

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Southampton
Programme name	Hearing Aid Aptitude Test
Mode of delivery	Distance learning
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	12 - 13 February 2014

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Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. We are a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. We currently regulate 16 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 HCPC keep a register of health and care 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 2 July 2014. At the Committee meeting, 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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 HCPC 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 did not consider it necessary to supply an independent chair and secretary for the visit due to the nature of the programme.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Elizabeth Ross (Hearing aid dispenser) Derek Adrian-Harris (Radiographer)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Abdur Razzaq
Proposed student numbers	25 per cohort two times per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	June 2014
Chair	The HCPC panel chaired the two day event
Secretary	No secretary was made available

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit, the HCPC 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"/>

The HCPC did not review the practice placement handbook prior to the visit. Due to the nature of the programme the documentation does not exist. The programme does not include any practice placements.

The HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as the programme is new and therefore external examiners' reports have not been produced.

During the visit the HCPC 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not meet with the placements providers and educators / mentors due to the nature of the programme. The programme does not include any practice placements so there are no placement providers or educators / mentors to meet with.

The HCPC met with students from the BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology) as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

The HCPC did not see the specialist teaching accommodation because it is a distance learning programme and does not require any specialist laboratories or teaching rooms.

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 33 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eleven SETs. The visitors agreed that 13 of the SETs are not applicable to this 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 provide further evidence of how students are provided information about the programme.

Reason: In the documents provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not determine how students and potential applicants will be provided information they require to make an informed choice whether to take up a place on the programme or otherwise. The visitors were unable to see clearly articulated information about:

- detailed admission criteria;
- programme fees;
- the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) during admissions;
- admission health checks;
- programme assessment methods;
- duration of the programme; and
- how the programme will be delivered.

During the programme team meeting the visitors learnt that the programme team will revisit and produce detailed programme documentation including a student/programme handbook and advertising materials clearly articulating the information students and potential applicants need to make an informed choice. To assess whether this standard is met the visitors need to see revised programme documentation and the advertising materials.

2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the admissions procedures to apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Reason: In the entry criteria for this programme the visitors noted that required evidence for a good command of reading, writing and spoken English was “GCSE or O’Level English Language grade C or above (or equivalent); or an IELTS [International English Language Testing System] score of 6.5 or equivalent” (Admissions Policy-Hearing Aid Aptitude Test, page 4). It was not clear if, or what score is required for each of the components of IELTS for entry to the programme. During the programme team meeting, the programme leader said, they will revisit the admission criteria to update this section. The visitors require the education provider to submit the revisited programme documentation to clearly state the English language requirements needed for entry to the programme, to ensure that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the selection and entry criteria to ensure they are appropriate, clear and consistent.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit gave examples of entry criteria for applicants to the programme as being authenticated copies of audiological qualifications. Equivalent qualifications to those suggested in the examples will be considered on a case by case basis and compared to the requirements of the HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs) for hearing aid dispensers. The entry criteria further gives examples for appropriate completed clinical placements, CPD evidence and curriculum vitae. The visitors were satisfied with the entry criteria for those individuals practising as an audiologist. The visitors had concerns around specific groups of applicants (international applicants and applicants without recent audiological qualifications which included a complete IRCP) applying to the programme. The visitors noted students on the programme were assessed against a range of competencies based on prior learning and experience and the programme had no direct contact taught curriculum or practice placement elements. The visitors therefore expressed concern that not all applicants would be able to meet all of the clinical competencies that HCPC require from hearing aid dispensers. Discussion with the programme team indicated they had been considering making entry criteria for applicants more robust and may include an Individual Record of Clinical Practice (IRCP) however had not determined details. The visitors need further information about the entry criteria, particularly for international applicants and for applicants without recent audiological qualifications which included a complete IRCP. In this way the visitors can be assured the programme will consistently apply appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards for this programme and will ensure that potential applicants will have appropriate and sufficient experience of working in a clinical environment.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the programme committees and management structure, indicating the roles and responsibilities of the programme team members and how the roles interlink.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team at the visit, the visitors noted the programme team also manage other audiology programmes and therefore has management structures in place. The visitors were unable to determine the programme specific structures for effective management. In discussion with the students it was clear they understood the roles and responsibilities of various members of the programme team, and who the main points of contact were when they needed support. However, from a review of the documentation the visitors determined the programme management structure was not documented, and as such the visitors could not be assured that future students and staff of the programme would have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the day to day management of the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the roles and lines of responsibility of the programme team and committee structures, to ensure that the programme continues to be effectively managed.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The programme team must submit further evidence of how they support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme especially for students with physical sensory impairment.

Reason: In the documentation provided before the visit, the visitors noted that there are resources in place to support learning and teaching activities on this programme. The visitors also noted that the programme had no direct contact taught curriculum as the programme was delivered online. The visitors could not determine how students with physical sensory impairment will be supported throughout the programme. During discussion with the programme team, it was indicated that all recorded presentations will be subtitled and uploaded to the online portal. However, from review of the documentation, it was not clear how these students will be supported. Therefore, the visitors required further evidence of how they support required learning and teaching activities of the programme especially students with physical or sensory impairment.

3.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how students will be made aware of the education provider's support policies.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to determine how students will be made aware of the different support policies and procedures the education provider has and the support available to them. During the programme team meeting, it was discussed that online inductions will be held to make sure students were aware about the different policies and support available for students. The visitors considered this important to be clearly stated for students within the programme documentation including admission materials. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to show how students will be made aware about the education provider's support policies.

3.13 There must be a student complaints process in place.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the complaints process is clearly articulated in the programme documentation for students.

Reason: From a review of programme documentations, the visitors noted that the education provider has an institution wide student complaints process. The visitors were satisfied that this process ensures that students concerns and complaints are dealt with. However, from a review of the documentation submitted for this programme, the visitors were unable to find reference to the student complaints process. The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the complaints process is clearly articulated to students.

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The education provider must identify where on the programme students' attendance is mandatory and how the attendance mechanisms are effectively communicated and monitored.

Reason: The programme documentation submitted prior to the visit did not clearly specify the minimum attendance requirements for this programme. The SETs mapping document stated under standard 3.15 "Due to the nature of the programme (distance learning) access to online teaching material cannot be monitored." During discussions with the programme team, it was highlighted this standard is applicable to the

programme and therefore the programme team must identify where students' attendance is mandatory and put procedures and mechanisms in place to monitor it effectively. From the evidence received the visitors were not satisfied this standard was met. Therefore, visitors require the programme documentation to be revised to clearly identify where on the programme students' attendance is mandatory and how the attendance mechanisms are effectively communicated and monitored.

3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of a formal process for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted for the visit, the visitors could not find any evidence of how the programme deals with concerns about students' profession-related conduct. The visitors noted that students on the programme will undertake assessments and the education provider has a role in identifying any concerns about students' conduct and help addressing it. During discussions with programme team, it was highlighted the education provider does have a formal process for dealing with concerns about students' conduct that is applicable to this programme and this will be included in the programme documentation. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit the revised documentation to evidence the formal process for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how the programme learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted it was clear that the programme curriculum consisted of learning outcomes and that the programme had no taught curriculum with any formal teaching or learning approaches in place. The visitors noted that the programme has one module "HAAT v2" with six other subsections covering a range of competencies. The visitors noted that students on the programme were assessed against the range of competencies based on prior learning and experience. During discussion with the programme team, the visitors learnt that the subsections within the module have their own learning outcomes which are not mapped in the module "HAAT v2". The visitors were unable to determine what the learning outcomes for the whole curriculum were and rationale behind those specific learning outcomes. The visitors were also unable to determine how the learning outcomes will ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet all the standards of proficiency. Therefore, visitors will need further evidence of how the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the assessment methods employed measure the learning outcomes.

Reason: This condition is linked with condition under SET 4.1. From a review of the documentation submitted it was clear that the programme consisted of learning outcomes with no formal teaching or learning approaches in place. The visitors noted that students on the programme were assessed against the range of competencies based on prior learning and experience and the programme had no taught curriculum. The programme has one module "HAAT v2" with six other subsections covering a range of competencies. During discussion with the programme team, the visitors learnt that the subsections within the module have their own learning outcomes which are not mapped in the module "HAAT v2". The visitors were therefore unable to identify all the learning outcomes and assessment methods within the programme and were therefore not able to determine if all the standards of proficiency were covered and assessed. The visitors require the education provider to provide evidence to show that assessment methods clearly assess all the learning outcomes and demonstrate that all the standards of proficiency are assessed within the programme and that those who successfully complete the programme can practise safely and effectively.

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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 standard 5.1 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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: 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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 include practice placements. The visitors discussed this with the programme team and it was indicated this programme is designed for those audiology applicants who wish to gain the required additional knowledge to be able to practice as hearing aid dispensers. 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.

Elizabeth Ross
Derek Adrian-Harris