

## Education Visitors' Report (Monitoring of a Programme)

<b>Educational Institution</b>	AECC University College (UC)
<b>Programme Name</b>	Master of Science (MSc) Chiropractic (Graduate Entry)
<b>Start Date of Programme</b>	September 2020
<b>Date of Visit</b>	10 May 2022 (Year 2 monitoring visit)

<b>Panel Chair</b>	Rabia Ahmed
<b>Panel Member</b>	Duncan Holt, Grahame Pope
<b>Observers (If applicable)</b>	
<b>Panel Secretary</b>	Elizabeth Austin

<b>Introduction</b>
<p>In June 2020, the GCC approved the AECC University College Master of Science (MSc) Chiropractic (Graduate Entry) programme with one condition.</p> <p>The Education Committee had determined that a visit to AECC UC would not be necessary as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. the institution was a known education provider</li> <li>2. a visit to AECC UC had taken place two years previously and the GCC Education Committee was well aware of the facilities available.</li> </ol> <p>As the MSc is a new programme, and to provide assurance to the Education Committee that the GCC Education Standards continue to be met, the programme is subject to annual monitoring which will take the form of virtual panel meetings.</p> <p>The first virtual panel meeting was held on 1 June 2021 with the panel comprising members of the Approval Panel to ensure the process was efficient and consistent.</p> <p>The second virtual Panel meeting was held on May 11<sup>th</sup> 2022 and comprised the registrant member from the original Approval Panel, a lay member and lay Chair.</p>

<b>Staff members, groups, facilities and resources that the Panel plans to interview</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
Dean/ pro-vice-chancellor/deputy vice chancellor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Representative(s) from validating institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Senior management responsible for programme resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme Leader	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Faculty staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Patients	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clinic facilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Resources ( e.g. IT, library facilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Conditions imposed on the institution at the time of approval and decision on whether they have been met. (if applicable) 2020</b>		
Condition	Deadline	Condition met?
The GCC will conduct annual monitoring visits until the first graduating cohort has been achieved to ensure that the programme is meeting all of the requirements set out in GCC's Education Standards.	Summer 2021	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

<b>Recommendations 2020</b>		
The university to produce a clear and structured policy with regard to assessment of student accredited prior learning and its fit to the programme.		Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
The university to undertake an evaluation of the summer school particularly in terms of subsequent achievement and progression of students joining the Master of Science (MSc) Chiropractic (Graduate Entry) Programme.		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Partially met Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
The university to undertake a full evaluation of the fast track manual skills development of student training		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>

Recommendations 2021		
Review and consider the support given to students for their research/dissertation and to enable them to fulfil the demands of this.		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Met Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Consider building in some formative assessment in the first semester to help students and staff gauge their progress and performance.		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Partially met Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>

How conditions, recommendations and areas of concern were addressed
<p><b>Panel meeting with AECC Senior Management Group (via Teams)</b></p> <p>The Panel met with senior members of staff to find out how the course had been progressing since the last visit in 2021.</p> <p><u>Progress since last visit</u></p> <p>Developing the course in the midst of a global pandemic raised challenges for staff and students on the Graduate Entry programme but the Head of Chiropractic stated that the students adapted quickly to the changes and had a mature understanding of the restrictions imposed on the provider. Apart from the clinical placements, which were affected, the course has run as intended. The delivery model is very much a problem based learning curriculum and it was reported that the group is fully integrated with the other programmes and working at the same level as the third year MChiro students. AECC UC reported that under the next revalidation of the programme, some aspects of structure and timings would be reviewed following student feedback.</p> <p><u>Preparatory Course</u></p> <p>AECC UC informed the Panel that the preparatory course is still considered a success and had enabled students to bond as a group ahead of joining the programme. The programme also sets expectations and helps to identify where the students' learning needs are. It was reported that students who attended the course had progressed and performed very well on the degree course, although there was no discernable difference, with regard progression levels, for those who did not take part in the programme compared to those who did.</p> <p><u>Teaching staff</u></p> <p>The provider informed the Panel that teaching staff on the programme are drawn from the more experienced academics due to the structure of the course and the diverse needs of the student group. All new members of staff follow a standard induction process.</p> <p><u>The Programme</u></p> <p>Asked about the inclusivity of the programme and provision, the provider informed the Panel that the course design is fully inclusive and its core values of inclusivity are embedded in the</p>

programme. Staff receive regular training on EDI and the examples of patients used as case studies are reflective of the diverse range of patients that would be seen in clinical practice. Monitoring of EDI is carried out through the annual monitoring process and reviewing access and participation plans. Currently, there are several initiatives across the School focussing on inclusivity, and progression and attainment gaps.

Regarding students with additional support needs on the programme, the Panel was informed that there is parity in all support services across the institution and from the point of application, the student services team is involved and follows the whole learner journey. This would also include reasonable adjustments where necessary. Well-being support is also promoted and students have easy access to all services. It was reported that there has been an increase in student support sessions across the whole institution during the pandemic, and student services regularly network with external agencies to signpost and refer to appropriate and specialist support in a timely fashion.

The assessment structure of the course, especially in the first year, is focussed on the development of knowledge and clinical thinking and decision making skills. The students take to this very quickly, and within six weeks are able to work through a process of diagnosis and clinical management. There are clinic entrance qualifying exams where they demonstrate they have the knowledge and skills to enter the supervised practice environment. Embedded throughout the programme is reflective practice. Soft skills are also assessed around communication, consent and patient management, these are overtly assessed as well as being embedded throughout the course.

All students are assigned a personal tutor as laid out in the student support framework. Three meetings with the personal tutor are arranged per semester but it is not mandatory for the students to attend the meetings. If concerns are raised about a student, this is fed back to the personal tutor in the first instance, and if needed, they will be signposted to student services for additional support. The panel was informed that personal tutors are mainly allocated from staff working and teaching on the course but were unsure of the ratio of personal tutor to student numbers. There is also a very experienced team of counsellors to support the students if required.

Regarding interprofessional learning (IPL), the Panel was informed that classes are taught alongside physiotherapy and sports and exercise students. There are also two new allied health profession courses being developed which will integrate with the MSc course. This will allow for integration of learning in professionalism and research opportunities. Around the clinic environment, students can observe and integrate with other professions such as physiotherapists, nurses, sports rehabilitators and exercise physiologists.

The clinic is viewed as a placement and there is no distinguishing between the students on different programmes when they enter the clinic. Patient allocation occurs equally across the programme and no one group is prioritised over the other. While they are not in a hospital environment they do experience a diverse case mix and students are encouraged to 'buddy' up and observe cases to broaden their experience. Wash up meetings are held at the end of every clinic shift to allow the students to hear about different patient presentations other students have seen.

### **Panel meeting with MSc Students (via Teams)**

The Panel met with seven students who were asked about their experiences regarding admissions, the preparatory course, the programme and careers.

### Admissions

The students felt the admissions process was clear and supportive and queries were answered quickly. Communication was clear and the virtual on-line talks/open days set the scene for the programme. There was a feeling the admissions process had been refined for the new intake having reflected on the previous year.

### Preparatory Course

The Preparatory Course received positive feedback and students commented that the content of the course was case based and was a 'true reflection' of how they would learn on the programme. Students felt the content was very appropriate and pitched at the correct level. It was also an excellent way of highlighting areas they needed to work on and improve. The exam at the end of the course revealed their knowledge gaps which was very beneficial. It also enabled them to get to know their classmates before the start of the course .

### The Programme

Students confirmed they felt integrated with other students at the university and they are a 'close knit' community. Some students expressed a view that initially, some year three MChiro students appeared to be dismissive of their abilities and experiences due to the structure of the course, but this has improved over time.

The Panel was keen to learn how students from a non-clinical background were finding the practical assessments on the programme. One student from a non-practical background found the course 'fantastic' and has 'loved the practical aspects and assessments on the course'. The students reported there is a lot of reflection in the assessments, and although they understand the importance of this, some felt there may be too much emphasis on this overall. It was also suggested that if all the assessments were graded, rather than just 'pass or fail', this would be more motivational for the students. There was also a consensus that more practical exams would be positive, especially focussing on adjustments, to really enhance their proficiency in this area.

Students confirmed that there had been an emphasis on patient communication, consent and professionalism and these were assessed within the objective structured clinical exam (OSCE) and the objective structured long examination record (OSLER).

Regarding additional learning support, one student confirmed they received support for a visual impairment and reasonable adjustments are made for him . The student felt there had been some 'trial and error' and adjustments were made accordingly. The staff are 'very understanding' and there have been 'no hurdles' in putting the adjustments in place. Preparations are already in place for his entrance into the clinic year from September.

The Panel sought feedback on the students' experience of the personal tutoring system. Students feedback that support from the personal tutors was 'mixed' and they felt there was a disparity between support offered. Some students had received regular meetings while others had received only one during the whole academic year. However, students were aware that they could speak to any member of staff they felt comfortable talking with and not just their assigned personal tutor. It was confirmed that not all personal tutors teach on the MSc programme.

One second year student reported that communication between himself and his dissertation tutor had been 'frustrating' and he had had to wait for one month for feedback on his ethics application form. This resulted in him having to apply for a postponement to his dissertation which was a 'stressful situation'.

Students reported that year rep meetings are held fortnightly and the process is clear and effective. Tutors/course leaders are responsive and 'get things done'. There are also feedback surveys and in class sessions to gather informal feedback from them.

The Panel asked the year two students to speak about their clinic experience so far. The students reported they received a two day induction to the clinic and were fully supported by the tutors during their first months in the clinic environment. As their experience grew, they were given more autonomy. Students confirmed there is a large variety of cases seen within the setting.

Students felt that information on the dissertation process would have been more useful if introduced earlier in the programme, especially during the first semester. There was consensus that completing a dissertation will help them become better informed chiropractors.

Regarding Inter professional learning, first year students felt this was limited, and one had difficulty in trying to arrange observations of radiology students, even though they are on campus. Second year students however, spoke positively about the two week observation placements with MSK Dorset and the Shockwave clinic they had been involved with.

### Careers

Finally, the Panel asked the students if they were aware of the breadth of career possibilities they could enter into on graduation. The students responded they were mainly aware of working in a clinic environment and were not aware of other possible areas. They felt that additional career guidance would be beneficial to them so they would be fully informed of all the opportunities available.

### **Meeting with Course Team (via Teams)**

The Panel met with the course team to find out how the course had been progressing since the last visit in 2021

### The Preparatory Course

The Panel were informed that all students were encouraged to take part but it is not mandatory if they have a background that is closely aligned to chiropractic. Written feedback has been very positive from the students and there are plans to start analysing data to see if there are any discernable differences between students who have attended and those who haven't.

### Teaching

Team members confirmed to the Panel that the staff teaching on the MSc course are drawn from the more experienced university staff due to the structure of the course and diverse nature of the student cohort. It was felt senior staff members would be able to better address the needs of the students and aid their progression. Teaching staff have all previously taught on the MChiro programme and follow an informal induction process before commencing teaching on the programme.

### The Programme

The panel asked for clarification around the personal tutoring structure and how this supports the students on programme. The Panel was informed that all students were allocated a personal tutor but they can talk to the person they are most comfortable with. They try and allocate a personal tutor from the teaching staff on the programme and believed this was the case this year. It was stated that the process is 'organic' and the department have an 'open door policy'. A reporting system is in place at a student level which flags up if a student has not engaged with personal tutoring sessions. Some staff members have approximately 40 students

each and tutors may choose to set up group meetings in the first instance and then additional 1:1 sessions can be arranged if required. Students on a repeat year are more closely monitored so any issues can be addressed at an early stage.

Due to the small cohort, student support needs can be looked at on an individual basis. No conclusions can yet be made on whether the difference in their previous academic backgrounds affect the support required, but this will be monitored going forward. The Panel was informed the students often support each other and do a lot of group work together. Students appear to be forthcoming in declaring their learning needs and registry are very proactive in informing students about the support that can be provided for them.

The Panel asked for further detail around the teaching of biopsychosocial concepts and how these were introduced. The Panel was informed that this is done through a number of units and the integrated nature of the case based learning, which is written specifically to highlight patients who have psychosocial issues. These issues are then discussed in greater depth with course tutors. Students are also exposed to these areas through clinic observations and specific tuition on aspects of psychology.

Regarding IPL, the team informed the Panel that there was no specific unit focussing on this aspect but students can learn alongside students on other courses. In future the team hoped to develop opportunities for 'true IPL' and would like to link in with the physiotherapy students when they revalidate the course. Overall, opportunities for IPL are 'somewhat limited'. The students' diverse backgrounds however does allow for them to learn from each other throughout the year. The Panel was informed that in clinic, students are presented with the opportunity to 'observe, rather than truly learn with each other', but hopefully with the relaxation of Covid restrictions, new opportunities will now present themselves. Students are also expected to reflect on their interactions with other health care providers as part of their e-portfolio.

Regarding careers after graduation, the Panel was informed that the team do not specifically gather data on this but from conversations with the students, the main reason for undertaking the course was for a career change, and they want to practise as chiropractors. A few have also expressed a desire to become leaders within the profession. During their second year students are exposed to a small business and marketing course which gives information on running a business and their statutory responsibilities.

### **Meeting with Clinic Team (via Teams)**

The team shared with the Panel that there are currently 32 treatment rooms in the current clinic and the new build is on track for a September 2022 opening. Currently there are a total of 166 students in clinic which will increase to 200 in September. This new build should help diversify the opportunities available to students to interact with different patient groups and further develop their clinical skills. While in the clinic, students learn to work with other health care professionals through observing other qualified chiropractors, the new lymphoedema clinic, the Dorset MSK clinic and the University Hospital Dorset Triage Knee Clinic.

Student induction to the clinic takes place over one week and involves the whole clinic team. Small group learning is introduced and the students study two to three subjects everyday. This is new for this year based on feedback from the student group.

Covid had a large impact on the student placement model and some things have changed as a direct result of this. The clinic adapted quickly and AECC UC was the first provider to reopen the clinic. Students currently attend clinic for 2.5 days/week and assess and consult with patients under supervision. They also work with groups of students and tutors to discuss cases

they may not have directly managed. This additional exposure is regarded as a positive step to increasing case mix.

The team confirmed there was an attempt to obtain a range of ages, genders and conditions in the clinic and they feel there is a 'depth and breadth' of patient cases. There have been improved links with the NHS and Covid created opportunities for this development. Space is provided for NHS teams in the clinic on the agreement that there are shared learning opportunities for the students. Excitingly, this new collaboration has resulted in an NHS orthopedic clinic basing themselves at AECC UC. Patients who were assessed as not being suitable for orthopedic surgery were fed directly into the student clinic and into their exercise centre, where they were given advice and information to take away with them. This demonstrated 'a true intergration' of different health care professions. This clinic will run monthly for the next six months.

It was reported that patient levels are now nearly back to pre Covid numbers. A new initiative undertaken this year is the reduction in fees to patients to allow them to access chiropractic treatment and also the introduction of a 'hardship fund', that allows patients with financial difficulties free access to treatment.

When asked by the Panel if there were any discernable distinctions between the students in clinic, the team reported that if anything, the Graduate Entry students are working at a higher level. Initially, the tutors were unsure of how the levels would compare but the students have demonstrated proficiency in the clinic setting.

A mentoring programme is in place in the clinic so students have a structured/supportive relationship throughout the placement.

Formative and summative assessments are in place throughout the placement and any students struggling are referred to their clinic mentor for additional support.

#### **Final meeting with the AECC Senior Management Team (via Teams)**

During the final meeting with the Senior Management Team, the Chair of the Panel gave a summary of the Panel's conclusions. It was stated that the Panel was satisfied with the progress of the programme. As noted in the June 2021 report, The GCC would continue with annual reviews of the programme until the first cohort has completed the MSc programme.

In addition, the Panel was:

- very impressed with the operation of the clinic and was pleased to see the separation of the placement and the school.

Finally, the Panel informed AECC that they would be happy to recommend to the Education Committee that the programme continue to be approved.

<b>Recommendation to Education Committee</b>	
1. Conditions met fully (recommend approval without conditions)	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Conditions not yet met fully	X
3. New conditions imposed	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. No action to be taken (continue to monitor)	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Withdraw approval (serious deficiencies that are a major cause for concern)



## Conclusion

In terms of conditions and recommendations the Panel noted and agreed that the one condition cannot be met until the first cohort of students had graduated. A further written update from AECC UC will therefore be required following this period.

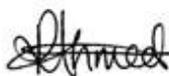
The Panel recommended the continued approval of the programme with four further recommendations for the institution to:

1. Articulate and implement a clear process for monitoring personal tutoring engagement, reflecting staff and student input which enables timely intervention to facilitate engagement.
2. Review the personal tutor/tutee ratio.
3. Further develop formal and informal opportunities for inter professional learning within the curriculum.
4. Formalise opportunities for raising awareness of the range of career opportunities available to students post registration.

The Panel also made two commendations:

1. The strategies to increase diversity amongst the student cohort should be commended, alongside the creation of the new working group focussing on progression and attainment gaps
2. The innovative work being undertaken in the clinic setting to support vulnerable communities through the hardship fund should be commended, alongside the introduction of the orthopedic consultant / fast track assessment clinic.

Signed:



Panel Chair: Rabia Ahmed

Date: 27/05/22