

Frequently asked questions – practice placement seminars

Introduction

This document provides a summary of all the common questions which delegates asked across all of the education and training seminars delivered in autumn / winter 2012 – 13 that relate to practice placements. If you require any further information regarding any of the information contained within this document please contact us at: education@hcpc-uk.org

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Standards

? How do we as education providers ensure that students are receiving a good placement experience?

In order for programmes to gain approval from the HCPC and for approved programmes to retain on-going approval all programmes must meet and continue to meet the standards of education and training (SETs). The SETs cover all aspects of the programme, including the academic and the practice placement settings. We recognise that education providers will work with practice placement providers and educators but SET 5 aims to make sure the education provider has overall responsibility for placement learning, and that suitable systems are in place to support it.

As part of this, we expect education providers to have robust systems in place to ensure they initially approve and subsequently monitor all practice placements. Other standards ensure there are effective systems relating to the role of practice placement educators including (but not be limited to) liaising with the practice placement providers and educators to ensure that learning outcomes are understood, as well as ensuring that students are well supported in that time. We also expect to see evidence of how assessments are managed in placements.

For more information regarding SET 5: Practice placements please refer to our Standards of education and training guidance which is available to download from our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

? What is the purpose of standard of education and training (SET) 5.13 and would this be covered by clinical governance arrangements?

SET 5.13 states 'A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout the practice placement'.

We recognise that students may learn on their practice placements in different ways and that different practice placement educators may structure the learning and teaching according to their own preferences and experiences or for the needs of the individual student. Therefore this standard is about ensuring that the practice placement educators' methods, whatever they may be, respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues. We will want to see evidence of the systems in place to ensure this so that, where ever possible, service users are aware that students are involved in their care and that students have received the appropriate consent.

Practice placement providers may have clinical governance arrangements in place which ensure this occurs. However, as practice placements can be undertaken in a variety of different organisations, which may or may not have clinical governance arrangements in place which ensure that learning and teaching methods respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues, the responsibility for ensuring that this standard is met for all placements lies with the education provider.

? Does our programme have to teach and assess all the standards of proficiency (SOPs) within practice placements?

No. An individual must meet all the SOPs at the end of the programme in order for them to successfully complete the programme and be eligible to apply to the HCPC Register. It is for the education provider to decide when, how and where the learning outcomes and the SOPs are taught and assessed within the academic and practice placement environments.

More information about the SOPs for each profession can be found on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

? Will the HCPC be taking over the Quality Assurance for Placement Learning (QAPL) audit which the General Social Care Council (GSCC) used to require social work programmes to do? Will the HCPC want copies of these audits?

No, the HCPC will not be taking over the QAPL audit. SET 5.4 requires the education provider to maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring placements. This means that when we approve a programme we will require evidence of how the education provider approves placements before they are used, how they are monitored and how they have links to the management of the programme.

We do not set specific requirements regarding what these policies or processes must look like. It is for the education provider to determine the most appropriate system for their programme. When we are undertaking the visits to the transitionally approved social work programmes we will be focusing on the version of the programme that is due to run from the next academic year and as such education providers should submit evidence appropriate to this version of the programme.

? Can the HCPC do anything to ensure that practice placement educators have sufficient time to undertake practice placement educator training?

The relationship with the practice placements is one which is managed by the education provider and not the HCPC.

Through the standards of education and training (SETs), the education provider keeps overall responsibility for all placements. This includes ensuring that practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training (SET 5.8). We expect that education providers will train new practice placement educators and follow this up with regular refresher training. We do not set specific requirements for the length or content of this training and training may take a variety of different forms such as online support; written support; or attending a course. It is for the education provider to determine the most appropriate format and delivery of training for their programme and manage this relationship.

More information about this standard can be found in our Standards of education and training guidance on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

? Does the HCPC have a requirement regarding the number of placements that can be elective?

No, we do not have any requirements which state how many placements can be elective. The standards of education and training (SETs) state that the number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of learning outcomes. The programme must ensure that irrespective of the placements a student elects to undertake they can successfully meet all the standards of proficiency at the end of the programme.

More information can be found in our Standards of education and training guidance on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

? Does the HCPC require practice placement educators to be registered in their home country if a placement takes place outside of the UK?

Practice placements can be held outside of the UK as part of an HCPC approved programme. We are not prescriptive on how this happens. However, we will want to be assured that the practice placement a student undertakes will be consistent with the standards of education and training (SETs) and above all the individual will, upon successful completion of the entire programme, be able to meet the standards of

proficiency (SOPs). This means that education providers will need to be sure that a student is undertaking their studies in an environment that is appropriate to their learning to make sure that no student is able to complete the programme without being able to meet all the SOPs.

As any practice placements outside of the UK need to be consistent with the SETs, SET 5.9 (practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are in place) continues to apply. Normally practice placement educators would be registered with us in the relevant profession. However, there are instances when there are other appropriate practice placement educators whose backgrounds do not match the specific profession that the student is studying, or does not belong to our Register. In these situations, education providers should consider the experience, qualifications and experience of the practice placement educator to ensure they are relevant to the practice placement and the learning outcomes or assessment required within that placement. This would be one area which would need to be considered as part of arranging the placement.

Our normal monitoring processes should be used to tell us about changes to approved programmes. An education provider not currently undertaking practice placements outside the UK may need to submit a major change notification form to let us know about the change to the programme depending on the scale of the changes required. We would recommend that education providers use our SETs and SOPs to help identify what information is crucial to gather before the placement is arranged and therefore determine the scale of the changes to the programme.

Any approved programme which already runs practice placements outside of the UK and is making changes to how they do this may also need to submit a major change notification form to let us know about the change to the programme depending on the scale of the changes required.

More information about the major change process can be found on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/majorchange/

? Does the HCPC require detailed placement audits (eg checking practice placement educators are registered) to take place even if the placement is taking place in the NHS?

We require education providers to maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements (SET 5.4). By 'all' placements we are referring to any placements which are part of the programme wherever they may be.

We do not specify the system which an education provider must use to approve or monitor placements. The system an education provider uses to approve practice placements before they are used or to monitor placements on an on-going basis may be different for all education providers. Among other requirements, the system may include checks to ensure practice placement educators are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed (SET 5.9).

More information about the Standards of education and training guidance can be found at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

Operational processes

? **If we change our requirements about whether practice placement educators should be registered with the HCPC, should we report this to you as a major change?**

Standard of education and training (SET) 5.9 states that we would normally expect practice placement educators to be registered with us in the relevant profession. However, there are instances of appropriate practice placement educators whose backgrounds do not match the specific profession that the student is studying. For example a nurse may supervise radiographers in aseptic techniques.

If the changes to your requirements are to increase access for students to HCPC registered staff, this would be considered an enhancement as it exceeds the threshold level for the standards.

If the change to your requirements is to decrease access for students to HCPC registered staff, this would be considered a major change which should be reported to us using the major change notification form*. We will then review the information you have provided to us and decide which of our operational processes would be most appropriate to review the change.

The major change notification form can be downloaded from our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/majorchange/

* We do not expect transitionally approved social work and approved mental health professional (AMHP) education and training programmes to engage with either our major change or annual monitoring processes. However, once the programme has completed the approval process and received confirmation of on-going approval, we would expect them to participate fully in our monitoring processes.

? One of the case studies used within the seminar was an example of a lack of communication between the education provider and practice placement providers. How would the HCPC pick up issues such as this?

Our approval and monitoring processes make sure that programmes and education providers meet our standards of education and training (SETs) so that students who successfully complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs). Once a programme has received open ended approval we monitor the programme through our monitoring processes of major change and annual monitoring to ensure the programmes continues to meet the standards.

It is the education provider's responsibility to inform us of any changes to how their approved programme continues to meet the standards.

Our major change process considers significant changes to a programme and the effect of these changes in relation to our standards. The changes can be retrospective or prospective and we have produced detailed guidance which is available on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/majorchange/

Our annual monitoring process is a retrospective process where we look back at how the programme has been delivered to the cohorts over the last two academic years. The annual monitoring process involves two types of monitoring submissions – an audit or declaration. We try to build upon an education providers own processes for monitoring and every two years we will ask them to submit internal documentation, such as external examiner reports, their responses to these and their internal quality documentation in order to determine whether the programme continues to meet the standards. Detailed information is available on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/monitoring/

? How are distance learning programmes regulated?

Distance learning programmes are regulated in the same way as other modes of delivery such as full time, part time or work based learning. All programmes which wish to gain approval from the HCPC must undertake the approval process and meet all the standards of education and training (SETs) and standards of proficiency (SOPs) appropriate for that part of the Register.

The evidence which a distance learning programme might submit in order to demonstrate how they meet the SETs and SOPs may be different from other modes of delivery. For example, in how they ensure the learning resources effectively support the required teaching and learning (SET 3.9) or how they deliver the learning outcomes to ensure the SOPs are met (SET 4.1). However, as the SETs and SOPs

are generic and flexible education providers can meet the standards in a variety of ways in order to gain HCPC approval.

More information about the Standards of education and training guidance can be found on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/

Consultations

? How are profession specific views taken into account when setting up new standards or revising existing standards?

We are committed to engaging with our stakeholders, and taking account of their views and input in the way that we carry out our work. We hold stakeholder events to help us when drafting new or revised standards. For example we could bring together representatives from professional bodies representing the different professions, employers and education providers to give us their views on the standards. This information would feed into a consultation document which we would make available on our website. Any consultations are open to all and consultations relating to new or existing standards will be of particular interest to professional bodies and those delivering approved education programmes and we encourage any interested party to contribute to our consultations.

We are currently undertaking consultations on the:

- Criteria for approving Approved Mental Health Professional Programmes in England;
- Profession-specific standards of proficiency for chiropodists and podiatrists; and
- Profession-specific standards of proficiency for prosthetists and orthotists.

Further information can be found on our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/

Registrations

? Why does the HCPC require a criminal records check to be undertaken upon admission to an approved programme and when an individual applies to the HCPC Register?

We require education providers to run appropriate and relevant criminal conviction checks on all applicants to a programme for example, though the Criminal Records

Bureau, Disclosure Scotland or another body. We expect education providers to have in place processes for determining whether an applicant should join the programme if they have declared a criminal conviction. These processes would include discussions with practice placement providers to determine whether they would be willing to offer a place to the applicant and what happens if they are not.

These decisions are based upon assessing whether it is appropriate for an applicant to join a programme. They are not about determining whether an individual, if they successfully complete the programme, would be eligible to join the HCPC Register. Completing an approved programme does not guarantee that someone will be able to register with us. Sometimes a student who has completed an education programme declares very serious information which may mean that we reject their application to the register. It is important to stress this only happens very rarely.

When an applicant applies to the HCPC Register they are required to answer questions about their health and character as part of the application form and submit a character reference from a person of standing in the community who has known the applicant for over three years. If any concerns are raised during this process, then the HCPC would investigate each application to the Register on a case by case basis.

More information can be found in our Standards of education and training guidance, Standards of conduct, performance and ethics and Guidance on health and character which are available from the HCPC website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/