
Education and Training Committee – 22 September 2009

Staffordshire University - Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science – Decision on approval

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

Staffordshire University proposed to establish a new Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science with a start date of September 2008 for the first cohort of students. The education provider was subject to an approval visit on 24-25 June 2008.

Following the visit a number of conditions were placed on the approval of this programme. The visitors' report can be found as appendix one. A conditions deadline was negotiated for 14 August 2008. The visitors' report and recommendation was submitted to the Education and Training Panel (ETP) on 18 August 2008 and was approved by that Panel. It was anticipated that the education provider's first attempt to meet the conditions would be reviewed by the visitors and a separate recommendation on whether to approve the programme would be made to the ETP at its meeting on the 25 September 2008.

Following the ETP meeting on the 18 August, the education provider submitted observations on the visitor's report and indicated that the local Strategic Health Authority (SHA) would not be in a position to confirm the number of places it wished to commission by the 25 September, and thus the education provider would not be in a position to meet the condition placed against standard of education and training (SET) 3.1 in time for ETP meeting scheduled for the 25 September. The education providers' observations can be found as appendix two.

The education provider requested an extension to the deadline to meet this condition to the 28 February 2009 and took the decision to delay the start date for the programme to September 2009. At its meeting on the 25 September the ETP was satisfied that all conditions had been met bar the condition against SET 3.1. It was also satisfied that the condition against SET 3.1 needed to be met before the programme could be approved. The Panel also determined that as the programme start date would not commence until September 2009, the deadline for this condition should be extended. This decision can be found as appendix three.

Subsequent to this decision, the education provider indicated that they had still not received the required information from the SHA. Between February 2009 and June 2009 there followed a series of communications between the HPC Executive and the education provider, where the Executive took the decision to

extend the deadline for the education provider to meet the condition on the basis that the education provider had indicated that the information they required from the SHA to meet the condition was imminent, and also on the basis that as the education provider had taken the decision to further delay the start date for the programme until March 2010 there was no risk to public safety by extending the deadline.

After a series of further missed deadlines, the Executive informed the education provider in June 2009 that the failure to meet the deadlines previously set constituted a collective first attempt to meet the condition. A final deadline of 31 July was set, subsequently extended to the 4 August after the education provider contacted the Executive to indicate that a final decision from the SHA would be forthcoming on the 4 August. The education provider was informed that failure to meet this deadline would constitute a second failed attempt to meet the condition.

The education provider subsequently informed the Executive on the 4 August that the SHA had not confirmed with them the number of places they intended to commission on the programme, and thus the education provider could not meet the outstanding condition on the programme. The education provider also submitted an application for extenuating circumstances to be considered and have asked the Education and Training Panel to consider a further deadline of the 31 August 2009 to meet this condition. The claim of extenuating circumstances can be found as appendix four.

The SHA has subsequently confirmed with the EP the number of places they wish to commission. The visitors have reviewed the documentation and are satisfied that the outstanding condition has been met and have recommended that the programme be approved.

Decision

The Committee is asked to consider the approval to the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science to be delivered by Staffordshire University. The Committee is asked to articulate and agree reasons for their decision so that they may be communicated to the Staffordshire University. The Committee have the following broad options:

- To not approve the programme on the basis that the education provider has had two attempts to meet the outstanding condition placed on the programme and has failed to do so; and to direct the Education Department to contact the education provider and inform them of the decision and the need to submit a new programme approval request should they wish to have HPC approval for the programme.
- To accept the extenuating circumstances provided by the education provider and, therefore, the visitor's recommendation to approve the programme.

Background information

- 'Guidance for non approval or withdrawal of approval from programmes', Education and Training Committee, 25 March 2009

Resource implications

There are no resource implications.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Visitors' report (p4)
- Appendix 2 – Education Provider's observations on the visitors' report (p13)
- Appendix 3 – ETP decision notice (p14)
- Appendix 4 – Education Provider's extenuating circumstances for missing two documentation deadlines (p16)

Date of paper

20 August 2009

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Staffordshire University
Programme name	Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC register	Paramedic
Date of visit	24-25 June 2008

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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 'paramedic' 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 1 August to provide observations on this report. This is independent of meeting any conditions. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee on 18 August 2008. At this meeting, the Committee will accept the visitors' recommended outcome, including the conditions. If necessary, the Committee may decide to vary the conditions.

The education provider is due to redraft and resubmit documentary evidence in response to the conditions outlined in this report by 14 August 2008. The visitors will consider this response and make a separate recommendation to the Education and Training Committee on the approval of the programme. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made to the Education and Training Committee on 25 September 2008.

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 education provider validated the programme. The visit also considered the following programme – Foundation Degree in Professional Development in Paramedic Science. The education provider 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on this programme only. A separate report exists for the other programme. 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 education provider, outlines their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Paul Bates (Paramedic) Glyn Harding (Paramedic)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Paula Lescott
Proposed student numbers	20
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2009
Chair	Professor Mike Goodwin (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Andrea Jones (Staffordshire University)
Members of the joint panel	Richard Benefer (Staffordshire University, Internal Panel Member) Dr Mark Forshaw (Staffordshire University, Internal Panel Member) Peter Jones (Staffordshire University, Internal Panel Member)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Validation Support Document	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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 (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC met with students from the operating department practice and nursing programmes, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

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 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 8 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 have also made a recommendation 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 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 review the programme documentation and advertising materials for the programme to follow the guidance provided in the HPC “Regulatory status advertising protocol for education providers”.

Reason: From the documentation submitted by the education provider it was clear that the documentation did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, the HPC is not a professional body and should not be referred to as such in any materials related to an HPC approved programme. It should also be made clear throughout all of the documentation that completion of the programme provides eligibility to apply for HPC registration. In addition, there are a number of items referred to as HPC requirements in the documentation that it needs to be clarified are professional body recommendations, in particular references to the amount of time that mentors should supervise students on placements and the guidance regarding the 24-hour cycle of care. Finally, references to the HPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics should be updated to the most recent version of this publication throughout the documentation. Therefore, in order to provide students with the correct information to make an informed choice about whether to join the programme and to prevent confusion amongst students on the programme, the visitors felt the programme documentation must be amended.

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider’s business plan.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that the programme has a secure place in the education provider’s business plan and is guaranteed to run.

Reason: During the senior team meeting it was apparent that the education provider was waiting for confirmation from the strategic health authority regarding commissioned numbers to the programme to ensure that the funding would be in place to run the programme. Once this confirmation has been received by the education provider, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate that this is the case to ensure that this standard is being met.

3.4 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that one of the planned paramedic personnel is recruited to the programme team before the start of the first programme, and that the other paramedic role is recruited to at the earliest possible opportunity.

Reason: From the programme team meeting it was clear that the programme team was already in place with the exception of the paramedic staff. Whilst the

visitors recognised that the job descriptions had been written and that initial advertising for the roles had already begun, they felt that in order for this programme to run at least one of these roles must be in position by the start of the programme. The visitors would therefore need confirmation of the recruitment of one of these individuals and details of their expertise and knowledge to ensure that this standard is being met.

3.5 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant expertise and knowledge.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that one of the planned paramedic personnel is recruited to the programme team before the start of the first programme, and that the other paramedic role is recruited to at the earliest possible opportunity.

Reason: From the programme team meeting it was clear that the programme team was already in place with the exception of the paramedic staff. Whilst the visitors recognised that the job descriptions had been written and that initial advertising for the roles had already begun, they felt that in order for this programme to run at least one of these roles must be in position by the start of the programme. The visitors would therefore need confirmation of the recruitment of one of these individuals and details of their expertise and knowledge to ensure that this standard is being met.

3.12 The resources provided, both on and off site, must adequately support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must review the programme documentation in order to provide evidence that the resources available for the learning and teaching of the students on this programme would be sufficient.

Reason: From the tour of the facilities and the planned equipment for purchase by the education provider the visitors could not determine whether the equipment resources would be sufficient for the number of students on this programme. Indeed, from the equipment list supplied and from the resources seen on the tour the visitors felt that these would not provide sufficient learning and teaching resources. In addition, consideration needs to be made into the lack of additional access to facilities for the students on this programme. The visitors therefore require details of the equipment that is currently available to this programme and an updated list of the type and quantity of equipment that the education provider is planning to purchase to ensure that this standard is being met.

3.13 The learning resources, including the stock of periodicals and subject books, IT facilities (including internet access), must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to demonstrate that the stock of subject texts will be sufficient to support the learning of the students on this programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team it was apparent that there were plans to purchase the books listed in the module descriptors as required reading. To ensure that this standard is being met the visitors require evidence regarding the quantity of the resources that are being purchased. The visitors also need to see the recommended reading lists for the programme and demonstration of the plans to purchase these resources, including the amount of each of the texts.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clarify the policy on preceptorship following completion of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted by the education provider it was clear that the information in the documentation was misleading regarding the programme policy on preceptorship after completing the programme. The documentation needs to be updated to clarify that a period of preceptorship was recommended as best practice after completion of the programme, and that preceptorship is not a requirement as is currently stated.

5.6 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to provide evidence of the education provider taking full responsibility over placements on the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team it was clear that the education provider planned to initially utilise Coventry University's placement audits for the first year of the programme before commencing their own audits. The visitors require evidence of a formal agreement between the two education providers and endorsement of Staffordshire University's responsibility for placements for the period that the information in the Coventry University's audits is utilised.

5.6 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to provide evidence that the placement audits that are planned to be utilised are tailored to paramedic placements.

Reason: In the programme documentation submitted by the education provider an audit was provided that would be adapted and utilised in the future to approve and monitor paramedic placements on the programme. The visitors require evidence that this audit has been adapted to be suitable for assessing paramedic placements to ensure that this standard is being met.

Recommendations

3.13 The learning resources, including the stock of periodicals and subject books, IT facilities (including internet access), must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The visitors wished to recommend that a wider range of paramedic texts is available to the students on the programme.

Reason: From the resources seen at the visit and the texts proposed for purchase by the programme team, the visitors felt that a wider range of paramedic texts could be made available to aid the research and learning of the students on the programme.

Paul Bates
Glyn Harding



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Ms Paula Lescott
Education Officer
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8 September 2008

Dear Paula

Please see below further detail in response to the validation condition (3.1) pertaining to the Visitors' report for the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science

In January 2008 Staffordshire University was commissioned by West Midlands Ambulance Service to deliver Paramedic education and training for its Staffordshire locality, comprising 40 Ambulance Technician to Paramedic Conversion students and 20 direct entry Paramedic students starting in September 2008. However, in May 2008 NHS West Midlands was charged with taking over the commissioning of Paramedic education and training for the Region and in July the University was informed of its confirmed commissioned numbers for the Technician to Paramedic conversion programme (FD Professional Development in Paramedic Science).

The second stage of the SHA's process involves confirming commissioned student numbers for direct entry programmes (FD in Paramedic Science) starting in Sept 2009. HEIs in the West Midlands have been notified that the process will start this autumn and we anticipate being informed of confirmed commissioned numbers (20) in early 2009. Unfortunately NHS West Midlands has not notified HEI's of definitive dates, so I am unable at this time to be any more specific.

The University is conscious that this means we will not be able to meet this validation condition in the timeline identified. We would appreciate it if the Education and Training Committee would consider the possibility of amending this condition deadline to 28 February 2009. We do apologise most profusely for this, but the commissioning process is under the control of our SHA and we are dependent upon them communicating their intentions to us in a timely and informative manner.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further clarification.

Yours Sincerely

Christine A Raper
Programme Area Manager for Lifelong Learning



Appendix 3

Health Professions Council

Education and Training Committee Panel

Programmes in respect of which approval/ongoing approval is recommended subject to conditions, where the education provider has made observations on the visitors' report

Name of programme	Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science
Name of education provider	Staffordshire University
Mode of delivery	Full time
Date of decision	25 September 2008

Panel :
Eileen Thornton, Chair
Helen Davis
John Donaghy
Sheila Drayton
Gill Pearson

Guidance for Panel Chairs

In determining whether to accept a Visitors' report (including the conditions and recommendations in the report), the Panel must reach its decision on the basis of the evidence put before it, in the form of the HPC Visitors' report and any observations on the report made by the education provider.

The Visitors' report is only a recommendation and the Panel may depart from that recommendation where it is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so.

The Panel must reach its own decision and give reasons for that decision. If the Panel wishes to amend the report, it should give reasons for each amendment.

Decision:
The Visitors' report should be amended as follows: The documentation deadline for the condition against standard of education

and training (SET) 3.1 should be extended to Friday 27 February 2009.

Reasons

The Panel noted that the Visitors' report had been submitted to the Education and Training Panel on Monday 18 August 2008 and had been approved by that Panel. The Panel noted that the education provider had since made an observation on the Visitors' report.

The Panel is satisfied that the condition against SET 3.1 in the Visitors' report needs to be met before the programme can be approved. The Panel is also satisfied that as the programme will not commence until September 2009, the deadline for this condition should be extended.

Signed:

(Chairman of the Panel)



APPENDIX FOUR

Faculty of Health

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Dr Neil Strevett
Education Officer
Health Professions Council
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SE11 4BU

11 August 2009

Dear Neil

Submission of claim of extenuating circumstances in meeting programme approval conditions

We have detailed below the University's claim of extenuating circumstances in meeting the deadlines for validation condition 3.1 for the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science:

We apologise most profusely that while we have responded to all conditions and recommendations for the two programmes that underwent validation, we have been unable to meet the remaining condition relating to providing evidence of commissioned places for the programme. Unfortunately the circumstances surrounding this have been completely out of our control but have depended upon our Strategic Health Authority publishing and keeping to its deadlines for notifying HEI's in the West Midlands of commissioned student places for two year FD in Paramedic Science. As indicated in the timeline below, despite being commissioned to deliver this HPC approved foundation degree, our SHA has consistently failed to meet its deadlines. This is clearly a great disappointment to us, particularly as the Ambulance Technician to Paramedic conversion programme (FD in Professional Developments in Paramedic Science) which was part of the same validation event, has received excellent feedback from students and the employer.

In order to make clearer the sequence of events leading to this present situation, I have presented them in chronological order overleaf:

Timeline

January 2008 - West Midland Ambulance Service commissions the University to develop two programmes of Paramedic education: Ambulance Technician to Paramedic Conversion programme for 40 students and a direct entry programme for 20 students, both commencing September 2008. Therefore arrangements made with the HPC for validation of two proposed programmes.

May 2008 - NHS West Midlands takes over the commissioning of Paramedic education and training for the Region from WMAS, and publicises its tender arrangements for both conversion and direct entry student places.

24/25 May 2008 - conjoint HPC/University validation of the two programmes

July 2008 - NHS West Midlands informs the University of its confirmed commissioned student numbers for the Technician to Paramedic conversion programme (FD Professional Development in Paramedic Science). But informs HEI's that it will not now commission for direct entry programmes for academic year 2008/9, but will put out tendering process in the autumn of 2008 for 2009/10 commissions.

August 2008 - University responds to all conditions and recommendations for the two programmes, but is unable to meet condition 3.1 for the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science due to the removal of commissioning places by the SHA.

8 September 2008 – letter to HPC Education Officer explaining the unforeseen circumstances relating to the unmet validation condition and asking the Education and Training Committee to consider the possibility of amending this condition deadline to 28 February 2009.

8 October 2008 - University informed of Education and Training Committee's amendment of condition deadline to 28 February 2009.

January/February 2009 – telephone and email discussions with HPC Education Officer concerning the non-publication of tendering for 2009/10 Paramedic education commissions in the West Midlands.

16 March 2009 - Informal information from SHA that tendering process would be soon be published.

19 March 2009 - condition deadline amended to 14 July 2009

4 June 2009 – publication by SHA to West Midlands HEI's of tendering process for 2009/10. Deadline of 1st July given for submission of tenders, with close of play 31st July given as date successful HEIs would be notified.
The University's tender was submitted on time.

June/July 2009 – telephone and email discussion with HPC Education Officer.
Email of 16 June confirmed 31st July as new condition deadline.

29 July 2009 – notification to HEIs from NMHS West Midlands stating a change to the deadline for confirming commissioned places, to a new date of 4 August 2009.

29/30 July 2009 – further telephone and email discussion with HPC Education Officer. Email of 30 July confirmed 5pm 4 August as new condition deadline.

4 August 2009 – again passed with no indication from SHA of confirmation of commissioned places.

We anticipate hearing from our SHA any day now, but do appreciate that this crosses over the amended deadlines that the HPC has so patiently provided. Were the Education and Training Committee able to consider the possibility of amending this condition deadline further, we feel sure that we should know of our SHA's commissioning intentions for 2009/10 by the 31st August

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further clarification.

Yours Sincerely

Christine A Raper
Programme Area Manager for Lifelong Learning