.

The visitors also note that any shortfall in specialist subject specific teaching needed will be supported by existing staff who are teaching on the undergraduate programmes. The visitors wanted clarification on workload modelling, to ensure there is no detriment to either the undergraduate or the Masters programmes, and that the workload for staff across both programme levels is appropriate. The visitors were informed that the University Workload Handbook provides guidance in relation to the number of hours of teaching and other duties each staff member is allocated. Within each department, each staff members workload is allocated and recorded annually on the Staff Workload Allocation template to ensure there is equity amongst teams. This document also acts to highlight the need for additional staff or movement of staff if necessary. Once completed, this workload allocation is also considered by the Head of School and Dean of Faculty.

The visitors considered on these bases, there were no conditions set in relation to these area of the standards. The visitors however, as the programme has not run, and therefore had no means of verifying whether the processes take place, recommend this issue is raised in the education provider's next performance review.

Section 4: Committee decision on approval

- We will record the decision of the Education and Training Committee here following their meeting on 31 March 2022.