

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Brunel University
Programme name	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	18 – 19 March 2014

Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
Visit details	3
Sources of evidence	4
Recommended outcome	5
Conditions.....	6
Recommendations.....	9

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. We are a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. We currently regulate 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'social worker' in England 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 5 June 2014. At the Committee meeting, 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Social work profession (in England) came onto the register on 1 August 2012 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 part of a joint event. The education provider and validating body reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – BA (Hons) Social Work and MA Social Work. The education provider, the professional body 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Christine Stogdon (Social worker) Patricia Higham (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
Proposed student numbers	35 per year inclusive of students from the MA Social Work programme
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2014
Chair	Derek Milligan (Brunel University)
Secretary	Sally McKinley (Brunel University)
Members of the joint panel	Ian Dear (Internal Panel Member) Mihail Danov (Internal Panel Member) Aidan Worsley (External Panel Member) Hilary Burgess (The College of Social Work) Jim Greer (The College of Social Work) Helen Wenman (The College of Social Work)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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"/>

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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining three 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 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

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must revise programme documentation to ensure it accurately reflects the current setting of regulation for social workers in England.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided, the visitors noted several instances of unclear or inaccurate references to the HCPC and the setting of professional regulation for social workers in England. For instance, the student handbook (page 19) states that, “Aegrotat awards are not acceptable as a licence for practice...”. The reference to a ‘licence for practice’ is inconsistent with the current terminology for professional registration of social workers in England and could therefore mislead students. The visitors also noted that the programme specification states; “All successful candidates will be required to complete an Assessed and Supported Year in employment with the relevant employer.” Such statements may be misinterpreted by students to mean that the ASYE is compulsory, or that it is a requirement for HCPC registration. The report from the Brunel Experts by Experience Committee (BEC) submitted with the documentation also stated on page 5; “There is an Annual Grant from HCPC.” This statement is incorrect. The visitors therefore require the education provider to review all references to the HCPC and to the requirements of students following successful completion of the programme, to ensure that the documentation supporting the delivery of the programme is consistently accurate and clear.

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 ensure that the principles behind the policy for allocation of practice placements for students on the programme are clearly articulated and ensure parity of student experience.

Reason: The visitors were provided with the Developing Professional Practice Handbook as evidence that this standard of education and training (SET) will be met. However, in discussion with the students at the visit, the visitors heard that students were not clear as to how the programme team allocate placements to students and ensure that there is equity in this allocation process. The students discussed their perception that those who were allocated a placement in a statutory setting were at a significant advantage in accessing learning opportunities, and that being placed in a statutory setting was largely down to ‘luck’. The students also discussed delayed start dates of some placements, which may result in disadvantage where they cannot complete the placement in time for the Examination Board. The visitors noted from page

28 of the Developing Professional Practice Handbook (First Placement), that students have access to the broad criteria that are used in matching placements to students, and in discussions with the programme team the visitors heard how the practice learning team and placement providers use these criteria in practice with the student profiles. However, from discussion with the students, there was a significant lack of understanding as to the principles underpinning the arrangements for allocation of placements, particularly how fairness is ensured in allocating statutory placements and reasons behind delays to placement start dates. There was also a lack of understanding as to the reasons why students were not able to identify and arrange their own placements. This standard requires the programme to ensure that all parties are prepared for the placement and understand the information around the placements they will be allocated to. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the students are prepared for placement with relevant information of the type of placement experiences they can expect and the ways in which the programme team ensure fairness in the allocation of practice placements.

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- 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 further develop the policy around discontinuation of placements, and ensure that this is clearly communicated to students and placement providers.

Reason: At the visit, the programme team tabled some further documentation, including a 'Policy for non-viable / discontinued placements'. The visitors noted that the policy states that in certain circumstances where a placement is discontinued early due to reasons that are not the fault of the student, evidence and practice placement days can be carried forward. The policy outlined that this is dependent on there being no more than 50 days carried over, to ensure that the second placement is feasible. In discussion with the programme team at the visit, the visitors questioned the reason for the 50 day threshold, and highlighted situations which could arise that would render this figure in the policy potentially problematic or unfair for the student concerned. The programme team indicated at the visit that they would reconsider this policy and its implementation. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that the policy applicable to discontinued or non-viable placements is robust and fair, and communicated clearly to the relevant parties in preparation for placements.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must submit further evidence that there will be at least one external examiner who will be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements. However, the visitors noted in the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to this programme. This standard requires the assessment regulations to clearly articulate the requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be appropriately registered with the HCPC. The visitors therefore require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiners to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard will continue to be met.

Recommendations

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Recommendation: The programme team are advised to monitor the perception of part time placement tutors for students and ensure the allocation process is implemented fairly and communicated clearly.

Reason: The visitors were provided with information about practice tutors, who support students in placements. The visitors were confident that the support given to students on placements, including support through this role, was meeting this standard. However, in the meeting with students, the fact that some practice tutors were part of the programme team, and some were part time or external tutors, was discussed. It was clear to the visitors that the perception across the students present was that practice tutors varied in their accessibility or availability to students, and part time practice tutors would tend not to be as readily available as those on the academic staff. In discussion with the programme team, the visitors heard how the practice tutors are allocated and managed to ensure that they have experience relevant to the specific placement, and are able to provide the necessary support to students. The visitors advise the programme team to further communicate this allocation process to students, to ensure that they understand the considerations process and the reasons why a particular practice tutor is allocated to support them. The programme team are also advised to monitor the student perception of practice tutor availability, particularly for externally contracted practice tutors.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Recommendation: The education provider should ensure that all students are fully aware of the arrangements around access to qualified social workers in non-statutory placements.

Reason: The visitors were provided with the Developing Professional Practice Handbook as evidence against this standard of education and training (SET). The visitors were confident that the approval and monitoring of placements ensures that there are an adequate number of qualified and experienced staff in the placement settings. However, in discussion with the students at the visit, the visitors heard that students were not clear as to how the programme team allocate placements to students and ensure that there is equity in this allocation process. As stated in the condition against SET 5.11, the students discussed their perception that those who were allocated a placement in a statutory setting were at a significant advantage in accessing learning opportunities. The visitors heard one representative of the student group explain how they asked their placement supervisor to seek out and arrange some opportunities to work alongside, or shadow qualified social workers, when on a non-statutory placement. In discussion with the placement providers, the voluntary, private and independent placement provider representatives outlined how they are able to provide students with statutory experience, opportunities to work closely with qualified social workers, and shadowing of qualified social workers where requested. The visitors recommend that the programme team ensure all students are made more aware of the

opportunities and associated arrangements that are available for them to access experience with qualified social workers when in non-statutory placements.

Christine Stogdon
Patricia Higham