Approval process report

Aston University, hearing aid dispenser 2023-24

Executive Summary

This is a report of the process to approve hearing aid dispenser programmes at Aston University. This report captures the process we have undertaken to assess the institution and programme(s) against our standards, to ensure those who complete the proposed programme(s) are fit to practice.

We have:
- reviewed the institution against our institution level standards and found our standards are met in this area
- Reviewed the programme(s) against our programme level standards and found our standards are met in this area following exploration of key themes through quality activities
- Recommended all standards are met, and that the programme(s) should be approved

Through this assessment, we have noted:
- The programme(s) meet all the relevant HCPC education standards and therefore should be approved.

Previous consideration	Not applicable. This approval was not referred from another process.
Decision	The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide: • whether the programmes are approved, and
Next steps	Outline next steps / future case work with the provider: • The provider's next performance review is in the 2023-24 academic year. The education provider's submission is being assessed by our visitors.

Included within this report

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 programme(s) detailed in this report meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the programme(s) 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 programme 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 programme(s)

- 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:

Jo Jackson	Lead visitor, physiotherapist
Robert MacKinnon	Lead visitor, hearing aid dispenser
John Archibald	Education Quality Officer
Sheba Joseph	Service user advisor

Section 2: Institution-level assessment

The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers nine HCPC-approved programmes across two professions. It is a higher education provider and has been running HCPC approved programmes since 2003.

The programmes under assessment lie in the education provider's College of Health and Life Sciences.

There are two proposed programmes and one is a degree apprenticeship. The education provider has also developed an equivalent, but alternative, non-degree apprenticeship programme. Both programmes are delivered at Level 5, the equivalent of a Foundation Degree. The programmes have a similar delivery structure and follow the same curriculum design and modules.

The funding stream for the two programmes is different. Learners on the degree apprenticeship programme will access the funding levy from their employer via the government. Learners on the other programme may be from other nations where apprenticeship funding is not available. Both groups are employed in an audiology environment, therefore as such are work based.

Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-registration	Biomedical scientist	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2010
	Hearing Aid Dispenser	☒Undergraduate	☐Postgraduate	2003

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 programme(s).

Data Point	Bench-mark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	170	200	2024	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. The value figure is the benchmark figure, plus the number of learners the provider is proposing through the new provision. We assessed the education provider's submission to see whether there was sufficient resource for the proposed programmes. The visitors did not have any further questions.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	2%	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 below the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 3%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because the education provider is performing above sector norms.

Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	93%	100%	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 above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 11%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because the education provider is performing above sector norms.
Learner positivity score	75.9%	79.7%	2023	This National Student Survey (NSS) positivity score data was sourced at the subject level. This means the data is for HCPC-related subjects. The data point is above the benchmark, which suggests the provider is performing above sector norms. When compared to the previous year's data point, the education provider's performance has improved by 3.7%. We did not explore this data point through this assessment because the education provider is performing above sector norms.

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 programme(s) aligns with existing provision.

As part of the request to approve the proposed programme(s), the education provider supplied information to show alignment in the following areas.

<u>Admissions</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
    Information for applicants –
- o The Admissions policy sets out information for applicants. The programmes' webpage contains information for applicants such as entry requirements. This is also contained in a digital prospectus and is outlined at open days and applicant visitor days.
- o Where an employer is new to degree apprenticeships and apprentice recruitment, a new employer meeting is set between the employer, the education provider's degree apprenticeship team and the programme admissions tutor. The programme admissions tutor works with the employer to ensure suitability of applicants. This process includes providing feedback on applicants curriculum vitae, current qualifications, and career suggestions.
- o Applicants who do not meet the entry requirements, but have experience in the profession, are considered on a case-by-case basis. Employers are asked to provide a written agreement of support for extended study time and learning resources.
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Assessing English language, character, and health** –
  - o The Admissions Policy states approved English language qualifications for all applicants. The required levels of achievement are specified on the education provider's website. Applicants must have at least grade 4 / C in English Language / Literature General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). English language qualifications are assessed by the University Admissions Team.
  - o Information about the suitability of applicants in terms of character and health is included within institution level Fitness to Practise information.
  - o Applicants are required to undertake an enhanced level Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check to enrol on the programmes. Positive checks are reviewed by the College's Fitness to Practise Board. Certain

disclosures may result in either restrictions being placed on learners during their studies or in their withdrawal from the programmes.

- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Prior learning and experience (AP(E)L)** –
    - o AP(E)L (also termed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)) is defined within the Admissions policy. The process is detailed within the Credit and Qualifications Framework. These policies are set out at institutional level.
    - o AP(E)L is considered and approved at the programme level locally. Applicants liaise with the Programme Director and/or Admissions Tutor to discuss the suitability of their evidence. If they consider it is suitable based on clear mapping to the programmes' learning outcomes, they will submit a request to the Associate Dean Education for approval. Approved AP(E)L information is held by the College Administrative Team and the University Admissions Team.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion** –
    - o This is covered in the Equality and Diversity policy. These policies are set at institutional level. Language in advertising and programme information is checked to ensure it is inclusive. Applicants are assessed whether they meet entry requirements. These are flexible for learners with disadvantaged backgrounds and contextual offer information is set out on each programme webpage.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

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 Register[1]** –
    - o The education provider is registered with the Office for Students (OfS). It can award a variety of degrees as set out in the Credits and Qualifications Framework and Ordinances. The education provider has

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[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

a Student Protection Plan and Business Continuity policy. These policies and frameworks are reviewed annually at an institutional level and apply to all programmes.

- o Programmes are approved and modified using the Programme Approval and Modification Policies. These are institutional policies. Programmes undergo scrutiny through the College Quality Subcommittee, followed by approval at institutional Programme Approval and Development Subcommittee for modifications, or Programme Specific Approval Panel for new programmes.
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Sustainability of provision** –
  - o The education provider's 2030 Strategy provides strategic priorities. Programmes align with the strategy to prepare learners for work through up-to-date learning and professional practice.
  - o The annual budget of the College is set by the Executive Dean and the Senior Management Team, which includes the head of each school. The Head of School makes an annual case for their budget. Requests for investment are made via College Management. All cases are considered on merit but investment to deliver programmes is prioritised.
  - o Programmes are subject to internal periodic review at least every six years. This is set out in the Periodic Review and Re-validation (Taught Programmes) policy. Any conditions or recommendations are monitored by the College Quality Subcommittee.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Effective programme delivery** –
  - o The role of the Programme Director is set out within the Programme Director Role Descriptor. This document has been developed by, and are maintained by, the University Learning and Teaching Committee. Programme Directors are appointed for an initial term of three years.
  - o The Head of Audiology supports and offers guidance to the programme team through, for example performance reviews. They also maintain oversight of the programme team and provide clarity on roles and responsibilities through programme team meetings and exam boards. They represent audiology programmes on the Senior Management Team of the college and Senior Management Group.
  - o Resources are managed by the Head of Audiology. They negotiate the yearly budget for audiology.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.

- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Effective staff management and development** –
  - o Each member of staff has a line manager and undertakes self-reflective review through the My Performance and Development Conversation (MPDC). Staff keep records of Continual Professional Development (CPD). The MPDC allows staff to identify development opportunities. Academic staff are required to work towards and achieve Fellowship or above of the Higher Education Agency. The college runs Teaching Away Days, including bespoke CPD elements. It provides a Teaching Research Fund to support teaching developments.
  - o Each member of staff engages with the Peer Observation of Teaching process twice per year.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Partnerships, which are managed at the institution level** –
  - o These are approved and monitored by the Partnerships Subcommittee (PSC). PSC is a part of the University Learning and Teaching Committee. Its role is to ensure collaborations with partners which lead to the award of academic credit or qualifications adhere to quality standards and meet Office of the General Counsel and regulatory requirements.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: None.

Quality, monitoring, and evaluation

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Academic quality** –
  - o The academic standards are set out in the General Regulations for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners and External Quality Assurance Assessors (EQAA) of Integrated Degree Apprenticeship Standards. They are reviewed annually by External Examiners. Programmes are subject to periodic review at least every six years as set out in the Periodic Review and Re-validation (Taught Programmes) policy. Programme teams are responsible for nominating External Examiners for approval by the College Quality Subcommittee.
  - o Programmes are monitored on a continual basis as set down in the Continual Monitoring Policy. This is done through key performance

indicators and focusses on the OfS B3 conditions, recruitment, learner feedback, and progression.
- o External examiners are appointed as set out in the General Regulations for the Conduct of Boards of Examiners. The requirement that programmes should have at least one External Examiner who is Registered in an appropriate discipline is monitored by the Programme Team and College Quality Subcommittee.
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Practice quality, including the establishment of safe and supporting practice learning environments** –
  - o Practice-based learning quality is ensured by the academic team and the University Careers and Placements Team. Practice-based learning providers are subject to an audit to ensure they have the resources to effectively support learners. Clinical supervisors must complete a clinical supervision course. Learners and practice-based learning providers give written feedback at the end of each cycle.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Learner involvement** –
  - o Learner feedback is collected on each module and at the end of each year. This is set down by the Module and Programme Evaluation Framework.
  - o Eligible final year learners are invited to complete the National Student Survey. Each school creates an NSS Action Plan. This is embedded within the College Action Plan and monitored by the Senior Management Team.
  - o Student Representatives are appointed by the Student Union and serve on Staff-Student Committees (SSC). Student Voice sessions are open to all learners. These occur a minimum of once per term. Learners are represented on Learning and Teaching Committees.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Service user and carer involvement** –
  - o Service user and carers are involved through dedicated events. The education provider is in the process of establishing a Service User and Carer group. The college has recently appointed a Public Patient Involvement Administrator who works with programmes to support this activity.

- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the education provider is in the process of establishing a Service User and Carer group, we will need to assured service users and carers contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of a programme and it makes sure learners completing the programme are fit to practise. Therefore, we will assess this through stage 2 of the approval process.

<u>Learners</u>

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- • **Support** –
  - o Academic and pastoral support is provided by Personal Tutors in line with the Personal Tutoring Policy. The education provider has developed a Personal Tutor Handbook to guide all staff in their responsibilities. Each tutor meets their tutees individually at least three times per academic year. This is also facilitated for apprenticeship learners to ensure they have access to full support from personal tutors when off campus.
  - o Individual support is tailored through the Disability and Academic Support Team. Staff within each programme can refer learners directly if needed. Each programme has a designated lead to ensure recommendations for support are appropriate.
  - o Complaints are dealt with as set out in the Student Complaints Procedure. Complaints are monitored annually through the University Learning and Teaching Committee.
  - o Obtaining consent is achieved through individual consent being given for appropriate tasks. All learners need to consent to partake in all clinical learning in practice sessions on and off campus.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- • **Ongoing suitability** –
  - o Annual self-declarations are required from learners. The college also has the right to request a further Enhanced DBS checks during the programme. Any new conduct issues are referred to the Fitness to Practise Committee. This is covered in the Fitness to Practise and Fitness to Study Regulations.
  - o All learners on programmes subject to Regulations on Fitness to Practise need to attend an introductory session covering the Code of Professional Conduct and Fitness to Practise.

- o Concerns can be raised by any member of staff, learner, or other individual in contact with the learner, in writing, to the Fitness to Practise Officer (FPO).
- o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Learning with and from other learners and professionals (IPL/E)** –
  - o The education provider holds annual IPE events involving a range of healthcare professions. Following the pandemic, the education provider is developing an overarching IPE policy.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

- **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)** –
  - o This is covered in the Equality and Diversity Policy. Monitoring of EDI, including attainment and awarding gaps, happens through Programme Committees. The education provider has both college and Institutional Leads for EDI.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
  - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

Non-alignment requiring further assessment: As the education provider is in the process of developing an overarching IPE policy, we will need to be assured learners are prepared to work with other professionals and across professions for the benefit of service users and carers. Therefore, we will assess this through stage 2 of the approval process.

Assessment

Findings on alignment with existing provision:
- **Objectivity** –
  - o Assessments are subject to Assessment Regulations. Assessments are moderated. Mark schemes are available to learners ahead of assessments. Marking is anonymous where possible. Double blind marking is used for significant pieces of work. Samples of all work are moderated internally and externally. Module boards look across the programme to ensure standards are maintained and assessments are fair. External examiners approve the award of final outcomes. Reasonable adjustments are given to learners if appropriate.
  - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.

- o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Progression and achievement** –
    - o Requirements for the award of programmes are set out in the Programme Specifications and Handbooks. Programme Specifications are available to learners through the My Aston Portal platform. Learners are informed, in live sessions and via information provided on Blackboard, about the specific requirements of the programme.
    - o The education provider has an Attendance Recording Policy. Learners are informed of which sessions are compulsory and how attendance and engagement will be monitored. Learners can track their engagement through the MyAttendance platform.
    - o Requirements for progression and achievement are set out in the General Regulations. Any programme level policy is recorded within individual Programme Specifications. These are approved by the Regulations Subcommittee.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.
- **Appeals** –
    - o The process by which learners can appeal is set out in the Student Academic Appeal Procedure document. Learners have 14 days from the release of Exam Board decisions to appeal. The appeals process is dealt with by the Head of Academic Services and Chair of the Exam Board. If a learner is dissatisfied with the outcome of their appeal, they may request a review. This will be conducted by a senior member of staff outside of the programme's college.
    - o This aligns with our understanding of how the education provider runs programmes, including degree apprenticeships.
    - o We think this as the education provider has indicated there have not been any changes to how they meet this area.

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.

There are two areas we will need to review through stage 2 of the process:
- The education provider is in the process of establishing a Service User and Carer group. We will need to assured service users and carers contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of a programme and it makes sure learners completing the programme are fit to practise.

- The education provider is in the process of developing an overarching IPE policy. We will need to be assured learners are prepared to work with other professionals and across professions for the benefit of service users and carers.

Education and training delivered by this institution is underpinned by the provision of the following key facilities:
- Staff on the programme are registered clinicians with private and NHS experience. They are also experienced researchers and experts in the field they specialise in. All staff have completed the teaching requirements of the higher education academy.
- The education provider has physical resources in place. For example:
  - clinical skills laboratories;
  - simulated technology;
  - learning and development centre;
  - library; and
  - well-being centre.
- All staff and resources required are in place.

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
Foundation Degree Hearing Aid Audiology (Degree Apprenticeship)	Part Time	Hearing aid dispenser	30 learners per cohort, one cohort per year	1 September 2024
Foundation Degree Hearing Aid Audiology (Non-Degree Apprenticeship)	Full Time	Hearing aid dispenser	15 learners per cohort, one cohort per year	1 September 2024

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.

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 defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider met our standards.

We have reported on how the provider meets standards, including the areas below, through the Findings section.

Quality theme 1 – sufficient staffing for the programmes

Area for further exploration: The education provider supplied the curriculum vitae of staff working on the programmes. The visitors were satisfied these staff had the appropriate knowledge and experience to deliver the programmes.

The visitors also noted the 'BSc HSAUD and FD Programme Committee Minutes 01-02-24'. These recorded that a staffing post for the new programmes needed to be filled. In addition, the visitors did not receive information about the relative contributions of the staff to the proposed programmes. Consequently, the visitors were unclear about the proportion of the staff time which would be spent working on the programmes. The visitors were therefore unsure whether there would be sufficient staffing resources to deliver the programmes effectively. The visitors sought further information about this.

Quality activities agreed to explore theme further: We decided to explore this by requesting an email response from the education provider. We thought this was the most effective way to explore the theme as we decided it was a query to which we needed to clarify our understanding.

Outcomes of exploration: The visitors received information about the programme team, their roles, and their responsibilities across the delivery of the programmes. The education provider also outlined the proportion of teaching time staff will spend specifically on the proposed programmes. The visitors were satisfied the evidence provided by the education provider demonstrated there was sufficient staffing within the programme team to ensure the programmes were delivered effectively. They had no further questions and considered this standard to be met.

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** –
    - Applicants must have five GCSEs at C / 4 or above, including Maths, English Language or English Literature and science, or equivalent.
    - Applicants for both programmes must also be employed in a full-time clinical audiology department / setting.
    - Information for applicants is available on the programmes' webpage.
    - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 3: Programme governance, management and leadership** –
    - The education provider has collaborated with practice-based learning partners to develop the programmes. They have a series of meetings to provide updates and other relevant information, for example upcoming assessments.
    - It is part of the admissions process to ensure all applicants are based within a functioning audiology clinic. This helps to ensure the capacity of practical-based learning necessary to deliver the programmes. A place on either programme is declined if a practice-based learning environment is not available. As part of the admissions process, an

audit of each practice-based learning provider is conducted to ensure relevant supervision, clinical support, training environment and equipment is available for the duration of the programme.

- o The programme team are registered hearing aid dispensers with private and NHS experience. They have completed the teaching requirements of the Higher Education Academy. As discussed in quality theme 1, staff working on the programme have clear roles and responsibilities. There is clear information about the proportion of teaching time staff will spend specifically on the proposed programmes.
- o Staff are experienced clinicians and experts in their own disciplines. Staff from other disciplines, such as neurophysiology, will also contribute to specialist teaching.
- o Interactive resources are hosted through Blackboard and are available to all learners. Programme staff are able to use Aston Replay to record teaching sessions and distribute content to learners. The education provider has physical resources in place. For example, clinical skills laboratories, simulated technology, learning and development centre, library, and well-being centre.
- o All staff and resources required for these programmes are in place.
- o As referred from stage 1 of this process, service users attend and contribute to meetings, for example programme meetings. The education provider is in the process of establishing a Service User and Carer group. The aim of this group is to maximise service user's and carer's time when contributing to programmes.
- o The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 4: Programme design and delivery** –
  - o The modules have been designed to ensure graduates from the programmes meet the standards of proficiency.
  - o Learners sign a code of conduct at the start of the programmes which sets expectations for behaviour on the programmes. Learners are taught and assessed about professional expectations and the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
  - o The curriculum ensures the proposed programmes remain relevant to current practice by following the NSHCS curriculum and the Institute of Apprenticeships and technical Education curriculum requirements for Level 5 hearing aid dispensers programmes. Additionally, the education provider uses the experience of the programme team to ensure the curriculum is relevant.
  - o Learners have the opportunity at different points of the programmes for learning, reflection and revisiting the values and philosophy of the programmes.
  - o The programmes have been designed to have a theoretical and practical integration of content.

- o Autonomous and reflective thinking are an integral part of the education provider's approach to learning and teaching. This can be seen in the content delivery and the design of assessments.
- o Evidence-based practice is central to the programmes' learning and teaching approach. For instance, learners are taught about evidence-based practice within modules such as Research Methods. Learners also receive support from library to establish good practice in researching for evidence.
- o The programmes use a wide variety of learning and teaching methods. For example, webinars, tutorials, and group work. The programmes use a blended teaching approach. Learner's study through a combination of online learning resources delivered via the virtual learning environment, Blackboard. Blackboard contains study materials, such as recorded lectures, and scientific journals.
- o The programmes follow a multidisciplinary approach to teaching. As referred from stage 1 of this process, learners have opportunities to learn with, and from, other learners from the school, such as those from pharmacy and biomedical science.
- o The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 5: Practice-based learning** –
  - o Practice-based learning is an integral part of the programmes. Learners undergo practice-based learning in skills labs at their audiology-based work environment.
  - o Practice-based learning has been designed to enable learners to achieve the learning outcomes. Tripartite meetings and auditing ensure the structure, duration and range of practice-based learning supports the achievement of the learning outcomes. Learners complete a logbook to demonstrate how they have achieved the learning outcomes.
  - o A variety of resources are made available to learners and practice educators to ensure they are engaging with the learning and preparing for all competency assessments. This is monitored via tripartite meetings, and regular communication.
  - o For both programmes, learners will spend most of their time working full time in their clinical role. They will be block-released for study time to complete on campus. This will be usually two or three days at a time a year.
  - o Employers provide a named member of supervising staff for each learner on both programmes. They are audited by the education provider to ensure they are suitable. All supervising staff are registered practitioners with qualifications in audiology. They must complete a supervisor's programme offered by the education provider for effective supervision. They also attend on-campus training and update days. The education provider has regular interaction with practice educators in a variety of contexts. For example, training and progress review.

- The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

- **SET 6: Assessment** –
  - Modules have been designed to ensure the standards of proficiency are assessed. The modules have been aligned to ensure they are effective at measuring the learning outcomes.
  - The programmes use a variety of assessment methods. For example, written assignments, exams, and portfolios.
  - Learners complete a portfolio within practice-based learning to demonstrate they can meet the expectations of professional behaviour, including the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.
  - The visitors considered the relevant standards within this SET area met.

Risks identified which may impact on performance: None.

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.

Recommendations

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

The visitors did not set any recommendations.

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

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
Aston University	CAS-01489-F1J4K3	Jo Jackson and Robert MacKinnon	Through this assessment, we have noted 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: Staff on the programmes are registered audiology clinicians with private and NHS experience. They are also experienced researchers and experts in the field that they specialise in. All staff have completed the teaching requirements of the higher education academy. The education provider has physical resources in place. For example: • clinical skills laboratories; • simulated technology; • learning and development centre; • library; and • well-being centre. All staff and resources required for these programmes are in place.
Programmes				
Programme name			**Mode of study**	**Nature of provision**

Foundation Degree Hearing Aid Audiology (Degree Apprenticeship)	Part Time	Apprenticeship
Foundation Degree Hearing Aid Audiology (Non-Degree Apprenticeship)	Full Time	Taught (HEI)

Appendix 2 – list of open programmes at this institution

Name	Mode of study	Profession	Modality	Annotation	First intake date
BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science	FT (Full time)	Biomedical scientist			01/10/2010
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)	FT (Full time)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/09/2012
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)	PT (Part time)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/09/2018
BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)	WBL (Work based learning)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/09/2018
Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology	FT (Full time)	Hearing aid dispenser			01/09/2007