

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Programme name	Post Graduate Certificate Approved Mental Health Professional
Mode of delivery	Part time
Type of programme	Approved mental health professional
Date of visit	4 – 5 March 2015

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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 a protected title 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.

As well as approving educational programmes for people who want to join the Register or have an annotation on their Registration record, the HCPC also approve a small number of programmes which are not linked to HCPC Registration. These programmes are for the profession of approved mental health practitioners (AMHPs) (for social workers, mental health and learning disabilities nurses, occupational therapists and practitioner psychologists).

The HCPC criteria for approving AMHP programmes set out the systems and processes an education provider is expected to have in place to deliver an AMHP programme, as well as the competencies professionals must achieve on completing the programme.

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 4 June 2015. 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 criteria for approving AMHP programmes and professionals who complete it will be able to achieve the criteria for approved mental health professionals. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

When the regulation of social workers in England transferred from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to ourselves, we took responsibility for approving AMHP programmes in England. The Health and Social Care Act (2012) gives us powers to set criteria for approving AMHP programmes. A decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing AMHP programmes. This visit is to assess the programmes against the criteria for approving AMHP programmes and professionals who complete it will be able to achieve the criteria for approved mental health professionals.

This visit was an HCPC only visit. The education provider and validating body 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 and role of HCPC visitors	David Abrahart (Approved mental health professional) Lynn Heath (Approved mental health professional) Simon Mudie (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Alex Urquhart
Proposed student numbers	25 per cohort, one cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
Chair	Chris Tait (Northumbria University at Newcastle)
Secretary	Joan Charlton (Northumbria University at Newcastle)

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 criteria for approving AMHP programmes	<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 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"/>
Service users and carers	<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 criteria for approving AMHP programmes and professionals who complete it will be able to achieve the criteria for approved mental health professionals

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a condition is set on the programme, which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 49 of the criterion have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 1 criteria.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. Conditions are set when certain criteria have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the criterion 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 can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally when it is felt that the particular criterion has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

E.8 Assessment regulations must clearly specify that any requirements for an aegrotat award which may be made will not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP

Condition: The education provider is required to state that any requirements for an aegrotat award will not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP.

Reason: The documentation reviewed prior to the visit outlined the regulations for an aegrotat award. Page 12 of the programme handbook referred the visitors to the 'Assessment regulations for Northumbria Awards' which can be found online. Page 17 of this document stated that "An Aegrotat award may be recommended when a PAB does not have enough evidence of the student's performance to be able to recommend the intended award, but is satisfied that the student would otherwise have reached the required standard for the intended award." Therefore the visitors established that an aegrotat award may be awarded to a student who is unable to complete the programme due to illness. During the programme team meeting this was discussed in further detail, it was established that an aegrotat award may be awarded to a student under the regulations of the education provider. However the visitors noted that the documentation does not make it clear that an aegrotat award does not lead to eligibility to be approved as an AMHP. Therefore the education provider is required to state in the documentation made available to current and perspective students that a student who is awarded an aegrotat award under the university regulations is not eligible to be approved as an AMHP.

Recommendations

B.14 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place

Recommendation: The education provider considers the inclusion of a clear statement in the documentation as to how attendance is monitored in taught sessions.

Reason: The visitors noted on page 11, paragraph 16 of the programme handbook that “Students are required to attend all taught sessions and the required amount of days in practice.” However in the documentation made available to students did not state how attendance was recorded in taught sessions. The students stated that attendance was recorded by filling in an attendance sheet at each teaching session. This was discussed further during the meeting with the programme team where it was stated that the education provider employs an electronic attendance monitoring system, however the programme did not use this system and instead adopted a sign in sheet due to the nature of the teaching patterns of the programme. The visitors were satisfied that the programme met the relevant criteria as the students must attend all teaching sessions and that attendance was recorded using a sign in sheet. However the visitors recommend that the methods of recording attendance were made clear in the programme handbook, so that all new students are aware as to the required attendance and how attendance was recorded.

David Abrahart
Lynn Heath
Simon Mudie