Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Staffordshire University
Programme name	Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	28 – 29 June 2017

Contents

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 'paramedic' 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 21 September 2017. At the Committee meeting on 21 September 2017, 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 to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme admissions, programme management and resources, and practice placements. The programme was already approved by the HCPC and this visit assessed whether the programme continued to meet the standards of education and training (SETs) and continued to ensure that those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was an HCPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Paul Bates (Paramedic) Susan Boardman (Paramedic) Ian Prince (Lay)
HCPC executive officer	Niall Gooch
Proposed student numbers	200 per cohort, 2 cohorts per year
First approved intake	October 2009
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	January 2018
Chair	Barbara Emadi-Coffin (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Chris Gray (Staffordshire University)

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	☒	☐	☐
Service users and carers	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be satisfied 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 the relevant 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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eight SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can have its ongoing approval reconfirmed. 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 can have its ongoing approval reconfirmed. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that they will have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Reason: From review of documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that the education provider was planning to recruit another four full-time staff to cover the increased student numbers on the programme. At the time of the visit, the process of recruiting additional staff was underway but had not yet been completed. The visitors were able to see copies of the adverts that had been put out, but they were not able to see evidence that the new staff were in place at the time of the visit, or a contingency plan for the event that the programme did not recruit as planned, and so could not determine that the standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing that there are an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

3.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that subject areas will be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

Reason: From review of documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that the education provider was planning to recruit another four full-time staff to ensure that the increased student numbers on the programme had access to appropriately expert and knowledgeable staff. The visitors were able to view adverts for the posts and were satisfied that the education provider was seeking staff with appropriate levels of expertise and knowledge. However, at the time of the visit, the process of recruiting additional staff had not yet been completed and so the visitors were unable to determine whether the standard had been met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing that the new staff on the programme will have relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that it maintains an effective system for approving and monitoring placements.

Reason: The visitors were able to discuss placement audit with the programme team and practice placement educators. They received verbal reassurances that there were monitoring procedures for placements. However, they were not able to see documentary evidence of how these procedures worked, and so were unable to determine whether the standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how placement audits are used in practice.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that placement providers have appropriate equality and diversity policies.

Reason: The visitors were able to discuss placement audit with the programme team and practice placement educators. They received verbal reassurances that there were audit procedures for placement which ensured placements had appropriate equality and diversity policies in place. However, they were not able to see documentary evidence of how these audit procedures worked, and so were unable to determine that this standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how placement audits are used in practice.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that placement settings have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Reason: The visitors were able to discuss placement audit with the programme team and practice placement educators. They received verbal reassurances that there were audit procedures for placement which ensured adequate numbers of suitable staff. However, they were not able to see documentary evidence of how these audit procedures worked, and so were unable to determine that the standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how placement audits are used in practice.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that practice placement educators have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: The visitors were able to discuss placement audit with the programme team and practice placement educators. They received verbal reassurances that there were audit procedures for placements which ensured the suitability of placement educators. However, they were not able to see documentary evidence of how these audit procedures worked, and so were unable to determine that the standard was met. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how placement audits are used in practice.

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

Condition: The education must demonstrate how they ensure that practice placement educators on placements outside West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) are appropriately registered.

Reason: From review of programme documentation and discussions at the visit, the visitors were aware that students undertook placements both with West Midlands

Ambulance Service and with other providers, including the elective placements that some students on the Direct Entry route completed at the end of their programme. They had been informed that an audit process place was in place to ensure that practice placement educators with WMAS were appropriately registered, although they had not been able to see a sample of one of these audits and so had set conditions on some of the standards in SET 5. They were not able to see evidence of how the education provider ensured that placement educators on non-WMAS placements, including the electives on the Direct Entry route, were appropriately registered, or under what circumstances the education provider might decide to waive the requirement for professional registration of educators. They therefore require the education provider to submit evidence showing how they will ensure appropriate registration of placement educators on non-WMAS placements.

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 provide evidence to demonstrate that the assessment regulations clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Reason: From review of documentation, the visitors were not able to see a clear statement about an aegrotat award not providing eligibility for admission to the HCPC Register. They could not determine how the education provider would ensure that it was clear to students and staff that aegrotat awards did not provide eligibility to apply for registration. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to submit evidence showing how they will ensure that assessment regulations clearly specific requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide such eligibility.

Recommendations

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider recruiting a service user and carer co-ordinator.

Reason: At the visit, the visitors were able to discuss service user and carer involvement in the programme. They were satisfied that the standard was met, as a range of service users were involved in teaching and learning activities and selection of students, and underwent preparation and training. They noted that there had, until recently, been a dedicated staff member with responsibility for co-ordinating service user and carer involvement, but that the staff member had taken a new job and the post had not been filled. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that there was a possibility that this role would be filled again. The visitors considered that appointing someone to this post would be helpful in ensuring that the programme continued to meet the standard.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep under review the range of placements offered to ensure that all students gain a range of experience reflecting modern paramedic practice.

Reason: From programme documentation and from discussions at the visit, the visitors noted that almost all placements were with West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS), and that there were a small number of placements in non-ambulance settings. They were satisfied that the standard was met, as WMAS placements took place across the range of the Service's practice, and core competencies were assessed in the university setting through formative simulation and objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), and on placement through the need for mentor sign-off of learning outcomes. However, the visitors considered that, given the changing nature of paramedic practice, it was important that the education provider kept the range of placements offered under review.

Paul Bates
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