
Supplementary information for
education providers

Approval process

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Section one: Introduction

About this document

Our Education Department has been carrying out approval visits to education providers and programmes throughout the UK since September 2004. During that time, we have gained experience and received feedback on the process from a number of people involved. This has included education providers and professional organisations. As a result, we have designed this document with the specific aim of making the process clearer for you.

We have divided this document into eight main sections – as shown on the contents page.

Throughout the document, 'we' refers to the Health Professions Council (HPC), and 'you' refers to the education provider or staff working on a programme seeking approval or on an already approved programme.

Also throughout this document, the term Education and Training Committee (ETC) includes those groups to which we have delegated authority for a number of duties. This includes the Education and Training Panel (ETP), and for certain administrative duties, the education executives. More details of this can be found on our website.

About us (the HPC)

We are the Health Professions Council. We are a regulator, and we were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills and behaviour. We currently regulate 14 health professions.

- Arts therapists
- Biomedical scientists
- Chiropodists / podiatrists
- Clinical scientists
- Dietitians
- Occupational therapists

- Operating department practitioners
- Orthoptists
- Paramedics
- Physiotherapists
- Practitioner psychologists
- Prosthetists / orthotists
- Radiographers
- Speech and language therapists

All of these professions have at least one professional title that is protected by law, including those shown above. This means, for example, that anyone using the titles 'physiotherapist' or 'dietitian' must be registered with us.

It is a criminal offence for someone to claim that they are registered with us when they are not, or to use a protected title that they are not entitled to use. We will prosecute people who commit these crimes.

You can see our Register on our website, so you can check the registration of your health professional.

We may regulate other professions in the future. For an up-to-date list of the professions we regulate, please see our website: www.hpc-uk.org

Our main functions

In order to protect the public, we:

- set standards for the education and training, professional skills, conduct, performance, ethics and health of registrants;
- keep a register of health professionals who meet those standards;
- approve programmes which health professionals must complete so they can register with us; and

- take action when health professionals on the Register do not meet our standards.

The Health Professions Order 2001 (the Order) says we must set our standards to protect the public and we must set standards which are necessary for safe and effective practice. This is why we have set our standards at a 'threshold' level. The Order decides what we do and how we do it. Under the Order, we do not design curriculum, or decide on clinical placement hours or how you structure your programme. Our role is to make sure that any programme we approve meets all of our standards.

As well as approving education and training for people who want to join the Register, we also approve a small number of qualifications for those already on the Register. We do this when we have to do so by law. The post-registration programmes we currently approve are supplementary prescribing programmes (for chiropodists / podiatrists, radiographers and physiotherapists) and programmes in local anaesthetics and prescription-only medicine for chiropodists / podiatrists. For registrants who successfully complete these programmes, we will make a note on the Register.

No matter what type of education provider you are, or what type of programme you offer for potential registrants, the programme must meet all our standards and be approved by us, so that individuals who successfully complete the programme will be eligible to apply for registration. Programmes which are already approved must continue to meet all our standards so that individuals who successfully complete the programme continue to be eligible to apply for registration.

Brief overview of the approval process

We visit all the programmes we approve to make sure that:

- the education programme meets or continues to meet our standards of education and training (SETs);
- those who complete the programme are able to meet or continue to meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register; and
- all programmes and education providers are assessed fairly and consistently.

When we carry out an approval visit, we are represented by what we refer to as **the HPC Panel**. The HPC Panel is normally made up of two visitors, at least one of whom is from the same part of the Register as the profession with which the programme is concerned and an education executive. The education executive's role is to support both the visitors and the education provider. Throughout the visit, we will ask questions of your staff, students, senior managers and placement providers. We relate all our discussions back to our standards. At the end of the approval visit, the visitors will make a judgement about whether, or to what extent, the programme meets or continues to meet our standards. Their recommended outcome will be sent to our ETC which makes the final decision.

For the purpose of this document, we have split the process itself into three separate parts. These are:

- pre-visit – which gives details of what needs to happen before a visit takes place;
- the visit – which outlines what you can expect at a visit; and

Section one: Introduction

- post-visit – which gives details of what happens after the visit has been completed.

To ensure the process runs smoothly there are specific tasks that must be carried out. Broadly speaking, you are responsible for:

- giving us an approval visit request form (sample provided in Appendix two) and telling us which dates you would like us to visit;
- giving us appropriate documents before the visit;
- negotiating the agenda and the meetings with us;
- providing an independent chair;
- providing someone to take minutes (secretary);
- ensuring that appropriate individuals are available to meet the HPC Panel;
- providing observations on the visitors' report, if you think it is appropriate;
- providing a response to any conditions; and
- giving feedback on our process.

We are responsible for:

- keeping you informed about our role, timelines and deadlines;
- appointing appropriate visitors;
- arranging accommodation and travel for our panel;
- negotiating the agenda and the meetings with you;
- producing the visitors' report; and
- managing the post-visit process.

After a visit has taken place, the visitors will make one of the following recommended outcomes to our ETC:

- approve or reconfirm ongoing approval of the programme with no conditions;
- set conditions on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme is approved or ongoing approval is reconfirmed;
- not approve the programme; or
- withdraw approval from a programme previously granted open-ended approval.

If our ETC decides to not approve or withdraw approval from a programme, those who complete the programme will not be entitled to register with us. As a result, they will not be able to practise in the UK using one of the titles we protect. The decision to not approve or withdraw approval is not taken lightly.

When we have approved a programme, we grant the programme what we refer to as 'open-ended approval' and we then monitor it using our annual monitoring and major change processes. These are documentary processes by which we decide whether a programme continues to meet our standards. You can get more information about these processes from our documents Annual monitoring - supplementary information for education providers, Major change - supplementary information for education providers, and in section 5 of this document.

Every other year we will ask that you fill in a feedback form. This will help us evaluate our processes and make sure that we maintain a high quality service and communicate with all education providers.

Approval of overseas qualifications

We have received correspondence from education providers asking if it is possible for us to approve programmes delivered outside of the UK which, in terms of curriculum and learning outcomes, could be considered to be the same as an HPC approved programme.

Following investigations into the legal implications of approving overseas qualifications, our ETC have agreed that we are not permitted to approve overseas or franchised programmes of any nature for the purposes of registration with the HPC. Further information about this can be found on our website.

Working with professional bodies

Under the process for approving pre-registration programmes, we have overall responsibility for the standards which programmes must meet. As part of the visit, we will participate in joint discussions with any relevant professional bodies but under legislation, we must assess programmes against our standards independently.

Professional bodies have an important role in promoting and representing their professions. They hold and shape their profession's knowledge and skills. In particular, professional bodies may develop the learning and curriculum frameworks for their profession.

Section two:

Flow charts of the approval process

These flow charts identify which parts of the process are our responsibility and which are yours. You should use the flow chart along with section 3 of this document which provides more detail on each of the steps.

Pre-visit

Approval visit request form

For new programmes, you send us an approval visit request form not less than six months before the proposed visit. For already approved programmes, we contact you with the reason and timescales for the visit.



Agreeing a date to work towards

We agree the date to work towards and format for the visit. The visit must be no less than three months before the start date of the programme or the next cohort.



Visitors chosen

Visitors are allocated to the visit and undergo our conflict of interest procedure. Once the visitors have been confirmed, we will contact you to **confirm the date**.



Documentation

Must be received eight weeks before the visit. If the documents provided do not include all the key documents, we will give you another two weeks to submit the outstanding information.



Documentation received

Documentation forwarded to the visitors. Visit proceeds as planned.

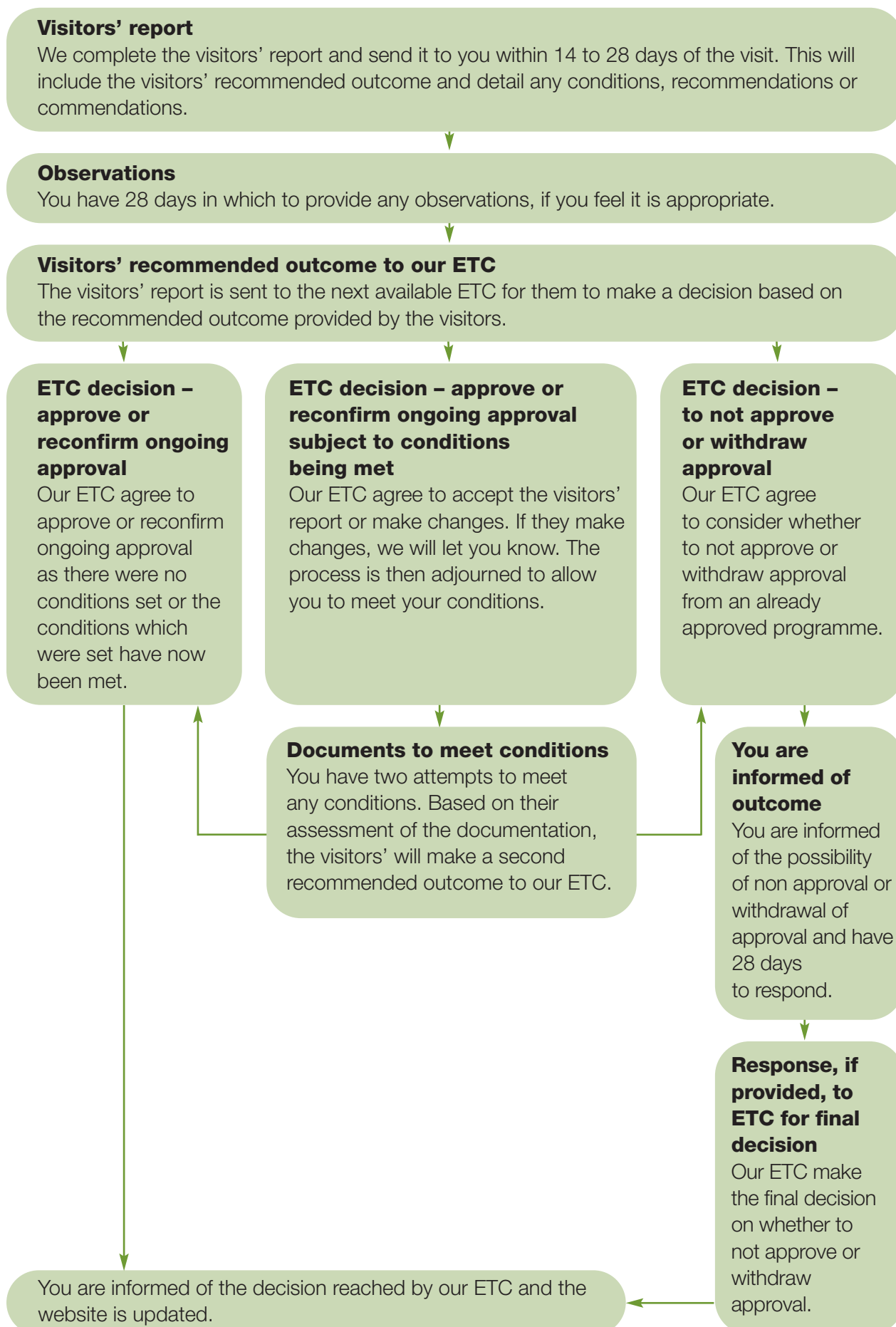


Documentation not received

For new programmes the visit is cancelled. If you still want to gain approval for your programme, you will need to submit a new approval visit request form.

For already approved programmes our ETC is informed and they can either decide on timescales for a rearranged visit or consider withdrawal of approval.

Post-visit



Section three:

The process in detail

We have provided the following points to expand on the steps outlined in the flow charts. There is more detail given on the approval visit itself in our Guidelines for HPC approval visits which is available to download on our website.

We cannot approve a programme until the approval process has ended and our ETC has granted formal approval. As such, you cannot advertise your programme as leading to eligibility to register with us if we have not approved it. You can find out more information in our Regulatory status advertising guidelines for education providers.

Part one – pre-visit

Sending a request for a visit

You will need approval for:

- new programmes you want to run;
- already approved programmes which have undergone significant changes; and
- programmes offered by new professions coming onto the Register.

There are no fees for an approval visit. The HPC Panel will take responsibility for all costs and related expenses of an approval visit. In particular, the panel:

- will arrange and pay for their own accommodation and travel; and
- will pay for all other general expenses (outside of the visit itself).

The panel is unlikely to accept invitations to social functions with the education provider or programme team during the visit.

There are different types of approval visit.

A **joint visit** is where a number of representatives, such as your internal validation panel, a professional body, the HPC or other regulators, are each approving the programme for different purposes.

Where possible, we will deal with several professions in a single visit through a **multi-professional visit**. In these cases, we will need to negotiate the arrangements with you as very large panels can effect discussions and we need to make sure that enough discussion is carried out for all the professions represented.

As we are an independent regulatory body, it is essential for both of these visits that the discussions and decisions we reach on programme approval or reconfirmation of approval are independent and impartial, and based solely on our standards. However, the HPC Panel forms part of the joint panel and we will participate in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue.

An **HPC visit** is where we are the only organisation approving the programme.

As far as possible, we would like our procedures to match your existing processes. If you are holding an internal or other validation event, we will try to arrange the visit for the same days.

Programmes normally need a two-day visit and **we do not carry out visits on Mondays** other than in exceptional circumstances. We normally hold visits at the site where the programme is delivered. You will need to take account of these factors when choosing your proposed dates.

If you are seeking approval for a new programme, you will need to send us a completed **Approval visit request form** to begin the process. A copy of the form is available on our website. We ask for three proposed dates in the forthcoming academic year and you must give us at least **six months'** notice of the proposed visit date.

It is your responsibility to contact us as soon as possible once you know that you will be running a programme which you would like to gain approval for. However, each summer, we carry out a forward-planning exercise in which

Section three: The process in detail

we will contact you by email asking you to complete an Approval visit request form for any new programmes you wish to run and gain approval.

If we have a specific reason for needing to visit, we will contact you with the details. The circumstances in which we might do this include:

- when a new profession comes onto the Register;
- when the major change process identifies significant changes;
- when the annual monitoring process identifies significant changes;
- if serious concerns have been raised; or
- if the approval process identifies the need for a follow-up visit.

The notice we will give to you when we need to carry out this type of visit will depend on the individual circumstances. In reaching this decision we will take into consideration:

- the reason for the visit;
- the availability of documentation;
- any already arranged internal validation meeting; and
- the availability of the education executive and visitors.

Depending on the circumstances it may be necessary to conduct the visit within as little as two or three months.

Further information about this can be found in our Guidelines for HPC approval visits and on our website.

No approval visit can take place any later than **three months** before the first cohort starts (for new programmes) or before the next cohort starts (for already approved programmes). If we set any conditions on the programme as a result of a visit, there is then time for you to meet them. However, we prefer you to hold the visit earlier because we cannot guarantee that a programme will be able to meet any conditions within this timeframe.

Please read the details of the post-visit process in section 3, part 3, of this document for information about the timescales and the next steps in the process.

Agreeing a date for a visit

On the approval visit request form, we ask you for **three** proposed dates for your visit. We will then choose one of these dates, based on the availability of visitors and education executive staff. If we cannot visit on one of your three proposed dates, we will contact you to choose another date or suggest alternatives.

Once we have agreed a date to work towards, we will send you an introduction pack (normally by email) which will include:

- a copy of the Guidelines for HPC approval visits;
- a copy of the Regulatory status advertising guidelines for education providers;
- a copy of the Standards of education guidance and Standards of proficiency for the profession concerned;
- the mapping documents for the SETs and SOPs; and
- a standard agenda relevant to your visit.

Section three: The process in detail

All of these documents can be downloaded from our website.

Once we have set a date for your visit, an education executive will normally contact you by email to introduce themselves and let you have more details. This person will be your HPC contact for the visit and will be available to answer any queries you may have regarding the visit. All communication between you and the visitors must be through this education executive.

Conflict of interest

We cannot confirm a visit date until all the visitors have gone through the conflict of interest procedure. The purpose of this procedure is to make sure that the allocated visitors do not have any significant connections with the programme that they are due to visit. If any visitor declares a significant conflict of interest, we will appoint another visitor. If any visitor declares what we consider to be a minor conflict of interest, we will normally let you know and ask for your feedback on their suitability.

For some small professions, there are a limited number of visitors available and it may be difficult to avoid all possible conflicts. In some cases we may need to take legal advice on the nature of a conflict when appointing visitors.

Once the visitors have gone through the conflict of interest process, we will contact you to confirm the date.

You must send us all relevant documents

You will need to send us the following documents and a **proposed agenda no later than eight weeks** before the visit. We need three hard copies of the documents as well as an electronic version.

The key documents which you must send to us are:

- a programme specification;
- descriptions of the modules;
- completed mapping document for the SETs (a template copy of this document is available on our website);
- completed mapping document for the SOPs (a template copy of this document is available on our website);
- a practice placement handbook;
- a student handbook;
- a draft agenda;
- curriculum vitae for relevant staff; and
- external examiners' reports for the last two years if appropriate.

When preparing documents for a visit, you should consider whether there is any further information you can send which will help the visitors prior to the visit. If you do send additional documentation you should make sure that the information relates to our SETs. You may want to send us information similar to that which you would normally use for your own validation processes. This information might include annual monitoring reports and student course committee minutes, as well as other information that deals with our SETs more specifically. For example, our visitors will need to see your equal opportunities policy to be sure that you put it into practice and monitor it properly. Your own validation panel may not usually need to see this as they would already be aware of it.

You can find more detail on the types of documents you may provide to meet all of our SETs in our publication Standards of education and training guidance which is available to download from our website.

Section three: The process in detail

You may also wish to submit documentation to illustrate how your own quality monitoring systems take into account the views of service users, practice placement providers and students. This documentation may come in the form of standard reports issued to commissioning or funding bodies, or engagement forums such as staff and student liaison committees.

When we receive a complete set of documents, we will send them to our visitors to review. We give our visitors two weeks to make any comments or provide feedback about the documents **if they feel it is necessary**. The feedback provided may reflect parts of the documents that need improving or areas with which they have concerns and would like to discuss further at the visit. Any feedback will be given in a format which links clearly to the SETs and the SOPs.

If the information you provide does not include the key documents listed, we will return them to you and give you an extra two weeks to provide the information we need. If, at the end of that two week period, we have not received a full set of documents, we will need to cancel the visit because we will not have enough time to prepare. If this happens to a new programme seeking approval and you still want your programme to be approved at a later date, you will be required to submit a new approval visit request form. If we have to cancel a visit to an already approved programme because the documentation has not been received, we will refer this to our ETC who will consider any available evidence from you. Our ETC can either decide on timescales for a rearranged visit or consider withdrawal of approval.

Agenda

The agenda for the visit will be negotiated with you. We also need to agree the various meetings for the visit. We have designed the standard agenda to include meetings with all

the relevant people who can help provide evidence of how a programme meets our standards. You may want to change the agenda in cases where you have a joint or multi-professional visit and are carrying out more than one validation process at the event. We understand that a **final** agenda may not be available until a few weeks before the visit, but you will need to send us your **draft** agenda at the same time as you send your documentation. When we have received the draft agenda, we will contact you to begin negotiations over the final agenda.

The agenda for an HPC approval visit includes:

- meetings of the joint panel to confirm agendas for individual meetings throughout the visit;
- a meeting with the senior staff who are responsible for programme resources;
- a meeting with the programme team;
- a meeting with students (past or present as appropriate);
- a meeting with the placement providers and educators;
- our own private meetings;
- a tour of learning resources, including the library, IT and specialist teaching areas.

There are detailed descriptions of the meetings held at an approval visit in Appendix one of this document.

It is your responsibility to make sure that the appropriate individuals are available to meet the HPC Panel, to find an independent chair and have a secretary to record the events of the visit. We produce a visitors' report for all visits but this is not in the form of minutes – it is an action-based record of our decisions mapped to the SETs. This is the document which we will send to our ETC for a final decision.

We also ask that you let the chair, and other members of the panel and your validation team (if you have one) know why we are there, and the implications for the students and the programme if we do not approve or withdraw approval from a programme. You can find a copy of our Guidelines for HPC approval visits on our website and we will also send it to you with your introduction pack. This information should be given to the chair and other people on the joint panel so that they are fully informed before the visit.

Part two – the visit

As we are an independent regulator, we must come to our decisions independently of everyone else. This is why we have a number of HPC private meetings during the visit. At the beginning of the first joint panel meeting for the visit, the education executive will explain our role to the joint panel and highlight the importance of us being independent and operating within the rules of the Order.

However, as we participate in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue, the joint panel meetings are also used to tell other members of the joint panel the areas which we want to ask questions about and hear the areas which their questions will cover. The chair will then help the joint panel organise the questions into a specific agenda for the meetings which follow.

During the visit, we need to make sure that the programme meets our SETs and that those who successfully complete the programme meet our SOPs. There are a large number of standards against which we must assess the programme, so we need to gather information to support the documents you have provided. We will do this by asking questions of various groups, viewing facilities, and listening to presentations. Any tour, presentations or questions will support your documents, and not replace them. We are happy for you to give us extra documents or access to internal websites at the visit. In fact, we may even ask

for extra information. However, you should consider this to be supplementary information only. We ask that you do not provide too much, as it is unreasonable to ask the visitors to read large amounts of information during the visit and this may result in conditions being placed on the programme.

We do not normally visit placement sites as part of an approval visit. However, we may visit placement areas in exceptional circumstances, for example if a specific concern has been raised by students or staff.

At the end of the visit, after we have gathered all the information we need, we will provide you with informal feedback if we feel it is appropriate. While we make every effort to provide the programme team with as much information as possible, there are times where providing feedback may not be appropriate. This could be:

- when there has not been enough time for the visitors to conclude their discussions;
- if important individuals were not present; or
- if further clarification is needed on particular areas.

If we do provide feedback at the end of the visit, it must be considered to be informal and not binding, as the visitors may amend their report after further deliberation. However, the visitors will not normally recommend that conditions are set in relation to issues that have not been discussed during the visit.

Part three – post-visit

The post-visit process takes at least eight to ten weeks to complete. The timescales will vary between programmes and depends on factors such as your ability to meet any conditions, our ETC dates and the times allowed for each step in the process. You can see the dates of all our ETC meetings on our website.

Visitors' report

Following the visit, we will write a visitors' report which we will send to you. We have up to **28 days** to write this report. However, we will do our best to get the report to you within 14 days of the visit.

The visitors' report is likely to contain proposed conditions, recommendations and commendations for the programme. We write all our visitors' reports in a standard format and we map them against each of the relevant SETs. The visitors' report is 'action-based' and does not provide a summary of discussions from the visit.

It is important to note that our visitors do not make the final decision on the programme; that is the responsibility of our ETC. The flow chart in section two of this document gives details of the stages at which our ETC is involved in the process.

Recommended outcomes that the visitors can make to our ETC are to:

- approve or reconfirm ongoing approval of the programme with no conditions;
- set conditions on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme is approved or ongoing approval is reconfirmed;
- not approve the programme; or
- withdraw approval from a programme previously granted open-ended approval.

The visitors may recommend a follow-up visit. This may apply when the only way to meet the conditions is through the normal meetings within an agenda, or where the nature of the conditions means that a visit is the most appropriate way of gathering evidence.

Follow-up action

After we have sent you the visitors' report, you will have **28 days** in which to make any observations on it, if you think it is appropriate. You might want to make observations on the report if, for example, you disagree with any conditions or believe that they are unfair. In these cases, you have the right to send your concerns to our ETC in writing. Even if you decide not to provide a formal response, you are still entitled to the full 28 days and we will not take any further action until this time has passed.

The Order states that all our visitors' reports must be published on our website at the end of the approval process. If you choose to make any observations to our ETC about the visitors' report, you will need to decide if you want to have your comments published on our website and let us know in writing when you send them.

If the visitors have recommended conditions for your programme, unless you inform us that you intend to object to the conditions, we will contact you within 28 days to negotiate a due date by which you must meet them. When deciding on a date, you will need to consider issues such as how long you think it will take you to meet the conditions, the start date of the programme or the next cohort, and the time we need for committee procedures. We will let you know the dates of our ETC meetings and negotiate a due date that suits both you and us.

After the 28 days have passed, we will send the visitors' report to our ETC at its next meeting, along with your observations (if you made any).

Is the visitors' recommended outcome to approve or reconfirm ongoing approval of the programme?

If 'yes', and the programme has no conditions, our ETC can approve or reconfirm ongoing approval of the programme at this stage. When the programme is approved or has its ongoing approval reconfirmed, we publish the visitors' report on our website and send you a formal letter of approval. The programme then has open-ended approval which we then monitor each year and we expect you to report any significant changes to us.

If 'yes', and the programme has conditions, our ETC has two options.

- 1. Accept the visitors' report including all conditions.** If the visitors' report has conditions, the recommended outcome will be that the programme is approved or has ongoing approval reconfirmed depending on you meeting certain conditions. If our ETC accepts the visitors' report, including all conditions, the approval process is effectively suspended until the agreed due date so that you have time to meet the conditions.
- 2. Consider changing the visitors' report.** This may be because of observations from you on the report or because the ETC feel that an element of the visitors' report is inappropriate. We will let you know in writing the outcome of our ETC and any changes we make to the report or comments made. Our ETC will not normally add new conditions to the report. At this stage, we suspend the approval process until the agreed due date so that you have time to meet the conditions.

In both these cases, we suspend the approval process until the due date for sending us further documents to meet the conditions

contained in the visitors' report. You must meet all the conditions in the visitors' report before the visitors can send a recommended outcome to the ETC that the programme is approved or has ongoing approval reconfirmed. We will send you a reminder email two weeks before the due date. If we do not receive documents by the due date, please see the section below entitled 'If you do not send a response to conditions by the due date'.

If 'no', the visitors recommended outcome is to not approve, or withdraw approval.

Our ETC will consider the recommended outcome and may decide that it needs to consider further whether to not approve the programme or withdraw approval from an already approved programme. In this case, we will send a formal letter to you with the decision and give you **28 days** to respond.

Our ETC will then consider the matter at the next meeting, taking account of any response from you. If you choose to make a response, you will need to do so in writing, and let us know if you want your response to be public. If our ETC decides to not approve your programme or withdraw approval from an already approved programme, we will let you know in writing and update our website. For already approved programmes this will include removing the programme from the list of approved programmes. If this happens, those individuals who complete the programme will not be entitled to apply for registration with us. If we make any other decision, we will let you know the outcome in writing and the subsequent actions that we will need to take.

If you send us a response to conditions by the due date

Once we have received the documents we need, we will send them to the visitors for their comment, feedback and recommended outcome for our ETC. They may decide that you have met the conditions, have met them partially or not met them at all.

Have you met the conditions?

If you have met all conditions, the visitors recommended outcome to our ETC will be that the programme is approved or has ongoing approval reconfirmed. We will let you know the ETC decision in writing and will update our website. The process then ends.

If you have partly met the conditions or not met them because the documents did not contain the necessary information, we will contact you to discuss any exceptional circumstances. We will tell you a new date for meeting the outstanding conditions. We may report progress at this stage to our ETC at its next meeting.

If you do not send a response to conditions by the due date

If you do not send us a response to conditions by the due date we will contact you again within a week of the due date. If you do not provide documents or do not give us a reason why you have not done so, within a week of the due date, we will send a report to our ETC. Our ETC may make the decision to not approve the programme or withdraw approval from an already approved programme. We will make every effort to keep you informed at each step of the process.

We do not take decisions about non-approval or withdrawal of approval lightly and will not make them simply because we do not hear from you. When we make this decision, we will let you know in writing and update our website. For already approved programmes this means that the programme will be removed from the list of approved programmes on the website. If you want to have the programme approved at a later date, you may begin the process again from the start.

Section four:

Independent education providers

An increasing number of independent education providers want us to approve their programmes. An independent education provider is an organisation which provides an education programme but which is not governed by a university and so does not have the powers to award degrees.

As independent providers are not governed by a university, they do not generally have in place a set structure to support their programmes. Nor do they all have experience in designing a curriculum. When we visit an education provider for the first time, we will be approving both the programme and the education provider at the visit.

We suggest you work with the relevant professional body and with education providers who already run approved programmes when designing your curriculum. If you are an independent provider considering our approval, please contact us for more advice.

Section five: What happens next?

Once we have approved a programme and granted 'open-ended' approval or reconfirmed ongoing approval, we monitor it each year. The processes of annual monitoring and major change work alongside our approval process and a visit to an already approved programme may be triggered by either process.

Throughout both processes we intend, as far as possible, to use and build upon your own processes for monitoring, drawing heavily upon your existing documentation to remove the need for regular visits.

Annual monitoring

Annual monitoring is a documentary, retrospective process where we consider whether a programme continues to meet our SETs and continues to effectively deliver and assess the SOPs.

We will contact you when you are due to submit annual monitoring. The annual monitoring cycle involves two different processes of annual monitoring submissions over a two year cycle.

The annual monitoring process operates alongside the major change process outlined below. You can find more detailed information in our document Annual monitoring – supplementary information for education providers or on our website.

Major change

The major change process requires you to notify us of any changes which significantly alter the way in which your programme continues to meet the SETs or continues to effectively deliver and assess the SOPs. This allows us to gather appropriate evidence to show that all the standards continue to be met.

When a change occurs to a programme we expect you to consider the impact on how the SETs and SOPs continue to be met. However, we do not require you to notify us of every

change to a programme. If a change does not have an impact on how a programme meets our standards it can be reported to us in annual monitoring. You should only notify us of changes to your programme that change:

- the overall way in which a programme meets our standards; and / or
- the way a programme is recorded on our website or database.

You can find more detailed information in our document Major change – supplementary information for education providers or on our website.

Section six: Glossary

Annual monitoring	Our annual process to ensure approved programmes continue to meet our SETs and SOPs.
Awarding institution	The education provider who validates / awards the final qualification.
Approval	Our process of validation and accreditation that leads to decisions about the ability of a programme to meet the requirements of our SETs.
Chair (independent chair)	An individual who is not associated with the programme in any way who you appoint to oversee the visit.
Commendation	Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.
Condition	Conditions are requirements that you must meet before the programme can be approved or have ongoing approval reconfirmed. Conditions are set when certain SETs have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.
Conflict of interest	When a visitor has a significant connection with an education provider or programme so they cannot visit that programme or provider.
Conflict of interest process	The process where we decide whether a visitor has a significant connection with an education provider or programme.
Education and Training Committee (ETC)	The statutory committee at the HPC with responsibility for education and training matters.
Education and Training Panel (ETP)	A panel of the ETC which considers visitors' reports and observations made by education providers. They may approve education programmes, qualifications and providers as well as major changes to programmes and the outcomes of the annual monitoring process.
Education provider	The establishment at which a programme is delivered or by which a qualification is awarded.
External examiners	Appointed by you to monitor the assessment process for the academic and the practice elements of programmes and to ensure that professional and academic standards are met.
Education executive	Our representative who is responsible for organising the visit.
HPC partner	See visitor.

HPC Panel	The panel which visits you to decide whether the programme meets our SETs. The panel will normally include an education executive and two trained HPC visitors, at least one of whom is from the relevant part of the HPC Register.
Independent education provider	An education provider which does not have powers to award degrees and which is not governed by an education provider with these powers.
Joint panel	The panel at the approval visit which may include your quality assurance staff, an independent chair, secretary, the HPC Panel, and representatives from any other validating organisations such as professional bodies.
Major change	A change to a programme which has a significant impact on teaching and learning or resources and on our SETs and SOPs.
Major change process	Our process for assessing if a change to a programme is major.
Open-ended approval	Where we approve programmes for an unlimited period depending on satisfactory monitoring.
Pre-registration programme	A programme which, once approved, gives successful students eligibility to apply to join our Register.
Programme	The academic provision, practice placements, assessment, qualification and education provider which in totality form the programme for approval purposes. This equates to an academic award.
Recommendation	Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval or ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular SET has been met at, or just above, the threshold level.
Secretary	An individual appointed by you to take an accurate written record of discussions during the visit.

Standards of education and training (SETs)

The standards which you must meet to ensure those completing an approved programme meet the SOPs.

Standards of proficiency (SOPs)

The standards required of registrants and those applying for registration for the safe and effective practice of their profession.

Visitor

An HPC partner we have appointed to visit, approve and monitor education programmes for the professions we regulate.

Visitors' report

A report written at the end of an approval visit. The report is in a standard format and may contain conditions, recommendations and commendations.

Section seven:

HPC reference documents

Document	Date of publication
Standards of proficiency for arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists / podiatrists, clinical scientists, dietitians, occupational therapists, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, prosthetists / orthotists, radiographers, speech and language therapists	Originally published July 2003 Republished October 2007
Standards of proficiency for operating department practitioners	Originally published July 2004 Republished October 2008
Key decisions from our consultation on the standards of education and training and the approvals process	September 2004
Standards of education and training	Originally published October 2005 Republished July 2009
Major change – supplementary information for education providers	Originally published February 2006 Republished February 2008
Annual monitoring – supplementary information for education providers	Originally published November 2006 Republished October 2008
Standards of education and training guidance	Originally published January 2007 Republished July 2009
Guidelines for HPC approval visits	December 2007
Regulatory status advertising guidelines for education providers	December 2007
Standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists	July 2009

All documents and further information can be found at www.hpc-uk.org

Section eight: Contact details

If you have any questions, please contact us at:

Education Department
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184 Kennington Park Road
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London SE11 4BU

tel +44 (0)20 7840 9812
fax +44 (0)20 7820 9684

approvals@hpc-uk.org

Appendix one:

Meetings at an approval visit

During the visit, we will normally meet with the following groups and ask them questions about the programme and how it meets our standards. Before the visit, we will have received documents relating to the programme. This information forms the basis of the discussions that will be held with these groups.

Students – the purpose of this meeting is to get students' views of their experiences of the programme provided and of you. For a new programme, this may involve students from a similar programme. For an existing programme, this will include students from a range of years and will involve past students if possible. This meeting will not involve members of the programme team.

Placement providers and placement educators – meeting the placement providers gives us an opportunity to investigate the standards relating to placements. Discussions will focus mainly on issues such as assessment, monitoring, health and safety, student support and placement support. The meeting will involve those responsible for supervising students on placement and managing placements.

Programme team – this is the team responsible for delivering the programme and will include the programme leader, tutors, lecturers and the placement coordinator. If a programme is offered with another provider, members of both teams will be present. The discussion will focus mainly on delivering the programme, students' experiences, curriculum and assessment and support for placements.

Senior management staff – this meeting is designed to establish the position of the programme in your business plan and to explore how the programme is managed overall including issues of funding and providing resources. This meeting involves those people responsible for strategic areas of the programme and may include people such as the dean or associate dean of the faculty,

head of school and representatives from funding bodies or commissioners.

HPC private meetings – as we are an independent regulator, we must come to our decisions independently of the joint panel. As a result, we hold HPC private meetings throughout the visit to make our decisions and decide on the areas of the programme we need to further explore.

Tour of resources – during the tour we will expect to see the facilities used to support teaching and learning. You might want to show us the library and IT facilities which students will have access to and arrange for us to meet subject librarians and support technicians. Where appropriate we will expect to see the subject-specific teaching rooms such as laboratories or clinical skills suites.

Joint panel meetings – in the joint panel meeting, the HPC Panel will discuss the outcomes of the HPC private meeting with the members of the joint panel. This might mean that we are telling a validation panel and professional or regulatory body representatives the areas in which we want to ask questions and also hearing what their questions might be. The chair will then help the joint panel to organise the questions into a specific agenda for the meetings that follow.

Appendix two:

Approval visit request form

Programme and education provider information	
Name of education provider	
Name of awarding / validating body (if different from education provider)	
Name of programme	
Mode(s) of study	<input type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please provide details)
Duration of programme	
Name of school / faculty (to which the programme belongs)	
Post-registration entitlement (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> Supplementary prescribing (SP) <input type="checkbox"/> Local anaesthetic (LA) <input type="checkbox"/> Prescription-only medicine (POM)
Qualification(s) leading to eligibility to register with the HPC (eg BSc (Hons))	
Annual monitoring date (usual month that annual monitoring is signed off by your institution)	
Date of next periodic review / revalidation (if known)	
Does this approval affect other programmes eg discontinuation of a previous programme? If so, please provide details.	

Contact information	
Position	Dean / Head of faculty / school
Title (eg Dr, Prof, Mr, Mrs)	
Name	
Telephone	
Email	
Position	Programme Leader
Title (eg Dr, Prof, Mr, Mrs)	
Name	

Appendix two:
Approval visit request form

Contact information	
Telephone	
Email	
Position	Quality assurance officer
Title (eg Dr, Prof, Mr, Mrs)	
Name	
Telephone	
Email	
Which of the above is the main contact for the visit?	
Visit information	
Reason for the visit	<input type="checkbox"/> New programme (seeking HPC approval for the first time) <input type="checkbox"/> New profession
Type of visit	<input type="checkbox"/> HPC visit <input type="checkbox"/> Joint visit <input type="checkbox"/> Multi-professional visit
If a joint or multi-professional visit please provide further details (eg internal validation)	
Proposed student numbers	
Proposed start date of programme	(dd/mm/yyyy)
Three suggested dates for the visit NB: We require six months' notice for a visit, which cannot take place less than three months before a programme is due to start. Visits usually take two days, but SP / LA / POM take one day.	1. (dd/mm/yyyy) 2. (dd/mm/yyyy) 3. (dd/mm/yyyy) Visits are not held on Mondays.

Note: Programme approvals are dealt with as public business by our Education and Training Committee. Therefore, you should expect details of this request to be in the public domain. If asked, we will only provide factually accurate statements about a programme (eg that it is not approved) and will not speculate on the outcome of the approval process.

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Publication code 20080918fAPV (printed July 2009)

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