
Approval process report

Brunel University London. Occupational Therapy / Physiotherapy 2023-24

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve programmes at Brunel University London. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programmes against our standards, to ensure learners who complete the proposed programmes are fit to practice.

We have:

- Reviewed the institution against our institution-level standards and found that our standards are met in this area.
- Reviewed the programmes against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area.
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programmes should be approved.

Through this assessment, we have noted how the programmes meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	N/A
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Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programmes are approved.
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Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • Subject to the Panel's decision, the programmes will be approved and begin following the panel meeting.
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Section 1: About this assessment

About us

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

This is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the programmes detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programmes approval / ongoing approval.

Our standards

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

Our regulatory approach

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

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

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

The approval process

Institutions and programmes must be approved by us before they can run. The approval process is formed of two stages:

- Stage 1 – we take assurance that institution level standards are met by the institution delivering the proposed programmes

- Stage 2 – we assess to be assured that programme level standards are met by each proposed programme.

Through the approval process, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess whether providers and programmes meet standards based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. Our standards are split along institution and programme level lines, and we take assurance at the provider level wherever possible.

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

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence-based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

The assessment panel for this review

We appointed the following panel members to support this review:

Fleur Kitsell	Lead visitor, Physiotherapist – Educationalist, Practitioner
Jennifer Caldwell	Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist - Educationalist
Alistair Ward-Boughton-Leigh	Education Quality Officer

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers six HCPC-approved programmes across three professions. It is a Higher Education Provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 1997.

The Education Provider is currently also seeking approval of an MA Dramatherapy programme and a Postgraduate Prescribing programme. They also engaged with HCPC with Performance Review for the period 2018-2021 with no referrals to any other process.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programmes awards can be found in [Appendix 2](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Arts therapist	☐ Undergraduate	☒ Postgraduate	2021
	Occupational therapy	☒ Undergraduate	☒ Postgraduate	1997
	Physiotherapist	☒ Undergraduate	☒ Postgraduate	1993

Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

This data is for existing provision at the institution, and does not include the proposed programmes.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
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Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	694	709	2022	The benchmark figure is data we have captured from previous interactions with the education provider, such as through initial programme approval, and / or through previous performance review assessments. Resources available for the benchmark number of learners was assessed and accepted through these processes. But the visitors should assess this through the relevant stage 2 standards. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	3%	2020-21	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects The data point is equal to the benchmark, which suggests the provider's performance in this area is in line with sector norms When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 1% The visitors may want to consider this in their assessment. But as the education provider is performing along the benchmark there may not be any specific point to explore further.

Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	92%	2020-21	This data was sourced from a data delivery. This means the data is a bespoke HESA data return, filtered bases on HCPC-related subjects The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has dropped by 5% This is quite a significant drop and also means the education provider is now below the benchmark. In previous years they were at a similar level to the benchmark. The visitors factored this into their assessment and considered if any actions were required.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	Bronze	2023	The definition of a Bronze TEF award is "Provision is of satisfactory quality." We did not explore this data point through this assessment because we recognise the achievement of a Bronze award is still an achievement.
National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score	79.9%	73.9%	2024	This data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects The data point is below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing below sector norms When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 7% We did not explore this data point through this assessment because even though the education provider

				is performing below the benchmark. They have improved significantly in recent years.
HCPC performance review cycle length		2025-26	2 years	The education provider achieved a 4-year ongoing monitoring period at their last Performance review. No areas were referred from the last review (2021-22). 4 years is also the second-longest review period we can award.

We also considered data points / intelligence from others (e.g. prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England (NHSE); The Executive regularly engage with NHSE to keep updated on sectoral developments and practice-based learning placement shortage. We have been informed that both professions have been affected / impacted by placement shortages. We have made the visitors aware of this and ensured that they factored this into their findings.
- The education provider informed us that the addition of these new programmes will not be impacted by this. This is because the new programmes will use placement capacity from existing programmes (who will in turn lower their future learner number intakes to accommodate the new programmes).

The route through stage 1

Institutions which run HCPC-approved provision have previously demonstrated that they meet institution-level standards. When an existing institution proposes a new programme, we undertake an internal review of whether we need to undertake a full partner-led review against our institution level standards, or whether we can take assurance that the proposed programmes aligns with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programmes, the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

Admissions

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Information for applicants –**
 - The education provider's admissions policy and procedures outline the principles and processes for selecting and admitting learners, covering all levels of study and learning modes. Their Provost is responsible for

admissions, supplemented at the departmental level, to meet specific professional requirements.

- The education provider offers online and on-campus open days, providing profession-specific information and taster sessions to help applicants understand healthcare education. Learner ambassadors, including those from minority ethnic groups, are available year-round to guide prospective applicants. Each programme also has an admission tutor to assist potential applicants with information and support.
- These policies are on the education provider's website and available for all applicants to the proposed programme. This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

- **Assessing English language, character, and health –**

- The education provider has discussed the existing English proficiency requirements for applicants who speak English as a second language. This is outlined on their website and will apply to the proposed programmes. They have stated that where English is not the applicant's first language, recent evidence (within the last four years) of proficiency in the English language will be required. Their admissions criteria include GCSE English to grade C, an IELTS score of 7, Cambridge exam proficiency at grade C or Cambridge Advanced at grade B.
- The education provider has also stated that all applicants must complete a Health Declaration Questionnaire, which the Brunel University London Occupational Health Department screens. In situations of doubt, candidates will be assessed by a University's Occupational Health team member.
- The education provider has also detailed in their baseline document how their admissions policy sets out the approach to making a decision on applications, which includes assessments to ensure learners can communicate in English, their character, and whether any health checks are required.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L) –**

- The education provider has discussed how their admission policy recognises prior learning and experience procedures. The policy sets out the approach to deciding on applications which may include of any experiential or prior learning. This they stated will initially be assessed from an applicant's personal statement, reference and/or CV, where these are submitted. Where an applicant needs to take part in an interview to join the course the assessor(s) may ask questions to assess for APEL. Information on this is also detailed in their 'Exemption Policy'.
- This Policy is set at the institution level and applies to all taught programmes. It allows the flexibility to accept credit gained at another

HEI or to recognise prior experiential or certificated learning as an exemption for their own credits, up to a maximum of 50% of the taught elements of an award. To accept exemptions, there must be a check of learning outcome coverage.

- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and is appropriate for the proposed programmes. This is also detailed in their existing baseline document.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
 - The education provider has discussed their commitment to ensuring equal opportunities and an excellent learner experience for the entire community. Their Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy, “Social Justice for All 2021-2024,” aims to enhance fairness and inclusivity, focusing on social justice. The strategy addresses learners, employees, contractors, and visitors, emphasising the importance of dismantling barriers and structural inequalities to foster an inclusive culture.
 - Their strategy outlines six guiding principles: being well-informed, respectful, enabling, inspirational, integrating, and self-reflective. They explained how it builds on their previous Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy, detailing current progress, future priorities, and an action plan with clear targets and responsibilities. The education provider has focused on the impact of COVID-19 on marginalised groups and is committed to continuous adaptation. Annual reviews by relevant committees ensure transparency and responsiveness, with an Advisory Group and the broader community encouraged to contribute.
 - To support these efforts, the education provider has established several committees focused on EDI. They held a symposium in May 2023 to address ethnicity degree awarding gaps, and multiple action research projects have been initiated to tackle these gaps, supported by a formal Access and Participation Plan.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and will be applied to the proposed programmes.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Management and governance

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Ability to deliver provision to expected threshold level of entry to the Register¹ –**
 - The education provider has discussed how they have developed excellent relationships with their external partners both in the UK and internationally.

¹ This is focused on ensuring providers are able to deliver qualifications at or equivalent to the level(s) in SET 1, as required for the profession(s) proposed

- They have also discussed how their well-established BSc (Hons) and pre-reg MSc Physiotherapy routes consistently score highly on the National Student Survey (NSS). They also discussed their excellent reputation locally and more widely across NHS Trusts.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Sustainability of provision –**
 - The education provider has detailed how their strategy contributes to the mission to educate and transform individuals to exceed their potential and who will contribute to the complexities of wider society and beyond. They explained that they currently have a diverse learner population, and their active promotion of widening participation and successful achievement into professional employment sits within their strategic agenda.
 - The education provider has discussed how it is committed to improving graduate outcomes and achieving high levels of employability for graduates locally.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Effective programme delivery –**
 - The education provider has discussed how they have built their reputation by delivering programmes and courses for pre-registration and post-registration practitioners in Nursing, Health and Social Care.
 - They explained their successful and well-established pre-registration Physiotherapy programme (BSc, MSc). Additionally, they have a post-registration MSc Advanced Clinical Practice (Ofsted Outstanding) and PgC Musculoskeletal Ultrasound programmes (CASE accredited).
 - They have also detailed how their programmes are supported by professional services teams who work with the academic team to develop, deliver and govern all programmes.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Effective staff management and development –**
 - The education provider has detailed how their multidisciplinary teams has extensive expertise in the acute and primary care setting. This is in addition to practice learning, placement support skills, simulation and moulage and specialist roles in advanced clinical practice, advanced practice. Their interprofessional learning and education strategy is enhanced and further expanded by building on their institution's existing knowledge and skill set.
 - Furthermore, their academic staff have access to professional development activities and required compliance training. Staff will review their development needs with their line manager during their annual Performance Development Reviews (PDR).
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level –**
 - The education provider discussed how they have long-term established relationships in multiple countries. They explained how this is a result of the work of their Vice Dean International, and they have had a pipeline of learners from those countries for many years. They stated that learner numbers are sustainable and are likely to continue growing.
 - They discussed that other established partnerships are in place with local NHS Trust partners. They explained how these have been established for a number of years and are backed by their experienced team.”
 - The education provider has also referred to the ‘Brunel Partners Academic Centre for Health Sciences (BPACHS). BPACHS’ principal focus will be to deliver transformed physical and mental health care and social care provision through training, education, research and knowledge transfer.
 - They stated that the centre will also be a gateway to broader engagement with other disciplines at the education provider. This includes arts and humanities, business, computer science, engineering, law, mathematics and social sciences.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Academic quality –**
 - The education provider has stated that all programmes and short courses are reviewed annually via their annual programme review process. Additionally, every three to four years, programmes will undergo periodic monitoring, which involves a structured review of their ongoing compliance with regulatory standards and educational quality.
 - They also stated that approvals for new programmes are overseen by the Quality Assurance department at the education provider and go through a robust approval process.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments –**
 - The education provider has discussed how all placements are audited for their quality of placement provision using the Pan-London placement audit tool.
 - The department responsible for the proposed program has a placements team that oversees the governance of placements. They

have said that Practice assessors support HCPC learners who require placements organised by the education provider. They also have practice tutors in place who are the learner's personal tutors.

- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

- **Learner involvement –**

- The education provider has detailed that learners are involved and contribute to the programmes. They have actively participated in formal and informal discussion forums and constructively contributed to evaluating the existing nursing programmes.
- The education provider has discussed how it actively involves learners as partners in designing, delivering, and reviewing its academic programs. They stated that this collaborative approach is supported by a strong relationship with the Union of Brunel Students (UBS), where Vice Presidents from each College participate in formal governance structures. Learner representation they have stated is also integral to various university committees, including the Student Experience Committee, College Education Committee, College Management Board, and Senate. Learners are also engaged in bespoke meetings and discussions during the programmes' developmental stages, particularly at Stage 3 Programme Design.
- They have also explained how the review of academic programmes is primarily conducted through the Annual Monitoring of Taught Programmes. This includes learner representatives in enhancement discussions and incorporates feedback from learner surveys and Boards of Studies meetings. Additionally, the Periodic Programme Review (PPR), held every five years, involves taught and research learners and elected UBS members, ensuring comprehensive learner participation in the evaluation process.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

- **Service user and carer involvement –**

- The education provider has discussed how partnerships working with Service Users and Carers (experts by experience) are also crucial to learner learning. They already have an established group within the College of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences (the college). Their experts, by experience, currently support learning from the recruitment process and contribute to the delivery and evaluation of the existing programme.
- They have also detailed how their College of Health, Medicine and Life Sciences has constituted a Service User and Carers Working Group (SUC). This group has the responsibility for the coordination and provision of service users and carers for their pre-registration healthcare programmes.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Learners

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Support –**
 - The education provider has detailed how Student Services provides non-academic support and guidance to learners from enrolment to graduation. This includes counselling, welfare and wellbeing, disability support, money matters, and international learner advice.
 - They have also discussed the range of resources within the University and College. These include:
 - Academic library support extends to learners and academic staff. The resources include relevant databases, an expanding journal repository—electronic and hard copy—and supportive library service-related seminars and tutorials where relevant.
 - Digital skills support- a team that provides guidance and support for learners with digital skills.
 - The Academic Skills Services (ASK) – a team that provides guidance for learners in numeracy, statistics, presentation and academic writing skills. The team also facilitates online resources and individual tutorials as required.
 - Learner well-being service to ensure equality, diversity and inclusion for all learners during their course of study whilst at the university. The academic and wider team facilitates a structured referral process to ensure learners access the appropriate services and are supported accordingly.
 - A Learning Technologist who supports and provides expertise to the team using digital technology and pedagogic advice, support and training in the wider aspects of digital education, blended learning, curriculum design and development.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Ongoing suitability –**
 - The education provider has stated that learners are taught the professional expectations and regulations regarding conduct and ethics. They must consistently demonstrate these standards both during and outside of their programs. Professional behaviours are developed and monitored throughout all modules. A learner exhibiting unprofessional behaviour during an assessment can result in a failing grade, regardless of their performance in other components.
 - Professional development modules support learners in developing professional behaviours and attributes. Failing a professional development module is taken seriously, and learners who do not meet the requirements on a second attempt may be withdrawn from the

programme. Failing a practice placement raises concerns about a learner's professional suitability. Learners who fail more than one practice placement within an academic year may be withdrawn from the program without further reassessment opportunities.

- They have also explained that when a learner's behaviour, performance, or health raises questions about their professional suitability, they are referred to the University Professional Suitability Regulations and Procedure. This procedure outlines how the university responds to such concerns and the actions it may take to address and support the learner.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E) –**
 - The Professor for Interprofessional Learning (IPL) and the Department of Health Sciences Director of IPL are responsible promote interprofessional education within the health professions to enhance learning and strengthen relationships to improve healthcare quality.
 - The education provider has discussed how expanding the new College to include Brunel Medical School allows them to re-focus their education strategy to encompass interprofessional learning.
 - They also discussed how their College Education Hub promotes innovative teaching methods, including IPL. Additionally, the new MSc in Clinical Education includes a core module, "Facilitating Interprofessional Learning".
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Equality, diversity and inclusion –**
 - The education provider has discussed the range of existing policies for this section. This includes their bullying and harassment policy, which ensures they meet their legal obligations in handling such issues seriously and appropriately. This policy aims to support affected learners by providing advice and directing them to relevant agencies. Additionally, it guides staff in assisting learners who have experienced bullying or harassment.
 - Their Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment policy ensures that incidents are addressed with the utmost seriousness and appropriate support is provided. The policy includes provisions for offering advice and directing affected individuals to appropriate agencies, as well as supporting staff in assisting those impacted by sexual violence or harassment.
 - The education provider has a religion and belief policy that promotes an inclusive environment for all learners, regardless of their faith. This policy ensures equal opportunities and support throughout the academic journey, offering guidance on learning, research, and religious observance. It also emphasizes that bullying or harassment based on religion or belief will not be tolerated and outlines the support

available to learners. Additionally, there are policies in place to support learners with disabilities, long-term health conditions, mental health concerns, learning difficulties, and those with caregiving responsibilities.

- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and is detailed in their existing baseline document. These policies will apply to the new programmes and are appropriate.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:

- **Objectivity –**
 - The education provider has stated that all learners have an assessment brief. This sets out the requirements of the assessment, the relevance (authenticity), and how it links to future assessments. A template for assessment briefs and feedback has been developed within the Division of Nursing and has been disseminated across the Department of Health Sciences.
 - Their senate regulations outline the roles and responsibilities of External Examiners, who ensure that assessment processes measure learner achievement rigorously and fairly against the programme's intended outcomes. They approve assessments, scrutinise learners' work, and review internal moderation. The Programme Approval Policy requires new and major modifications to taught programmes to be reviewed by a Design Review Panel, including at least one external subject specialist, to ensure the appropriateness of learning outcomes and planned assessments.
 - Panels of Examiners and Boards of Examiners, defined in their regulations, are responsible for confirming the integrity and fairness of the assessment process. They are also responsible for making decisions about learner performance and progression. These processes are conducted anonymously and follow predefined rules to ensure objective decisions.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Progression and achievement –**
 - The education provider has discussed how standard progression and award requirements are set at the institution level and defined in their senate regulations. Any variations to the senate regulations or individual requirements for a programme are defined in the related programme specification.
 - Details of accrediting bodies, the accreditation requirements, and which awards lead to eligibility to apply for registration are provided in

programme specifications and the progression and award requirements sections.

- Attendance requirements and outcomes of not meeting the requirements are also defined in the programme specifications. Attendance is recorded and monitored throughout each programme. Where a learner's level of attendance raises concerns.
- This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.
- **Appeals –**
 - The education provider has discussed their Academic Appeal process, which is a request to review a decision of a Board of Examiners. The board are charged with making decisions on learner progress, assessment and awards. Additionally, postgraduate research learners provide the outcome of a formal progress review as specified in their senate regulations. More information on their appeals process is in their senate regulations.
 - This aligns with how we understand the education provider to run and appropriate for the proposed programmes.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None

Outcomes from stage 1

We decided to progress to stage 2 of the process without further review through stage 1, due to the clear alignment of the new provision within existing institutional structures, as noted through the previous section

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:

- Resources;
 - Staff involved with the delivery and management of the programme;
 - Occupational Therapy: The current staff team who teach across their existing BSc, MSc Occupational Therapy pre-registration and MSc ACP.
 - Physiotherapy: The current staff team who teach across their BSc, pre-registration MSc, APP, ACP and apprenticeship programmes.
 - Physical resources, including any specialist teaching space. The education provider stated that they will use the existing physical resources that are in place for their existing provision.
 - The proposed programmes are joining their existing approved provision and will share the existing in-place practice-based learning provisions. The education provider has detailed how existing programmes will recruit fewer learners to allow for the introduction of the new

programmes. Meaning the total learners will not increase significantly overall.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Outstanding issues for follow up: None

Section 3: Programme-level assessment/

Programmes considered through this assessment

Programme name	Mode of study	Profession (including modality) / entitlement	Proposed learner number, and frequency	Proposed start date
MSci Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational Therapist	15 learners, 1 cohort per year	08/09/2025
MSci Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapy	15 learners, 1 cohort per year	08/09/2025

Stage 2 assessment – provider submission

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.

Data / intelligence considered

We also considered intelligence from others (e.g. prof bodies, sector bodies that provided support) as follows:

- NHS England (NHSE) – London. Our contacts at NHSE have warned against ongoing issues in securing Physiotherapy placements in London. Demand continues to rise, but there have been issues in securing new placements, and no additional funding is being provided to create new placement places. We shall raise this issue with the visitors as part of their stage 2 review.

Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their submission. Based on our understanding, we did not need to undertake quality assurance activities to ensure the standards were met.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the [Findings section](#) detailing where we requested further information / clarifications through points of clarification.

Section 4: Findings

This section details the visitors' findings from their review through stage 2, including any requirements set, and a summary of their overall findings.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before providers or programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is an issue with the education provider's approach to meeting a standard. This may mean that we have evidence that standards are not met at this time, or the education provider's planned approach is not suitable.

The visitors were satisfied that no conditions were required to satisfy them that all standards are met. The visitors' findings, including why no conditions were required, are presented below.

Overall findings on how standards are met

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings against the programme-level standards. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

Findings of the assessment panel:

- **SET 1: Level of qualification for entry to the Register** – this standard is covered through institution-level assessment
- **SET 2: Programme admissions** –
 - The education provider explained how their existing admissions policies and procedures are in place and will apply to the proposed programmes. Their admission policy and procedure document is the document that details these policies. The education provider stated that it describes the principles and processes which are used to select and admit new learners.
 - The visitors reviewed the education provider's policy which covers admissions to all Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught, Postgraduate Research and Language Centre awards. It sets out all study modes, including full-time, part-time, distance and online learning. The education provider explained that their admission procedures are also

supplemented at a departmental level to meet specific professional requirements.

- The education provider explained how applicants will be provided with detailed information about the programmes structure, fees, expectations, and professional requirements through university websites and course materials. The education provider stated that they strive to ensure that their admissions arrangements and processes are accessible, transparent, fair, inclusive and equitable, and consistent in their application. Entry criteria, including academic qualifications, English language proficiency, and health and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, are also outlined for both programmes. The entry requirements detail the GCSEs, A-Levels, and BTECs, as well as how international applicants can access their application portal.
- The visitors noted the education provider's explanation about how all applicants must complete a values-based written statement. This aims to demonstrate insight into the proposed programmes professions and alignment with NHS and HCPC values such as respect, compassion, and professionalism.
- The visitors noted that the education provider have explained the English language requirements for the proposed programmes. They have discussed how these align with those published for their existing BSc and MSc programmes. Applicants must demonstrate English language proficiency consistent with HCPC requirements, typically:
 - IELTS 7.0 overall (with no component below 6.5), or
 - An equivalent qualification, such as TOEFL or Pearson Test of English.
- The education providers' admissions policies also detail their fitness to practise policies. These detail the conducts and the behaviour that applicants are expected to uphold from application to taking up their place on the programmes. It also details the continued conduct and behaviour learners will be expected to display on the programmes and the parameters which could lead to a fitness to practice review.
- The visitors found the policies and procedures in place would be appropriate for the proposed programmes. They found there to be clear descriptions of the policies and how they would apply to learners. They noted how academic and professional requirements are clearly stated in documentation and on the website. The visitors therefore found the SETs relating to this area to be met.
- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership –**
 - The education provider has explained how they actively engage in national and regional networks that shape the practice education landscape. These include:
 - Chartered Society of Physiotherapy (CSP)
 - Royal College of Occupational Therapists
 - NHS England (NHSE)
 - London Higher Education Group
 - Council of Deans of Health

- NWL Health & Care Faculty (currently chaired by Brunel's Director of Practice Education)
- Through these forums, the education provider stated that they contribute to policy development, placement innovation, and shared responses to sector-wide challenges.
- Formal collaboration is facilitated through their Quarterly Practice Education Partnership Meetings (PEPMs). They explained how these meetings include representatives from their academic teams, placement coordinators, and practice educators. They provide a forum to review placement quality, discuss curriculum updates, share feedback from learners and educators, and co-develop improvements. In addition, they explained that these meetings enhance partnerships and collaborative working between the education provider and practice partners. The aim was to promote quality evidenced by transformational learning experiences for all learners engaging in practice education, placements and work-based learning.
- The education provider explained how placement capacity is centrally managed by their physiotherapy practice and occupational therapy practice education teams respectively. These teams coordinate allocation across all their respective programmes and ensure all learners access practice-based learning in line with programme requirements. These teams are made up of Admin support, Physiotherapy / Occupational Therapy Practice Education Leads and the Department Directors for Practice Education.
- They have also detailed that for the 2024-25 academic year, they have secured 586 Physiotherapy placements to meet the needs of approximately 240 learners. Currently, all learners on their existing Physiotherapy programme have been offered practice placements in line with programme requirements. Therefore, the education provider has stated that they have sufficient placements for both their existing and new learners. They have also discussed how they work in partnership with practice sites to expand placement capacity. This includes offering Practice Educator training, providing long-arm supervision models, and supporting innovative placement models. The Occupational Therapy programme will be delivered by a multidisciplinary academic team. This team includes qualified, experienced occupational therapists, as well as academic staff from related disciplines such as psychology, anatomy, and rehabilitation sciences. The visitors agreed this structure should support a broad and integrated approach to programme delivery.
- The education provider stated that every module within the programme is supported by faculty members who are subject matter experts with national and international recognition and leaders in their respective fields. Their expertise spans clinical excellence, educational innovation, and pioneering research.
- For the Physiotherapy programme, visitors noted that it will be supported by faculty members who bring expertise across all four

pillars of physiotherapy practice and in all key clinical disciplines. All clinically qualified and eligible staff are CSP members and HCPC registered. Visitors reviewed evidence indicating that these staff have extensive clinical experience and hold at least a Master's-level qualification relevant to their area of expertise. Additionally, visitors noted that staff are supported to undertake higher education teaching qualifications, with the aim of achieving Fellowship status with the Higher Education Academy (FHEA).

- Through clarification, the education provider explained that for both the MSci Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy programmes, the target intake will be a maximum of 48 learners per programme per year. This number reflects their existing provision model, where they traditionally operate three groups of 24 learners. They detailed that, importantly, the introduction of the MSci programmes will not increase the total number of learners and the number of practice placements beyond their current approved and managed provision. Instead, their existing learner numbers will be distributed across three pre-registration pathways (BSc, MSc pre-registration and MSci), ensuring that capacity is maintained.
- The visitors also noted how the education provider's Executive Team and other members of their Senior Leadership Team review staffing levels in relation to learner numbers and regulatory requirements. This is reviewed at their monthly College Management Board meetings and more frequently with Heads of Department. When staff changes are required, the Head of Department submits a Recruitment, Extension & Adjustment Process (REAP) form to the Executive for approval. They have also explained that they currently have 28.1 FTE staff in the Physiotherapy academic team and 15 FTE in the Occupational Therapy academic team.
- The education provider has also clarified that for both programmes, where additional input or knowledge is required, they will utilise their existing model of engaging external lecturers and specialists through hourly paid provision. This approach is already in place across both pre-registration and post-registration teaching, ensuring that all subject areas are delivered by individuals with current, specialist knowledge.
- The visitors found the education provider to have clearly demonstrated how the programme teams work as part of a regional network. They agreed the evidence supplied demonstrated how education providers' staff actively participate in regional networks, and supporting documentation shows a clear level of collaboration with practice-based learning providers. This collaboration included meetings, joint audits, training and support for practice-based learning providers' staff.
- The visitors also found the system the education provider has in place to be effective in ensuring availability and capacity for the number of learners on the current BSc and MSc and proposed programmes. They found the design strategy document for the MSci programmes to

be informative and demonstrated the collaborative approach that has led to the development of the programmes.

- The visitors reviewed staff curriculum vitae's submitted which evidenced on the range of knowledge and skills within the academic team responsible for the proposed programmes. They noted the expertise within the academic team with support from the wider institution for appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) programmes / opportunities, research and other professional activities.
- The visitors considered all the information made available, including the information made available through further expansion, when completing their assessment. The visitors have therefore found the SETs related to this area to be met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery –**

- The education provider has stated that the proposed programmes have been designed so that all modules and programme-level learning outcomes are explicitly mapped to the Standards of Proficiency (SOP). This is aimed at ensuring that graduates meet all the competencies required for safe, ethical, and effective practice. The education provider has detailed that together, the programme-level outcomes are designed to satisfy both threshold requirements for registration and the enhanced graduate capabilities expected of masters-level physiotherapy and occupational therapy learners.
- The education provider has explained how their Programme Teams reviews the SOP mapping annually to ensure continued alignment as HCPC updates its standards and the profession evolves. Practice educators receive guidance and training to support assessment against HCPC standards during placements, ensuring coherence between academic and practice-based evaluation.
- The education provider has also stated that the learning outcomes for the MSci Physiotherapy programme are designed to ensure that all graduates meet the Knowledge, Skills, Behaviours, and Values (KSBVs) required for safe and effective autonomous practice as defined by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists (CSP) Physiotherapy Framework (2010) and are aligned with expectations for entry-level clinical practice.
- The education provider has stated that professionalism and high standards of conduct, performance and ethics are fundamental values of their programmes. They stated that all clinical modules include elements of this in their learning outcomes. They stated that it is embedded in their preparation for and evaluation of clinical practice placements and reflected in their policies and practices around conduct and character.
- The education provider has stated that the proposed MSci in Occupational Therapy programme at BUL is explicitly designed to reflect the philosophy, core values, and knowledge base set out in the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) Learning and Development Standards for Pre-registration Education (2021) and

other key professional frameworks. They have also explained how the proposed Physiotherapy programme mirrors the first three years of Brunel's BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy in both content and clinical placement structure, ensuring full coverage of HCPC standards and parity in clinical preparedness. It aligns fully with the CSP's Learning and Development Principles and Physiotherapy Framework, producing graduates who are:

- Capable of proficient and confident application of core physiotherapy competencies within the four pillars of practice: clinical, leadership, education, and research
 - Prepared for whole-person care across a range of settings, including acute, community, public health, and emerging models of care
 - Ready for autonomous practice, interprofessional collaboration, and early contribution to service leadership and innovation
 - Equipped to apply evidence-informed reasoning, digital health solutions, and address health inequalities through adaptive, inclusive practice
- Through clarification, the education provider detailed how learners are admitted directly to the programmes through UCAS or directly to the education provider. For the first three years, learners will be integrated and study alongside the BSc Learners with shared tutorials, teaching and practice placements. Years 1 and 2 mirror those of the BSc programme.
 - The education provider also explained how to ensure graduates are practice-ready, the final Level 6 practice-based learning placement is deliberately scheduled in Year 4, alongside the advanced Level 7 modules (Leadership, Complex Case Management, Enterprise in Contemporary Practice). This allows learners to integrate contemporary practice experience directly into their study.
 - The visitors noted the comprehensive and well-structured SOPs mapping document that was available for the proposed programmes. They found this clearly demonstrated the proposed programme's adherence to the SOPs and recognised it as an area of good practice.
 - The visitors also found the SETs to be concisely and fully mapped for the two proposed programmes. Supporting documents were supplied and helped confirm the alignment with the SETs. The visitors also found the learning outcomes for both programmes to be clearly detailed and described how these would be met by the learners in the programmes across all four years of the programme. They also found that learning outcomes clearly address professional behaviour in modules and practice.
 - The visitors also found the learning and teaching methods to be appropriate and for relevant and sufficient resources to be made available for the programmes. They note how the programme teams for each proposed programme have access to a wide range of resources, which allow them, in turn, to utilise a wide range of teaching methods.

They noted the range of teaching methods from more traditional to innovative methods. Including sessions that are staff-led and learner-led sessions, to making use of 'app' or digital teaching facilities.

- The visitors considered all the information made available, including that through further expansion, when completing their assessment. The visitors have found the SETs related to this area to be met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning –**

- The education provider has stated that practice-based learning is embedded into the proposed programmes with the aim for learners to progressively develop and apply professional skills in real-world settings alongside their academic learning. They explained how they are committed to providing learners with a broad range of clinical experience across a variety of healthcare settings.
- The education provider has stated that as part of the proposed programmes, learners will complete a minimum of 1,000 hours of supervised practice-based learning, exceeding HCPC requirements. Placements are distributed across all years of the programmes, ensuring continuous integration of theory and practice.
- The education provider has also explained how each practice-based learning placement includes clear learning objectives aligned with specific module outcomes and standards of proficiency, ensuring focused skill development. These are situated in a variety of locations, including:
 - acute hospitals
 - community rehabilitation services
 - mental health settings
 - paediatrics
 - children's clinics
 - sports services settings
 - research units
 - community settings
 - and social care settings.
- Based on the evidence reviewed, the visitors are confident there is a clear process in place for assessing the suitability of practice-based learning providers. The practice education team carries out this assessment prior to approval. For non-NHS providers, we noted that a formal 'Placement Suitability Form' is required. This form confirms that placements will offer appropriate supervision by an HCPC-registered professionals and that learners will have access to approximately 200 hours of meaningful, hands-on clinical experience, rather than observation-only exposure.
- The education provider has also explained how on each practice-based learning placement, learners are supported by a named visiting tutor. This tutor will maintain ongoing contact with both the learner and the placement provider. Visiting tutors receive real-time feedback on the learner experience, supervision quality, and placement organisation. Where concerns or development points are raised, these are

communicated directly to the module or practice education team for follow-up and continuous quality improvement. They stated that this process enables a continuous feedback loop, ensuring all placements meet professional and educational standards, and supporting the maintenance of a high-quality, safe, and effective practice-based learning environment.

- Through clarification, the education provider explained how their model for peer learning works. They stated that they have transformed a traditional 3-placement provision into 18 placements by overlapping cohorts across three placement blocks. They stated that this model will offer multiple benefits including:
 - Peer support and collaborative learning
 - Embedded data analysis projects within placements
 - Enhanced therapy input for patients, contributing to reduced length of stay
 - Tariff incentives for educators and departments
 - Stronger education provider-service links, fostering research engagement and educator confidence.
- The education provider also discussed how they are actively mapping a range of upcoming projects to the CSP's Common Placement Assessment Form (CPAF) learning outcomes. The aim of this is to launch education-focused practice-based learning placements within the current academic year. These placements will be clearly communicated to learners early in the selection process to maximise engagement.
- The visitors found the evidence supplied described and detailed a wide range of practice-based learning placement opportunities. They noted how the different proposed placements varied in terms of setting, structure and clearly describe how learners will have the opportunity to achieve all learning outcomes and the SOPs. The visitors found the use of the CPS' CPAF a useful assessment tool in monitoring and reviewing the practice-based learning placements themselves. The visitors also found through the mapping documents and the supporting documents, that practice-based learning is integral to the proposed programmes.
- The visitors also recognised the system in place to ensure sufficient staff are available at practice-based learning placement sites. But also to ensure that these staff have relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The evidence supplied details the close links between the education provider and practice-based learning providers that will allow for the ongoing monitoring and development of placements.
- The visitors considered all the information made available, including that through further expansion, when completing their assessment. The visitors have found the SETs related to this area to be met.
- **SET 6: Assessment –**
 - The education provider discussed how they have mapped their assessments to both the SETs and the SOPs in their Assessment

summary document. This document sets out which modules are core and compulsory and also explains how learners must successfully pass all modules to complete the programmes.

- The education provider has also provided details on their overall Assessment Strategy. This is broken down into two parts:
 - Their assessment framework integrates formative and summative assessments across theoretical and practice-based components, providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate competence against the standards of proficiency.
 - Their assessments are also mapped directly to the HCPC Standards of Proficiency, ensuring alignment between curriculum outcomes and professional requirements.
- They have also stated that their assessment design uses a combination of written assignments, case studies, presentations, and practical examinations. As well as reflective portfolios to assess learners' knowledge, clinical reasoning, professional behaviour, and practical skills. Practice-based learning placement assessments are also integral, with practice educators completing detailed evaluations of learners' performance against specific proficiencies, including client-centred care, ethical practice, and safe intervention.
- The principal aim of their assessment strategy is to ensure that their PSRBs, employers, service users and carers know that their graduates will possess the necessary knowledge, skills, behaviours and values (KSBVs) to practice as registered professionals. They have detailed how their assessments focus on the incremental development of learners' KSBVs across four pillars:
 - clinical skills
 - leadership
 - education
 - and research.
- They stated that modules are mapped onto these KSBVs in the programme's specification. There are also several points where learners' professional conduct and behaviour are assessed as well as their skills and knowledge.
- The education provider detailed how their practice-based learning placement evaluations will run. These will include structured assessments of professional behaviour by practice educators, focusing on communication, ethical decision-making, accountability, and adherence to HCPC standards. Learners will complete reflective and ethics case study assignments that require critical reflection on real or simulated ethical dilemmas and professional challenges encountered during their learning.
- The visitors found the assessment methods used by the education provider to be clearly detailed and explained in the SETs mapping document. They also found the assessment strategy to be sufficient, allowing learners to meet the standards of proficiency.

- The visitors found the education provider to have demonstrated how the assessments ensure that professional standards of conduct and behaviour are met throughout the programme.
- The visitors noted how there is a wide range of assessment methods used throughout the programme. They recognise how these will test learners' knowledge and skills at the appropriate level of the programme. They recognise it will also "play" to the learners' different strengths, which allows the learning outcomes to be assessed.
- The visitors assessed all the information available and found the assessments to be clearly mapped to the SETs. They found the education provider to have demonstrated how the assessments will ensure that professional standards of conduct and behaviour are met throughout the programmes. They therefore found the SETs related to this area to be met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None

Areas of good practice identified: The visitors found the education provider SOPs mapping for the proposed programmes to be detailed and comprehensive. The structure of the document was thorough and clearly laid out which they found helpful in conducting their review. The visitors wanted to recognise the effort and level of detail added to this document by the education provider and recognise this as an area of good practice.

Section 5: Referrals

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

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process.

Section 6: Decision on approval process outcomes

Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that the programmes should be approved subject to the conditions being met.

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

- All standards are met, and therefore the programmes should be approved

Education and Training Committee decision

Education and Training Committee considered the assessment panel's recommendations and the findings which support these. The education provider was also provided with the opportunity to submit any observation they had on the conclusions reached.

Based on all information presented to them, the Committee decided that:

- The programmes are approved

Reason for this decision: The Panel accepted the visitor's recommendation that the programmes should receive approval.

Appendix 1 – summary report

If the education provider does not provide observations, only this summary report (rather than the whole report) will be provided to the Education and Training Committee (Panel) to enable their decision on approval. The lead visitors confirm this is an accurate summary of their recommendation, and the nature, quality and facilities of the provision.

Education provider	Case reference	Lead visitors	Quality of provision	Facilities provided
Brunel University London	CAS-01600-Q1P1Y5	Fleur Kitsell Lead visitor, Physiotherapist – Educationalist, Practitioner Jennifer Caldwell Lead visitor, Occupational Therapist - Educationalist	Through this assessment, we have noted how the programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.	Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities: - Resources; - Staff involved with the delivery and management of the programme; - Occupational Therapy: The current staff team who teach across their existing BSc, MSc Occupational Therapy pre-registration and MSc Advanced Clinical practice. - Physiotherapy: The current staff team who teach across our BSc, pre-registration MSc, APP, Advanced Clinical practice and apprenticeship programmes. - Physical resources, including any specialist teaching space. The education provider has stated that they shall use the existing physical resources that

				are in place for their existing provision. o The proposed programmes are joining their existing approved provision and shall share the existing in-place practice-based learning provisions. The education provider has detailed how existing programmes will recruit fewer learners to allow for the introduction of the new programmes. Meaning the total learners will not increase significantly overall.
Programmes				
Programme name			Mode of study	Nature of provision
MSci Occupational Therapy			Taught	• Taught (HEI)
MSci Physiotherapy			Taught	• Taught (HEI)

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/1997
BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/03/1993
MA Art Psychotherapy	FT (Full time)	Arts therapist	Art therapy		01/10/2021
MSc Occupational Therapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/09/2007
MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Physiotherapist			01/09/2013
Postgraduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy (pre-registration)	FT (Full time)	Occupational therapist			01/08/2019