

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice, Full time BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice Integrated Apprenticeship, Full time
Approval visit date	21-22 May 2020
Case reference	CAS-15137-Y8V2B9

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Executive Summary

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.

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

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards 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.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

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 undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The 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 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](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Tony Scripps	Operating department practitioner
Julie Weir	Operating department practitioner
Temilolu Odunaike	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the virtual approval visit

There were other groups involved with the approval process as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Guy Brown	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Rheanneon Kelly	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Gemma Metcalfe-Glasgow	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Rosina Thompson	Northumbria University attendee	Northumbria University at Newcastle

Heidi Robinson	Northumbria University attendee	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Mike Donnellan	Professional body representative	College of Operating Department Practitioners (CODP)
Deborah Robinson	External Subject Specialist	University of Hull
Mark Moss	Internal validation panel	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Jess Tindall	Internal validation panel	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Kirsty Jameson	Internal validation panel	Northumbria University at Newcastle

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Operating department practitioner
Proposed First intake	01 September 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 40
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02177

Programme name	BSc (Hons) in Operating Department Practice Integrated Apprenticeship
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Operating department practitioner
Proposed First intake	01 September 2020
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 15
Intakes per year	1
Assessment reference	APP02178

We undertook this assessment of new programmes proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involved consideration of documentary evidence and a virtual approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we ask for certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Type of evidence	Submitted	Comments
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes	
Information about the programme, including relevant policies and procedures, and contractual agreements	Yes	
Descriptions of how the programme delivers and assesses learning	Yes	
Proficiency standards mapping	Yes	
Information provided to applicants and learners	Yes	
Information for those involved with practice-based learning	Yes	
Information that shows how staff resources are sufficient for the delivery of the programme	Yes	
Internal quality monitoring documentation	Not required	The programme is new and has not run.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education provider decided to move this event to a virtual (or remote) approval visit. In the table below, we have noted the meeting held, along with reasons for not meeting certain groups (where applicable):

Group	Met	Comments
Learners	No	As this was a virtual visit and, because the visitors did not have areas to address with this group, we decided that it was unnecessary to meet with them.
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	No	As above
Facilities and resources	Yes	
Senior staff	Yes	
Practice educators	Yes	
Programme team	Yes	

Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the virtual approval visit, the visitors' recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However,

the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 10 July 2020.

2.1 The admissions process must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that appropriate information about the programme is provided to potential applicants through the education provider's website, to allow them to make an informed decision about taking up a place on the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the programme handbook and programme specification as evidence for these standards and they were satisfied that information that would assist applicants in their decision making about the programme was contained within the programme documentation. However, as these documents are not made available to potential applicants, the visitors were unclear how the education provider will ensure applicants have this information prior to applying, in order to be able to make an informed decision about the programme. The visitors also reviewed the education provider's website prior to the visit but they noted that the website had not been updated with clear information areas about the programme. The visitors noted that information about additional costs, for instance travel and accommodation costs was not available on the website.

At the visit, the visitors heard that the programme team intended to update the website with the appropriate information once the programme is approved. As the visitors were unable to determine how potential applicants - who would not have access to the programme documentation – would have the information required to decide on the programme, they could not determine that this standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to update their website with the appropriate information about the programme or provide a finished text of the information that would go on the website before it is uploaded. This way, they can be assured that potential applicants would have access to this information and they can then determine whether this standard is met.

2.6 There must be an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants' prior learning and experience.

Condition: For the Degree Apprenticeship programme, the education provider must provide further evidence that clearly demonstrates that there is an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants' prior learning and experience.

Reason: From their review of the documentation, the visitors were unclear what the process for recognition of prior learning (RPL) would be for the degree apprenticeship (DA) programme. The visitors noted from their review of the DA programme specification, that learners may RPL the first year of the 3-year programme, provided they meet the required standards, which included completing 1200 hours in theory and 544 hours in practice. However, the visitors were unclear how applicants or employers would know what constitute "practice" in prior learning or what is required of applicants

as this was not made clear within the documentation. During discussions with the programme team, the visitors heard that, for instance, someone working in a theatre, for example a healthcare assistant with level 4 qualification can RPL into year 2 whereas someone without theatre experience will need to start from year 1. In the practice educators meeting, the visitors heard that a potential DA candidate could be someone “with enough experience such as a support worker”. They also heard that the employers would consider “those with professional exposure”.

Given the complexity of the RPL process for the DA programme, the visitors could not ascertain that there is a clear guidance for employers and the education provider to follow to assess individual applicant’s prior learning and experience. The visitors considered that there is lack of clarity within the programme documentation to demonstrate how the employers would be able to justify their decisions and to manage applicants’ expectations. Therefore, the visitors require that the education provider provide clear information specific to the complexity of the programme to both the applicants as well as the employers. The visitors require that the information provided demonstrate there is a clear agreement between the education provider and the employers in order for them to know what is acceptable for RPL and that staff involved are well informed and understand the process. This way they would be able to determine the appropriateness and effectiveness of the RPL process and thereby make a judgement about whether this standard is met.

3.18 The education provider must ensure learners, educators and others are aware that only successful completion of an approved programme leads to eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revise programme documentation to clearly state that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for HCPC registration.

Reason: From their review of the documentation provided, the visitors noted that page 6 of the programme handbook stated that the programme will prepare learners “to be safe, competent and knowledgeable practitioner and eligible for registration with the HCPC.” The visitors noted that learners, educators or the public may find this information confusing as completion of programmes do not guarantee access onto the HCPC Register. Rather, it gives eligibility to apply for registration. Although the education provider did provide correct information about eligibility to apply for HCPC registration in some other parts of the programme documentation, the visitors considered that the information provided throughout the documentation needs to be clear and accurate. They therefore request that the education provider revise both handbooks to show that successful completion of the programmes leads to eligibility to apply for HCPC registration.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that learners meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

4.5 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the programme.

The following condition applies to the above standards. For simplicity, as the issue spans several standards, the education provider should respond to this condition as one issue.

Condition: To ensure learners are prepared and competent for practice, and that theory and practice are effectively integrated, the education provider must ensure that the learning outcomes for module '6016: Leadership and management' ensure learners meet SOP 13.6: (understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice).

Reason: The visitors reviewed the programme specifications, programme handbooks and the module descriptors as evidence for these standards. From their review, the visitors noted that the level 6 module 6016: Leadership and management appeared to focus largely on skills with minimal focus on leadership theory. The visitors were unable to ascertain how the learning outcomes of this module would enable learners to meet SOP 13.6 (understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice). At the visit, the programme team explained that the BSc programmes (the DA and standard programmes) would focus on advanced skills, surgical assistance, critical analysis and quality, which are not available on the DipHE programme. They further explained that learners would have spent time in leadership roles working alongside and shadowing managers. However, the visitors noted this was not clearly articulated in the programme documentation.

The visitors could not see how the achievement of SOP 13.6 which is associated with this module will be taught and achieved. As such, they were unable to determine how learners would acquire the leadership skills they are expected to have to be able to practise competently as regulated professionals. In addition, the visitors noted that one of the year 3 practice modules is intended to deliver skills in leadership & management in perioperative practice. However, there was no evidence to show this is linked to the theory part of the programme. As the visitors could not see that leadership skills would be taught in theory, they were unable to determine how the skills would then be appropriately linked to practical teaching in a way that is relevant and meaningful to learners. The education provider must therefore ensure the module learning outcomes are revised to ensure SOP 13.6 is met and that there is effective integration of theory and practice to ensure learners are prepared and competent for practice.

4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the formal process to obtain consent from learners when they participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, and how they ensure learners understand what they are consenting to, to demonstrate its effectiveness.

Reason: The education provider referenced a section of the programme specification and the module descriptors which highlight the importance of obtaining consent by linking it to the programme outcomes for learners. The visitors noted that there was no explicit information provided on the process by which the education provider obtains consent from learners when they act as service users in practical and clinical teaching. The visitors also could not see information that showed how learners would be made aware of what types of activities they are consenting to.

At the visit, the programme team explained that learners will need to give their consent when they take part in role plays and for research and that consent is obtained on a case-by-case basis. They also stated that completed consent forms are checked by their ethics team. The education provider further explained that learners taking part in simulation may opt out if they do not want to take part. For instance, if this is due to

disability or sickness and that cameras can be moved away if learners do not wish to take part. Through these discussions, the visitors understood how the education provider obtains consent from learners. However, they considered that the programme documentation did not demonstrate how learners would understand what they are consenting to. As such the visitors could not determine that the consent process was effective. Therefore, they require that the education provider makes clear in the programme documentation and from a learner's point of view, their process of obtaining consent from learners to ensure learners are fully aware of what they are consenting to. This would in turn ensure that learners fully understand what is expected of them as health and care professionals, whilst respecting their individual rights and reducing the risk of harm.

5.3 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate in the programme documentation that the system used to approve and ensure the quality of practice-based learning is appropriate, thorough and effective.

Reason: The visitors were provided with web links to evidence this standard. The visitors noted that the web pages provided general information about practice-based learning for nursing, midwifery and operating department practice programmes. The visitor also reviewed the Practice Learning: Ensuring Quality document. The visitors noted that this document made references to Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) quality requirements. However, there was no information about the quality assurance systems in place specifically for operating department practitioners in practice-based learning. As such, the visitors could not determine that the system for approving and ensuring quality of practice-based learning for this programme was effective. Therefore, the education provider must review their practice-based learning quality assurance document to ensure it is appropriate, thorough and effective at ensuring quality of practice-based learning for operating department practitioners.

5.8 Learners and practice educators must have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure learners and practice educators have the information for them to be prepared for practice-based learning in a timely manner, particularly the practice assessment document (PAD) and the Ongoing record of Achievement (ORA).

Reason: The visitors noted from their documentary review that learners would be provided with their placement allocation information at least four weeks prior to commencing practice-based learning in order for them to prepare for the speciality. The visitors also noted from their review that there are two assessment documents to be used to assess learners in practice-based learning. These include the PAD and the ORA. The visitors saw that the ORA is to be used in conjunction with the PAD. At the visit, the programme team explained to the visitors that the PAD will be used by both learners and practice educators to assess learners' competencies whilst the ORA is used by learners to assist them in articulating where they are in their level of competency. However, the practice educators in their meeting did not appear to be fully aware how the PAD and the ORA would work.

As the practice educators did not have a clear understanding of how the assessment tools would be used to assess learners in practice-based learning, the visitors could not be certain that they would have the needed information in time to be prepared for practice-based learning. As such, the visitors require that the education provider makes clear to all practice educators and learners how the assessment methods, specifically the PAD and the ORA will work. The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure the information is provided in a timely manner in order for both learners and practice educators to be prepared for practice-based learning.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that the assessment of the learning outcomes for module '6016: Leadership and management' ensure learners meet SOP 13.6 (understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice).

Reason: The documentation provided prior to the visit included module specifications, and programme handbooks which gave information about how the assessment strategy and design will ensure learners who successfully complete the programmes meet the SOPs. As noted in the reasoning for the condition under SET 4.1, the visitors noted that the learning outcomes for module '6016: Leadership and management' focused heavily on skills, rather than leadership theory. As such, they could not determine how the assessment of these learning outcomes will ensure learners are able to meet SOP 13.6 to which it relates.

Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating how the assessment of module 6016 will ensure learners meet SOP 13.6 for operating department practitioners. In this way, they can determine whether this standard is met.

6.4 Assessment policies must clearly specify requirements for progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that clearly articulates how progression and achievement in module 6016 are communicated to learners to ensure they understand the risk of not passing part of the assessment which would lead to them not progressing or fully completing this aspect of the programmes.

Reason: From their documentary review, the visitors noted that there were two parts that make up the assessment for module 6016. The visitors noted that part one was an assessment (drug calculations) that carried a 30% of the weighting overall but has attached to it a 100% pass mark. Part two, on the other hand was an assessment that carried 70% of the weighting overall but has a standard university pass mark which is generally 40%. From the above, the visitors were unclear about what might prevent a learner from progressing if they failed part one of the assessment. From reviewing the documents and through discussions at the visit, the visitors understood that in most of the other modules, learners may be able to accumulate marks sufficient to pass. However, they noted that the 6016 module does not permit progress in the same way as the other modules even if a learner were to achieve sufficient marks elsewhere (a pass in part two). The visitors noted that in the assessment of this module, there are no

compensations which meant both parts need to be passed with part one at 100%. They noted that this was not clearly communicated to learners in the programme documentation. As such, the visitors could not determine how the learners would fully understand what is expected of them at this stage of the programmes. They therefore require the education provider to clearly specify to learners in the programme documentation, requirements for progression and achievement for module 6016. This would allow learners to fully understand the risk of failure that would lead to them not progressing or fully completing this aspect of the programmes.

Recommendations

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

5.8 Learners and practice educators must have the information they need in a timely manner in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to ensure it clearly defines the different roles and responsibilities of the “educators” involved in practice-based learning.

Reason: Although the visitors are content that this standard is met at threshold, they noted there were discrepancies in the terms used for individuals that support learners in practice-based learning. The visitors noted throughout the documentation instances where this group of people were referred to as practice assessors and other instances where they were referred to as practice educators. The visitors also noted that the practice educators themselves were not fully clear whether there were differences in these roles. As such, the visitors considered that the education provider should make clear in the programme documentation and to everyone involved in practice-based learning, the different roles so that everyone understands what is expected and required for the practice-based learning to be safe and effective.

Section 5: Visitors’ recommendation

Considering the education provider’s response to the conditions set out in section 4, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 20 August 2020 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC’s decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).