HCPC approval process report

Education provider	De Montfort University
Name of programme(s)	BSc (Hons) Paramedicine (Apprentice Pathway), Full time
Approval visit date	17 November 2020
Case reference	CAS-15736-Y5K6B9

Contents

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:

Matthew Catterall	Paramedic
Jennifer Caldwell	Occupational therapist
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.

Lisa Wakefield	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	De Montfort University
Sophia Welton	Secretary (supplied by the education provider)	De Montfort University
Keith Bromwich	External Advisor	University of Gloucestershire
Andrew Wright	University panel member	De Montfort University
Tasmin Raynor	University panel member	De Montfort University

Benjamin Smith	Student Representative	De Montfort University
Jenny Coombs	University panel member	De Montfort University
Rebecca Thirlby,	University panel member	De Montfort University
Joe Di Micco	Observer	De Montfort University

Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedicine (Apprentice Pathway)
Mode of study	FT (Full time)
Profession	Paramedic
Proposed First intake	01 May 2021
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 20
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP02184

We undertook this assessment of a new programme 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	Programme is new and has not run yet.

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	Not Required	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)	Not Required	As this was a virtual visit and, due to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to meet with this group.
Facilities and resources	Not Required	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.
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 26 February 2021.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate there is an appropriate and effective process for assessing applicants' prior learning and must provide clear

guidance for both applicants and staff about how applicants' prior learning and experience will be assessed.

Reason: The education provider stated in their mapping document that those entering the apprenticeship will undertake a 'skills scan' assessment. They explained this is a tool used with apprenticeships to assess the prior knowledge, skills and behaviours linked to the programme. The education provider stated further that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will then be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the skills scan. The visitor noted that there was no clear and detailed information provided within the documentation about how the RPL process will work for this particular programme. At the visit, the education provider explained that applicants will be able to join the programme in year 2 through RPL, which means in each year there will be a mix of entries. The education provider explained that their reasoning behind this was is to make the programme inclusive to the workforce. They further explained the education provider as a whole has a robust system in place to ensure an effective process. From their documentary review and through discussions at the visit, the visitors noted a lack of clarity in the RPL process into year 2. The visitors noted that the faculty documents described a general RPL process for programmes within the faculty but it was not clear how the process will apply to this programme. The visitors also noted from discussions that neither the education provider nor EMAS were able to clearly articulate what the RPL process would be for those entering into year 2. As such, the visitors were unable to determine that there was an appropriate process for assessing applicants' prior learning and that there was clear guidance within the documentation for staff and applicants, showing how prior learning will be assessed. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further information that clearly defines their process for assessing applicants' prior learning for entries into year 2 as well as evidence of how detailed RPL guidance will be made available to both applicants and staff.

3.1 The programme must be sustainable and fit for purpose.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there are plans in place to ensure the ongoing sustainability for the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted through their documentary review and from discussions at the visit that there is commitment from the partner organisation (East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS)) to fund the programme for 'the next three years'. The visitors noted there will be a one-off cohort starting in May 2021 and subsequently September and January entries each year starting from September 2021. The visitors understood that the funding was due to start from January 2021 as this was this initial proposed start date of the programme. As the education provider and EMAS were only able to provide commitment for the next three years, the visitors could not determine that there will be sufficient funding available to learners starting the programme in year 1 in September 2021 and January 2022, by the time they are in their final year of the programme. Therefore, the visitors could not determine that the programme would still be secure after three years and therefore request that the education provider provide further evidence of how they will ensure ongoing sustainability of the programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the programme management structure, which describes the lines of responsibility of everyone involved in the day-to-day management of the programme.

Reason: The visitors were referred to the education provider's overall governance on their website and details of the programme's module specification as evidence for this standard. At the visit the programme team explained that directors within EMAS are briefed about the apprenticeships and that the programme team engages with several colleagues to make sure everyone is on the 'same page' as regards the management of the programme. The team further explained that they are aware of the differences between a degree apprenticeship (DA) and a full time programme and that they have appointed a band 7 member of staff to oversee the degree apprenticeship programme. They also explained that there is support for the DA team and that meetings are held regularly with their partners. From their review of the documents provided and the discussions at the visit, the visitors could not see how the different aspects of the programme would be effectively managed on a day-to-day basis, particularly given the partnership arrangement with EMAS to deliver part of the programme. For example, the visitors recognised that EMAS views the apprentices as 'employed learners' while the education provider view them as 'learners' but neither had a clear process for how aspects such as occupational health, student support, management of fitness to practice requirements, would work for these learners operationally. The visitors noted there was no clear responsibility for the programme and as such they could not determine that this standard was met. The education provider must therefore provide evidence of the programme management structure showing clear responsibilities of everyone involved in the day-to-day management of the programme.

3.9 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there will be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver the programme effectively.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the staff curricula vitae submitted as evidence for this standard. At the visit, the visitors were made aware there are currently four paramedics within the teaching team, with an advert out for another and plans to recruit two additional staff before the start of the programme. In addition, the education provider explained there are clinical staff with advance clinical practice skills, associate practitioners, as well as staff from within the faculty who would all contribute to the delivery of the programme. The programme team also explained they have honorary contract staff and the possibility of using visiting lecturers to teach on the programme. The education provider stated that learners would benefit from learning from a variety of staff with different expertise which, they considered a good experience for the learners. The visitors considered that the education provider's approach towards the delivery of the programme would be beneficial to learners. However, they were unclear how the education provider will determine the number of staff adequate to the effective delivery of the programme to all learners. The visitors also noted that there were no timescales provided for future recruitments or the contingencies in place should the recruitment be unsuccessful. The visitors considered that the education provider would need to justify how they determine the number of staff is adequate. For example, how the education provider will determine the proportion of time each staff would spend working on the programme in relation to its practical requirements, the number of learners, their needs and the learning outcomes to be achieved is adequate. In addition, the visitors considered that the education provider would need to provide timescales for future recruitment and contingency plans should recruitment be unsuccessful. In this way, the

visitors would be able to make a judgment about whether there would be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place by the programme's planned start date of May 2021. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence that clearly demonstrates there would be sufficient number of appropriately qualified staff to deliver an effective programme.

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 protocols to obtain consent from service users and learners when they participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching and for managing situations when learners decline from participating.

Reason: In their mapping document the education provider stated 'Consent forms are undertaken and an example are in the back of the Practice Assessment Document we use for our standard entry programme.' However, the visitors noted that no Practice Assessment Document (PAD) was provided. As such, they did not see evidence of the formal protocols to obtain consent from learners when they participate as service users, or for managing situations when learners decline from participating as service users in practical sessions. Similarly, there was no evidence provided for how consent is obtained from service users in practical teaching. When discussed at the visit, the education provider explained learners would need to give their consent when they take part in simulation activities, however, this was not articulated within the documentation. The education provider explained that learners would have been made aware of the activity prior to them taking part in it and that they could decide not to take part if they do not wish to. The programme team explained further that in cases where learners decline to participate, the education provider would discuss this with the individual learner and would ask the learner to work with their personal tutors to discuss how they could be supported. As regards obtaining consent from service users, the programme team explained service users would have had to give their consent when they agreed to take part in practical teaching. The visitors noted that this was not articulated in the programme documentation and as such they were unable to determine that the education provider had an effective process for obtaining consent from service users and learners or that the process is made clear to all parties involved. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate there is an effective process in place for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners and for managing situations when learners decline from participating.

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 provide evidence that demonstrates how they will ensure learners and practice educators have the information they need in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Reason: The education provider stated in their mapping that an induction for practice educators will be provided, including details of how to support learners to complete their ePortfolio and 'on the job training' elements. However, as the visitors were not provided with the practice education handbook or the practice assessment document, they were unclear what information learners and practice educators would be provided in order to prepare them for practice-based learning or how this information will be communicated

to them. At the visit, the programme team spoke in detail about different ideas on how they would support practice educators in order to prepare them for practice-based learning and for it to be effective. For example, they mentioned about providing information around requirements for progression, support for learners if they fail and how to support learners who are having difficulties on the programme. The visitors however noted that these plans were not finalised. As such, they could not be certain that expectations would be clearly set and communicated to both learners and practice educators ahead of practice-based learning in order for practice-based learning to be safe and effective. Therefore, the education provider must demonstrate:

- what information will be provided;
- how this information is provided; and
- that there is sufficient information in order to ensure learners and practice educators will be prepared for practice-based learning.

6.3 Assessments must provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

6.5 The assessment methods used must be appropriate to, and effective at, measuring the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that the practice-based learning assessments provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement and that the assessment methods are appropriate to and effective at measuring the learning outcomes.

Reason: For these standards, the visitors were directed to the module specification forms and the validation document where they saw the learning outcomes as well as skills that learners are expected to have achieved by the end of the programme. The visitors also reviewed the assessment regulation section of the education provider's website and the SOPs mapping. From their review, the visitors were satisfied that assessments of the theoretical aspects of the programme provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and that the methods used would effectively deliver the learning outcomes. However, as the practice assessment document (PAD), which would be used to assess learners in practice, was not provided, the visitors were unable to determine whether assessments in practice would also be able to measure learners' progression and achievement. Similarly, without seeing the PAD, the visitors were unable to judge whether the assessment methods used in practice would appropriately and effectively measure the learning outcomes. In their review of the mapping document, the visitors noted for example, SOP 4 - be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement, and its sub SOPs were mapped to module 5: Foundations of Decision Making in Ambulance Practice. The visitors noted that this module forms the first clinical practice education module and that part of its assessment will be undertaken via the PAD by practice educators. However, as the visitors did not see the PAD, they were unable to determine that the chosen assessment methods are in line with the learning outcomes of this module. In discussions with the programme team, the team informed the visitors work is being undertaken to develop the PAD as their aim is to have a standardised PAD that can meet the needs of the different education providers involved as well as EMAS and its practice educators.

As the visitors have not seen what the PAD will be, they were unable to determine that the assessments would:

- ensure assessment requirements are clear and realistic;
- provide all learners equal opportunity to demonstrate their progression and achievement; and
- be consistent and sufficiently thorough to allow learners to clearly demonstrate how far they have progressed during the course of the programme and achieved the learning outcomes.

Additionally, without seeing the PAD, the visitors were uncertain the assessment methods to be used to assess learners in practice would be effective at determining whether the learning outcomes of the programme have been met. Therefore, the education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate that these two standards are met.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will make it clear to learners how resits in practice work to ensure they are fully aware of the requirements for progression and achievement in all parts of the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the module specification forms provided as well as the assessment regulations available on the education provider's website. The visitors noted from their review, learners would be allowed reassessment opportunities for up to 90 credits at each academic level in any permutation or combination of module sizes. However, the visitors were unclear how resits would work in practice-based learning as this was not made clear in the documentation. At the visit, the education provider informed the visitors that there are rules around the number of fails and reiterated the reassessment opportunity mentioned in the documentation. However, details of how this would work in practice-based learning was not articulated in the documentation and as such, the visitors could not determine how learners would be made aware of these requirements. The visitors considered that in order for them to be able to determine whether this standard is met, clear information must be communicated to both learners and educators within the programme documentation showing specific requirements for progression and achievement, particularly as it relates to how resits in practice would work. The education provider therefore, must provide additional evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

Section 5: Outcome from second review

Second response to conditions required
The education provider responded to the conditions set out in section 4. Following their consideration of this response, the visitors were satisfied that the conditions for several of the standards were met. However, they were not satisfied that the following conditions were met, for the reasons detailed below. Therefore, in order for the visitors to be satisfied that the following conditions are met, they require further evidence.

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 provide evidence that demonstrates how they will ensure learners and practice educators have the information they need in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

Reason condition not met at this time: In response to this condition, the education provider referred the visitors to the practice assessment document (PAD), which they said contains a handbook to provide support for practice educators and learners. From their review, the visitors noted that there was no handbook provided in the PAD and they could not find the information elsewhere within the documentation. As such, the visitors remain unable to determine:
- what information will be provided to learners and practice educators;
- how this information is provided; and
- that there is sufficient information in order to ensure they will be prepared for practice-based learning.

The visitors therefore could not determine that this condition is met and require the education provider to submit further evidence.

Suggested documentation: Practice handbook for learners and practice educators containing information they need in order to be prepared for practice-based learning.

6.3 Assessments must provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement.

6.5 The assessment methods used must be appropriate to, and effective at, measuring the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that the practice-based learning assessments provide an objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement and that the assessment methods are appropriate to and effective at measuring the learning outcomes.

Reason condition not met at this time: In response to this condition, the education provider referred the visitors to sections of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Paramedics. The education provider also listed several processes and systems they have put in place, in line with the Benchmark Statement, to ensure assessments provide objective, fair and reliable measure of learners' progression and achievement and that assessment methods can effectively measure learning outcomes. Examples of the processes the education provider stated they have put in place include:

- anonymous marking to ensure continuity and parity with regards student awards.
- moderation of all marking, both internally and through external examination;
- alignment of assessment methods and criteria to learning outcomes and teaching activities; and
- amendments to the module specification sheets to enhance the learning approach.

The visitors noted that the education provider has put in these processes and systems to assist in allowing objectivity, fairness and reliability of assessments. However, the

visitors also noted that in the PAD provided, there was no assessment information for years 1 and 3. Without the assessment materials for these two years, it was not possible for the visitors to determine whether the assessments themselves would reliably measure learners' achievement and progression throughout the programme.

Similarly, without seeing what assessment methods would be used in years 1 and 3, the visitors were unable to assess how effective the assessments are at measuring learning outcomes for each year or across the programme. As a result, the visitors remain unclear how the assessments would:

- ensure assessment requirements are clear and realistic;
- be consistent and sufficiently thorough to allow learners to clearly demonstrate how far they have progressed during the course of the programme and achieved the learning outcomes; and
- ensure the assessment methods are effective at determining whether the learning outcomes have been met.
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Therefore, the visitors considered that SETs 6.3 and 6.5 remain unmet and request further evidence.

Suggested documentation: Assessment materials for years 1 and 3 outlined within the PAD.

Section 6: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, and the request for further evidence set out in section 5, 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 26 May 2021 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available on our website.