

HCPC approval process report

Education provider	British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences
Name of programme(s)	Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route, Part time
Approval visit date	14-15 November 2018
Case reference	CAS-13221-R7G5Q1

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Executive Summary

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

The following is a report on the approval process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that programme(s) detailed in this report meet our standards of education and training (referred to through this report as 'our standards'). The report details the process itself, the evidence considered, and recommendations made regarding programme approval.

Through undertaking this process, we have noted areas that may need to be considered as part of future HCPC assessment processes in section 7 of this report.

Section 1: Our regulatory approach

Our standards

We approve programmes that meet our education standards, which ensure individuals that complete the programmes meet proficiency standards. The proficiency standards set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

Programmes are normally [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to satisfactory engagement with our monitoring processes. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

How we make our decisions

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to undertake assessment of evidence presented through our processes. The visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation of the visitors, inclusive of conditions and recommendations. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee meets in public on a regular basis and their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

HCPC panel

We always appoint at least one partner visitor from the profession (inclusive of modality and / or entitlement, where applicable) with which the assessment is concerned. We also ensure that visitors are supported in their assessment by a member of the HCPC executive team. Details of the HCPC panel for this assessment are as follows:

Ian Prince	Lay
Stephen Smith	Practitioner psychologist - Sport and exercise psychologist
Sandra Wolfson	Practitioner psychologist - Sport and exercise psychologist
Niall Gooch	HCPC executive

Other groups involved in the approval visit

There were other groups in attendance at the approval visit as follows. Although we engage in collaborative scrutiny of programmes, we come to our decisions independently.

Peter Mackreth	Independent chair (supplied by the education provider)	Carnegie School of Sport, Leeds Beckett University
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Section 2: Programme details

Programme name	Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route
Mode of study	PT (Part time)
Profession	Practitioner psychologist
Modality	Sport and exercise psychologist
Proposed first intake	01 April 2019
Maximum learner cohort	Up to 25
Intakes per year	2
Assessment reference	APP01938

We undertook this assessment of a new programme proposed by the education provider via the approval process. This involves consideration of documentary evidence and an onsite approval visit, to consider whether the programme meet our standards for the first time.

Section 3: Requirements to commence assessment

In order for us to progress with approval and monitoring assessments, we require certain evidence and information from education providers. The following is a list of evidence that we asked for through this process, and whether that evidence was provided. Education providers are also given the opportunity to include any further supporting evidence as part of their submission. Without a sufficient level of evidence, we need to consider whether we can proceed with the assessment. In this case, we decided that we were able to undertake our assessment with the evidence provided.

Required documentation	Submitted
Programme specification	Yes
Module descriptor(s)	Yes
Handbook for learners	Yes
Handbook for practice based learning	Yes
Completed education standards mapping document	Yes
Completed proficiency standards mapping document	Yes
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	Yes
External examiners' reports for the last two years, if applicable	Not Required

We also expect to meet the following groups at approval visits:

Group	Met
Learners	Yes
Senior staff	Yes
Practice education providers	Yes
Service users and carers (and / or their representatives)	Yes
Programme team	Yes

Facilities and resources	Yes
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Section 4: Outcome from first review

Recommendation of the visitors

In considering the evidence provided by the education provider as part of the initial submission and at the approval visit, the visitors recommend that there was insufficient evidence to demonstrate that our standards are met at this time, but that the programme(s) should be approved subject to the conditions noted below being met.

Conditions

Conditions are requirements that must be met before programmes can be approved. We set conditions when there is insufficient evidence that standards are met. The visitors were satisfied that a number of the standards are met at this stage. However, the visitors were not satisfied that there is evidence that demonstrates that the following standards are met, for the reasons detailed below.

We expect education providers to review the issues identified in this report, decide on any changes that they wish to make to programmes, and then provide any further evidence to demonstrate how they meet the conditions. We set a deadline for responding to the conditions of 24 January 2019.

2.1 The admissions process 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 education provider must demonstrate that applicants will have access to sufficient information about the programme in order to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, including information made available to applicants and the application form. From this evidence, and from discussions that took place at the visit, it was not clear to the visitors where all applicants would be able to access all the information they required to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place. For example, the visitors could not see where applicants would be informed of the potential additional costs associated with the practice-based learning on the programme, or of how they would be able to work through the programme structure. The visitors were therefore unable to determine whether the education provider gave applicants sufficient information about the programme. They require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider will do so, including how learners will be enabled to understand exactly what will be required of them before they make a decision to come on to the programme.

2.2 The selection and entry criteria must include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that their selection and entry criteria include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence provided for this standard, including the application form and the relevant sections of the qualification handbook. They also

discussed academic requirements for entry to the programme with the senior team and with the programme team. The visitors' understanding was that some learners coming on the programme would not have an undergraduate psychology degree, as this was not an absolute requirement for all learners. There was therefore a risk that they would not be sufficiently prepared, and that this would mean they were not suited to the level and content of the programme. The education provider stated in discussion that they had arrangements in place to ensure that all learners were appropriately prepared for study. However, the visitors were not clear about how these arrangements would be put into practice, and so were unable to determine whether the programme had appropriate academic and professional entry standards. They therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence clarifying the academic and professional entry standards for all learners.

2.3 The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants have a good command of English.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the qualification handbook provided to applicants. It was not clear from this documentation how the education provider would ensure that all applicants would have a good command of English. The stated policy, clarified in discussions with the senior team, was that since applicants would already have completed an undergraduate degree it could be presumed that they had an appropriate level of English, including academic writing. However, the visitors noted that the programme was open to applicants from overseas, and that such applicants would not necessarily have needed a good command of English to complete an undergraduate degree. They were therefore unable to determine how the education provider would ensure that all applicants had a good command of English. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants, including those with undergraduate degrees from overseas universities, have a good command of English.

2.4 The admissions process must assess the suitability of applicants, including criminal conviction checks.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants have undergone a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, and must clarify what criteria will be used in judging whether to allow applicants with a criminal record to be admitted to the programme.

Reason: The visitors were aware from their review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the senior team that they did not have a procedure in place to carry out Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on applicants. The senior team stated that for the whole of the programme all learners would be in employment and practice-based learning settings that required their own DBS checks, and that therefore they did not need to carry out DBS checks themselves. However, the HCPC expects that education providers carry out DBS checks, and the visitors therefore considered that the standard was not met. Additionally, from discussion with the senior team and from review of the documentation, it was not clear to the visitors how the education provider would decide under what circumstances (if any) applicants with a criminal record would be admitted to the programme. In the discussions the senior team had

clarified that a criminal record would not necessarily disqualify an applicant, and that they would consider individual situations on a case by case basis. However, the visitors were not clear what guidelines would be applied in such situations, and so they could not determine that all applicants would be treated equitably. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing that they will carry out DBS checks on applicants, and what principles will be applied in deciding whether to admit to the programme learners who have a criminal record.

2.7 The education provider must ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that they have equality and diversity policies in admissions and that they are appropriately monitored.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the application form and the qualification handbook. They were not clear from this review, or from discussions with the programme team and the senior team, that the education provider had a process for monitoring equality and diversity policies in admissions, and for ensuring that relevant data were collected. They could also not see how the feedback loop regarding equality and diversity in admissions was closed – for example, what action would be taken in the event that an issue was identified. The visitors were therefore unable to be clear that the standard was met, and require further evidence from the education provider demonstrating how they will ensure that equality and diversity policies in admissions are implemented and monitored.

3.14 The programme must implement and monitor equality and diversity policies in relation to learners.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that equality and diversity policies in relation to learners will be monitored.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the practice placement handbook and the qualification handbook. They were not clear from this review, or from discussions with the programme team and the senior team, that the education provider had a process for monitoring equality and diversity policies in relation to learners, and for ensuring that relevant data was collected. They could also not see how the feedback loop regarding equality and diversity in relation to learners was closed – for example, what action would be taken in the event that an issue was identified. The visitors were therefore unable to be clear that the standard was met, and require further evidence from the education provider demonstrating how they will ensure that equality and diversity policies in relation to learners are implemented and monitored.

3.15 There must be a thorough and effective process in place for receiving and responding to learner complaints.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have a thorough and effective process in place for receiving and responding to learner complaints.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including guidelines for supervisors and the qualification handbook. From this initial review, they understood

that if complaints could not be resolved by programme staff in the first instance, the reviewer of last resort of learner complaints would be the Chair of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). The visitors were not sure that this was an appropriate arrangement, as it was not clear how the person in this role would make decisions or what oversight was in place. In discussions with the senior team, however, it was clarified that oversight of this process would be provided by a committee at BASES. The visitors considered that this could be an appropriate arrangement, but they were not able to view terms of reference for this committee, or further detail about how the education provider would ensure that its processes were thorough and effective. They were also unclear about how the process would be communicated to learners, and considered that if a process was not well understood by learners then this might impede its thoroughness and effectiveness. They therefore require the education provider to demonstrate that their learner complaints process is thorough and effective.

4.10 The programme must include effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users and learners.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have thorough and effective processes for obtaining appropriate consent from service users.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence for this standard, including the candidate handbook and the practice placement handbook. It was not clear to them from the documentation how the education provider intended to ensure that in practice-based learning service users would always be aware if they were being treated by a learner, and that appropriate consent would be obtained. The programme team stated that they had confidence in their practice-based learning partners to do this, because of their existing relationships and the audit system that was in place for practice-based learning. However, the visitors could not see how what specific process was in place for ensuring that appropriate consent was obtained from service users during practice-based learning, and that learners understood the importance of this. They were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating how they will ensure that appropriate consent is obtained from service users.

5.4 Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure safe lone working for learners in practice-based learning.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including the practice placement handbook. They considered that the education provider's arrangements for auditing practice-based learning settings were generally appropriate. However, the visitors understood that some learners were likely to be undertaking lone working as part of their practice-based learning, for example meeting service users at sports clubs before or after the normal day in practice-based learning. It was not clear to the visitors how the education provider would ensure that all practice-based learning providers undertook risk assessments for lone working, where appropriate. The programme team stated that they had confidence in practice-based learning partners to deal with such situations, but the visitors could not see evidence of a process by which

this was done, for example by staff from the education provider visiting practice-based learning settings. They therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing how they will ensure that all practice-based learning settings are safe for learners.

6.6 There must be an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted for this standard, including the qualification handbook. From this evidence it was not clear how the process for academic appeals would work, and how it would be communicated to learners. The programme team were unable to clarify how this process would work, and so the visitors were unable to determine whether there was an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals. They therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence showing that they have an academic appeals process in place and that clear information about how to make use of the process will be available to learners.

Section 5: Outcome from second review

Second response to conditions required

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

2.1 The admissions process 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 education provider must demonstrate that applicants will have access to sufficient information about the programme in order to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place.

Reason condition not met at this time: The visitors reviewed the evidence submitted as part of the conditions response. This included a narrative of how the education provider intended to give applicants full information about all aspects of the programme, via a briefing document for the applicants. The visitors considered that this could be an appropriate way to meet the condition. However, they noted that a document mentioned in the response, intended to provide a guide to the different types of entry on to the programme had not yet been produced. Additionally, they were not provided with details of the additional training that would be provided to BASES administrative staff to enable them to respond appropriately to queries, or of the short webinar and the infographic that would be created for applicants. They were therefore unable to determine whether all of the measures mentioned in the conditions response would be fit for purpose in enabling applicants to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme. Therefore, they require further evidence demonstrating that the

education provider will provide appropriate and comprehensive information for applicants to the programme.

Suggested documentation: Evidence to demonstrate:

- how the planned webinar and infographic documents will enable all learners to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.
- That the proposed briefing document for applicants is appropriate.

2.2 The selection and entry criteria must include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that their selection and entry criteria include appropriate academic and professional entry standards.

Reason condition not met at this time: The education provider submitted evidence to show that entry requirements had been clarified and strengthened, and would be appropriately communicated to applicants. This included amendments to the application form and to the programme handbook. However, the visitors were not clear from reviewing this evidence how the education provider would ensure that all learners coming on to the programme had appropriate levels of existing knowledge that would enable them to meet the SOPs and to practise safely and effectively when they completed the programme. In particular the visitors could not see how the education provider would ensure that “a minimum MSc Sport and/or Exercise Psychology and/or PhD Sport and Exercise Psychology” would suffice for meeting the SOPs, or that learners who needed to complete a conversion course to be eligible for the programme would have completed that conversion course before they started on the programme. They therefore were unable to determine whether the standard was met.

Suggested documentation: Evidence to show how the education provider will ensure that all learners coming on to the programme possess appropriate background knowledge before the start of the programme.

2.3 The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure that all applicants have a good command of English.

Reason condition not met at this time: As evidence for this condition the education provider submitted updated documents making clear their English language requirements for learners, including the handbook and application guide. The education provider’s assumption was that learners who had completed a first degree taught in English would have appropriate levels of proficiency in English. However, the programme will be open to overseas learners. The education provider clarified in their response that such learners would be expected to attain an IELTS standard of 6.5, with no component below 6.0. The visitors noted, however, that this is below the level required in the HCPC standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists (SOP 8.2), and they were not clear how the education provider would ensure that learners leaving the programme had attained the appropriate IELTS level by the time they completed the programme. They additionally considered that it was not clear how exactly the assessment of English skills would be made through admissions, or at what point in the

process. They therefore were unable to determine whether the standard was met, and require further evidence around how the education provider will ensure a good command of English for applicants.

Suggested documentation: Evidence clarifying the following points:

- at what point in the application process learners will have to meet the IELTS threshold; and
- how specifically this will be assessed; and
- whether the education provider will use the admissions process to ensure that learners meet the appropriate IELTS level required by the SOPs, or some other means.

5.4 Practice-based learning must take place in an environment that is safe and supportive for learners and service users.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure safe lone working for learners in practice-based learning.

Reason condition not met at this time: The education provider submitted evidence showing that it had updated and strengthened its risk assessment requirements for lone working, including regular random checks and requiring supervisors to comment on lone working risk assessments in their reporting. These measures seemed appropriate to the visitors. However, they noted that other important components of the education provider's strategy for dealing with the risks of lone working, i.e. providing a list of considerations for learners and supervisors who may be dealing with such situations, were only "strongly recommended" for learners and supervisors. They considered that the steps mentioned were essential for safe lone working in practice-based learning, and could not see how the education provider would ensure that these steps were followed by learners and supervisors in lone working situations. They were therefore unable to determine whether the standard was met and require further evidence showing how the education provider will ensure safe lone working in practice-based learning.

Suggested documentation: Evidence showing how the education provider will ensure that learners and supervisors are taking the "strongly recommended" actions to minimise the risks of lone working.

6.6 There must be an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they have an effective process in place for learners to make academic appeals.

Reason condition not met at this time: The education provider submitted further evidence about the details of their academic appeals process and how it would be communicated to learners. This process was broadly appropriate. However, the visitors noted that the details of the process did not include a time frame in which learners could expect a decision. They considered that this meant that the process was potentially not effective, as it was not clear how all learners could be confident that the process would generate an outcome in due time. The visitors noted that academic appeals processes must be able to conclude in a timely fashion so that appropriate decisions can be made

by learners and the education provider about further steps, as necessary. They therefore require further evidence in order to determine whether the standard is met.

Suggested documentation: Evidence showing how the education provider will ensure that academic appeals are decided within an appropriate time frame, and that this will be communicated appropriately.

Section 6: Visitors' recommendation

Considering the education provider's response to the conditions set out in section 4, and the request for further evidence set out in section 5, the visitors are satisfied that the conditions are met and recommend that the programme(s) are approved.

This report, including the recommendation of the visitors, will be considered at the 04 July 2019 meeting of the ETC. Following this meeting, this report should be read alongside the ETC's decision notice, which are available [on our website](#).

Section 7: Future considerations for the programme(s)

We include this section to note areas that may need to be considered as part of future HCPC assessment processes. Education providers do not need to respond to this section at this time, but should consider whether to engage with the HCPC around these areas in the future.

The visitors recommended that this programme be approved on the understanding that possession of a PhD Sport and/or Exercise Psychology would no longer provide eligibility for entry. This was because they had not been able to explore at the visit how the education provider would ensure that candidates in possession of such a qualification had sufficient appropriate underpinning knowledge for the programme. They therefore suggest that visitors in future monitoring processes be aware of this understanding of the programme and its structure.