

Visitors' report

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| Name of education provider | Birmingham City University |
| Programme name | Dip HE Paramedic Science |
| Mode of delivery | Full time |
| Relevant part of HPC Register | Paramedic |
| Date of visit | 1 – 2 February 2012 |

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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 '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. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 12 June 2012. At the Committee meeting on 12 June 2012 the programme was approved. 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 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 and validating body validated the programme. 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 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 education provider outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

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|---|--|
| Name of HPC visitors and profession | Bob Fellows (Paramedic) Vince Clarke (Paramedic) |
| HPC executive officer (in attendance) | Lewis Roberts |
| Proposed student numbers | 30 per cohort |
| Proposed start date of programme approval | September 2012 |
| Chair | Fiona Church (Birmingham City University) |
| Secretary | Barbara Nugent (Birmingham City University) |
| Members of the joint panel | Gareth Moran (External Panel Member) Dave Kerr (External Panel Member) Russell Thornhill (External Panel Member) Rachel Curzon (Internal Panel Member) Barbara Howard-Hunt (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"/> |

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as the programme is new and therefore there are currently no external examiner reports. The visitors did review external examiners' reports for the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science programme.

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"/> |

The HPC spoke with students from the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science programme 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.

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 48 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 9 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.

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 review the programme documentation, including reading lists for accuracy.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions during the visit a number of inaccuracies were identified within the programme documentation. The visitors note that on page 92 of the Practice Placement Handbook the table differentiates between 'supervised hours' and 'supernumerary accumulated hours'. The visitors noted that all practice placements should be both supervised and supernumerary, therefore require the table to be updated. The visitors also require the education provider to review the reading lists to ensure all references are accurate and up to date.

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 re-visit all programme documentation including web and paper advertising materials, to clearly highlight the range and duration of placements, the potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements and any additional personal costs associated with attending placements.

Reason: During discussions the programme team stated that all students will undertake a range of core placements that include a placement in an ambulance, maternity, operating theatre and coronary-care setting. The programme team also stated that both direct entry and non-direct entry students (supported by an employer) can access the programme. The visitors noted that non-direct entry students may be based in locations throughout the UK and that the education provider may facilitate placements close to the students employer if requested. However, through discussions with non-direct entry students from the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science programme it was stated that in order to attend some placements significant travel or overnight accommodation was required.

The visitors recognise that the location of the placements can vary depending upon whether a student has accessed the programme directly or whether they are supported by their employer. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to determine where applicants and students would find out about the logistical arrangements associated with placements, including information about the range and duration of placements, the potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements and any additional costs associated with attending placement.

This lack of information about placement range, likely placement locations and subsequent costs associated with attending placement may mean that students

cannot make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation, including all advertising material, to clearly highlight to potential applicants the range and duration of placements, the potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements and any additional personal costs associated with attending placements.

2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation including advertising materials, to ensure that the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) entry criteria are clear.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors could not determine the IELTS level for entry on to the programme. At the visit the programme team stated that the level was 6.5. As the education provider must clearly set out their English-language requirements in the information they make available to applicants the visitors require the IELTS entry level to the programme to be clarified and clearly stated in the programme documentation and advertising materials. If students enter the programme with an IELTS score of 6.5 the visitors also require evidence of how the programme team ensures at the point of registration that an applicant will attain a score of IELTS 7.0 with no element below 6.5 (Standard of Proficiency 1b.3).

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the admissions documentation for non-direct entry students to ensure the entry criteria are clear and consistent.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted that non-direct entry applicants to the programme must be employed in a trainee paramedic role (or equivalent), have the full support of their operational line manager and hold current IHCD ambulance technician award (or equivalent). The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to provide clarification of what constitutes equivalency within the non-direct entry criteria. The visitors require examples of equivalent employment roles and equivalent qualifications that the education provider would accept.

The visitors also noted from a review of the admissions information on the education providers website that it states that applicants should 'have access to an appropriately prepared Mentor'. The visitors note that this entry criterion differs to those outlined in the Programme Specification.

The visitors therefore require the education provider ensures that the entry criteria are clear and consistent within all admissions documentation, including advertising and potential non-direct entry applicants are able to access further information on what equivalent ambulance job role, qualifications, and scope of practice that the education provider will accept.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure paramedic specific resources are available to effectively support the required learning and teaching activities for a cohort of 30 students.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and students from the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science programme, the visitors noted that the current provision of paramedic specific resources and equipment is appropriate to support the current required learning and teaching activities.

However, the visitors noted that the current provision of paramedic specific resources and equipment is based on a smaller cohort than the proposed 30 for the Dip HE Paramedic Science programme. The visitors also noted comments from students on the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science where it was stated that access to paramedic specific equipment was limited at times. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team where it was stated that the ambulance training vehicle is currently on loan from a placement partner. The visitors considered the ambulance training vehicle to be a key programme resource and therefore require formal confirmation that this resource will be in place throughout the duration of the programme. The visitors require further evidence of business and resource planning that demonstrates that the education provider will ensure paramedic specific resources and ambulance equipment are available to effectively support the required learning and teaching activities for a cohort of 30 student paramedics.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the number, duration and range of practice placements and outline where in the programme ambulance, maternity, operating theatre and coronary-care placements will be undertaken. The education provider must also demonstrate where the practical learning outcomes associated with the 'Paramedic Care of the Trauma Patient' module will be achieved.

Reason: During discussions the programme team stated that all students will undertake a range of core placements that include a placement in an ambulance, maternity, theatre and coronary-care setting. The visitors require clarification of where in the programme these core placements will be undertaken.

From a review of the programme documentation the visitors also noted that successful completion of the 'Paramedic Care of the Trauma Patient' module requires students to achieve a number of learning outcomes in a practical setting. The visitors considered it most likely that students will be able to achieve these practical learning outcomes in an accident and emergency or trauma unit placement. The visitors expressed concern that the current core placements may not allow all students on the programme to achieve the learning outcomes associated with the 'Paramedic Care of the Trauma Patient' module.

The visitors therefore require the education provider to outline how students will achieve the learning outcomes associated with the 'Paramedic Care of the Trauma Patient' module given the range of core placements. The education provider must also clarify where in the programme the core placements will be undertaken to ensure they appropriately support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate the mechanism they use to ensure practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator refresher training.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team and practice placement educators the visitors were satisfied that the education provider has mechanisms in place to ensure practice placement educators undertake appropriate initial practice placement educator training. However, the visitors also expect the education provider to follow up initial training with regular refresher training and noted that all practice placement educators will require an update to articulate the changes associated with the introduction of the Dip HE Paramedic Science programme and any other developments that occur. The visitors therefore require the education provider to clearly articulate the mechanism they use to ensure practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator refresher training and the mechanisms in place to update practice placement educators on important changes to the programme.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must clarify the mechanisms in place that ensure students and practice placement educators have a full understanding about the clinical competencies that will be achieved within each practice placement setting.

Reason: The visitors noted discussions with practice placement educators and students from the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science programme where it was stated that on occasion they were uncertain about which clinical competencies should be achieved during each placement. The visitors noted from a review of the programme documentation that students are required to demonstrate defined clinical competencies whilst undertaking level 4 modules and defined clinical competencies whilst undertaking level 5 modules. However,

the visitors were not able to associate specific clinical competencies to specific practice placements that would demonstrate academic and clinical progression. The education provider must therefore clarify the mechanisms in place that ensure students and practice placement educators have an understanding about the clinical competencies that should be achieved within each practice placement. Evidence might include mapping of clinical competencies against specific practice placements.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to ensure consistency and clearly differentiate between the roles and responsibilities of a Mentor and a Practice Placement Educator.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted references to the role of Mentor and Practice Placement Educator. The visitors noted that the roles and responsibilities of a Mentor and a Practice Placement Educator are clearly defined on page 8 – 10 of the Practice Placement Handbook and that the diagram on page 8 clearly differentiates the roles. The education provider states that Practice Placement Educators will ‘lead on the facilitation of learning in the placement environment’ and that a Mentor will ‘provide an assessment of your achievement’.

The visitors noted that throughout the programme documentation the two roles are often cross referred (e.g. Page 15 of the Course Guide reference to ‘Practice Placement Educator / Mentor’). The visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation to ensure consistency and, if it is considered that the roles are different, to clearly differentiate between the roles and responsibilities of a Mentor and a Practice Placement Educator. If it is decided that the terms are interchangeable, then the documentation must be updated to reflect this, to avoid potential confusion

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must provide examples of the Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE) that are used within the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors note that a number of modules utilise OSCE as the main form of summative assessment and that this assessment demonstrates that students meet a number of the standards of proficiency. The visitors were not presented with OSCE as part of the programme documentation. To ensure that the OSCE used within the

programme are in line with the relevant learning outcomes the visitors require examples of the OSCE that are used within the programme.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Condition: The education provider must provide an example of the 'Mentor Witness Statement' to demonstrate that the measurement of student performance is objective and ensures fitness to practice.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to determine the mechanisms in place that demonstrate that the measurement of student performance in practice placements is objective and ensures fitness to practice. The visitors noted that practice placement educators undertake summative sign off of clinical competencies when a student has demonstrated the competency under supervision. During discussions with the programme team it was noted that practice placement educators formatively assess clinical competency throughout the duration of a placement and utilise a 'Mentor Witness Statement' to evidence fitness to practice and competency acquisition. However no example of the 'Mentor Witness Statement' was provided. The visitors require an example of the 'Mentor Witness Statement' to demonstrate that the measurement of student performance is objective and ensures fitness to practice.

Recommendations

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider undertaking an accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) mapping exercise for the IHCD ambulance technician award.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the Accreditation of Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L) Policy and Procedures document and are satisfied that this standard is met. However, from discussions with the programme team the visitors noted comments where it was anticipated that the course may attract a number of applicants who hold an IHCD ambulance technician award and that these applicants may be eligible to AP(E)L elements of the programme. The visitors were satisfied that the education provider will deal with these applicants on a case by case basis in line with the AP(E)L policy. From a review of the education provider's policy the visitors noted that the education provider had already conducted a mapping exercise for some other common entry pathways in other health professions. The visitors recommend that the education provider may want to undertake a similar exercise with the IHCD ambulance technician award and clearly define maximum credit allowance.

Bob Fellows
Vince Clarke