Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Sheffield Hallam University
Programme name	BA (Hons) in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	13 – 14 February 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. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 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 6 June 2013. At the Committee meeting on 6 June 2013, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures 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 (in England) came onto the register on 1 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 reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes - BSc (Hons) Applied Nursing (Learning Disability) and Generic Social Work, MA Social Work and Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only). 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	Julie Weir (Operating department practitioner) Kim Bown (Social worker) Caroline Jackson (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Abdur Razzaq
HCPC observer	Maria Burke
Proposed student numbers	76 per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2013
Chair	Graham Holden (day 1) (Sheffield Hallam University) Clive Woodman (day 2) (Sheffield Hallam University)
Secretary	Helen Garner (Sheffield Hallam University)
Members of the joint panel	Alison Purvis (Internal Panel Member) Mike Purdy (Internal Panel Member) Barbara Young (Internal Panel Member) Nicky Sampson (Internal Panel Member)

	Emma Stockdale (Internal Panel Member) Karen Booker (Internal Panel Member) Kiefer Lee (External Faculty Panel Member) Wijaya Mallikaaratchi (External Panel Member) Helen Wenman (The College of Social Work) Kath Morris (The College of Social Work) Anne Kelly (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	☒	☐	☐

The education provider tabled further information at the visit, but the HCPC was unable to review all of this documentation in detail due to time constraints.

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 10 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 review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the terminology used is accurate, consistent and reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation and the HCPC.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider contained incorrect terminology, the programme specification states 'The HCPC (2012) does not allow APL in relation to the 170 days of practice learning and the 30 skills days' (page 23) and on page 31, There are references to 'HCPC codes' which do not exist. The visitors noted other instances of incorrect terminology used throughout the documentation submitted. The visitors also noted inconsistencies around the levels of Criminal Record checks/clearance required from potential applicants and students. They also noted the education provider has referenced previous regulatory body (GSCC) in the documentation submitted. Such incorrect and inconsistent statements create confusion and have the potential to mislead potential applicants and students. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the terminology used is accurate, reflects the language associated with statutory regulation and avoids any potential confusion for applicants and students.

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 revise the admissions and programme documentation to articulate clearly the scheme for the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (APEL) or other inclusion mechanisms that are in place for programme entry.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted that, while the website and programme handbook indicated that applicants could apply to enter stages of the programme and be admitted through an accreditation procedure, there was no clear detailed information about the scheme. During discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that prior certificated credit or prior experiential credit may be used within the programme, and any evidence of prior learning and experience is assessed during short listing and during interview. Also evaluated are each applicant's knowledge of social work roles and responsibilities, social work values and service user perspectives. The team considered how prior experience mapped onto the programme's learning outcomes and determined an appropriate entry point. However, the visitors were unable to determine that enough information was available to potential applicants about APEL. In order to meet this standard, information about APEL should be clearly articulated to potential applicants. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revise the admissions and programme documentation to explain the process in place.

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 formal 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 discussion with the students and the programme team that there were no formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as a service user in practical sessions. The visitors were concerned that without consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved with students participating as service users. The visitors could not determine how students were informed about participation requirements within the programme, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained, or 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 formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching.

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 revise programme documentation to clearly identify the minimum attendance requirements for the practice placement setting and the academic setting.

Reason: The programme documentation submitted prior to the visit did not clearly specify the minimum attendance requirements for the academic setting and the practice placement setting. Discussions with the students indicated they knew the procedures to follow when absences were necessary however did not know the minimum requirements for attendance at the practice placement setting or in the academic setting. Discussions with the programme team indicated there was an expected attendance of 100% for all components of the programme with allowances made for reasonable absences. From the evidence received the visitors were not satisfied the minimum requirements were being fully communicated to the students. The visitors also noted that if students were not aware of the threshold requirement, it would be difficult for the education provider to monitor and step in to take action to ensure absence does not affect students' learning and development. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation to be revised to communicate the minimum attendance requirements for the academic setting and the practice placement setting to students**.**

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 education provider must demonstrate how the learning outcomes ensure that students who complete the programme meet all the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers in England.

Reason: The visitors noted that the documentation provided prior to the visit included module descriptors, each with several of the SOPs listed as being covered in each module. There was also a mapping document which showed the SOPs mapped against module titles. The education provider did not provide any further detailed mapping to show how the programme's learning outcomes mapped onto specific teaching and learning opportunities and demonstrated how all the SOPs were met. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme's learning outcomes ensure that students who complete the programme meet the SOPs for social workers in England to ensure that this standard is met. The visitors require a detailed breakdown of how each SOP is delivered in relation to the learning outcomes.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Condition: The education provider must provider further evidence of the procedures in place for formal collaboration between the programme team and practice placement providers from all sectors at strategic and operational levels.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided prior to the visit, and in discussion with the practice placement providers, that there is regular and effective collaboration between the placement providers in the statutory sector and the programme team both at strategic and operational levels. However, the visitors were unclear as to how this collaboration will be managed with the practice placement providers from independent, voluntary and private sectors, especially at strategic level. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the education provider will ensure that formal collaboration is in place at strategic and operational levels with practice placement providers from all sectors. In this way, the visitors can be sure that there is regular and effective collaboration between the practice placement providers and the programme team from all sectors and that this standard is met.

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 demonstrate how the assessment strategy and design ensure that students who complete the programme meet all the standards of proficiency for social workers in England.

Reason: In line with the visitors' concerns relating to SET 4.1, they noted that the mapping documentation provided prior to the visit did not clearly indicate how all students who successfully completed the programme demonstrated that they had met all the standards of proficiency. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme's assessment strategy and design ensures that all students who complete the programme meet all the standards of proficiency to ensure that this standard is met.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how they ensure that the assessments are applied consistently and objectively.

Reason: This condition relates to SET 6.6 which refers to external examiner's concerns about 'standards of marking feedback to the students'. The visitors noted that there is inconsistency in assessments feedback to the students which may impact measurement of student performance and fitness to practise. However, during discussions with the programme team it was mentioned that the assessment officer is taking a lead on developing and implementing a system that means the feedback format for each module will be decided and published to students, so that expectations are clear. No information about how this system will work was provided to the visitors. The visitors were therefore unable to determine that there are mechanisms in place to deal with the measurement of student performance. The visitors therefore require further evidence demonstrating how the education provider ensure that the assessments are applied consistently and objectively and consistent feedback is given to the students around assessments.

6.6 There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Condition: The education provider must provide further information about how it monitors the processes for providing feedback to students on assessments to ensure that feedback is timely, consistent and sufficiently detailed to inform their learning and performance.

Reason: The visitors noted the documentation provided (External Examiner Report 2010-11) included reference to external examiner's concerns about 'the persistent inconsistencies in standards of marking feedback: some scripts are annotated / corrected, others are not; some scripts offer extensive summative feedback, others offer only brief comment; some scripts clearly indicate how second marking / moderation has been undertaken, others do not'. During discussions with the programme team, it was revealed that the issue of feedback and annotation is an area of continued activity towards improvement. The assessment officer is taking a lead on developing and implementing a system that means the feedback format for each module will be decided and published to students, so that expectations are clear. Limited information about how this system will work in practice was provided to the visitors and they remain uncertain whether the education provider has a strategy in place for monitoring feedback on assessments that would identify and address the concerns raised by external examiners. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further information about how it monitors the processes for providing feedback to students to make sure that students receive assessment feedback, which is timely, sufficiently detailed and consistent, to ensure that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly state that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors could not determine where in the assessment regulations there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. The visitors could not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not enable them to be eligible to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that there is a clear statement included in the programme documentation.

Kim Bown
Caroline Jackson
Julie Weir