Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Ruskin College
Validating body / Awarding body	The Open University
Programme name	BA (Honours) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	13 – 14 February 2014

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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 (delete as appropriate) of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 2 July 2014. 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 professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. 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 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 professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Beverley Blythe (Social worker)
	Patricia Higham (Social worker)
HCPC executive officers	Amal Hussein
Proposed student numbers	30 Full time once per year
	6 Part time once per year
Chair	Alison Coleman (University of Salford)
Secretary	Guy Langton (Ruskin College)
Members of the joint panel	Bob Cecil (The College of Social Work)
	Bill Turner (The College of Social Work)
	Helen Wenman (The College of Social Work)

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	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
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 47 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining ten 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 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 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 ensure potential applicants of the programme are given a complete range of information in order to make an informed choice about the programme.

Reason: Documentation provided and discussion at the visit included information about the admissions policies for the programme. Open days were highlighted as the main way to provide detailed information about the programme and the application process. The visitors did not receive any documentation regarding the open days prior to the visit. During discussions with the programme team the visitors highlighted the importance of providing full information about the programme so applicants are able to make informed decisions. This included information about:
- the application process requirements;
- the enhanced disclosure and barring service and medical clearance;
- the interview day, the written tests and group work to be completed; and
- all costs associated with travel, particularly in regards to placement.

The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the above information is communicated to potential applicants, to ensure that they are able to make an informed decision regarding whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

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

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: The visitors noted that the education provider has information regarding their AP(E)L policy outlined in their 'College Admission Policy', which is a generic college wide policy. However, the visitors were unable to locate any clear detailed information regarding AP(E)L within the information provided to applicants to this programme. Discussion with the programme team clarified the policy was not regularly used. The programme team spoke of the support they provided applicant through this process. However, there is little information about it in the admissions information in relation to this programme. The visitors were unclear as to how the programme applied the generic AP(E)L policy and how potential applicants were made aware of what constitutes as criteria for AP(E)L. The visitors were also unable determine how the programme team actively monitor the AP(E)L process against the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs). The visitors therefore require the education provider to revise the admissions and programme documentation to explain the process in place.

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 the terminology in use is reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation for social workers, and contains accurate information about the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme documentation submitted by the education provider included several instances of incorrect terminology and information. For example, the presentation on the open day given to potential applicants refers to an HCPC bursary on the slides. HCPC does not have any involvement with bursaries; these are set by the Department of Health. The visitors also noted on the 'social work student offer letter 2014' the Health and Care Professions Council were referred to as the 'Health and Care Practitioner'. Also, the visitors noted the programme handbook (page 28) states that the programme is 'accredited' by HCPC, rather than it is 'approved' by HCPC, which is the correct terminology. The visitors noted other instances such as these throughout the documentation, and feel that incorrect and inaccurate statements may mislead students and provide an incorrect impression of the HCPC as the statutory regulator. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation and ensure the terminology used is accurate, reflects the language associated with statutory regulation, and avoids any potential confusion for students.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the protocols to obtain informed consent from students when they participate as service users and for managing situations when students decline from participating as service users in practical sessions.

Reason: The visitors noted through discussions with the students and the programme team that verbal consent had been sought from students when they were required to participate as a service user in practical simulation and role play activities. The visitors were made aware that during induction week, students were encouraged to develop 'ground rules' which they must abide to whilst on the programme. The education provider submitted the ground rule as evidence to meet this standard. However, the visitors were unable to determine within the 'ground rule' where consent was discussed and what protocols were in place for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as a service user in practical and clinical teaching. The visitors considered that without consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved when students participated as service users. The visitors could not determine how students were informed about the requirement for them to participate, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained. The visitors could also not determine how situations where students declined from participation were managed with alternative learning arrangements so there would be no impact on their learning. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide evidence of the formal protocols that are in place to obtain informed consent.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence to demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the programme allow students to meet the following standards of proficiency (SOPs):

- **3 be able to maintain fitness to practise**
    - o 3.2 understand the importance of maintaining their own health and wellbeing
    - o 3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career- long learning
- **4 be able to exercise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement**
    - o 4.5 be able to make and receive referrals appropriately
- **9 be able to work appropriately with others**
    - o 9.5 be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet the needs and outcomes
- **15 be able to establish and maintain a safe practise environment**
    - o 15.2 be aware of applicable health and safety legislations and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team, the visitors were unable to determine where in the curriculum the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the above standards of proficiency. Although the education provider completed a standard of proficiency mapping document, the visitors were unable to determine how the above SOPs were being taught within the curriculum in such a way to ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register. The visitors require the education provider to provide further evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure all standards of proficiency, specifically SOPs 3.2, 3.3, 4.5, 9.5, and 15.2 are addressed within the curriculum.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Condition: The programme team must provider further evidence on first year placement educators and how they ensure that those from the private voluntary sector have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience to supervise and support social work students**.**

Reason: From the documentation received, the visitors could not determine how the education provider ensures that educators from the private voluntary sectors have relevant knowledge, skills and experience. For this standard, the education provider referenced the submission document in their SETs mapping document. The visitors had the opportunity to meet with the practice educators from local authorities who explained how it applied to the local authority settings. Unfortunately there were no representatives at the meeting from the private voluntary sector and the visitors were unclear how the submission document ensured this standard is met in relation to those from the private voluntary sector. As a result, the visitors were unable to determine how the education provider ensures practice educators from private voluntary sectors have relevant knowledge, skills and experience and how these individuals were supported to supervise social work students. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to ensure that this standard is met.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure placement educators are appropriately registered or how other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors were made aware that a 'Partnership agreement form' and the QAPL framework were used in approving and monitoring placements. However, the documentation did not provide information on how they ensure that practice educators are appropriately registered. The visitors were given a list of practice educators used by the education provider, however their registration status was not always clear. The visitors were subsequently unclear about the steps taken to ensure that suitable practice placement educators were in place, including whether they were appropriately registered. To ensure this standard is met, the visitors require the education provider to articulate clearly the requirements for registration or other arrangements for placement educators at each placement, and the processes in place for ensuring these are implemented and monitored.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that demonstrates that the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the programme meet the following standards of proficiency (SOPs):

- **3 be able to maintain fitness to practise**
    - 3.2 understand the importance of maintaining their own health and wellbeing
    - 3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career- long learning
- **4 be able to exercise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement**
    - 4.5 be able to make and receive referrals appropriately
- **9 be able to work appropriately with others**
    - 9.5 be able to support the development of networks, groups and communities to meet the needs and outcomes
- **15 be able to establish and maintain a safe practise environment**
    - 15.2 be aware of applicable health and safety legislations and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team, the visitors were unable to determine where in the curriculum the assessment of the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the above standards of proficiency (SOPs). Although the education provider completed a standard of proficiency mapping document, the visitors were unable to determine how the above SOPs were being taught and assessed within the curriculum in such a way to ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register. The visitors require the education provider to provide further evidence that demonstrates that the learning

outcomes ensure all standards of proficiency, specifically SOPs 3.2, 3.3, 4.5, 9.5, and 15.2 are assessed within the curriculum.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not lead to registration with the HCPC.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit did not state that aegrotat awards do not lead to registration with the HCPC (SETs mapping document SET 6.9). The visitors noted this was not clearly articulated anywhere in the programme documentation and were therefore not satisfied that this SET was met. This SET requires that the programme documentation clearly states that an aegrotat award will not provide eligibility for admission to the Register to avoid any confusion. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation (such as the programme specification document) to be updated to clearly specify that an aegrotat award would not provide eligibility for admission to the Register. This is to provide clarity for students and to ensure that this standard is met.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must include a clear statement in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the Register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail about the external examiner recruitment policy. It was not evident that there was an explicit requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register unless other arrangements are agreed. The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner for the programme. However, the visitors need to see evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the external examiner on the programme have been included in the documentation to demonstrate that this standard continues to be met

Beverley Blythe
Patricia Higham