

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Aston University
Programme name	Aston Certificate in Audiology
Mode of delivery	Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	6 – 7 October 2011

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Hearing aid dispenser' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 22 February 2012. At the Committee meeting on 22 February 2012, the programme was approved. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC approval for the first time. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visit also assessed whether a number of standards under SET 5 (Practice placements) were applicable to the programme as a result of entry requirements for prior qualifications and experience as an audiologist working in the NHS.

This visit was an HPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Hugh Crawford (Hearing aid dispenser) Timothy Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
HPC observer	Victoria Adenugba
Proposed student numbers	10 per cohort
Proposed start date of programme approval	March 2012
Chair	Trevor Knight (Aston University)
Secretary	Gillian Cook (Aston University)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Approval visit evidence folder	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review a practice placement handbook prior to the visit. This programme does not include any practice placements so there is no practice placement handbook.

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit, there have been no past external examiners reports as the programme is new.

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not meet with any placement providers or educators/mentors. This programme does not include any practice placements so there are no placement providers or educators/mentors to meet with.

The HPC did not meet with any students. The programme was a new programme so there were no current or past students to meet.

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved. The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of SETs are not applicable to this education programme and they are not required to be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 37 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 7 SETs. The visitors agreed that the remaining 13 SETs are not applicable to this education programme.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors did not make any recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

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

Condition: The programme team must submit advertising materials for the programme.

Reason: Information provided prior to the visit indicated because this is a new programme the education provider had not produced advertising materials. Discussion at the visit indicated the programme team had not produced advertising materials as they were waiting upon the outcomes of the HPC approval visit before advertising the programme. Through discussion with the programme leader it was clarified programmes could be advertised before obtaining HPC approval as long as the advertising materials complied with the HPC's Regulatory status advertising guidelines for education providers. The programme leader confirmed there were no internal processes preventing them from producing advertising materials until after programme approval had been granted. To assess whether this standard is met the visitors need to see the advertising materials.

The visitors also noted the existing programme documentation did not clearly specify that upon successful completion of this programme students will be eligible to apply for registration as a Hearing aid dispenser, "...audiologists who wish to be eligible for registration with HPC" (Programme specification: Educational Aims). The visitors considered this to be an important clarification for potential applicants and for students on the programme and therefore require this clarification to be included in the advertising materials for the programme. The visitors require the programme team to submit advertising materials (such as prospectus information, website information) for this programme to ensure potential applicants have the information they need to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

2.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the criminal convictions checks applied through the admissions procedures.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit indicated the programme would not undertake criminal conviction checks on the applicants or students of this programme. In discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that the education provider policies do not need criminal convictions checks because the programme does not include students undertaking a practice placement experience. The programme team indicated as part of the admissions procedures they would request a signed declaration from the applicants' employer (or future employer) confirming they were satisfied the individual had no undisclosed criminal convictions and were therefore suitable to work for them. The visitors were satisfied with this clarification however require the admissions procedures

to include this declaration process as evidence for this standard. The visitors require the advertising materials to clearly articulate the declaration process as it is important information for potential applicants to the programme. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the admissions procedures, and the advertising materials, to include the requirement of a declaration from an employer, or future employer.

2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of health requirement checks applied through the admissions procedures.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit indicated the programme would not require applicants or students on this programme to undergo health requirement checks. In discussion with the programme team it was indicated that the education provider policies do not need compliance with any health requirements because the programme does not include students undertaking a practice placement experience. The programme team indicated as part of the admissions procedures they would request a signed declaration from the applicants' employer (or future employer) stating they were satisfied the individual complied with any health requirements and were therefore suitable to work for them. The visitors were satisfied with this clarification however require the admissions procedures to include this declaration process as evidence for this standard. The visitors require the advertising materials to clearly articulate the declaration process as it is important information for potential applicants to the programme. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the admissions procedures, and the advertising materials, to include the requirement of a declaration from an employer, or future employer.

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Condition: The programme team must submit further details of the entry standards for applicants who are returning to practise, or joining the hearing aid dispensing profession, after a career break.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit detailed entry standards for applicants to the programme as being recognised professional qualifications or international qualifications. The programme team indicated they expected the majority of applicants to be those already practising as an audiologist. The visitors were satisfied with the entry criteria for those individuals practising as an audiologist, however had concerns around specific groups of applicants who could apply to the programme, particularly applicants who were returning to practise, or joining the hearing aid dispensing profession, after a career break. Applicants who are not currently in practise would not have the same 'current' experience of the clinical environment. The programme does not include a practice placement experience and the visitors therefore expressed concern that applicants not in practise might not be able to meet all of the clinical competencies of the programme. During discussion the programme team

indicated they had been considering setting a limit on the length of any career breaks for applicants however had not determined what the limit would be. The visitors need further information about any career break limits, to be assured the programme will apply appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards for this programme and will ensure that clinical aspects of the teaching on this programme are not disadvantaged by the applicant not having 'current' experience of a clinical environment. Therefore, the visitors require details of the entry requirements for applicants who are returning to practise, or joining the hearing aid dispensing profession, after a career break.

4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence to demonstrate how theory and practice are integrated with particular consideration to the following SOPs:

- 1a.6 be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement:
 - be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- 1b.3 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, service users, their relatives and carers:
 - understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
 - be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems
- 2b.3 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales:
 - be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users

Reason: The visitors noted the documentation provided prior to the visit mapped the standards of proficiency to the programme modules. The mapping document indicated the above SOPs are covered through all modules of the programme. During discussion at the visit the programme team particularly emphasised the clinical skills module as covering the theory and practice aspects for practical competencies of the programme. The programme team indicated role-play exercises and actors would be used in the teaching of the professional competencies and they had available links to private hearing aid dispensers through their existing audiology programmes. Because the programme does not have students undertaking a practice placement experience, the visitors highlighted the importance of ensuring the integration of theory and practice within the programme. The visitors raised the SOPs above as being the ones where it would be most difficult for the programme to ensure students understand the practical application of professional competencies related to dispensing of hearing aids, in particular the impacts of financial implications and the different hearing aid systems for service users. The visitors require further assurance that

students will be able to manage the differences between the simulation experience and the 'real-life' experience of hearing aid dispensing. If it is decided links from the private hearing aid dispenser setting will be used, details of how hearing aid dispensers will be involved with the delivery of the programme could be included as evidence here. The visitors require the programme team to submit further evidence to demonstrate the integration of theory and practice in relation to the SOPs highlighted above.

4.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Condition: The programme team must submit further information about the use of hearing aid dispenser practitioners within the teaching of the programme.

Reason: Documentation received prior to the visit included information about the modules within the programme and an outline of the members of the programme team who will be delivering the modules. During discussion at the visit the programme team indicated they may use links to hearing aid dispenser practitioners through their other audiology programmes to assist the students learning and understanding of the practical components of the programme. The programme team indicated they had existing materials which would be used by the hearing aid dispensers contributing to the programme. The visitors noted the use of hearing aid dispenser practitioners could be beneficial for the programme and could support the concerns outlined in the condition set under SET 4.3 regarding SOPs 1a.6, 1b.3 and 2b.3. If the programme does use hearing aid dispenser practitioners within the teaching of the programme, information about how they would be involved, including examples of the teaching materials for the SOPs indicated would need to be reviewed by the visitors to ensure it is appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum. Therefore the visitors require the programme team to submit further information about the use hearing aid dispenser practitioners within the teaching of the programme.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the programme confers no aegrotat awards.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit stated that the programme does not confer aegrotat awards (SETs mapping document SET 6.9). The visitors were satisfied with this however noted this was not clearly articulated anywhere in the programme documentation. This standard requires that the programme documentation clearly states this to avoid any confusion. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation (such as the programme specification document) to be updated to clearly specify that an aegrotat award would not be conferred by this programme. This is to provide clarity for students and to ensure that this standard is met.

Standards of education and training not applicable to the programme

5.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme. The visitors therefore recommend this standard is not applicable to the programme.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.2 is not applicable to the programme.

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission

procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.3 is not applicable to the programme.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.4 is not applicable to the programme.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.5 is not applicable to the programme.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the

programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.6 is not applicable to the programme.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.7 is not applicable to the programme.

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.8 is not applicable to the programme.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.9 is not applicable to the programme.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.10 is not applicable to the programme.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements.

The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.11 is not applicable to the programme.

5.12 Learning, teaching and supervision must encourage safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.12 is not applicable to the programme.

5.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.

Reason: Prior to the visit the programme team submitted documentation for the programme. This included a SETs mapping document in which the education provider has made the case that standards under SET 5 are not applicable to the programme because the programme does not incorporate practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated that expected applicants to the programme would be practitioners returning to work, competent with working with service users but needing to update their clinical skills. Alternatively, they would be practitioners in practise seeking registration as a hearing aid dispenser. The visitors have set conditions on the admission procedures for the programme to ensure there are robust admissions procedures in place for this programme. The visitors were satisfied that if the programme meets all conditions in this report, practice placements would not need to be integral to this programme, and therefore recommend standard 5.13 is not applicable to the programme.

Hugh Crawford
Tim Pringle