

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Oxford Brookes University
Programme name	MA Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	5 – 6 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 education provider and awarding body reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – BA (Hons) Social Work – Full time and Part time, MA Social Work – Part time, and PG Dip Social Work – Full time and Part time. The education provider, 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Jane McLenachan (Social worker) Graham Noyce (Social worker) Annie Mitchell (Practitioner psychologist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Amal Hussein
Proposed student numbers	20 for both full and part time
Chair	Brian Marshall (Oxford Brookes University)
Secretary	Nicola Kirk (Oxford Brookes University)
Members of the joint panel	Robert Johns (The College of Social Work) Helen Wenman (The College of Social Work) Julia Winter (Internal Panel Member) Ailsa Clarke (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 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"/>
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 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 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining four 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.

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 revisit all programme documentation, including advertising material and website, to ensure that potential applicants have contemporary information about changes to bursary arrangements.

Reason: From the information provided, the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider ensures that applicants to the programme have all of the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme. In discussion with the students, it was highlighted that students on the programme are very aware of the changes in bursary arrangements for social work students in England. Students gave very detailed accounts of being supported by the admission tutor and the information given to them according to the students was up to date. However, the visitors were unable to determine from the documentation and website if and how information about possible changes to the fee structure due to changes in bursaries will be communicated to potential applicants. The visitors consider this to be essential information for applicants and therefore, require the education provider to review the programme documentation including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants are informed and kept up to date regarding possible changes to the fee structure. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme can meet this standard by ensuring that applicants have all the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further information about the education provider's health requirements and how this is consistent with the equality and diversity policy in place.

Reason: From the information provided in the documentation and in discussion at the visit, the visitors were clear that all students must complete a health declaration as part of the admissions process to the programme. The visitors also discussed the health requirement with the programme team and it was highlighted that applicants declare their health requirements at the interview. Once a declaration was made by applicant it was then discussed by the interview team who made a decision on the health declaration. However, the visitors, could not determine the process that the education provider has in place to make such decision, how the process is applied and how it is used to identify what adjustments could or could not reasonable be made if health conditions were disclosed. As such the visitors could not determine how the admissions procedures apply the health declarations and how any issues that may arise would be dealt with in a manner that is consistent with the equality and diversity policy. Therefore the visitors require further information about the health declarations that are applied at the point of admission to this programme. In particular, the visitors require further evidence of how equality and diversity is ensured in regards to health declaration at the point of admission and how this application is consistently and equitably applied.

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanism.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the admissions information to clarify the accreditation for prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme.

Reason: From the information provided, the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider ensures that applicants to the programme have all of the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme. Evidence was provided to the visitors regarding the generic website information that is provided to applicants but this did not include the specific information about this programme. The visitors noted in the programme specification (Section six) that there may be an AP(E)L policy and process in relation to this programme but were unclear how this was communicated to applicants. The visitors were therefore unclear about how the programme team ensure that applicants to the programme are informed of the potential to gain accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and how they can engage with this process. Therefore the visitors require further evidence about how applicants are provided with information about the relevant AP(E)L policies and how applicants can engage with this process. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme can meet this standard by ensuring that applicants have all the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence that a robust monitoring system for students attendance is in place; to include information as to what would trigger procedures for poor attendance.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided that there was no explicit reference to where and when attendance is mandatory for students on the programme. Within the documentation, the visitors noted that for in house lectures 'attendance sheets are sometimes used to monitor attendance' and that poor attendance would be followed up. However, the visitors were unsure how attendance is followed up if the use of attendance sheets were sporadic. In discussion with the students it was highlighted that there is an attendance policy and that students are aware of when attendance is mandatory. The visitors also discussed the attendance policy with the programme team who highlighted the expectation of students on the programmes. However, the visitors were unsure how students starting the programme would be informed of this attendance policy, how it would be enforced and what, if any, repercussions there may be for students who fail to attend. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of the attendance policy, what parts of the programme are mandatory and how this is communicated to students. They also require further evidence to demonstrate how students are made aware of what effect contravening this policy may have on their ability to progress through the programme.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider ensure the documentation provided through the admissions procedures is consistent and current.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation provided and in discussion at the visit the visitors were satisfied with the information provided for applicants regarding criminal conviction checks. However, the visitors would like to recommend to the programme team to amend their documentation and website to ensure that potential applicants and students are given information that is current and consistent. For example, the programme specification (Section six) still makes references to Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) instead of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). Therefore, the visitors would like to encourage the education provider to revise their documentation to ensure that students continue to be given information that is current.

Jane McLenachan
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