

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	De Montfort University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	3 – 4 April 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 '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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 23 August 2012. At the Committee meeting on 23 August 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

This visit was the result of the education provider amending their currently approved BSc (Hons) Audiology programme and reforming it into a new training route. Given the similarity between the approved programme and the new programme, it was agreed the approval of this programme would incorporate those who enrolled for the September 2011 cohort. Those students will be eligible to apply for registration upon successful completion of the programme with the caveat that the education provider will have to meet all conditions in this report including any conditions the visitors set specifically for the first cohort of students who commenced the programme in September 2011.

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 and validating body did not validate or review the programmes at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programmes. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Audiology, full time, Foundation Degree in Hearing Aid Audiology, full time and Aptitude Test, flexible. Separate reports exist for these programmes.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Claire Brewis (Occupational therapist) Linda Mutema (Diagnostic radiographer) Tim Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	35 per cohort
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2011
Chair	Debbie Lockton (De Montfort University)
Secretary	Sophia Welton (De Montfort 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 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 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 revisit all of the programme documentation, and any advertising material, to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of HPC regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted that elements of the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of incorrect terminology within the documentation, stating that completion of the programme will enable graduates to register with the HPC. Upon successful completion of the programme all students become eligible to apply for registration with the HPC and as such the language the education provider uses needs to reflect this. The visitors also noted that the programme documentation consistently makes reference to HPC regulating 'Hearing Aid Audiologists'. The protected title regulated by the HPC is 'hearing aid dispenser' which allows registrants to undertake the protected functions associated with the title. The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the protected title is consistently referred to throughout the documentation. The visitors considered that the incorrect use of terminology 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.

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 the programme documentation to clearly highlight what becoming a hearing aid dispenser means, that the HPC is the statutory regulator for the profession and that successful completion of the programme provides to eligibility to apply for registration with the HPC.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted limited reference to the title 'hearing aid dispenser' and the protected functions that are associated with it. The visitors also noted that there was limited reference to the fact that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the HPC. The visitors were concerned that the role of a hearing aid dispenser was not clearly highlighted within the programme documentation and that potential applicants, as well as students, would be unaware of the future employment options available to them. The visitors also noted limited reference to the role of the HPC as the statutory regulator for hearing aid dispensers. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation to include key information about the option of becoming a hearing aid dispenser. This information should ensure that applicants and students have all of the information

they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme and whether to apply to the HPC Register on successful completion of the programme.

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 advertising materials to clearly highlight the potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements including any associated additional costs.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that students on the programme are fee paying. From discussions with students the visitors also noted that students may be expected to self-fund any additional costs associated with taking up a place on the programme, including costs associated with accommodation at placement, travel to and from placement and criminal record checks. From discussions with the programme team the visitors also noted that the geographical spread of placements is expanding with some placements over 100 miles from the education provider.

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 potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements and any additional costs associated with attending placement. This lack of information about likely placement locations and subsequent costs 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 potential distances students may be required to travel when attending placements and any additional personal costs associated with attending placements.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to outline the systems used to ensure that all practice placement educators have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: The visitors noted discussions with the programme team which outlined the procedure in place for approving practice placement educators who work in the NHS. The programme team stated that practice placement educators must be band six or above, have a minimum of two years' experience and have attended practice placement educator training. The visitors were satisfied with these criteria, however they were not provided with documentary evidence to support these discussions. The visitors also noted that the education provider utilises practice placement educators who work outside of the NHS. The visitors were less clear about the procedures in place for approving practice placement educators who work in the independent sector. The visitors therefore require the

education provider to provide further evidence to include clear formal protocols and an outline of the systems in place to ensure that practice placement educators from within the NHS and independent sector have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience required to supervise a student from this programme.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly state that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors could not determine where in the assessment regulations there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. The visitors could therefore not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not enable them to be eligible to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that there is a clear statement included in the programme documentation.

Recommendations

3.4 There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of the Register.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider developing additional mechanisms to ensure that the person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme is able to access additional information and resources specific to hearing aid dispensing.

Reason: The visitors noted that the person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme is not on the HPC Register. However, the visitors were satisfied that they are appropriately qualified and experienced and that this standard is met. The visitors also noted that the programme maintained links to the profession specific issues associated with hearing aid dispensing through a number of mechanisms, which included inviting hearing aid dispensers to deliver teaching sessions and facilitating independent sector practice placements. Through discussions it was also apparent that the person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme has close links with the British Academy of Audiology (BAA) and plans to develop links with the British Society of Hearing Aid Audiologists (BSHAA). The visitors recommend that the education provider continues to explore ways to support the person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme in maintaining up to date profession specific knowledge specific to hearing aid dispensing.

4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to further highlight the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and the students the visitors noted that the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics are taught and assessed within the programme. The visitors were therefore satisfied that the curriculum makes sure that students understand the implications of these standards. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted that references to the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics were limited. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to further highlight the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider ways of supporting the programme team in the development of opportunities for independent sector practice placements.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors are satisfied that the number, duration and range of practice placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. The visitors also noted in the discussions with the programme team and students' examples were given of students gaining experience in the independent sector. The visitors recommend that the education provider finds ways to support and encourage the programme team to continue facilitating independent sector placements for students. In this way the programme team may be able to consider enhancing this practice to ensure that all students can gain access to a wider range of placement learning experiences.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider developing a system for checking the HPC registration details of practice placement educators.

Reason: Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted plans to expand the range of practice placements to include non-NHS placements. The visitors recommend that the education provider should consider developing a system for checking the HPC registration details of practice placement educators in non-NHS practice placements.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to clearly state that any exit awards from the programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team, and a review of the programme documentation, the visitors were satisfied that any exit awards from the programme do not contain any reference to the HPC protected title or part of the Register. To provide further clarity the visitors recommend that the education provider should clearly state that any exit awards from the programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register.

Claire Brewis
Linda Mutema
Tim Pringle