

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The Iron Mill Institute (Validated by the University of Worcester)
Programme name	MA in Dramatherapy
Mode of delivery	Part time
Relevant part of HPC register	Arts therapy
Relevant modality	Dramatherapy
Date of visit	5 and 6 March 2008

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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 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Dramatherapist' 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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee on 18 August 2008. At the Education and Training Committee's meeting on 18 August 2008, 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 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 part of a joint event. The University of Worcester validated the programme. The University of Worcester and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the University of Worcester. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the University of Worcester, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Dr Susan Hogan (Art Therapist) Dr Bruce Bayley (Dramatherapist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Miss Abigail Creighton and Miss Elisa Simeoni
Proposed student numbers	18 students
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2008
Chair	Mr Joe Hodgson (University of Worcester)
Secretary	Ms Deborah Hodson (University of Worcester)
Members of the joint panel	Ms Linda Rolfe (External Panel Member) Mr David Powley (External Panel Member)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review external examiners' report from the last two years prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not meet with student as the programme was new so there were no current or past students to meet.

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 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 have also made a number of 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.

The visitors have also made a number of commendations. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that references to the roles and requirements of the professional body and the regulatory body are accurate and up-to-date.

Reason: The documentation currently fails to distinguish the different roles and requirements of the regulatory and professional bodies. For example, in the additional course requirements in the programme specification, there are numerical values quoted as HPC requirements and these are actually requirements of BADth (British Association of Dramatherapists), not HPC.

The documentation does not consistently tell students about the link between completing the programme and eligibility to register with the HPC. For example, the wording in the letters of introduction could be misleading as all students would need to apply to register with HPC after they have completed their programme. You should make sure that your documents clearly tell students that completing the programme means they are “eligible to apply for registration with HPC”. There is no guarantee that they will be able to register with the HPC and use the protected title. It is important that the information is updated so that applicants have the correct information they require to take up a place on the programme.

2.2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The education provider must review the admissions procedures to ensure that criminal convictions checks have been completed by the point of registration onto the programme.

Reason: The current admission procedures require the criminal convictions checks to be completed during the first term and before students go onto placements. The visitors felt that the current timing was too late and that unidentified criminal convictions could affect students’ participation in training groups, personal development groups and supervision groups and in addition might affect their ability to negotiate their first placement.

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

Condition: The education provider must review the admissions procedures to ensure that occupational health clearance been completed by the point of registration on to the programme.

Reason: The current admission procedures require the occupational health clearance to be completed during the first term and before students go onto

placements. The visitors felt that the current timing was too late and that unidentified health issues could affect students' participation in training groups, personal development groups and supervision groups and in addition might affect their ability to negotiate their first placement.

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must provide written confirmation that the University of Worcester has successfully validated the programme.

Reason: The visitors received a partnership agreement during the visit between the University of Worcester and the Iron Mill Institute. They heard the discussions between the two bodies and are aware that the University of Worcester is intending to approve the programme subject to conditions. The visitors are confident that progress will be made, in terms of meeting the conditions set by the University of Worcester's validation panel; however there is no guarantee of validation until all the conditions will be met. The visitors felt that final written confirmation of the validation was needed to assure the security of the programme.

3.4 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must recruit an additional clinical process supervisor to the programme team.

Reason: The education provider intends to recruit a cohort of up to 18 students. There is currently enough qualified and experienced staff to deliver two clinical process supervision groups which would mean 9 students in each group. The visitors felt that smaller student numbers in each group were needed to ensure effective delivery. In the meeting with the programme team, the programme team explained that they wish to have a maximum of 8 students in each group and intended to recruit an additional clinical process supervisor so they can recruit 18 students.

3.12 The resources provided, both on and off site, must adequately support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that the work rooms at the X-centre are suitable for confidential work.

Reason: During the tour of facilities, the visitors saw the work rooms which will be used for supervision groups, training groups and personal development groups. The space currently has open exits and glass walls which are not suitable for the confidential teaching and learning activities. The visitors and the programme team discussed options of using screens, furniture and signage to close off spaces. Evidence is required to show that the work rooms are modified for confidential work.

3.13 The learning resources, including the stock of periodicals and subject books, and IT facilities (including internet access), must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence that core texts and internet access are available on site at the X-Centre.

Reason: The visitors saw the list of textbooks and journals due to be ordered, the lists of textbooks and journals currently available and saw the space of the future library. They received confirmation from the senior team that the finances are in place to buy the textbooks and journals and create the library space. However, they explained that they wished to wait until the validation event, until making the final commitment to purchase the new textbooks and journals.

Whilst the visitors were encouraged by the progress and plans to date, they wished to receive confirmation that all the text books and journals (already identified in the booklet provided during the senior team meeting) were on-site at the X-Centre and accessible to students. In addition, they wished to receive confirmation that the on-line resources available through the University of Worcester virtual learning environment were accessible at the X-Centre, following successful validation.

5.5 The number, duration and range of placements must be appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the information which details the number, duration and range of placements, so that it is clear how students gain access to a wide range of learning experiences in a variety of practice environments.

Reason: It was unclear from the documentation how students access a range of groups and individual placements and a variety of placement experiences (e.g. schools settings, hospital settings, prison settings). During the meeting with the placement providers it was clarified that groups and process supervision allowed students to learn from other students' placement experiences and one module included a short compulsory prison and school placement.

The placement tutors have a role in ensuring that students see a range of clients groups. The visitors felt that it was important this information is included in the documentation so that students and future programme team members can see what is expected of them and that practice is consistent.

5.6 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the system used for approving and monitoring all placements and must articulate it in the documentation.

Reason: The documentation was not clear about the system used for approving and monitoring all placements. The meeting with the placements providers clarified this but the visitors felt that this must be articulated in the documentation so that students and future programme team members can see what systems are used.

For example, the documentation should be updated in order to include; policies and processes for approving placements; systems for ongoing monitoring and assessing placements; how feedback from students is collected, analysed and acted on; how the education provider gains feedback from practice placement educators and co-ordinators, and make sure that channels of communication are clear; how the education provider feeds this information back into their processes; and how the education provider deals with placements where difficulties arise.

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Condition: The education provider must review the assessment criteria in order to demonstrate a clear link between each criterion and the achievement of the HPC standards of proficiency.

Reason: Although the assessment criteria for written assignments were clear, the assessment criteria for continuous assessment (used to assess the ability to use supervision effectively) and clinical practice placements was less clear. The criteria are currently very broad and because of this it is not explicit how each criterion contributes to the achievement of the standards of proficiency. The visitors need to make sure that a student has been assessed in each of the standards of proficiency, so they can practice their profession safely and effectively. As there is no clear link between the criteria used in continuous and clinical assessment and the individual standards of proficiency, the visitors currently do not have this assurance. The education provider's review of the assessment criteria could include the rewording of specific criterion, the insertion of additional criteria or the referencing of the standards of proficiency to the criterion.

Recommendations

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider developing guidelines for the practice placements mentors' role.

Reason: The information the placement mentors received about their role is limited, and there is no annual refresher training organised by the education provider. As the placement mentors do not have a significant role in the assessment of students on placement and those met during the meeting were content with the information they received, the visitors did not wish to insist on any mandatory training. Instead, the visitors felt that the development of guidelines for placement mentors could help make their role clearer to them.

6.4 The measurement of student performance and progression must be an integral part of the wider process of monitoring and evaluation, and use objective criteria.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the overarching numerical value applied to each assessment criteria with an aim to provide greater clarity to students.

Reason: It was recognised that the assessment methods, procedures and criteria are adequate to assure students are able to demonstrate an ability to meet the standards of proficiency. However, it was felt that greater clarity may be provided to students on the numerical grading system applied to each assessment criteria. It was not wholly clear how the values from one to five were allocated or how these values accumulated to have an impact on progression. It was felt that additional criteria could be applied to the numerical values to assist students in their understanding of the requirements of each assessment.

Commendations

The visitors wish to commend the following aspects of the programme,

Commendation: The organic and holistic environment in which the programme has been placed and the optimism and energy that informs the positive potential of this programme.

Reason: The education provider delivers the programme within an environment that has an established tradition of arts therapy and creative arts activities on site. It has active links with creative and therapeutic arts projects in Europe and abroad via the on-going work and links of the Director of the education provider. The X-Centre provides the programme with a fertile and active holistic approach to creative arts and community life linking this actively to training and development initiatives.

Commendation: The clear progression of students from year to year and the achievement of the awards entitled Postgraduate Certificate, Postgraduate Diploma and MA.

Reason: The stages of achievement within each year are clearly titled and valued, which is useful for students who receive a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma. The visitors felt that the approach employed in this programme should be commended as it values each stage of learning in its own right by giving each stage a clear place in the development of the MA. It demonstrates a caring and creative way of valuing the learning of each student at each stage of the programme, giving a sense of worth to each developmental level of the programme, regardless of whether or not the student continues past the Postgraduate Certificate level or Postgraduate Diploma level.

Dr Susan Hogan
Dr Bruce Bayley