Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS)
Programme name	Certificate of Competence (Degree followed by Registration Training Portfolio)
Mode of delivery	Flexible
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	24 – 25 November 2009

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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 14 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Biomedical scientist'or 'Medical laboratory technician' 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 ongoing approval of the programme. The education provider has until 12 February 2010 to provide observations on this report. This is independent of meeting any conditions. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 10 March 2010. At this meeting, the Committee will accept the visitors' recommended outcome, including the conditions. If necessary, the Committee may decide to vary the conditions.

The education provider is due to redraft and resubmit documentary evidence in response to the conditions outlined in this report by 12 February 2010. The visitors will consider this response and make a separate recommendation to the Committee on the ongoing approval of the programme. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made to the Committee on 10 March 2010.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was an approved programme which had been brought over on the formation of the HPC and had not been subject to a visit. 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 did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	David Houliston (Biomedical Scientist) Pradeep Agrawal (Biomedical Scientist) Gordon Burrow (Podiatrist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Mandy Hargood
HPC observer	Osama Ammar
Proposed student numbers	250
Initial approval	9 July 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2010
Chair	Eddie Welch (EQA Assessment Manager, Clinical Pathology Accreditation (UK) Ltd (CPA))
Secretary	Christian Burt (Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS))

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	☐	☐	☒
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	☐	☐	☒
Criteria for accreditation and re-accreditation of BSc (Hons) degrees in Biomedical Science	☒	☐	☐
Specification for pre-registration education and training of biomedical scientists	☒	☐	☐
Clinical laboratory standards for pre and post registration training of biomedical scientists	☒	☐	☐
Registration Training Portfolio	☒	☐	☐
Laboratory guidance for external verifiers visit	☒	☐	☐
Standard letters and forms	☒	☐	☐

The HPC did not review the following documents prior to the visit as

- module descriptors do not exist in relation to the Certificate of Competence.
- a programme specification has not been created for this award type.
- there is currently no external examiner for this programme.
- the standards of proficiency were appropriately mapped via the Registration Training Portfolio.

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

The HPC did not see any specialist teaching accommodation or learning resources as training is delivered in the NHS Trust laboratories where students are employed or within the academic component taught at the accredited universities.

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 61 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 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 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 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.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must submit formalised standard operating procedures to ensure that the programme is managed effectively.

Reason: The visitors did not receive any formalised standard operating procedures in the documentation prior to the visit. However, during the meetings with the senior team and the programme team, verbal descriptions were given as to how the programme was managed in terms of the routes to achieve the award.

The description provided included the following area that had not been stated in the documentation provided to the visitors prior to the visit.

- Delegation of relevant authority from the IBMS Education and Development Committee to the relevant individuals and articulation of a process for decision making in terms of assessment of the Registration Training Portfolio.
- Procedures for ensuring that individuals have completed all necessary components and pre-requisites of the route to the final award, including criminal records checks and occupational health checks.

In order for the visitors to be assured that the programme is managed effectively they require documentation that formalises the standard operating procedures.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must submit formalised standard operating procedures to ensure consistency of assessment of the Registration Training Portfolio and associated laboratory self-assessment forms.

Reason: The visitors did not receive any formalised standard operating processes in the documentation prior to the visit. However, during the meetings with the senior team and the programme team, verbal descriptions were given as to how the programme was managed in terms of the routes to the award and quality assurance of verifiers' reports and laboratory self-assessment forms by the IBMS.

The descriptions provided included the following areas that had not been stated in the documentation provided to the visitors prior to the visit.

- Procedures for reviewing and updating verifiers' reports for the attainment of the Certificate of Competence.
- Procedures for the receipt and assessment of the verifiers report following the assessment of a Registration Training Portfolio.
- Procedures for the receipt and assessment of laboratory self-assessment forms.

In order to be assured that this standard is met the visitors require documentation that formalises all the standard operating procedures that ensure consistency of

assessment of the Registration Training Portfolio and associated laboratory self-assessment forms.

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Condition: The education provider must submit formalised standard operating procedures to describe the processes for annual monitoring and the management of changes to IBMS accredited programmes.

Reason: During the visit the education provider provided sample copies of annual monitoring reports received from programmes accredited by the IBMS but it was not documented how these submissions were reviewed or how changes to programmes were managed. In the meeting with the programme team the visitors asked if there was any formal assessment of the content contained within the report. The programme team responded that the reports were reviewed to ensure that the programmes were not moving away from the IBMS accreditation process and that the programmes were following the action plans set out within the reports.

The programme team also reported that changes to the programmes were received and were reviewed in a similar way to the annual monitoring reports. These forms were reviewed in terms of how the change would impact on the programme's ability to meet the accreditation process of the IBMS. Any significant changes were reported to the Education and Development Committee at the IBMS.

In order to be assured that the education provider has regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place, the visitors require formalised procedures for assessing and reviewing annual monitoring reports and any changes to IBMS accredited programmes.

3.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that there are appropriate and regular training updates for the Registration Training Portfolio verifiers.

Reason: From the documentation the visitors could not determine whether the verifiers of the Registration Training Portfolio received appropriate and regular training.

During meetings with the programme team and the practice placement providers the visitors were informed that the Registration Training Portfolio verifiers received one day's training to be verifiers. Any updates made to the guidance or the verification process itself was passed on to the verifiers by letter or email. There was no further training after the initial day. There were update meetings at the IBMS Congress, held bi-annually and although these were reported to be well attended there was no formal requirement for attendance at this meeting.

The verifiers who also attended the practice placement educators/training managers meeting discussed with the visitors that the visits they carried out to the laboratories was considered to be part of their continued training as verifiers.

The visitors considered that in order for this standard to be met the education provider must provide documentation that demonstrates that there are appropriate and regular training updates for Registration Training Portfolio verifiers.

3.13 There must be a student complaints process in place.

Condition: The education provider must advertise the complaints process more widely within the rebuild of the education provider's new website, which is currently happening.

Reason: Prior to the visit the visitors received the new complaints process put into place by the education provider. During the meeting with the programme team it was noted that this had been included in letters to students. However it was not widely advertised on the website and students might have difficulty obtaining access to the process, if they are not in current correspondence with the IBMS.

From discussions with the students it was apparent that, owing to the IBMS website upgrade, various documents including the complaints document were not readily available for viewing.

Therefore the visitors require further documentation that details the availability of the complaints process on the IBMS website following completion of the upgrade.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must resubmit the document "Laboratory guidance for an external verifier" provided to verifiers of the Registration Training Portfolio to clearly articulate that the information given to verifiers and laboratories is consistent.

Reason: In the documentation received prior to the visit the visitors noted that one set of guidelines regarding approval for the laboratories made reference to the CPA guidelines for laboratory approval. However the "Laboratory guidance for an external verifier" does not and this evidence was therefore conflicting.

The verifiers who attended the practice placement educators meeting understood they were expected to determine whether the laboratory they attended for a Registration Training Portfolio examination had CPA accreditation even though the documentation they received did not state this.

As the verifiers are approving and monitoring the laboratories through the Registration Training Portfolio assessment process on behalf of the IBMS, the visitors considered that the guidelines they followed should be complementary to all documentation related to laboratory approval.

Therefore the visitors would like to receive revised documentation that provides consistent information to verifiers and laboratories to ensure that the monitoring and approval of laboratories is thorough and effective.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism to ensure that the appropriate standards are in place in the assessment of the Registration Training Portfolio.

Reason: The documentation provided prior to the visit did not indicate that there was any external evaluation of the Registration Training Portfolio outside of the appointed verifier. It was clear from discussion that the only monitoring of the Registration Training Portfolio was made by internal employees of the IBMS when a report was received at the IBMS offices.

In order for this standard to be met the visitors would like to receive revised documentation to demonstrate that there would be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure that the Registration Training Portfolio assessment process is monitored and evaluated by an external party.

David Houliston
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Gordon Burrow