

## Performance review process report

### Association of Clinical Scientists, 2018-2021

#### Executive summary

This report covers our performance review of the Association of Clinical Scientists (ACS) and its approved provision.

Following the visitors' review, there were no referrals made to other processes, and no risks identified which may impact on the education provider's performance. The visitors however noted two areas which they considered require further review when next the education provider engages with the performance review process:

- I. The minimum involvement of service users/carers.
- II. The limited action taken following feedback evaluation from learners.

Due to the way this programme is delivered - primarily via a portfolio approach rather than a taught educational programme, it is not possible to compare the education provider's practice and learner satisfaction against the usual national databases. As such, it is important that learner satisfaction is continually evaluated, and any issues addressed to improve learners' satisfaction and ultimately their success. Limited response has been provided by the education provider in relation to this point and this is required to monitor such progression in future reviews.

Given the areas highlighted above, in addition to the lack of data points to support the education provider's position, the visitors have considered that a suitable review period would be two years after which time it would be hoped that the above areas would have been fully addressed and possibly acceptable data points established.

This report has been considered by our Education and Training Panel who have agreed the final decision on the review period.

<b>Previous consideration</b>	Not applicable – This is the education provider's first engagement with the HCPC's performance review process. There was no previous consideration leading to this performance review.
<b>Decision</b>	<p>The Education and Training Committee (Panel) is asked to decide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• when the education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be</li> <li>• whether issues identified for referral through this review should be reviewed, and if so how.</li> </ul>

Next steps

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Subject to the Panel's decision, the education provider's next performance review will be in the 2023-24 academic year

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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 performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) 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 performance review process

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible, and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

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

### **Thematic areas reviewed**

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

### **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 a review of this education provider:

David Newsham	Lead visitor, Orthoptist
Beverley Cherie Millar	Lead visitor, Clinical Scientist
Manoj Mistry	Service User Expert Advisor
Temilolu Odunaike	Education Quality Officer

## Section 2: About the education provider

### The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers one HCPC-approved programme across one profession, clinical scientist. It is a professional body and has been running the HCPC approved programme since 2012.

The Association of Clinical Sciences is an umbrella organisation of constituent member professional bodies. They have the primary function to assess pre-registration clinical scientists under a competency-based assessment, for the award of the Certificate of Attainment for onward Health and Care Professions Council registration as a clinical scientist. The Certificate of Attainment is an assessment process learners may apply for once they have attained the necessary academic achievements and in-service training as a pre-registered clinical scientist. The programme involves building a portfolio of evidence, cross referenced to the competences, that is reviewed and assessed at interview by an HCPC registered clinical scientist, constituent member professional body nominated assessors. As such, the education provider has limited input in the academic and training provision of their learners who are only formally known to them at the point of application once their academic achievements and in service training has been acquired.

It is worth noting that the education provider's internal assessment and internal/external reporting mechanisms are built around calendar years rather than academic years, therefore their portfolio submission covered full calendar years 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021.

In addition, the nature of this education provider and its programme has meant some thematic areas are not applicable to them. As such, these areas are not included through this report.

### 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	Clinical Scientist	Postgraduate	2002

### 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.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	97	70	2021	Although there has been a steady decrease in the number of learners in recent years, we are reassured through this performance review exercise that learner numbers are now stabilised. As the education provider continues to monitor application numbers, receive estimates of learner numbers from their constituent member professional bodies and monitor their expenditure, we expect these to ensure their sustainability
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	N/A	N/A	2019-2020	As a non-Higher Education Institution (HEI), this data is not provided by Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and it is therefore marked not applicable.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	N/A	N/A	2019-2020	As a non-HEI, this data is not provided by HESA and the education provider does not have an equivalent data.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	N/A		As a non-HEI, this data is not provided by Office for Students (OfS) and is therefore not applicable
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	N/A	N/A	2022	As a non-HEI, this data is not provided by the OfS and the education provider does not have an equivalent data.

### Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

#### Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.



## Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. 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 was performing well against our standards.

### Quality theme 1 – approach to financial stability

**Area for further exploration:** There is evidence of income from two primary sources, collectively the Professional Body subscriptions and application fees, and we noted these incomes have been able to provide sufficient funding for all expenditures.

We noted that one of the primary forms of income is via the application fees and the number of applicants has progressively decreased each year from 116, 90, 66 and 70 applicants from 2018 to 2021 respectively. It was uncertain as to current number of applicants for 2022 to date. We were also unable to determine the education provider's approach to addressing the decreasing number of applicants if this remains a continuing trend. It was unclear if the education provider had any additional avenues of financial income to offset the decreasing resources from applications to ensure proposed future expenditure costs are met. In addition, we were unable to determine how the education provider was able to recruit pre-reg clinical scientists to the programme following the introduction of the various other education providers.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further clarification on the information supplied to understand how the education provider intends to or has addressed the areas identified above.

**Outcomes of exploration:** We understood from the education provider's response that the decrease in numbers noted over the 2018-2021 period is associated with alternative education providers coming in around the introduction of the NHS Scientist Training Programme (STP). The education provider explained they have stabilised their learner numbers over the last three years as they continue to see their constituent member professional bodies promoting alternative paths into the profession. As such, they are not expecting numbers to reduce in the immediate future. The education provider is asking all their constituent member professional bodies to make similar estimates as obtained from the Association of Genomic Science, for the number of applications they might expect in their modalities for the coming years, which is to be achieved via surveys of their members.

The education provider also explained they do not have other avenues of income as they are solely funded by application fees and their constituent member professional bodies' contributions. They considered their cost base as modest as they are largely reliant on volunteers via the constituent member professional bodies and have moved over to video assessment and electronic portfolios, significantly reducing costs. The education provider also described other ways by which they have significantly decreased their expenditure. However, they explained that should their

costs increase, they are prepared to either seek additional funding from the constituent member professional bodies or increase assessment fees (for example in line with inflation).

In summary, the education provider noted how and why they have monitored their application numbers and will continue to receive estimates of numbers from their constituent member professional bodies. They will also closely monitor their expenditure and adjust their fees accordingly. We were satisfied this clarification adequately addressed the issues raised. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

### Quality theme 2 – collaboration with their constituent member professional bodies

**Area for further exploration:** From the information provided we noted interactions with the Association of Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine and the Association for Clinical Genomic Science. Furthermore, representatives from all the professional bodies attend the education provider's board meetings.

We considered it important to have clarity on how the specific roles of these professional bodies and relationships between them and the education provider, have not only enhanced regulatory functions but also provided information and transparency to applicants.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** We received evidence that listed the constituent member professional bodies, explaining that these organisations could provide assistance on careers and training queries, guidance on portfolio construction and assistance for any 'rejected at portfolio' or 'failed at interview' applications. For example, information about eligibility for subsidised application fee, was made available to applicants and also presented on the constituent member professional bodies page of the education provider's website. It was also explained on the "My routes to registration" page of the website. The Memorandum and Articles of the Association outlined the formal responsibilities of the constituent member professional bodies that form the Governing Body of the ACS ('the Board').

This provided the clarity needed on how collaboration with the professional bodies enhanced the applicant experience and the regulatory function. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

### Quality theme 3 – quality assurance with constituent member professional bodies

**Area for further exploration:** We are aware the education provider does not provide any teaching or placement activities, rather applicants are assessed on their knowledge/education and their historical professional experience within the workplace. In their portfolio, we noted reference to approved training schemes for different modalities (e.g. audiology, clinical biochemistry, clinical embryology etc). We could not determine how the education provider has reflected on their

performance around ensuring the quality of these training schemes. We were also unclear about the education provider's performance around the use of collaboration and communication to ensure governance was in place with their constituent member professional bodies.

To help standardise assessment of the educational experiences of the various modalities, we needed to know if the constituent member professional bodies helped assessors to assess the standard/suitability of the applicants' educational programmes, particularly in the case of applicants undertaking Route two. Route two is available to learners (from a list of modalities), who have not completed an approved training scheme but with further significant postgraduate training and experience.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The response submitted showed the constituent member professional bodies offered support to potential applicants, providing guidance on what the assessors nominated by the professional body will be looking for in the specialist modality. Constituent member professional bodies had updated and maintained the specific competency documents relevant to the modality/ sub-modality they represent. These documents provided an indication of what sort of information and evidence was required to demonstrate the generic competencies in relation to the modality/sub-modality.

Regarding collaboration, communication, and guidance, the constituent member professional bodies provided guidance on expected outcome and also nominated assessors. The education provider Board met regularly to discuss both general and specific matters. For example, clinical embryology assessors met to discuss what might be expected from learners in relation to IntraCytoplasmic Sperm Injection as this clinical process was starting to be offered in more widespread settings. The constituent member professional body (the Association for Reproductive and Clinical Scientists) then disseminated the conclusions of these discussions to prospective applicants in the modality.

The education provider also provided further clarity around their reflection on how they ensured standardisation. Assessors were given guidance on what should be in a portfolio and the generic competences outlined the consistent expectation across all modalities. New nominated assessors in training were encouraged to observe assessments outside their discipline as well as their own and were provided with opportunities to discuss what they have observed with experienced assessors, the relevant Director for their modality and the Administrator. New assessors were also partnered with experienced assessors for at least their first two assessments and efforts were made to rotate which assessors were paired together when conducting assessments to give assessors opportunities to learn from a variety of partner assessors.

The detailed response submitted by the education provider reassured us the education provider, in collaboration with their constituent professional bodies has

performed well in effectively assessing their provision to ensure quality and drive improvements. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

#### Quality theme 4 – outcomes of the Pre-registrant Scientist Survey

**Area for further exploration:** We noted the Association for Clinical Genomic Science (ACGS), which is one of the constituent member professional bodies, performed a Pre-registrant Scientist Survey in 2021 to identify future needs. The survey highlighted some key points as well as helping with forecasting learners within this modality. However, there was lack of information around how the education provider addressed the outcomes of the survey to help learners complete their training programmes successfully and in turn increase the number of applicants applying for the Certificate of Attainment (CoA). We also could not determine if there had been reflection on the benefit of this survey and therefore whether there was the possibility for a similar survey to be undertaken in the other trainee clinical science modalities.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** We understood some elements of the outcomes was predominantly for the employing laboratory/ department which was relayed by the ACGS themselves. For elements specific to the education provider, we understood work has already commenced on identifying, nominating, ratifying and training new assessors in the areas cited so the education provider is better prepared for the anticipated increase in the numbers of these specific types of applications.

The education provider noted the Pre-registrant Scientist Survey has been brought to the attention of the Board and a request will be made of the other constituent member professional bodies to conduct similar surveys. This would help determine how many applications they might expect in their respective modality/ sub-modality in the coming years.

The detailed response provided reassured us the education provide has been able to effectively deal with some long-term challenges and continue to look for ways for improvement as per the outcomes of the Pre-registrant Scientist Survey. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

#### Quality theme 5 – supporting learners on portfolio preparation

**Area for further exploration:** As part of their horizon scanning, the education provider stated they do not know who their learners will be until they apply for assessment at the point they feel they have acquired the required competencies. We could not determine how the education provider had performed in terms of supporting learners in their portfolio preparations. Their reflection also did not demonstrate their performance on how they encouraged employers to support and facilitate training/ further training/ guidance to enable learners to successfully complete their applications thereby improving the clinical scientist workforce.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The education provider explained they collaborated with their constituent member professional bodies to support learners. They stated they were available to be contacted by employers, training officers, education/training representatives of their constituent member professional bodies and prospective applicants themselves. This included responding to ad hoc requests for clarity of their guidelines as well as general information and advice.

We were reassured that the education provider has continued to support their learners. Therefore, we are satisfied this quality activity has addressed the issued and there are no further questions going forward.

#### Quality theme 6 –impact of Covid – 19, including changes in the use of technology

**Area for further exploration:** Lower numbers of applicants were noted during the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. However, we noted success rates were comparable to previous years. We also noted that steps were introduced to facilitate assessments due to Covid restrictions. Online applications, although already developed, was the mechanism chosen with virtual interviews delivered. It appeared this will be the primary method of delivering assessment in the future. The education provider recognised there were delays in completing assessment of applications during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was linked to assessor availability or applicants asking for a delay in order to fulfil urgent roles in their workplace. The visitors noted all the changes; however, it was unclear how the education provider had reflected on implementation of the changes, including the impact on learners, and what they were taking forward.

In addition, as many processes were carried out online, we needed to know how the provider ensured online platforms were secure and confidentiality/GDPR was considered if the education provider decided to continue to process payment, share portfolios with assessors and interviews are conducted online and recorded.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** In their response, the education provider elaborated on their performance around the changes they have implemented in response to the impact of Covid-19. Regarding full delivery of the assessment online, the education provider explained learners were asked to complete an evaluation form (anonymously) when notified of their result. Learners were encouraged to comment on all aspects of their experience of the application and assessment process which included those measures enacted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Responses were observed by the Administrator then periodically reported to the Executive and the Board. The education provider is now working with the Board and

their constituent member professional bodies to gauge the opinion of prospective applicants and their supervisors.

The provider also described how they ensured information was kept secure. We understood the portfolio of evidence is now submitted via a secure Google forms submissions portal. Information such as the applicant's data of birth, personal address details and responses to the equality, diversity & inclusion survey were redacted before sending to assessors. Assessment interviews were conducted via MS Teams with no audio or video recording.

This demonstrated the education provider has considered the impact of the pandemic on their provision and are taking steps to ensure any learning from the experience enhances their provision. We were also reassured the education provider continues to use technology to improve their provision. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

#### Quality theme 7 – changes to curricula to reflect changes in professional body guidance

**Area for further exploration:** We understood the education provider is taking a pragmatic and proportionate approach to changes to their curricula. However, we were unclear about how changes to curricula were determined by the constituent member professional bodies and how such were communicated to the education provider and reflected upon.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** As part of their response, the education provider reflected on their approach in cases where HCPC standards changed, as an example. The education provider explained they informed their constituent member professional bodies about the changes and the Board discussed its ramifications, notably how this might affect the competencies which require demonstrating within the portfolio. The constituent member professional bodies ensured they covered changes in technology/ knowledge/ legislation which they expect learners to be knowledgeable about.

This reassured us the education provider had reflected on their approach to adapting to changes in professional body guidance in order to improve the quality of their provision. Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward.

#### Quality theme 8 – involvement of service users

**Area for further exploration:** We noted service user involvement was limited to one lay member on the Board. We appreciate the education provider offers an experiential pathway to HCPC registration rather than a taught route. However, irrespective of the pathway to registration, it was not clear what role/ input the service user had in relation to the programme. We decided to further explore how the

service user's feedback contributed to the development and review of the programme.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested additional information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent. Specifically, we requested information on the steps the education provider has undertaken to ensure that there is further involvement particularly at Board Meetings and that the lay/service user perspective in relation to the professional bodies is relayed to the education provider.

**Outcomes of exploration:** In their response, the education provider explained they have a lay member role on the Board with the duties explained in the letter of appointment. However, they recognised that further lay/ service user involvement is required and would be grateful for any advice the HCPC has for them and their constituent member professional bodies in relation to this. The education provider acknowledged an applicant's experience pathway for clinical science in order to adequately demonstrate the competences, requires work-based experiential learning. They explained further that learners and their employers are based in a healthcare setting and are expected to be knowledgeable about Patient Public Involvement.

We understood a lay member has observed assessments and provided their feedback but no areas of concern in relation to the interview have yet been identified from these observations. The education provider recognised that lay member observations of assessments could occur more regularly, and they intend to make attempts to ensure this is the case.

We also understood the education provider is looking into ways to ensure they continue to involve service users and carers, so they more meaningfully contribute to the overall quality and effectiveness of the programme.

Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward. However, to ensure they continue to improve, we will review this area again when next the education provider engages with the performance review process.

#### Quality theme 9 – using feedback evaluation to enhance the application process for future applicants

**Area for further exploration:** Learners have highlighted areas where they found a high level of support particularly that of the Administrator and the manner in which the assessors ensured the applicant was at ease. However, we noted feedback on other areas such as the development of their website, timescales for completing the process and further guidance on putting the portfolio together was less positive. We considered it important to know how the education provider had taken steps to evaluate any improvements made and how this is communicated back to both current and future learners.

**Quality activities agreed to explore theme further:** We requested further information to allow the education provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The education provider explained the feedback evaluation was first discussed amongst the Administrator and Executive and summaries provided to the Board, where areas of discussion and possible changes to the process have been identified. We understood this was normally covered in Board meetings. The education provider acknowledged these comments will be reviewed and considered as part of their documentation and process review.

The education provider also noted that changes to their processes are rare. The education provider mentioned the use of the evaluation form which learners were asked to complete after their assessment reached a conclusion. In addition, they intend to conduct a survey of assessors, and ask their constituent member professional bodies to survey prospective applicants and their supervisors, to gauge their opinion of these changes. Summaries of the results of the survey will be published on the education provider's website.

Following this quality activity, we had no further questions going forward. However, as the education provider is developing new ways to evaluate performance in this area, we will review this area again at the education provider's next performance review to ensure the comments noted have been reviewed and considered.

## Section 4: Summary of findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

### Overall findings on performance

#### Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

#### **Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
  - The education provider conducts an annual assessment of their financial viability and the sustainability of their provision. Their primary source of income is through application fees and constituent member professional body subscription fees.
  - They have introduced the use of modern technology around electronic portfolio submission and remote assessment which they outlined has improved efficiency, reduced the cost base and made the review of assessments less time consuming for their assessors.
  - Although the education provider has experienced a decrease in the number of applications received in recent years, as outlined in [Quality theme 1](#), they have identified ways to ensure the sustainability of their provision.
  - Therefore, we are satisfied the education provider continues to perform well in this area.



- **Partnerships with other organisations –**
  - The education provider has regular dialogue with other education providers that also offer assessment towards HCPC registration as a clinical scientist. Representatives of their constituent member professional bodies also regularly meet representatives of these organisations to discuss matters relating to their modality. The education provider also responds to Government level consultations, such as the Department of Health and Social Care Consultation on Regulatory Reform.
  - Details of how the education provider collaborated with the partner organisations, to enhance their provision was provided through quality activity as outlined in [Quality theme 2](#). Therefore, we are satisfied they have continued to perform well in this area.
  
- **Academic and placement quality –**
  - Training is in the live service environment, and the academic requirement for success is stipulated in the education provider's Guidelines for Application.
  - A detailed outline of how the education provider works with their assessors and their constituent member professional bodies, for example, how they ensured standardisation across the different assessors, was discussed through [Quality theme 3](#).
  - Based on information received, we are confident the education provider has performed well in this area.
  
- **Interprofessional education (IPE)–**
  - There is a requirement for learners to be trained in an active clinical/multidisciplinary department. Learners are required to demonstrate an understanding of the wider clinical situation relevant to the patients presenting to their specialty.
  - In conjunction with, and in response, to the amendments to the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for clinical scientists, the education provider has demonstrated through their reflection that they would extend IPE by continuing to work with their constituent member professional bodies.  
The information submitted demonstrated the education provider is performing well in this area.
  
- **Service users and carers –**
  - The education provider noted they have a Lay Member position on the Board who attends their Board meetings, assesses learners' feedback in conjunction with the administrator, and suggests improvements to process arising from these.
  - We noted involvement of service user and carer was through one lay member.
  - Details provided in [Quality theme 8](#) showed the education provider has recognised the need to enhance the involvement of service users and carers to ensure overall quality and effectiveness of the programme.
  - This has demonstrated the education provider has performed satisfactorily in this area. However, to ensure the education provider

improves their performance in this area, we will review again when next they engage with the performance review process.

- **Equality and diversity –**
  - The education provider noted training departments/ employing organisations have a legal responsibility to ensure equality and diversity. In cases where the training departments or employing organisations were unable to do this, the education provider's complaints and appeals procedures was used.
  - The application form requests data from applicants in the context of equality, diversity and inclusion and contains a statement behind these aims. The education provider mentioned their intention to publish their equality and diversity policy on their website.
  - In their portfolio, the education provider gave an example of how they followed their equality and diversity procedure to support a dyslexic learner.
  - From the information submitted, we are reassured the education provider is performing well in this area.
- **Horizon scanning –**
  - The education provider noted their challenge was not knowing who their learners will be until they apply for assessment. Applicants apply at the point they feel they have acquired the necessary competences at the end of their pre-registration clinical scientist training. They noted this approach requires a level of horizon scanning to ensure they can assess learners in a timely manner.
  - The education provider also highlighted the work carried out by one of the constituent member professional bodies, to identify future needs, particularly as it concerns the decreasing number of applicants. Through quality activity ([Quality themes 4](#) and [5](#)), we were able to gain assurance that the education provider has developed strategies to collaborate with their constituent member professional bodies, so they are better prepared to manage application numbers.
  - Therefore, there is sufficient evidence to determine the education provider continues to perform well in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** As noted above, at the education provider's next performance review, we will review any developments around the involvement of service users.

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Impact of COVID-19 –**
  - The education provider noted that the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the roll out of electronic submission and remote assessments. The education provider also highlighted some delays experienced in completing assessment of applications and noted this was partly due to assessor availability.

- As outlined in [Quality theme 6](#), the impact of the pandemic has led to the development of an online submission of portfolio which has assisted assessors in assessing applications in a more efficient way.
  - Through information submitted in their portfolio and engagement with quality activity, we received sufficient evidence that demonstrated the education provider has performed well in this area.
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**
    - The education provider noted that as they do not directly provide teaching, their assessment methodology has remained unchanged apart from moving to an electronic platform.
    - A full detail of how the education provider has used technology to improve their assessment method is given in [Quality theme 6](#). An example of this is the move to online interviews.
    - Based on the information received, we are satisfied the education provider has continued to perform well in this area.
- **Apprenticeships –**
    - The education provider currently does not deliver this route and has not mentioned any intention to do so. However, information supplied in their portfolio demonstrated they could consider this route if required in the future.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies –**
  - The education provider noted there was no impact for them for them in this area as an assessment body. However, they recognised the recent changes to the HCPC standards of proficiency would need to be reflected in the competencies they assess their learners against due to their unique position as a professional body and education provider.
  - The education provider did not highlight any other engagement with professional bodies, in this section of their portfolio. However, they also recognised that changes to other professions that relate to the work of clinical scientists might change the types of evidence their learners use to demonstrate attainment of the competences.
  - From the information provided earlier about the education provider's relationship with their constituent member professional bodies, we have sufficient reassurance they continue to engage with relevant professional bodies to enhance their provision.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

## Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

### **Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Curriculum development –**
  - The curriculum (portfolio content) is based on current practice, although does not change the generic competencies against which learners are assessed.
  - Constituent member professional bodies maintain the specific competencies that provide advice to learners on how they might demonstrate attainment of the competences in the context of their modality. The education provider encourages their professional bodies and modality-specific assessor pools to meet to discuss the impact any changes in their modality might have on how assessments might be conducted.
  - We are satisfied that despite the diversity of the modalities, the education provider continues to take active steps to support curricula development. Therefore, we are confident they are performing well in this area.
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
  - The education provider noted how they have continued to offer a flexible and pragmatic response to changes, despite fast changes in technology.
  - As outlined in [Quality theme 7](#) we understand the education provider's approach to curricula development to reflect changes in relevant professional body guidance and how this is shared with learners.
  - Therefore, we are satisfied the education provider continues to perform well in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

## Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

### **Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Learners –**
  - The education provider uses learner evaluation forms to gather feedback from their learners. Decisions, outcomes, and recommendations following appeals and complaints are reported by the Secretary to Board meetings and Annual General Meetings.
  - As noted in [Quality theme 9](#) the education provider is also exploring other ways to gather feedback, such as asking their constituent member professional bodies to survey prospective applicants and their supervisors.
  - We are satisfied the education provider has performed satisfactorily in this area. However, for us to assess how these proposals on feedback evaluation has developed and reflected on, we will review this area again when next the education provider engages with the performance review process.

- **External examiners –**
  - The education provider noted external examiner reports are provided and a review of these found some discussion points with the relevant Board member for the modality and/or at Board meetings. The education provider confirmed no concerns regarding the conduct of any of the assessments that were evaluated was identified.
  - From the information provided we have a clearer understanding of how issues relating to assessments are raised and dealt with in line with the education provider's external examiner evaluation process. Therefore, we are confident the education provider has continued to perform well in this area.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** As noted above, at the education provider's next performance review, we will review how they have used feedback evaluation to enhance the application process for future applicants.

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:** Learners highlighted areas where they found a high level of support particularly that of the Administrator and the manner in which the assessors ensured the applicants were at ease. The visitors considered it was good practice.

#### Data and reflections

**Findings of the assessment panel:** The visitors noted that reflections have primarily focused on success rates, numbers of applicants and reflections from learners. Much of the data requested was marked as not applicable. The visitors are aware the education provider delivers an experiential route rather than a taught programme, so this explains the reason for the lack of data.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** To remain confident with education provider performance, we rely on a regular supply of data and intelligence to help us understand education provider performance outside of the periods where we directly engage with them. As the education provider has not been able to supply relevant data or establish data supply, this remains a risk and therefore means a more frequent review is required.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** We are aware that the nature of the education provider and its programme would mean they may not be able to supply data points on the standard areas required:

- Continuation rates
- Graduate outcomes
- Teaching quality
- Learner satisfaction

The education provider is proposing to submit their annual application/assessment results statistics. We will work with the education provider to understand the information they submit and to determine how these could provide the level of

reassurance needed to be able to allow beyond a two-year review period. Therefore, establishing data supply remains an outstanding area for follow up.

## Section 5: Issues identified for further review

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

### **Referrals to next scheduled performance review**

#### Involvement of service users

**Summary of issue:** The visitors noted the involvement of one service user on an ad hoc basis. The visitors considered there is need to involve service users and carers more in the programme so they can contribute to the overall effectiveness of the programme. Therefore, we have noted this as an area to be developed and reflected upon in the provider's next performance review.

#### Enhancement of the application process for future applicants using feedback evaluation

**Summary of issue:** The education provider acknowledged the visitors' comments around evaluating feedback to enhance the application process for future applicants. Although the provider noted changes to their processes are rare, they are considering conducting surveys with their assessors, constituent member professional bodies, prospective applicants and their supervisors, to gauge their opinion of changes made. Therefore, we will review how the education provider has evaluated and reflected upon the feedback received from these groups and improvements made to further evaluate their performance in this area.

## Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

### **Assessment panel recommendation**

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

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2023-24 academic year
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report

**Reason for this recommendation:** Due to the areas for future review as noted in the Executive summary of this report, and the absence of external data points, the visitors have considered that a suitable review period would be two years. As noted above, we rely on regular supply of data and intelligence to help us understand education provider performance outside of the periods where we directly engage with them. Where the education provider does not have an agreed / established data supply with the HCPC, the maximum length of time we will allow between

performance review engagements will be two years. This will allow us to continue to understand risks in an ongoing way where data is not available.

After this time, it would be hoped that the outstanding areas would have been fully addressed.

### **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 education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2023-24 academic year

**Reason for this decision:** The committee agreed with the findings of the visitors during this review and were satisfied with the recommended review period.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Annotation</b>	<b>First intake date</b>
Certificate of Attainment	FLX (Flexible)	Clinical scientist			01/01/2002