

# AHCS

## Standards of Education and Training for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes

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## Part 1: Introduction

The Academy for Healthcare Science (the Academy) has an overarching role in the quality assurance of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across the education and training framework in Healthcare Science. This includes:

- Healthcare Science Curriculum programmes developed by the HEE's National School of Healthcare Science<sup>1</sup> delivered at:
  - undergraduate level in the Practitioner Training Programme (PTP)
  - masters level in the Scientist Training Programme (STP)
  - and doctoral level in the Higher Specialist Scientist Training (HSST) programme
- Other programmes in Healthcare Science leading to eligibility to register with the AHCS (including Scotland).
- Programmes accredited by the Institute of Medical Illustrators (IMI) leading to eligibility to join the AHCS Register of Medical Illustrators.

The delivery model varies between programmes and will depend on the nature of quality assurance processes used for workplace training for example, in PTP, the higher education provider delivering the undergraduate programme is responsible for quality managing the workplace training and trainees are students on work placement. In STP and HSST, trainees and Clinical Scientists in HSST respectively are employed by a host healthcare organisation and attend the higher education provider on a part-time basis. Quality management of the workplace training is the responsibility of the National School for Healthcare Science (the School), quality assured by the Academy.

The role of the Academy also varies between programmes. At PTP and HSST level, the Academy holds a register of those who have completed PTP and HSST programmes or have demonstrated equivalence against programme outcomes. At STP level, the Academy is an approved education provider for the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) for the STP Certificate of Equivalence and must ensure that it meets the HCPC Standards of Education and Training.

Thus, the Academy approves education providers for PTP BSc (Hons) and Graduate Diplomas in Healthcare Science and HSST Doctorate in Clinical Science programmes and accredits higher education providers to deliver the STP MSc in Clinical Science programmes. It does this by delegating the task of accrediting higher education providers offering MSC undergraduate and postgraduate programmes to the School, who undertake the accreditation process against the Academy Standards of Education and Training (SET) below. The objectives of accreditation are to ensure that each undergraduate and postgraduate programme:

- meets the requirements of the specific ethos, framework, educational and training standards, curriculum and learning guides specifications.
- involves NHS staff, patients, and the public.
- has sufficient academic and clinical expertise and resources.

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<sup>1</sup> following the transfer to the work of the HEE's Modernising Scientific Career curriculum development team to NSHCS in 2015-16.

- continues to develop and evolve in response to NHS developments, curriculum changes and feedback from employers, students, patients, service users, carers, and other partners.

The Academy quality assures the accreditation process undertaken by the School and IMI by observing a sample of accreditation visits, sitting on the panel that reviews accreditation outcomes.

The overarching requirement is that undergraduate and postgraduate programmes align with, and are mapped to, these Standards of Education & Training (SET) and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (2014) and the relevant subject benchmark and qualifications statements at the appropriate academic level for the programme.

## Part 2: Professional Standards

This section describes the overall professional standards that programmes must meet.

- Programmes must address the requirements of *Good Scientific Practice* (GSP, 2021) and the professional curriculum related to it.
- Within training environments patients/volunteers must not be exposed to undue risk from teaching and learning and teaching activities.
- Training programmes must support safe, effective, patient centred, and compassionate care at all times.
- Successful completion of a programme and conferment of an award leading to eligibility for entry to professional registers must ensure fitness to practise in line with GSP.
- Equality and diversity policies must be in place, implemented and monitored in all settings for all programmes fostering equality of opportunity and respecting diversity.
- Programmes must deliver the associated education and training outcomes as specified by curriculum frameworks used.
- The delivery of the curriculum must remain relevant to current scientific and clinical practice.
- Professional aspects of practice must be integral to programmes and should be clearly visible in assessment procedures.
- Quality assurance processes must be in place for all parts of programmes.
- Programmes must promote self-development, accountability and the personal qualities required of a healthcare professional.
- Programmes must promote clinical leadership and professional development appropriate to the level of the programme.
- Approaches to teaching and learning must foster independent, learner centred learning and must develop evidence-based practice in learners.
- Learners', employers', and patients' views must be considered in the design, delivery and evaluation, and development of programmes.
- Programmes must support the development of the learner in a multi professional team setting, and programmes are expected to include opportunities for effective interprofessional teaching and learning wherever possible.
- The delivery of the curricula must be relevant to the needs of service commissioners, employers, and patients.

- Academic providers must ensure that exit awards that do not lead to eligibility for healthcare science professional status, must be named appropriately to avoid confusion with any approved healthcare science award.
- Knowledge, skills, and work-based components of programmes must be integrated.

## Part 3: Standards of Education and Training

The standards for education and training describe in detail the expectations of the Academy in the delivery of a quality programme by individual or consortia arrangements for all providers of academic or work base education and training. Evidence of adherence to these standards by a higher education provider is required to be an AHCS accredited programme. The standards for education and training which incorporate many of the expectations of *Good Scientific Practice* (GSP, 2021) are split into three domains, which define the requirements of the Academy and explain and contextualise the overarching professional standards. These are:

- Domain 1: Patient protection and engagement.
- Domain 2: Learner centred approach.
- Domain 3: Programme content, delivery, management, and resources.

### Domain 1: Patient protection and engagement

- Programme content reflects the rights, responsibilities, and pledges of the NHS Constitution, placing the patient at the heart of education and training.
- Patients must be treated with respect, compassion, and dignity, maintaining confidentiality.
- Patient safety must be protected, and patients should not be exposed to risk from learners.
- Patients must be informed when learners will be involved in their care and their informed consent must be obtained.
- Entry requirements for practitioner level programmes must ensure learners meet essential requirements for patient protection of:
  - English language skills <sup>2</sup>
  - Criminal records checks

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<sup>2</sup> Higher education providers must ensure appropriate entry level qualifications. IELTS requirements for international students applying to UK higher education providers to study a programme leading to eligibility to register are set at an overall score of 6.5 with no element below:

- 5.5 for undergraduate students
- 6.5 for reading and writing and 6.0 for speaking and listening for post graduate students.

- Occupational Health checks
- Prior knowledge skills and experience
- Admissions procedures must include Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, compliance with health requirements and professional entry and academic standards.
- Processes must be in place to handle concerns over the learner, their professional suitability and fitness to practice, throughout the course of programmes.
- Learners must be always subject to appropriate supervision and in all settings.
- Assessment processes must be valid, reliable, consistent, and equitable.
- Patients must be involved in programme design, delivery, evaluation, and development.
- Patients, service users, and / or must be included (where feasible) in recruitment and assessment activities.

## Domain 2: Learner-centred approach

- Applicants to a programme must be able to access clear and accurate information about programmes, the entry requirements and application process, and information about programmes in all settings.
- Procedures must be in place to evaluate/accredit prior experience and learning for entry to and/or exemption from components of programmes.
- Learners must be appropriately prepared for and supported during programmes, including an appropriate induction to the learning environments and resources available for programmes.
- Learners must be appropriately prepared for the work-based setting and have relevant knowledge, skills, and experience to practice safely under supervision.
- Learners must be able to access appeal processes.
- Learners must be able to access processes to raise concerns about the quality of the education and training programme.
- Learners must be able raise concerns about overall practice in a healthcare setting or about colleagues, including other students, medical practitioners, and other healthcare workers, with the appropriate person if patients are at risk of harm.
- Learners must receive effective feedback, and must be able to access academic, pastoral support and guidance in all settings.
- Learners must have identified educators in both educational and work-based settings.
- The supervision model must be appropriate for the learning and teaching activities of programmes and the needs of the learner.
- Systems must be in place to identify and address the needs of learners requiring additional support.
- Protocols must be in place to stipulate maximum durations for programmes and to authorise breaks in study, to ensure learning remains current throughout the course of programmes.
- Systems must be in place to gain consent from learners engaging in learning and teaching activities which risk personal injury or disclosure of personal information, and reasonable alternative arrangements must be available when consent is not provided.

## Domain 3: Programme content, delivery, assessment, and management

### Programme content

- The academic content of the undergraduate or postgraduate programme must comply with the appropriate curriculum; with the learning outcomes for each module and their relative credit ratings clearly mapped to the curriculum framework at the appropriate level of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (2014).
- There must be admission procedures for the Accreditation of Prior Learning and/or Prior Experiential Achievements that define the maximum credit exemption allowed. Where appropriate, these must confirm that where exemption is granted against research, development, and innovation learning outcomes the outcomes have been achieved at the appropriate level of the QA framework.
- Professional practice and clinical leadership are clearly integrated across programmes.
- The content and timing of any work-based learning programme complies with the curriculum and framework, educational and training standards, ensuring that theory and clinical placements and/or classroom practical components have synergy using a blended learning approach.

### Programme delivery

- Programme delivery must meet the timescale and delivery model within the appropriate curriculum.
- The number of educators must be appropriate for the number of learners and associated teaching, learning and assessment and support roles.
- Educators must be appropriately trained to undertake their teaching and assessment and support roles.
- The learning, teaching and assessment environments must be appropriate for the effective delivery of programmes.
- Educators must be appropriately professionally qualified and/or members of the relevant professional register/body.
- Quality, consistency, supervision and support for the research, development and innovation section must be provided by an appropriately experienced and qualified supervisory team.
- The physical resources and the learning resources, including electronic materials, must be appropriate for the effective delivery of programmes.
- The human resources must be adequate for the delivery of programmes.
- Programmes are taught in research active academic environment and is informed by recent research findings. Key delivery staff must be currently research-active in the relevant specialist scientific areas and have a track record of excellence in research and innovation at a level appropriate to the QA framework level of programmes.
- Programmes award and exit titles must meet curriculum recommendations.

### Assessment

- Assessment must be conducted against objective and documented outcomes.
- Assessment should include both formative and summative approaches.

- The delivery of the assessment should ensure that learners are enabled and supported to successfully meet the learning outcomes upon completion of programmes.
- Feedback following assessment must be learner centred, timely and linked to the assessment outcomes.
- Assessment policies and procedures are valid, reliable, consistent, and equitable utilising a spread of assessments; clear module mark descriptors, assessment criteria, credit weightings, module mark determination, deferrals, reassessments, failures and exit routes.
- Assessment strategies should be developed in association with appropriate partner organisations (e.g., the School, IMI, Professional Bodies and Medical Royal Colleges).

### **Programme management**

- An appropriately qualified and registered professional lead for each programme must be named.
- The respective roles and responsibilities for all parties in the design, delivery, assessment, and evaluation of programmes must be documented.
- Educators in the workplace must have their role in education and training stipulated in their job descriptions.
- Mechanisms must be in place to ensure the appraisal and development of those in the role of significant educators within programmes.
- Programmes must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.
- The details of how programme delivery is managed must be documented and accessible.
- Channels of communication between all parties must be agreed and documented.
- A documented evaluation of programme delivery must take place at least on an annual basis.
- Rigorous Quality Assurance measures are in place across all systems.
- Work based teaching and learning for undergraduates must be subject to education provider approval, and monitoring processes or formal agreements must be in place.
- Appointment of an appropriate external examiner (*following national criteria for the appointment of external examiners*) who has a responsibility to review all practice components of a programme.
- Mechanisms are in place to ensure a close working relationship with appropriate healthcare science agencies including but not limited to: Professional Bodies, Medical Royal Colleges, the Academy for Healthcare Science, Institute of Medical illustrators and the National School of Healthcare Science.