Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Keele University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	12 – 13 May 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 13 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' 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 29 July 2009. At the Committee meeting on 29 July 2009 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC approval for the first time. 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 with the professional body considering the accreditation of the programme. The education provider, the professional body and the HPC 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 HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the professional body outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Robert Munro (Biomedical Scientist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Brendon Edmonds
Proposed student numbers	60 (Year 2)
	4 – 6 (Year 2)
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2009
Chair	Stuart Egan (Keele University)
Secretary	Debbie Goodall (Keele University)
Members of the joint panel	Alan Wainwright (The Institute of Biomedical Science)
	Nicky Fleming (The Institute of Biomedical Science)
	Jim Cunningham (The Institute of Biomedical Science)

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	☒	☐	☐
Supplementary Information (Employer Meeting Minutes, Memorandum of Understanding)	☒	☐	☐

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)	☒	☐	☐

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 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 12 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.

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

Conditions

2.1 The admission procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation (including publications and websites) to more clearly articulate the selection process for prospective students considering the Applied Biomedical Science (ABMS) pathway.

Reason: The programme documentation advises prospective students that the availability of the ABMS pathway is limited to placement availability and student selection to this pathway is conducted using a selection procedure during the first year of study. The ABMS Clinical Placement document provides further detail regarding the selection process and how placement availability is determined for the following year.

The visitor considered that this detailed information regarding student selection to the ABMS pathway was not provided to prospective students and therefore the visitor was not satisfied that an applicant could make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme. The visitor therefore requires all the programme documentation available to prospective students to more clearly articulate the selection procedures for entry onto the ABMS pathway.

2.2.1 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of written and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate how the admissions procedures apply selection criteria to evidence a good command of written and spoken English for students applying to the programme.

Reason: The programme documentation details the entry requirements for students entering Keele where applicants are required to have a minimum GSCE grade C in English Language or the equivalent. However, the programme documentation did not specify how applicants, who applied on the basis of holding equivalent qualifications, would be assessed to ensure that they had a good command of written and spoken English.

The visitor requires all the programme documentation available to prospective students to clearly articulate the admission procedures in place for assessing whether or not a student has a good command of written and spoken English.

2.2.2 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The education provider must implement formal procedures for conducting criminal convictions checks prior to students entering the ABMS pathway.

Reason: Through reviewing the programme documentation and from the various meetings held at the approvals visit, it was clear that the programme had no formal procedure for conducting criminal conviction checks prior to entry onto the ABMS pathway. Instead students were advised that this may be a requirement of certain placement providers and that the HPC set a criminal conviction check as a requirement for entry to the register.

The visitor requires the education provider to implement formal procedures for conducting criminal convictions checks that are carried out prior to a student entering the ABMS pathway. These procedures must include provisions to account for students that may have a criminal record and clear processes as to how this would be managed. Furthermore, the visitor also require that the programme documentation be updated to reflect the requirements for criminal convictions checks prior to entry onto the ABMS pathway. This is to ensure that prospective students are aware of this requirement prior to accepting a place on the programme.

2.2.3 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate any health requirements that students will be required to comply with in order to complete the programme.

Reason: Through reviewing the documentation and from various meetings held at the approval visit, the visitor was clear that the programme had specific health requirements, including the requirement for vaccinations, which students needed to comply with.

However, the visitor was concerned that documentation made available to prospective students did not articulate the requirements for vaccinations and any other health requirements that are specific to the programme. The visitor therefore requires the education provider to revisit all the programme documentation (including publications and website) to ensure that the health requirements are clearly articulated.

2.2.5 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the accreditation of prior learning policies are clearly articulated within the admission procedures.

Reason: Through meeting with the programme team, the visitor noted that the programme did apply selection and entry criteria that specifically addressed the accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

However, the visitor was not satisfied that the programme documentation articulated the policies and procedures that govern the accreditation of prior learning. Therefore, the visitor requires the education provider to revisit all the programme documentation to ensure that the accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms are clearly communicated to students.

3.2   The programme must be managed effectively.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the systems used to ensure that placement components of the programme are managed effectively.

Reason: Following discussion with the programme team and practice placement educators, it was apparent to the visitor that the education provider was not taking ultimate responsibility for placements. In particular the visitor was concerned that the education provider had relied on IBMS accreditation of placements and that there was also a reliance on the West Midlands Network to ensure that the approval and monitoring of placements was being carried out.

The lack of formal auditing and monitoring (reflected in the conditions later in the report) meant that the visitor was not assured that placements were managed effectively. Systems, such as placement evaluations, audits, and partnership meetings, were either not in place or were not developed and managed by the education provider to monitor and enhance placement learning.

The visitor requires further evidence that the education provider does maintain overall responsibility for placement provision. Furthermore, the visitor also requires further evidence to be satisfied that appropriate procedures are in place to ensure that the approval, monitoring, training and assessment of placements and the placement experience are managed effectively.

4.5 **The delivery of the programme must assist autonomous and reflective thinking, and evidence-based practice.**

Condition: The education provider must revisit the module 'Applied Biomedical Science Placement' to ensure that this module must be passed in order for student to be eligible to receive the ABMS award.

Reason: The visitor noted in the programme documentation and through meetings with the programme team that it was proposed that students could potentially fail the module 'Applied Biomedical Science Placement' and still receive the ABMS award. The visitor noted that students were only required to pass the placement portfolio assessment set for this module in order to be eligible to receive the ABMS award.

The visitor was concerned that, in potentially failing the module, the student would not pass the reflective and research assessments, which link directly to the placement experience and to the placement module itself. The visitor felt that successful reflection on the placement experience and the completion of the research report was an important element in assisting autonomous, reflective thinking and evidence-based practice. Therefore the visitor requires the education provider to revisit the 'Applied Biomedical Science Placement' module and amend it to ensure that students pass this module in order to be eligible for the ABMS award.

5.1 **Practice placements must be integral to the programme.**

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme design and documentation to articulate clearly that placements are integral to the programme.

Reason: The visitor noted in the programme documentation and through meetings with the programme team and practice placement educators that the integration of placement experience into the programme was not evident.

In particular, the visitor was concerned about the emphasis throughout the programme documentation that a student's opportunity to meet the relevant standards of proficiency was solely provided through the placement experience. Further to this, the visitor was also concerned that this placement experience was not sufficiently approved, monitored and managed by the education provider. The lack of formal auditing and monitoring (reflected in the conditions later in the report) meant that the visitor was not assured that placements were managed effectively. Systems, such as placement evaluations, audits, and partnership meetings, were either not in place or were not developed and managed by the education provider to monitor and enhance placement learning.

In reviewing the modules for the programme, the visitor could clearly identify many instances outside of the placement experience where students are required to demonstrate how they meet certain standards of proficiency. However, the over emphasis on the placement experience to meet the standards has not provided sufficient evidence to the visitor as to how the practice placement learning outcomes and progression are in line with the rest of the

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programme. Furthermore, the documented placement structure does not demonstrate that the placement experience is integral to the programme, but rather that it is an additional element that is solely relied upon for students to demonstrate how they meet the standards of proficiency and that it is not sufficiently managed by the education provider.

The visitor requires further evidence from the education provider to be satisified that practice placements are indeed an integral part of the programme.

5.3.1 The practice placement settings must provide a safe environment.

Condition: The education provider must evidence the formal arrangements for ensuring that placement settings provide a safe environment, both initially and on an ongoing basis.

Reason: The visitor noted that the programme documentation did not clearly articulate the formal arrangements in place that ensure a safe environment within the practice setting. However, the visitor also noted that the Academic Placement Co-ordinator did conduct regular visits of placements to ensure that, amongst other things, a quality placement experience was being provided.

However, the visitor was unclear as to the formal procedures that were in place to ensure that placement settings were safe. Systems such as a formal audit tool, developed and implemented by the education provider, were not provided along with further documentation as to how these tools are used and fed back into the programme on an on-going basis. Therefore the visitor requires further documentation to evidence the formal arrangements in place that ensure that practice placement settings provide a safe environment, both initially at approval and also on an ongoing basis.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that a thorough and effective system is in place for the approving and monitoring of all placements.

Reason: The visitor noted through meeting with the programme team and the practice placement providers that an informal system of monitoring and approving placements was in place. Furthermore, it was also noted that this system was historically based on the IBMS accreditation of placements. However the visitor was not provided with any documentation that specifically addresses how these systems are operated, the relevant audit tools that may be used and how the system feeds back into the continual development of placements on the programme.

The visitor therefore requires further documentation to evidence that a formal system for approving and monitoring placements is in place across all placements and that this system is initiated and managed by the education provider.

6.5   There must be effective mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the placement assessment portfolios to demonstrate that the education provider has effective mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Reason: The visitor noted in meeting with programme team and through the programme documentation that the education provider relied on locally trained assessors to provide a final assessment of student practice placement portfolios. The visitor also noted that the education provider did not have any mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards of this assessment and that this responsibility was currently deferred to the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS).

The visitor was concerned that, in deferring this responsibility to the IBMS, the education provider did not have effective mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards for the assessment of the placement portfolio. Therefore the visitor requires further evidence that the education provider has developed effective mechanisms to be responsible for the assurance of appropriate standards of the placement portfolio assessment.

6.7.5   Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner from the relevant part of the HPC Register unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The education provider must provide a CV of the current external examiner for the ABMS programme.

Reason: The visitor noted that the education provider had recently appointed a new external examiner to the ABMS programme, who was not from the relevant part of the HPC register.

The visitor requires the CV of the current external examiner to be assured that the appointment is appropriate to the programme and to meeting this SET.

Recommendations

3.4 **There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.**

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the current provision of full time (and/or full time equivalent) staff on the programme to continue to ensure the delivery of an effective programme.

Reason: The visitor noted through the programme documentation and through meetings with the programme team that there was a reliance on temporary staff, employed from local trusts within the West Midlands network, to delivery certain aspects of the programme.

Whilst the visitor is satisfied that there is an adequate number of staff in place to deliver an effective programme, the education provider should consider reviewing these current provisions with a view to appointing more full time or full time equivalent staff from the appropriate part of the register.

5.7.4 **Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.**

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to more clearly articulate the portfolio assessment options available to students on placement.

Reason: The programme documentation articulated that students who failed the placement portfolio were referred back to the Biomedical Science award programme. The visitor also noted through the meeting with the programme team, that students could potentially reschedule additional placement time in order to complete the portfolio assessment. However this option was not clearly communicated through the documentation.

The visitor recommends that the programme documentation be reviewed to more clearly articulate all the options available to students regarding the portfolio assessment, including the provision to reschedule additional placement time in order to successfully complete it.

Robert Munro