hcpc health & care professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Havering College of Further & Higher Education
Validating body / Awarding body	The Open University
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	12 – 13 November 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. 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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 13 February. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. 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 came onto the register in 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 professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. 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 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 professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Richard Barker (Social worker)
	Patricia Higham (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Louise Devlin
Proposed student numbers	70
First approved intake	July 2004
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	March 2014
Chair	John Morris (Havering College of Further & Higher Education)
Secretary	Maureen Curtis (Havering College of Further & Higher Education)
Members of the joint panel	Michael Branicki (The College of Social Work (TCSW)
	Vicki Lawson-Brown (The College of Social Work (TCSW)

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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing 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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed. The visitors agreed that 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eight SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing 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 ongoing 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 the admissions information provided to ensure that applicants to the programme are informed of the expectations of the admissions process, and in particular the interview.

Reason: The visitors were provided with information at the visit regarding the admissions process, which requires applicants to be subject to an interview before being offered a place on the programme. The information provided indicated that applicants would have their level of written and spoken English assessed throughout this interview. However, from a review of the programme documentation, the visitors could not see where this was communicated to potential applicants to the programme. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the programme team ensure that applicants to the programme are fully informed of the requirements of the admissions process and in particular, the requirement to undertake an interview at which their proficiency in English will be tested. In this way the visitors can determine how applicants are fully informed about the admissions process before deciding to apply and take up a place on 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 revisit the admissions information provided to ensure that applicants to the programme are fully informed about the practice placement elements of the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were informed that the expectations of placement are communicated to applicants at the selection day for the programme. However, in the admissions documentation provided, the visitors could not see evidence of what information prospective students receive regarding practice placements, for example the length of placement, duration and examples of experience they could expect to get on placement. The visitors articulated that potential applicants may require this information in order to make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to identify that this standard can be met.

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 admissions information to clarify the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were satisfied that there is an accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy in place for the programme, whereby a maximum of 50 per cent of academic credit can be transferred, and there is a thorough matching process between an applicants' prior learning and the

learning outcomes of the programme. However, whilst the course information leaflet mentions AP(E)L, the visitors could not see how applicants to the programme would be informed about the process, told what amount of credit could be considered through AP(E)L, and whether practice learning could be transferred or not. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the education provider informs students of the AP(E)L policy and process for the programme. This will ensure that applicants are given the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on this programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the programme management structure, highlighting the lines of responsibility of everyone involved in the day to day management of the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the students, the visitors noted that there was some confusion regarding the roles of members of the teaching team, for example the students were unsure if there was a module leader for each module, and who they should go to if they had any questions about a module. In discussion with the programme team, it was clarified that there was not one module leader for each programme, but the modules are planned together and more than one member of the team will lead on managing the particular module. From their reading of the documentation the visitors were also not clear on what role the curriculum managers have in relation to providing support and guidance to students, and what the students should approach them for. The visitors therefore require further information regarding the lines of responsibility of the teaching team, and how this is conveyed to students to ensure that they can refer to this information, and have a clear understanding regarding which members of the team should be approached for which areas of the programme. In this way the visitors can determine how the management of the programme works in practice and how students are supported through the programme by the various members of the programme staff.

3.13 There must be a student complaints process in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide further information regarding the student complaints process, and how students are clearly informed about the process.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted in the programme handbook that students were asked to "refer to the college's complaints procedure, which is available at the Campus reception desk" (page 66) if they wished to raise a complaint about any aspect of the programme. When asked, the students indicated that they were not aware of how they could raise a complaint, and were unsure which reception desk the policy would be held at. Additionally, some students indicated that they would not feel comfortable making a formal complaint regarding the programme, as they felt there may be repercussions in regards to their individual progression. In discussion with the programme team, staff members indicated that there may be an understanding amongst students that they should not raise complaints, but that the programme team would not encourage this, and it is unclear where this perception amongst students originated from. From these discussions and the information provided the visitors were unsure how the students were informed about the complaints process, and how the policy and process is made easily accessible to students in order for them to raise any concerns or make a complaint. The visitors were

also unclear as to how the potential outcomes of the complaints process are communicated to students so that they are aware that this would not have an effect on their progress through the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the student complaints process, how it is made easily accessible to students, and how students are informed that they can make a complaint regarding the programme.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that there are appropriate protocols in place to obtain students' consent when they are acting as service users in role play situations.

Reason: The visitors noted through discussions with the students that verbal consent had often been sought for participation as a service user in practical role play activities, and that they were often able to choose which role they would like to take on. However, the visitors could not see evidence of any formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as a service user in practical teaching. The visitors therefore could not identify how the programme team worked consistently across the programme to identify any potential issues that may arise and how they mitigate any risk of emotional distress involved with students participating as service users. In particular the visitors could not identify how students were informed about the implications of participating in role play, or how situations where students declined from participation were managed with alternative learning arrangements so there would be no impact on their learning. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide evidence of formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students, and how these protocols are put into practice as part of the programme.

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 provide further evidence of how the teaching approach of splitting the cohort into separate teaching groups for the duration of module delivery, is appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were made aware that each cohort is divided into smaller teaching groups for the purposes of teaching, and that a module can be delivered by a different lecturer for each teaching group. However, in discussion with the students the visitors noted that students highlighted inconsistencies in the advice provided by the different teaching groups within the same cohort. In particular the students highlighted areas of the programme where they felt that the teaching methods employed suggested one way of demonstrating how they could meet the learning outcomes of a module, but may be assessed differently. From a review of the documentation, the visitors could not see evidence of how the programme team ensure consistency across the teaching groups, particularly how they maintain consistency in delivery across the cohorts, and how they ensured the curriculum was being delivered and assessed in the same way to each group of students. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that the approach of splitting cohorts is appropriately employed by the programme team to ensure effective delivery of the curriculum, to each group of students. In particular the visitors require this evidence to demonstrate how this approach ensures that all students across the programme are

consistently able to meet the required learning outcomes and therefore the HCPC standards of proficiency (SOPs).

6.6 There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of how standards in assessment are ensured through splitting the cohort into separate teaching groups.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were made aware that each cohort is divided into smaller teaching groups for the purposes of teaching and assessment. They were also aware that different members of staff were responsible for the teaching and assessment of these groups within the same cohort. However, in discussion with the students, a feeling that there were some inconsistencies in the marking between members of the teaching team was highlighted. From the documentation provided the visitors were unable to determine how the programme team ensured consistency in marking across the separate teaching groups of the programme. In particular they were unable to determine what monitoring and evaluation systems were in place to ensure consistency in marking across the different groups within the same cohort. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the monitoring and evaluation systems the programme has in place to ensure appropriate standards in assessment across different teaching groups within the same cohort.

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

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not lead to registration with the HCPC.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided, the visitors noted that the requirement for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register was included as part of the information for the visitors. However, the visitors could not see where this statement was included within the programme documentation, and as such were unsure how and where students were informed that an aegrotat award would not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register to use the title social worker, in England. The visitors therefore require further evidence of where it is stated within the programme documentation that an aegrotat award does not to provide eligibility for admission to the HCPC Register.

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 education provider must provide evidence of where it is clearly articulated within the programme documentation that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme must be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register, unless alternative arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: From a review of the documentation the visitors could not see where the requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of the Register was stated within the programme documentation. As such the visitors could

not determine how the programme team ensure that this is the case. The visitors therefore require further evidence of where this is stated to ensure that this is standard is met.

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 programme team should keep the level of input from regulated professionals into the programme under review and determine if the programme leader needs to be HCPC registered in light of this.

Reason: The visitors noted that while the programme lead is not currently HCPC registered, other members of the programme team are on the Register. Therefore the visitors are content that this standard is met. However the visitors recommend that the team should keep this under review and, if necessary, the programme lead should become HCPC registered, if possible. In this way the programme team may be better placed to maintain the input into the curriculum from registered Social work professionals and ensure that any changes to the landscape of statutory regulation can be quickly and clearly communicated to students.

3.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep the level of research input in teaching in the 'Research in Action' module under review, to ensure that that there continues to be an appropriate balance of research input for students completing this module.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors were satisfied that all modules are taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge, and therefore that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that the 'Research in Action' module in the third year of the programme is a new module. As this is a new module the visitors recommend that the education provider continues to review the amount of specialist research expertise being brought to bear on the teaching of this module. In this way the programme team may be able to identify how best to maintain the level of specialist research input, and balance this with the taught elements of the module going forward.

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 that the programme team continue to monitor and develop the learning resources available to students on the programme, to ensure that they continue to effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Reason: From the tour of resources at the visit, the visitors were made aware of the variety and volume of resources available to support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme. They were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, in discussion at the visit a number of students highlighted that they had had difficultly accessing some texts in the library on a number of occasions. In discussion with the programme team, the visitors noted that the education provider is currently in

discussion with the validating body regarding allowing students of this programme to have access to the validating bodies' online reading material. The visitors would therefore like to recommend that the education provider continue to develop this potential access for students and explore other avenues, to increase students' ability to access the learning resources that will help them successfully complete this 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.**

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the lines of communication with students in regards to placement arrangement, to ensure that any students starting placements late are kept informed of developments in placing them.

Reason: The visitors noted in the discussion with the students that the majority of students went on placement on time, and are given appropriate information prior to starting placement. Therefore the visitors are content that the programme has demonstrated that it can meet this standard. However, for the few students who started placement late, the visitors were made aware of instances when students were occasionally not aware of what alternative arrangements were being put in place to provide them with a placement, and as such they were unaware of the type of placement they would be placed in. The visitors would therefore like to recommend that the programme team consider how best to communicate with students who are late starting placement. In this way the programme may be better placed to ensure that all students are equally well prepared for placement, and have all the information they need about the type of placement they can expect to be placed in.

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 HCPC 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 for the programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

Reason: The visitors identified from the documentation before the visit that none of the exit awards from the programme include any reference to a protected title or part of the HCPC register in their named award. Therefore the visitors were happy that this standard was met. The visitors also noted that the education provider included this requirement within the documentation provided prior to the visit, however it was only included as information for the visitors, rather than within the programme documentation. Therefore the visitors could not see that it is made clear to students that the exit awards from this programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC

Register. The visitors recommend that the education provider makes this explicit in the programme documentation to avoid any possible confusion for the students. In this way they may be able to enhance students' ability to make an informed decision if deciding to take an exit award from the programme.

Richard Barker
Patricia Higham