

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Coventry University
Programme name	MA Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time Work based learning
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	13 – 14 March 2013

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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 '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 4 July 2013. At the Committee meeting on 4 July 2013, 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 validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programme – BA (Hons) in 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. A separate report exists for the other programme. 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 status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Derek Adrian-Harris (Diagnostic and Therapeutic radiographer) Michael Branicki (Social worker) Deborah Kouzarides (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
HCPC observer	Jamie Hunt
Proposed student numbers	10
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2013
Chair	Chris Bland (Coventry University)
Secretary	Sally Sykes (Coventry University) Jon Briggs (Coventry University observing)
Members of the joint panel	Steve Smith (Internal Panel Member) Malcolm Carey (External Panel Member) Karen Jones (The College of Social Work) Ann Johnson (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"/>

The HCPC met with students from the BA (Hons) in Social Work and graduates from a closed MA Social Work (Step up to Social Work) programme as this programme seeking approval 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 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 5 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 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 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

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must submit further information to demonstrate how service user involvement within the programme is managed effectively.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit included a Service User and Carer Handbook. Discussions at the visit indicated the service user and carer group work with another education provider in the area and undertake various activities for both education providers. The activities the group participates in for this programme include curriculum delivery, curriculum design and assessment of practice portfolios. In the future they are planning to partake in the admissions processes as well. The visitors considered that with such wide ranging involvement directly relating to students (teaching, assessment and admissions); the programme team needs to have specific guidelines for how service user and carer involvement is managed, how the group is used and how the groups work is monitored to be able to ensure transparency and quality and consistency in the work they provide. The visitors also considered that such guidelines in place would protect the rights and needs of this group whilst they undertake activity with the programme. The visitors require the education provider to submit further information to demonstrate how service user involvement within the programme is managed effectively.

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 provide require further evidence to demonstrate how in the programme, students will be taught about, and understand, how to apply social work theory and methods of social work intervention and so will be able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4 upon completion of the programme.

13.4 understand in relation to social work practice:

- social work theory;
- social work models and interventions;
- the development and application of relevant law and social policy;
- the development and application of social work and social work values;
- human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;
- the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;
- the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;
- concepts of participation, advocacy and empowerment; and
- the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour

14.4 be able to use social work methods, theories and models to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not identify how the programme ensures students are able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4 upon completion of the programme. In particular they were unclear as to how the programme developed students understanding of social work theory and methods of social work intervention. Through discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that the students understanding of the theory of social work and methods of social work intervention was introduced through modules in the first year and then consolidated outside of the academic modules through other aspects of the programme, in particular through Action Learning Sets (ALS). The programme team highlighted that these ALS were planned in a way so that the programme team is able to structure them to enable students to consider social work theory and methods of social work intervention. These elements of learning and teaching were not included within the standards of proficiency mapping, module descriptors or programme handbook for the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how in the programme, students will be taught about, and understand, how to apply social work theory and methods of social work intervention. In this way the visitors can be sure the students who successfully complete the programme are able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4.

4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum.

Condition: The education provider must submit further information about the design of the Action Learning Sets (ALS) and demonstrate how a consistent approach is maintained for these groups.

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not identify how the programme integrates and consolidates the development and application of understanding social work theory through the programme. In particular they were unclear as to how the programme allowed students to develop an understanding of how to integrate social work theory and methods of social work intervention to practice. Through discussion with the programme team it was highlighted this was consolidated outside of the academic modules, in particular through Action Learning Sets (ALS), which have been designed to “act as a forum for enabling students to bridge the gap between theory and practice” (MA Social Work Course Handbook, p23). The programme team highlighted these ALS were planned in a structured way which had not been made apparent within the documentation provided. It was described that the ALS would be made up of small groups of students working with a tutor from the programme. The visitors considered if these groups were the main way in which social work theory to practice would be integrated in the students learning, having separate groups could mean there was the potential that this was being delivered in differing ways. The visitors highlighted there should be a consistent approach to the ALS to ensure the integration of theory to practice for students would be comparable. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further information about the design of the ALS and to demonstrate how a consistent approach is maintained for these groups.

4.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Condition: The education provider must submit further information regarding the online and face to face delivery approaches of the programme.

Reason: Documentation and discussion at the visit indicated the programme has integrated online teaching and learning tools within delivery of the programme. Whilst during the visit the visitors were shown that Skype and Big Blue Button were used for tutorials, seminars and also for meetings with practice placement providers when needed, there was insufficient time to discuss this further. The visitors later considered that communication is central to the profession of social work; communication theories and methods underpin meaningful communication practices and therefore when communicating with students, appropriate consideration needs to be given to the levels of online communication and face to face contact. The visitors highlighted that additional support may be needed for students who constantly experience a high proportion of online communication instead of face to face contact for placement meetings, tutorials and seminars. The visitors require further information regarding the delivery of online teaching and learning and the face to face contact. Particularly this is to ensure the programme team does not place sole focus on one mean of communication over the other and so disadvantage students learning.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide require further evidence to demonstrate how in the programme, the assessment strategy and design will ensure students understand, how to apply social work theory and methods of social work intervention and so will be able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4 upon completion of the programme.

13.4 understand in relation to social work practice:

- social work theory;
- social work models and interventions;
- the development and application of relevant law and social policy;
- the development and application of social work and social work values;
- human growth and development across the lifespan and the impact of key developmental stages and transitions;
- the impact of injustice, social inequalities, policies and other issues which affect the demand for social work services;
- the relevance of psychological, environmental, sociological and physiological perspectives to understanding personal and social development and functioning;
- concepts of participation, advocacy and empowerment; and
- the relevance of sociological perspectives to understanding societal and structural influences on human behaviour

14.4 be able to use social work methods, theories and models to achieve change and development and improve life opportunities

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not identify how the programme assessment ensures students are able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4 upon completion of the programme. In particular they were unclear as to how the programme developed and assessed students understanding of social work theory and methods of social work intervention. Through discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that the students understanding of the theory of social work and methods of social work intervention was introduced through modules in the first year and then consolidated outside of the academic modules through other aspects of the programme, in particular through Action Learning Sets (ALS). The programme team highlighted that these ALS were planned in a way so that the programme team is able to structure them to enable students to be able to use them to consider social work theory and methods of social work intervention and for the programme team to assess the students understanding. These elements of learning and teaching were not included within the standards of proficiency mapping, module descriptors or programme handbook for the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme assesses students understanding and how they apply social work theory and methods of social work intervention. In this way the visitors can be sure the assessment strategy and design ensures students who successfully complete the programme are able to meet SOPs 13.4 and 14.4.

Derek Adrian-Harris
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