

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	De Montfort University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	3 - 4 June 2009

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Biomedical scientist' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the approval of the programme. The education provider has until 10 July 2009 to provide observations on this report. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 29 July 2009. At this meeting, the Committee will accept the visitors' recommended outcome and approve the programme.

The education provider is due to redraft and resubmit documentary evidence in response to the conditions outlined in this report by 15 July 2009. The visitors will consider this response and make a separate recommendation to the Committee on the approval of the programme. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made to the Committee on 25 August 2009.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC approval for the first time. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was part of a joint event. The professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The professional body and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	David Houlston (Biomedical scientist) Peter Ruddy (Biomedical scientist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Neil Strevett
Proposed student numbers	14 per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2009
Chair	Elaine Woodhouse (De Montfort University)
Secretary	David Parker (De Montfort University)
Members of the joint panel	Alan Wainwright (Institute of Biomedical Science) Robert Munro (Institute of Biomedical Science) Nick Kirk (Institute of Biomedical Science)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 58 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 5 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors did not make any recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme.

Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1 The admission procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all the documentation for the programme to ensure that the terminology used throughout is fully reflective of the requirements of the HPC and statutory regulation.

Reason: From the documentation submitted by the education provider there were instances where registration with the HPC was described as occurring at the same time as graduation. The documentation should be revised to ensure that it is clear to applicants that graduation from the programme will lead to eligibility to register with the HPC and will not confirm automatic registration.

3.8 The facilities needed to ensure the welfare and well-being of students must be both adequate and accessible.

Condition: The education provider must assess the risk to students of having hand washing facilities separated from the main microbiology laboratory by a door and review its health and safety procedures to ensure that this standard is fully met.

Reason: During discussions with students it was disclosed that pathogenic materials were cultivated within the laboratory. The tour of the facilities had revealed that hand washing facilities were separate to the laboratory and accessed via a door. Though discussions with the programme team revealed that the both the laboratory and hand washing area was regarded as a single, discrete area and separated from other facilities and teaching areas by the education provider, the visitors remained concerned that access to washing facilities from the main area of the laboratory required students to use a door. In order to meet this standard, the visitors required the education provider to assess the risks to students of having hand washing facilities outside of the main area of the laboratory and to review its health and safety procedures accordingly.

5.3.2 The practice placement settings must provide safe and effective practice.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all practice placement laboratories have full Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) before students begin their placements.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team it became apparent that the education provider had in place a system of assuring itself that practice placements provided an environment for safe and effective practice. A key component of this system was to ensure that all laboratories had full CPA. In discussions with practice placement providers it emerged that several placement providers were currently in the process of resubmitting their CPA applications. Therefore to fully meet this standard, the visitors judged that the education provider should assure itself that all placement providers had CPA before students began their placements.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all existing practice placement educators have completed the training course offered by the education provider and that completion of the course becomes compulsory for all new practice placement educators. The education provider must also establish and provide compulsory refresher training for all placement educators.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team it was noted that the education provider offered a 2 day training course to all practice placement educators. The course had been running for three years and it was reported that nearly all placement educators had been through the course. Furthermore, it was noted that attendance was not compulsory nor was there any form of refresher training for placement educators once the course they had been completed. Discussions with practice placement providers revealed that all placement educators were strongly encouraged to attend the training course. The visitors judged that to fully meet this standard all current practice placement educators who have not already completed this training must do so at the earliest opportunity and that the training must be made compulsory for all new placement educators. In addition, the education provider must also devise and provide periodic compulsory refresher training for all placement educators.

6.7.3 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all documentation and handbooks clearly specify that an aegrotat award does not provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation submitted by the education provider, this standard was referred to within the main body of the text, however, where students were directed to assessment and university regulations it should be made explicitly clear that an aegrotat award does not provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

David Houliston
Peter Ruddy

2nd July 2009

Dr Neil Strevett

Education Department

Health Professions Council

184 Kennington Park Road

London SE11 4BU

Dear Dr Strevett,

Re: HPC visit to De Montfort University 3-4th June 2009

We have now had chance to carefully consider the HPC report of the above visit and our comments are given below. I would first like to thank the HPC visitors for their hard work and constructive comments made both in their preparations for, and during the visit in June 2009. The report of the visit asks for the documentation to be revised to clearly state that (i) graduation from the programme will allow eligibility to apply for registration relationship and not automatic registration, (ii) that the welfare and well being of students must be adequate and accessible, (iii) that all practice placement laboratories have full CPA accreditation, (iv) that practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training and (v) that aegrotat awards cannot be used to provide eligibility for admission to the register.

The documentation will be fully revised to address Conditions 2.1 and 6.7.3. With regard to the latter condition, students who have become ill during the programme and who have not been able to satisfactorily complete the practice placements have not been allowed to graduate with a coterminus aegrotat award. This will be made clear in the documentation in the Sections dealing with recruitment and assessment. We have begun to review the educator training status of those practice placement trainers who currently review the competence of our students in training laboratories. While we cannot force NHS employees to undertake training programmes, only

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those that have undertaken appropriate educator training will be permitted to ratify the competence of our students. All new trainers will attend the Training for Trainers’

Courses run by the University and we will also ensure that regular refresher courses are made available to all trainers. Attendance will be documented and the list of ‘approved trainers’ in the placement laboratories updated. A list of trainers who have attended the training courses run by the university, and their place of employment will be held by the University and regularly updated. This list of appropriately trained trainers would be available to the HPC if required.

The washing facilities in the microbiology suite and other teaching laboratories have also been reviewed. A designated washing facility has been identified in the Microbiology Laboratory which will be appropriately signposted and brought to the attention of both staff and students. Furthermore, we are conducting a review of Health and Safety within the teaching laboratories at DMU based on HSE standard procedures.

Our only real concern that we have identified is the condition relating to full CPA accreditation to ensure that practice placement laboratories provide safe and effective practice. Full CPA accreditation covers a far wider range of activities (e.g. staff recruitment, equal opportunities, management structures and associated services including phlebotomy) than the provision of safe and effective practice. As conditional approval will not be granted in the future this could provide some difficulties and restrictions for us. The condition as stated also implies that student biomedical scientists could only be placed in laboratories that have guaranteed full CPA accreditation for at least three years. This is currently not the practice as surveillance visits are held every two years.

Currently, if a laboratory does not gain full CPA accreditation it has a period of time to rectify any non-compliances (which in some cases may be up to three years) and during this non-full CPA accredited period the laboratory would still continue to operate as a clinical laboratory. Samples would still be processed as normal by HPC-registered Biomedical Scientists and laboratory training for the non-Applied Science degree trainees within the laboratory would continue. In effect it would only be the Applied Biomedical Science students on a co-terminus BMS programme that would be disadvantaged in their training under this condition.

We also feel that this is inconsistent with other approval visits. For example, only last year when one Higher Education Institution stated that only full CPA accreditation would be acceptable they were informed by a HPC visitor that this would restrict the

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placement laboratories available due to the wide range of activities covered by such accreditation and the many possibilities of having accreditation being made conditional or temporarily removed.

In conclusion, it is our contention that any restriction on students being trained in the laboratory should be limited to those laboratories that have critical non-conformances (compliances) rather than non-critical conformances. Non-critical conformances are usually minor and do not reflect any risk to the students. In order to meet this SET we will ensure that while students will be placed only in those laboratories that are approved for training by the IBMS, we will also make sure as far as is possible that training laboratories are fully accredited by the CPA. If major non-compliances were identified then the students would be placed in another appropriate training laboratory. The University would hold records of CPA accreditation visits to our NHS training laboratories.

Apart from our concern regarding full CPA accreditation for placement laboratories, we are happy to accept that July 15th would be an acceptable date for meeting the other conditions. Apart from the condition regarding CPA accredited laboratories we have no objection to the approval conditions being made public. It would also be helpful if you provide information regarding the evidence needed to satisfy the conditions set for approval to be granted. For example, would pictorial evidence be appropriate to demonstrate the washing facilities etc.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

Paul H Whiting

Professor of Biomedical Science

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