

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	North West Midlands Regional Partnership / Staffordshire University
Validating body / Awarding body	Staffordshire University
Programme name	Post Graduate Diploma in Step Up to Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	17 – 18 December 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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 13 February. At the Committee meeting, 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 it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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. The awarding body validated the programme. The awarding 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 awarding body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Patricia Higham (Social worker) Shaaron Pratt (Diagnostic radiographer)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	32 per cohort once a year
Proposed start date of programme approval	24 February 2014
Chair	Noel Morrison (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Andrea Jones (Staffordshire University)
Members of the joint panel	Jacob Daly (External Panel Member) Stella Mills (Internal Panel Member) Nigel Thomas (Internal Panel Member)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit. This programme is a new programme and therefore there are no past external examiners' reports.

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 graduates from the previous MSc level step-up to social work programme (cohort two).

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 three 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 recommendation 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 submit further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure potential applicants to the programme are able to make informed decisions about the programme.

Reason: Documentation and discussion indicated the application process for this programme is managed at the outset through the Department for Education (DfE). Shortlisted applicants are then sent through the education provider where a further round of the application process is managed. The visitors noted there was no specific programme information available online. This standard requires the education provider to ensure potential applicants have information they require to make an informed decision about whether to apply for this programme. This includes details of the intense nature of the programme, the admission requirements (such as required qualifications, criminal conviction checks, health requirements), the bursary arrangements and details of how the programme is managed and delivered. The programme team identified they were aware of the need to develop online advertising materials. They also highlighted this would be made available before future cohorts were recruited. The visitors require the education provider to submit further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure potential applicants to the programme are able to make informed decisions about the programme. They require an indication of the content of the advertising materials and the timescales for making this available online.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme documentation to ensure it is accurate and reflects the status of current regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted the documentation provided for the visit contained some inaccuracies when referring to the programme, the HCPC and HCPC requirements. Firstly the visitors noted there were references to the HCPC, as a regulatory body, stipulating the number of days / hours required for students to complete the programme (programme handbook, page 17; Practice learning, first placement module handbook, page 11; Practice learning, second placement module handbook, page 11; module descriptors – practice learning – first and second placements, Indicative content). The HCPC does not specify required days / hours for academic or practice learning and therefore needs correcting within the documents. Secondly, the visitors noted references to the HCPC as a professional body (Programme handbook, page 16; Practice learning, second placement module handbook, page 20). The HCPC is not a professional body, it is a regulatory and therefore this needs correcting. Thirdly the visitors noted a reference to the “BA Honours social work award” (Practice learning, second placement module handbook, page 20). The handbook is not for the undergraduate programme and so should be revised to accurately reflect this programme. The visitors considered these inaccuracies will need to be corrected for the students to have accurate information. The visitors therefore require the programme

team to review the programme documentation taking into account the above detail to ensure it is accurate and reflects the status of current regulation.

5.12 Learning, teaching and supervision must encourage safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the practice placement documentation clearly articulates the role the practice educator / supervisor has in ensuring practice learning, teaching and supervision encourages safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.

Reason: The visitors noted the practice placement documentation concentrated on the role the practice educator has in assessing the student on the achievement of their learning outcomes. The documentation does discuss supervision however the visitors were unable to determine the arrangements for supervision, particularly details of how recordings should be undertaken. The practice educator (who may also be the supervisor) role is crucial in providing a safe and supportive environment for the student to develop safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct. The visitors considered the emphasis on this aspect of the role of the practice educator / supervisor was missing from the documentation. The visitors consider it important for the documentation to refer to this so students are aware of the responsibilities of the practice educator / supervisor that underpins their placement learning experience. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revise the practice placement documentation to clearly articulate the role the practice educator / supervisor has in ensuring practice learning, teaching and supervision encourages safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.

Recommendations

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the programme handbook be revised to include detailed information regarding programme policies and procedures.

Reason: The visitors received evidence that there are various processes in place for raising any concerns, complaints or other issues. The visitors noted there was a link to these processes within the programme handbook and so were satisfied these standards were met. The visitors noted the programme handbook does not provide further explanations as to the separate processes and in what circumstances they can be used. The visitors feel this information would further support students on this programme and recommend the information about these processes be expanded to include the circumstances in which they can be used and which individual is the correct person to raise any issue with. This includes the:

- Students complaints process;
- process for raising academic or practice concerns informally;
- process for raising academic or practice concerns formally;
- formal process in place for considering students fitness to practise;
- process for academic misconduct; and
- process for the right of appeals for students.

Patricia Higham
Shaaron Pratt