

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Birmingham City University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	29 – 30 January 2013

Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
Visit details	3
Sources of evidence	4
Recommended outcome	5
Conditions.....	6
Recommendations.....	10

Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 16 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 HCPC keep a register of health and care 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 6 June 2013. At the Committee meeting on 6 June 2013, the programme was approved. This means the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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 education provider and the HCPC 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 HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the education provider, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Vince Clarke (Paramedic) Mark Nevins (Paramedic)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
HCPC observer	Nicola Baker
Proposed student numbers	30 per cohort
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2014
Chair	Derek Cassidy (Birmingham City University)
Secretary	Jane Binks (Birmingham City University)
Members of the joint panel	Kevin Barrett (External Panel Member) Enid Egginton (Internal Panel Member) Barbara Nugent (Internal Panel Member) Mary Rooke (Internal Panel Member) Mark Stanley (External Panel Member) Sally Thompson (External Panel Member) Laura Tomlinson (Internal Panel Member)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HCPC 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 HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit, the programme is a new programme and therefore no reports exist.

During the visit the HCPC 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 HCPC met with students and graduates from the Dip HE 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.

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 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 6 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 number of 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.

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 submit planned advertising materials for the programme which includes information about any additional entry tests.

Reason: The documentation submitted prior to the visit included website links to the existing Dip HE Paramedic Science programme to show how the advertising materials would be presented. The visitors noted the programme specification document referred to a fitness test for applicants to undertake, "Students must be physically fit and have the strength to lift and carry patients and equipment. This will be tested at the selection event during the fitness test" (page 8). Through discussion with the programme team it was clarified the 'fitness test' is to be a 'dexterity test'. The visitors wish to ensure that potential applicants are given full information about the programme and to ensure that the nature of any additional entry tests is clear. The visitors are aware this programme has a planned commencement date of September 2014 and therefore finalised advertising materials may not be available yet. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to submit planned advertising materials for the programme which includes information about any additional entry tests.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit further information to clarify the non-direct entry route for the programme and information to demonstrate how potential applicants are clearly informed of the requirements for the non-direct entry route to the programme.

Reason: The documentation provided for this visit included the programme specification document which had details about the entry routes onto the programme. It detailed a direct entry route and a non-direct entry route. The visitors were satisfied the direct entry route to the programme was appropriate. The visitors noted the non-direct entry route stated applicants will need:

- to be employed in a trainee paramedic role;
- to have support of line manager and their organisation;
- to have access to a mentor who has completed Birmingham City University's mentor training;
- to hold an IHCD Ambulance Technician Award;
- to hold a QAA approved Access to HE Diploma in a Health subject (must include Mathematics and English Language GCSE equivalent if not already achieved); and
- to undertake and pass Organisation / Trust entrance interviews and examinations (Programme specification, page 9).

The visitors were concerned this list of entry requirements could require a lot more effort than the direct entry route and so could disadvantage potential applicants who would be more suited to a non-direct entry route onto the programme. In discussion with the programme team it was indicated the list provided was not intended in the way the programme specification reads. It was also highlighted the applicants for this programme via the non-direct entry route would be assessed on an individual basis.

From this evidence the visitors could not determine what the non-direct entry route requirements were and how potential applicants were informed of this route. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further information to clarify the non-direct entry route for the programme and information to demonstrate how potential applicants are clearly informed of the requirements for the non-direct entry route to the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit further information surrounding the routes onto the programme and evidence to demonstrate this information is clear for applicants.

Reason: The documentation provided for this visit included information about the education provider wide accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) processes (Appendix 6). The programme specification document indicates that applicants can apply to use the AP(E)L process, "Claims by students who wish to apply for APEL must be approved by the Personal Development Department on an individual basis" (page 8). It was highlighted through discussion that it would be difficult for applicants to transfer onto this programme through the AP(E)L route due to the professional nature of the programme. The programme specification document also had details about the non-direct entry route onto the programme. Through discussions with the programme team it was clarified that applicants to the programme through the non-direct entry route would be looked at on an individual basis. The visitors considered it to be confusing that the non-direct entry route was considered in a similar way to the AP(E)L process. From discussions the visitors were unable to determine the routes onto the programme, particularly whether the non-direct entry route to the programme was part of the AP(E)L process or whether the AP(E)L process was an alternative way to enter the programme. The visitors also considered this may be confusing to applicants for the programme. The visitors therefore require further information surrounding the routes onto the programme and evidence to demonstrate this information is clear for applicants.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence to demonstrate what commitment is being made with the placement providers to ensure the practice placements for students will be secure for the duration of their study.

Reason: The documentation indicates the education provider has existing relationships with placement providers through delivering an existing programme. The visitors noted this new programme may have different requirements of the placement providers than the existing programme. In discussions it was articulated an agreement would be made with all parties offering placements. These agreements would look to guarantee a number of placements for specified periods of time to ensure the placements are secure for all students across the duration of the programme. It was highlighted the education providers admissions processes required the programme to be able to guarantee placements for a student for the duration of the programme before being able to admit them onto the programme. The visitors noted it may be difficult for placements to guarantee places for the entire duration of the programme as the workforce landscape changes. The visitors considered this could be a particular problem for private placement providers as their work depends on the contracts they receive. The visitors

have not seen evidence of initial discussions or final arrangements in place to guarantee placements with the placement providers for this new programme. In order to determine this standard is met visitors require evidence of these arrangements to see what commitment is being made with the placement providers to ensure the practice placements for students on the programme will be secure for the duration of their study.

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 revisit programme documentation to ensure references to the HCPC's standards and requirements for registration are accurate.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit contained occurrences of misleading information. The visitors noted the programme handbook referenced continuous professional development inaccurately. "Continuous Professional Development (CPD) which is a requirement of the HCPC every 2 years" (page 26). The visitors highlighted that CPD is a requirement of registrants to stay registered with the HCPC, it is something that should be continually undertaken. Every two years the HCPC will randomly select a percentage of people from that profession and require them to submit their CPD profiles for audit. The visitors additionally noted an incorrect reference to HCPC standards, "All clinical staff adhere to their responsibilities as laid down in their Codes of Professional Conduct" (page 19). The visitors highlighted that the HCPC does not have codes of conduct; the HCPC has the standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards of proficiency registrants must adhere to. The visitors considered the documentation to be misleading to students and therefore require the programme documentation to be reviewed to ensure references to the HCPC's standards and requirements for registration are accurate.

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 programme documentation must be revised to ensure the programme expectations for the number of practice placement hours the student must undertake and the HCPC's position regarding placement hours is clarified

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit provided information for the students and practice placement educators about practice placements. The programme course guide states that "The College of Paramedics curriculum guidance recommends students attend a total of 2250 hours in practice over a 3 year programme. This should be split into 750 hours per year in order to be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC. There is an expectation that student paramedics will aim for 100% attendance in both University and practice settings"(page 24). The visitors noted the programme handbook includes a diagram of the programme that maps modules and placements against the years (pages 12-14). The visitors noted from this mapping, the required 750

hours per year could be completed early on in the year if the shift arrangements with the practice placements allowed this. The visitors considered with the 750 hours specifically stated, students may feel they do not need to complete the rest of the placement hours for the year if they have completed the required 750 hours. Through discussion with the programme team it was indicated the programme structure is designed to allow for additional time, enabling students to consolidate skills and practice or make up hours and placement experience as required. All practice placements are expected to be completed within the programme. The visitors were satisfied with this explanation however require the programme documentation to make it clear that the programme expectations are separate and different from the professional body requirements. The visitors also noted the statement above implies the HCPC has a requirement for a specific number of practice hours to be attended in order to be eligible to apply for registration. This is incorrect in that the HCPC has no attendance requirements for students to adhere to. The visitors also require the documentation to be revisited to ensure that there are no confusions regarding HCPC requirements for practice hours attendance. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to ensure the programme expectations for the number of practice placement hours the student must undertake and the HCPC's position regarding placement hours is clarified.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider consider that applicants and students may find it useful to know their employability prospects if they have not gained the particular driving requirements that working in the profession may require.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme admission procedures do not require applicants to hold a driving licence for admission to the programme. The visitors are aware that driving an ambulance can be a key part of the job role for paramedics. Discussions with the programme team indicated they would make this clear for students during the latter stages of the programme. The visitors suggest this information may be better provided at the beginning stages of the programme – including before application to the programme, so that applicants and students are fully aware from the outset of the impact this may have on their future employability prospects.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider ensure they regularly review any changes to the programmes being delivered or the cohort numbers and inform the HCPC of any changes to programme delivery and cohort numbers through our major change process if necessary.

Reason: Discussion at the visit indicated the plans for delivering this programme. The faculty currently delivers an HCPC approved programme - Dip HE Paramedic Science. The education provider is planning to move completely to this new BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science programme and commence the programme in September 2014. The maximum cohort number for this new programme is the same number as it is for the existing programme. The visitors feel that in the continually changing workforce landscape it may be that the education provider decides they need to deliver both programmes at once. The visitors recommend the education provider review any changes to the programmes being delivered or changes to cohort numbers to ensure the staff resources remain appropriate for both programme's needs. The visitors also note that if necessary the education provider may need to inform the HCPC of any changes to programme delivery and cohort numbers through our major change process.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider look to ensure consistency and clarity within the module descriptors.

Reason: In the documentation provided the visitors noted the module descriptors could be confusing for students. The visitors noted that different modules referred to the same textbook but listed different editions. They noted some textbooks had publishing dates which were incorrect and inconsistent in different modules. They noted there were abbreviations throughout the module descriptors with no explanations as to what they

meant. The visitors thought this might be confusing for students referring to the module descriptors and so recommend the programme team look to ensure consistency and clarity within the descriptors.

Vince Clarke
Mark Nevins