

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust & Prometheus Medical
Validating body / Awarding body	IHCD (part of Edexcel)
Programme name	IHCD Paramedic Award
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	10 – 11 January 2012

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Paramedic' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health 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 29 March 2012. At the Committee meeting on 29 March 2012 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider and awarding body did not validate or review the programmes at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programmes. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. While this visit considered the collaborative programme between South Western Ambulance Service and Prometheus Medical the visit also considered the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust IHCD Paramedic Award. A separate visitor report exists for this programme.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Vince Clarke (Paramedic) Paul Bates (Paramedic)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	12 per cohort (8 cohorts per year)
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 April 2012
Chair	David Halliwell (South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust)
Secretary	Samantha Edwards (Prometheus Medical)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC 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 HPC 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 HPC met with students from the South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust IHCD Paramedic Award, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

The meeting with students was conducted via teleconference.

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 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 5 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 revisit the programme documentation and any advertising material to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme documentation submitted by the education provider included instances of incorrect terminology in relation to the HPC. In particular, there were instances of terminology suggesting that a successful graduate would become a certified HPC paramedic (e.g. Advertising Material Booklet, p6). It was also the case that the documentation refers to the 'HPC code of conduct' (e.g. Paramedic Objective Book 2011, p10). Any successful graduate of the programme becomes eligible to apply to the Register and would not be able to use the protected title until they were on the HPC Register. The HPC does not have a 'code of conduct' which a registrant must follow. Instead registrants must act in accordance with the HPC's Standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors considered the terminology to be misleading to applicants and students and therefore required the programme documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect terminology throughout.

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 clarify within the programme documentation if there is accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) applied during admission to the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation that the education provider has a policy of recognising prior experiential and prior certificated learning in line with the requirements of the validating body. However, in discussion with the programme team, the visitors noted that the requirement for applicants to the programme to have held the equivalent of an ambulance technician qualification for a year, limits any opportunity for AP(E)L. As such it was anticipated that no applicant to the programme would be able to gain accreditation for prior experiential learning other than that gained while completing an ambulance technician qualification. As such the visitors were unclear as to how the stated AP(E)L policy for the programme would work in practice and what criteria would be used to assess any prior experiential learning. The visitors therefore require clarification of the AP(E)L process, how it will be employed and what criteria, if any, will be used to assess any prior experiential learning. The visitors also require further evidence of how this process is communicated to applicants to ensure that this standard is met.

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 education provider must clarify within the programme documentation any formal policy for dealing with any issues around student attendance, particularly in the academic environment.

Reason: Within the documentation provided the visitors noted that students are informed that attendance is mandatory while on practice placement and that attendance is monitored. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that that the expectation is that all aspects of the academic programme are similarly mandatory and that attendance is monitored through the use of student registers. However, in discussion with the students, the visitors noted that the students were unaware of the mandatory attendance expectations while they were in the academic environment and what repercussions there would be if they failed to attend. The visitors could also not identify what repercussions there would be for students who failed to attend any element of the practice placements. Therefore the visitors require clarification of the policy employed by the education provider to determine what would happen to a student who failed to attend any of the mandatory elements of the programme. The visitors also require further evidence of how the programme team communicate to students where attendance is mandatory.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of how they fully prepare students and practice placement educators for the placement aspects of the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team the visitors were clear that by the end of the programme students would have to have undertaken a series of placement experiences and demonstrated a defined set of competencies. Further discussion with the programme team clarified that the number of hours students were required to spend on practice placement were sufficient for students to meet the required learning outcomes. However, in discussion with the students, it was highlighted that they were unclear as to the specific amount of time they were required to spend on practice placement.

The visitors were also made aware that the students on this programme would mainly be coming from a different background to those on the programme designed for civilian ambulance technicians. However, the visitors were unclear about how the competencies that were required to be demonstrated during each

placement block are clearly communicated to students and practice placement educators. The programme documentation did not provide sufficient evidence for the visitors to determine what broad set of competencies each student would be expected to have met after each placement block. The visitors were therefore unsure about how the programme team ensured that the students would be demonstrating competencies which were within their scope of practice at each stage of the programme.

The visitors therefore require further information about how the programme team ensure that the set of competencies a student would be expected to meet on each placement block is clearly communicated to student and practice placement educators .This evidence should also include information about how students and practice placement educators are informed of the requirements for the number of hours a student needs to spend on practice placement. This is to ensure that students and practice placement educators are aware of the requirements for successful completion of each placement block and that this standard is met.

6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of how the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme are clearly specified.

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students are able to re-sit any assessment twice and if a student failed to pass after two re-sits they would not be able to progress though the programme. The documentation also clearly stated that for the first three modules students are required to pass all assessments within an individual module to progress to the next module within the programme. However, the visitors noted that the documentation did not highlight this requirement for the fourth module 'Unit 4'. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that similar regulations were in place for the final module 'Unit 4'. However, during further discussion, it was articulated that students could fail all assessments initially and then continue on the programme until the opportunities for re-sitting assessments had been exhausted. The visitors felt that this policy was not clearly articulated and may result in students having to 'trail' failure of academic assessments into the practice placement areas of the programme to complete the programme in the time allocated. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the criteria for progression and achievement within the programme, particularly for 'Unit 4'. This evidence should also include clarification of how the programme team clearly specify what assessments a student would have to pass prior to undertaking any practice placement experience. In this way the visitors can be sure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider keeping the demographic of the applicants to the programme under review.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that applicants to this programme would be drawn from eligible candidates within the armed forces who have suitable experience and qualifications. By limiting the pool of applicants to this demographic the programme could ensure that successful applicants to the programme will have the experience required to complete the programme and meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for paramedics. This is in addition to the requirement for any applicant to the programme to have held the equivalent ambulance technician qualification for up to a year. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that the programme will be advertised on the website of Prometheus Medical and may lead to candidates from outside the target demographic applying. In discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that, while very unlikely, a non armed forces applicant could potentially apply to the programme in the future and be successful. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team keep the demographic of applicants to this programme under review. In this way the programme team can ensure that, if necessary, additional entry requirements will be applied to civilian applicants and that the learning and teaching provided is appropriate for their experience. In this way the programme team may be able to ensure that the programme can prepare applicants from any demographic to successfully complete the programme and meet the relevant SOPs.

Paul Bates
Vince Clarke