

Education Visitors' Report (Approval of a Programme)

Name of Educational Institution	AECC University College
Programme Name	MChiro (Hons)
Proposed Start Date of Programme	September 2021
Date of Approval Meeting	5 March 2021

Panel Chair	Grahame Pope
Panel Members	Andrew Williams Mark Webster
Observers	Penny Bance
Panel Secretary	Annemarie McNeely

Introduction
<p>In September 2020, the AECC University College (AECCUC) made a full programme submission to the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) to consider the recognition of a proposed MChiro (Hons) degree programme, to commence in September 2021. A full programme analysis was undertaken by an Education Visitor Panel consisting of one chiropractic and two lay members. The outcome of the initial Education Visitor analysis was considered by Education Committee at their meeting on the 18 November 2020.</p> <p>The Education Visitor Panel undertook a remote approval meeting with the AECCUC team on 5 March 2021.</p>

Staff members, groups, facilities and resources seen			
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Resources (e.g. IT, library facilities)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	Please specify		

How areas of interest/concern were addressed.
During a pre-meeting on 25 February 2021, the Education Visitor Panel discussed

areas of interest or concern identified as a result of the analysis of the programme submission. The areas identified were discussed with AECCUC representatives at a series of meetings during the remote approval event on 5 March 2021. A summary of the discussion is noted below:

Meeting with the Senior Management Team

AECCUC provided the Panel with a strategic overview of University activity, this included plans for new programmes and the development of an integrated rehabilitation centre (IRC) which will be built on the institution's newly acquired Garnet Campus. This development aims to allow an expansion into core areas of healthcare, in an aligned manner which works for the institution and will offer placement opportunities for students in a interprofessional environment. This facility would also allow for placement opportunities for students from outside AECCUC. The IRC is a new build, supported by a £2.7 million grant from the local enterprise partnership and due to open in September 2022. The other buildings on Garnet Campus are being renovated, creating new seminar rooms, skills labs, rehabilitation space and the Human Performance Laboratory.

In terms of the School of Chiropractic, there are plans to continue with a refresh of programmes, this activity would be underpinned by the School's four framework structures consisting of Foundation Studies; Pre Registration Chiropractic; Postgraduate Studies and Continuing Professional Development. It was noted that the current MChiro(Hons) programme had seen a significant increase in student numbers, which indicated a real demand. To support the increased workload the institution was in the process of recruiting additional chiropractic staff.

The Panel noted that changes had been made to the supervision of onsite clinic internships, in that for the most part this is now undertaken by clinic tutors only. There had previously been a model whereby supervision was carried out by both academic staff and clinic tutor supervisors.

Chiropractic programme representatives were currently in discussion with local providers (both within the NHS and independent healthcare sector) with regard to plans to further increase external placement opportunities for students, which also included involvement in local long covid rehabilitation support participation. An expansion of external placements would allow students to link with students studying on other healthcare science programmes and further enhance the interdisciplinary learning experience. This stakeholder engagement has given the institution the opportunity to raise awareness of chiropractic in the locality and support mainstream services with the more long-term effects of the pandemic. The institution also expressed an interest to work internationally to further develop the student chiropractic placement experience.

AECCUC reported that Brexit had resulted in a slight decrease in applications from prospective EU chiropractic students, however as a result of targeted marketing there had been increased interest from UK students, which balanced this out. The team recognised that additional support may be required for new students as a result of the pandemic disruption to studies and discussions were underway for more enhanced transitional support across all year groups. In addition, there were robust plans in place for students to catch up on missed manual practice sessions.

The importance of student communication and the closing of the feedback circle was also something which the institution was continuing to work on.

In terms of staff development, the Panel was pleased to note that an Education Strategy

was in place at the University and included training and support for academic staff on the digital transformation of programmes.

The current MChiro (Hons) will continue to run in parallel to the new programme. If a student on the current programme were to take a study break or be unsuccessful and unable to progress they would have the opportunity to repeat equivalent modules on the new programme.

Meeting with the Course Delivery Team

The team advised that the proposed new MChiro(Hons) was in many ways a refresh of the current programme. The content was predominately the same with some subjects/topics being relocated within the course structure to allow for better integration of learning at the right time. The major change reported was the intention to horizontally integrate and embed research throughout the curriculum, throughout all years of study.

The Panel was interested in the guideline/protocols/mechanisms which students would need to follow in respect of the proposed clinical audits within the new programme and were advised that clinical audits were already part of the current MChiro (Hons) programme via an annual cycle of audit of clinic services, which included infection control and best practice guidelines for patient management. Students were also encouraged to find additional appropriate areas for potential audit. The new programme will look to promote/highlight the relevance of audits which can be adopted in clinical practice and why audits are useful for patients, chiropractors and others.

The Panel noted the new optional research placement module and were advised that the reason for inclusion was to provide students with a particular research interest with the option for further study, under the guidance of a supervisor. The team was confident that there will be significant interest in the optional module. Opportunities for students to undertake original research would also be available, and where ethical approval had not yet been granted students would be provided with assistance with applications.

The team reported that student placement opportunities would initially take place at the onsite clinic and at the new integrated rehabilitation centre once this came onstream. In future it was hoped that external observation and placement opportunities would be available across year groups; discussions with private chiropractic clinics and the NHS with regard these opportunities are ongoing. The team further reported that there will be more opportunities for onsite interprofessional learning as additional health programmes came online.

The Panel was advised that the programme assessment strategy would include a multi assessment station OSCE which would comprise of a practical skills exam and theory-based questions. The institution's intention is for students to undertake a more integrated assessment regime to support and facilitate understanding. The Panel noted that for some practical skill elements of assessments, that students received a straight pass/fail and were advised that while this was the case students would receive feedback from tutors on areas for improvement. With regard to group work assessments, a percentage mark would be distributed to individual students. It was hoped that the range and variety of assessments would cater to individual student learning.

The team reported that despite the move to substantial online learning as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic, that comparatively pre-covid positive and constructive interactions continued between tutors and students

Meeting with the Course Resource Team

As a result of the fast moving impact of Covid 19, the institution put in place a Continuity of Learning Plan to identify and resource the teaching platforms required. Students were also invited to feed their thoughts into resource availability at meetings with the Vice Chancellor and the Library and Student Services Team, this allowed for the student voice to be heard throughout the process. The resource team reported that student feedback was positive with regard to resources generally available, however there had been some restriction to physical access to the library facility as a result of Covid, this was under continuing review. Online teaching guidance was provided to support staff and a staff training needs analysis was undertaken, with training provided prior to the start of the semester

In terms of funding for new courses, the team advised that a generic baseline budget is factored into the library budget for course resources, if new journals are required, resources are available. The Panel was advised that the academic library is generally well covered from a health sciences perspective in terms of database journals. The acquisitions area of the library is proactive with regard to new editions, and will alert the course team with regards to these and vice versa.

The resource team reported a huge growth in virtual resources, teaching aids and the purchase of some additional e-books, however it was also noted that the cost of e-books during the pandemic had substantially increased which has proved a challenge for academic libraries more generally.

In terms of student support, one to one and group sessions are offered to help search for required resources and support is also provided to assist students in reference management, information literacy, critical thinking and research skills. Students requiring Individual Learning Plans (with declared additional learning needs) meet with a student service adviser at the start of their studies to let them know what resources are available to support them throughout the programme. Educational assessments are also available for students who may have additional learning requirements. The wellbeing and registry team work very closely to identify students requiring additional support, and reasonable adjustments can generally be accommodated. There has been an increase in demand for the wellbeing service during lockdown and daily counselling sessions are available to students. There is also some capacity for students to have almost immediate access to the service. A Senior Wellbeing Advisor joined the team in September 2020 and there are also plans to provide mental health training to staff. Staff, via the Student Wellbeing and Monitoring Group, also look out for markers which might indicate a student is become less engaged and at risk of poor performance and proactively reach out to students to offer support.

It was reported that all students were allocated an academic personal tutor, the current model may mean that the personal tutor may not teach a student and feedback from students indicate a preference for a personal tutor to also be a current tutor – a pilot is currently underway to assign personal tutors in this regard. It was noted that currently a personal tutor may be supporting in the region of sixty students.

Meeting with those responsible for the clinical aspects of the programme

The placement clinic internship for the proposed programme will be very similar to the experience of students on the current MChiro (Hons). The team are clear that the internship will continue to provide a quality experience for students and that they are exposed to a wide variety of patients and conditions.

The clinic is looking at operating a pod system where a group of eight students are under the supervision of one clinic tutor throughout their clinical training. Year 4 placements run for between forty six and forty eight weeks (although this includes allowances for students to take leave). The placement experience had also been broadened out to allow students to gain a breath of experience through some external placement activity e.g. GP surgeries, clinics. There is ongoing work with regard to expansion of the external placement element of the clinic internship, which will be quality assured to allow all students to receive a comparative experience, and training will be provided to providers so that students are assessed in an equitable manner. Student feedback on placement experiences will also be sought.

The Panel, as reported in the earlier meeting with the Senior Management Team, was advised that student clinic supervision within the onsite clinic will be predominantly carried out by clinic tutors, where as previously this had been shared by clinic tutors and academic teaching staff. Course content across all years will be monitored to ensure continuity between the pre-clinical and clinical training.

The team reported that with the expansion of health sciences and intern placements at the University, discussions are underway with regard to the potential of repurposing some of the current space prior to the opening of the interdisciplinary rehabilitation clinic planned for the additional campus.

The Panel noted that the proposed MChiro (Hons) had moved to a portfolio competency-based learning and assessment as opposed to the OSLER route. They were advised that the rationale for the change was that the institution was of the view that the building of a regular portfolio would allow for students' continuous identification and understanding of areas of growth and gaps in their knowledge and provide more opportunity to address these. The portfolio is paper-based, however online portfolio platforms are currently being explored. Graduation would be dependent on a combination of symbiosis exams and portfolio sign off.

Meeting with students

The Panel met with a group of students across four year groups who all reported that Covid 19 had impacted studies, particularly with regard to restrictions on the practical elements of the course, but also appreciated that factors relating to this were outside the control of the University. Students reported that there was now the opportunity for additional practical skills sessions but that the teaching 'bubble' arrangement was not ideal; however again appreciated that logistics were difficult.

Students reported the move to telehealth consultations and found these interactions helpful. In terms of mix of patient exposure, the demographic of the local area meant that it was likely that patients are older and have co-morbidities.

On the academic side of studies, students reported that the move to predominately digital learning had been difficult for some, but weekly activity guides provided by the teaching team had been very helpful. Students felt that a positive which had come out of the move to online was that there was additional interaction and communication with tutors. There had been good support from tutors and student services on a practical and personal level throughout.

In terms of feedback and communication both at University and School level, students felt that the loop was not always completed and varied from tutor to tutor. It was felt that there

could be some improvement in this area.

Account of verbal summary recommendation given to the institution's SMT

The GCC Education Visitor Approval Panel informed the Senior Management Team that following the discussion and further information provided by the team that it was minded to recommend approval of the proposed programme to the Education Committee with two conditions, three recommendations and three commendations - details of which are provided below.

The Panel also advised that the proposed conditions, recommendations and commendations could be subject to change by the Education Committee. In addition, there was an expectation that an update on recommendations be provided to the Education Committee.

The AECCUC team was thanked for their participation and practical support in setting up the meeting.

Recommendation to Education Committee

1. Approve <u>without</u> conditions	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Approve <u>with</u> conditions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3. No approval (insufficient evidence due to serious deficiencies)	<input type="checkbox"/>

Conditions for the institution with reasons and timeframe in which they must be met. (Recommendation 2)

* Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. If conditions are placed upon the programme by the GCC, the institution must disclose this decision to prospective and current students.

- 1. The University to provide the GCC with an outline plan of student clinical observation opportunities for the year one cohort, to include early preparatory work with regard to potential additional external offsite clinical observations (May 2021).**

Plans for potential offsite external clinical observation and placement progress for later year groups to be reported by the University as part of the GCC's annual monitoring cycle beginning in Spring 2022, alongside an update on development and changes to the onsite clinical facilities.

- 2. The course team to complete a review of all module descriptors and clarify the detail of practical and OSCE examinations to provide clarity and consistency to students. (May 2021)**

Recommendations for the institution and reasons

* Recommendations do not need to be met before the programme is granted ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme.

The Approval Panel has recommended the following:

- 1. The University/School team to review the process of evaluating the contribution of individual students involved in group-based activity to ensure that students have**

clarity with regard to calculation and award of percentage of grades, and that there is greater consistency across modules.

2. The University/School team to revisit the student to personal tutor ratio as currently the student number appears significantly high.
3. To continue to develop communications with regard to closing the student communication loop, including the effective communication of timetables and any changes to programme delivery.

The Education Committee will review the recommendations with the institution as part of annual monitoring in Spring 2022. A report on these areas would be expected to be included as part of annual monitoring returns and will be discussed as part of annual monitoring.

Commendations to the institution

The Approval Panel gave the following commendations:

- The support provided to students during the pandemic;
- The development of health research throughout the heart of the new programme
- The aspiration of the development of a clinical rehabilitation centre, housing a clinical placement academy which will contribute to the local health economy

Further Evidence Required

N/A

Conclusion

The Approval Panel concluded that the programmes content adequately met the GCC's Education Standards. The Panel was impressed with the hard work of the team who devised the programme, its contemporary and innovative nature

As a new programme, and to provide assurance to the Education Committee that the GCC Education Standards continue to be met throughout, the programme will be subject to annual monitoring which may take the form of a panel visit; meeting or a written report as part of the GCC's annual monitoring cycle of programmes.

Signed:



Panel Chair: Grahame Pope

Date: 19 March 2021

