
Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Aston University
Programme name	Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	2 – 3 March 2011

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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 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Hearing aid dispenser' 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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 12 May 2011. At the Committee meeting on 25 August 2011, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Hearing aid dispenser profession came onto the register in April 2010 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional bodies did not consider their accreditation of the programmes. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. The visit also considered a different programme – BSc (Hons) Audiology with Professional Training. A separate report exists for this programme.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Tim Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser) Hugh Crawford (Hearing aid dispenser)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
HPC observer	Osama Ammar
Proposed student numbers	25
Initial approval	28 September 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Ros Hill (Aston University)
Secretary	Gillian Cook (Aston University)

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 ongoing 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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 3 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing 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 ongoing 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 admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the terminology in use is reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation under the HPC.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. The visitors noted a number of instances where out-of-date terminology was evident. The documentation referenced the HPC as 'accrediting' the programme. The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes instead we 'approve' education programmes. The visitors considered the current terminology in place could be misleading to applicants and students and therefore require all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to be amended to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology to ensure consistency and to ensure this SET is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence outlining the approach used to effectively and thoroughly approve and monitor placements which are located outside of the local area.

Reason: The visitors noted the system in place for the approval and monitoring of placements within the local area of the programme and considered this to be thorough and effective. However, through discussions with the programme team and students, the visitors noted newly acquired placement settings were increasingly spread out further away in terms of their geographical position to the programme. The visitors also noted that the programme is planning to approve and monitor placements outside of the local area using technology such as Skype in an attempt to alleviate some of the human resource impact. The visitors require further evidence outlining the plans for the development of this approval and monitoring tool, evidence of protocols and details of projected timescales and action plans, to ensure the approaches used for placement settings outside the local area of the programme will be thorough and effective.

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate the mechanisms in place that ensure practice placement educators have undertaken appropriate practice placement educator training and are given programme specific information. The education provider must also provide further evidence regarding the planned implementation of the e-learning training for practice placement educators.

Reason: Evidence provided prior to the visit indicated the education provider held training sessions for practice placement educators. From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider approves practice placement educators who may have undertaken practice placement educator training from other education providers.

The visitors were concerned this could mean the practice placement educators, although trained to undertake work with students, would not be aware of the programme specific intricacies and may not fully be aware of the implications of working with students from this programme. Further discussion with the programme team indicated the education provider had planned for the implementation of e-learning training for practice placement educators.

In order to ensure the education provider is ensuring appropriately trained practice placement educators undertake work with students, the visitors require further evidence that outlines the mechanisms used to ensure practice placement educators have received appropriate training to work with students from their programme, how they ensure training from other education providers is consistent with their own training provision and how they ensure practice placement educators receive programme specific information. The visitors also require evidence outlining the planned implementation date for the e-learning resource and evidence of protocols outlining the scope of the project.

Tim Pringle
Hugh Crawford