Extraordinary Review Assessment (ERA) Visit Report Summary

Approved Education Institution	Southampton Solent University
Programme(s) monitored	**Nursing Associate:** • FdSc Health & Social Care (Nursing Associate) • FdSc Health & Social Care (Nursing Associate) (Apprenticeship) **Pre-registration nursing:** • BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing (apprenticeship route) • BSc (Hons) Adult Nursing • BSc (Hons) Mental Health Nursing (Direct entry) • BSc (Hons) Mental Health Nursing (Apprenticeship route)
Date of monitoring visit	24 – 27 February 2025
Date of report publication	15 October 2026

Introduction

This document is a summary explaining our Quality Assurance (QA) process for monitoring education institutions in partnership with their practice learning partners. We also explain why we commissioned an extraordinary review assessment, the independent visitors, its findings and the action plan we have since put in place. For the full independent report, please click here.

SSU are an approved education institution (AEI) in the South East region, approved to nursing associate, pre-registration nursing and post-registration provision.

Background

In August 2024, the EdQA Team received a query from the AEI informing they were delivering a non-credit bearing module for the nursing associate programme, where upon completion, these students would be able to join Year 3 of their nursing programme. The AEI asked whether this route could be offered to their direct entry students. Following a review of previous programme approval and modification reports that were completed for SSU, the EdQA Team were unable to confirm that approval of the bridging module had been undertaken. The AEI confirmed that the module was first delivered in March 2021.

During September to November 2024, the EdQA Team worked collaboratively with SSU to gain further information about the AEIs RPL processes, module specifications, practice and theory hours, field specificity and the supernumerary status of students on this pathway. A review of the mapping of the programme standards was undertaken by the NMC who identified concerns regarding robust teaching and/or assessment for all the standards of proficiency. As the EdQA Team were not assured that the NMC programmes were being delivered in compliance with the NMC Education Standards, in January 2025 a decision was made by QA Board to commission an extraordinary review assessment across both the nursing and nursing associate programmes.

The NMC

As the professional regulator of nurses and midwives in the UK, and nursing associates in England, we work to ensure these professionals have the knowledge and skills to deliver consistent, quality care that keeps people safe.

We set the education standards professionals must achieve to practise in the United Kingdom. When they have shown both clinical excellence and a commitment to kindness, compassion and respect, we welcome them onto our register of more than 867,000 professionals.

Once registered, nurses, midwives and nursing associates must uphold the standards and behaviours set out in our Code so that people can have confidence that they will

consistently receive quality, safe care wherever they're treated. We promote lifelong learning through revalidation, encouraging professionals to reflect on their practice and how The Code applies in their day-to-day work.

Our role in the quality assurance of education

We set the standards of education and training that enable students to achieve our standards of proficiency before joining the register. We approve education institutions to deliver nursing, nursing associate or midwifery programmes. As part of our ongoing educational quality assurance (EdQA), we monitor all of our approved education institutions (AEIs) in partnership with their practice learning partners (PLPs) to ensure they continue to meet our standards.

Our QA framework provides detail on the QA process and the evidence education institutions need to demonstrate to satisfy us that they meet our standards for education and training.

Where we have concerns that an approved education institution may not be meeting our standards, we may carry out an extraordinary review assessment. These are undertaken by independent QA visitors who report their findings to the NMC. Where we have serious concerns that our standards are not being, or will not be met, we can also withdraw approval of the programme and/or an institution. Internally we have a QA Board which provides oversight of our ongoing education QA activity, and our Professional Practice directorate provides regular updates to our Council in relation to our QA activities

The Extraordinary Review Assessment (ERA) process

The NMC provided the independent QA visit Team with an ERA review plan, which identified the NMC requirements for monitoring, under the five themes of the Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education (SFNME) (NMC, 2018 updated 2023):

1. Learning culture
2. Educational governance and quality
3. Student empowerment
4. Educators and assessors
5. Curricula and assessment

The review plan indicated specific requirements within the Standards framework for the QA visitors to scrutinise, and triangulate evidence from findings during the visit.

The QA visit team included one lay visitor and four registrant visitors selected with due regard for the programmes under review. The QA visit team used the review plan to direct their focus for triangulating the evidence in academic and practice learning settings.

The QA Team concluded their findings verbally to SSU on the final day of the visit (27 February 2025) and then provided a full report, mapped against the NMC standards and requirements.

Findings

Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education	Met/Not Met
1.1 The learning culture prioritises the safety of people, including carers, students and educators, and enables the values of the Code to be upheld.	Met
1.2 Education and training is valued in all learning environments.	Met
2.1 There are effective governance systems that ensure compliance with all legal, regulatory, professional and educational requirements, differentiating where appropriate between the devolved legislatures of the United Kingdom, with clear lines of responsibility and accountability for meeting those requirements and responding when standards are not met, in all learning environments.	Not met
2.2 All learning environments optimise safety and quality, taking account of the diverse needs of, and working in partnership with, people who use services and carers (PSCs), students and all other stakeholders.	Met
3.1 Students are provided with a variety of learning opportunities and appropriate resources which enable them to achieve proficiencies and programme outcomes and be capable of demonstrating the professional behaviours in the Code.	Met
3.2 Students are empowered and supported to become resilient, caring, reflective and lifelong learners who are capable of working in inter-professional and inter-agency teams.	Met
4.1 Theory and practice learning and assessment are facilitated effectively and objectively by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals with necessary expertise for their educational and assessor roles.	Not met
5.1 Curricula and assessments are designed, developed, delivered and evaluated to ensure that students achieve the proficiencies and outcomes for their approved programme.	Not met

Next steps and action planning

In March 2025, the extraordinary review visit report was shared with SSU for factual accuracy checking. Following this period, factual accuracy amendments were made to the report and in April 2025, the final report was submitted to the AEI and the NMC. SSU were then offered one calendar month to make any observations on the report before recommendations were reviewed at QA Board.

As a response to the identified risks, SSU were required to develop and implement an action plan to address the key risks identified to ensure that their pre-registration nursing and nursing associate programmes meet all NMC standards and requirements. An action plan was developed and submitted to the NMC.

As agreed by the QA Board, SSU were supported through a critical concern for education quality assurance process. The EdQA team met with SSU to agree a schedule of meetings to discuss the action plan, and seek evidence of their progress against each of the NMC Standards. Progress was overseen by the QA Board to ensure appropriate, robust and timely action is being taken to address the concerns.

Update September 2026

SSU worked closely with the NMC to provide evidence that the actions set out in the extraordinary review action plan had been met. Having reviewed all the information provided, the NMC were assured the risks had been addressed and made a recommendation the QA Board at its meeting on 21 April 2026, that SSU be de-escalated from a critical concern to enhanced scrutiny, which was agreed. SSU continue to work with the EdQA team through this process to demonstrate compliance.

The QA Board recognised and acknowledged the work undertaken during the process by SSU, and the collaboration with stakeholders that has contributed to the achievement of this positive outcome.