hpc **health & care professions council**

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Surrey and South East London Partnership with Royal Holloway, University of London
Validating body / Awarding body	Royal Holloway, University of London
Programme name	Step-up Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	2 – 3 October 2013

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 '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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 3 December 2013. At the Committee meeting, 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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 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 of HCPC visitors and profession	Aidan Worsley (Social worker in England)
	Beverley Blythe (Social worker in England)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
HCPC observer	Hollie Latham
Proposed student numbers	34
Proposed start date of programme approval	January 2013
Chair	Patrick Lehman (Royal Holloway, University of London)
Secretary	Lynn Walsh (Royal Holloway, University of London)
	John Enright (Royal Holloway, University of London)
	Penny Webb (Surrey and South East London Partnership)
	Charlotte Brady (Surrey and South East London Partnership)

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 HCPC did not review External examiners' reports from the last two years for this programme prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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)	☒	☐	☐

The HCPC met with a student from the MSc in Social Work at Royal Holloway, University of London, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

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 41 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 16 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.

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 submit further evidence demonstrating that applicants are fully informed about the financial implications, including any fiscal penalties and details of reassessment and progression, prior to starting the programme.

Reason: The evidence submitted as information provided to applicants included the Student Handbook and Department for Education website. At the visit, the presentation used to welcome students to assessment centre days was also tabled as additional evidence. The visitors noted that this gives prospective students information about the programme, including a statement that students will have their fees paid, and will receive a bursary of £19,833. However, the visitors could not see evidence that students are informed of the provisos regarding the bursary, particularly in relation to progression through the programme. The Trainee Bursary Agreement was also tabled at the visit, from which the visitors saw that there were a number of circumstances which would lead to the termination of the contract. Trainees who fail an assignment during the programme will have one additional attempt to pass. Should they fail to pass on the second attempt, or if they are unable to successfully complete the programme within 14 months, the contract will be terminated. There are also circumstances where the student will need to repay part of the bursary, which they must be made aware of prior to embarking on the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how and when students are informed as to the progression requirements of the programme and the financial and employment implications.

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence of reasonable adjustments, implementation and monitoring of equality and diversity policies in admissions.

Reason: The standards of education and training mapping document highlighted the Royal Holloway, University of London (RHUL) Fair Admissions Policy and complaints system, stating that this runs in parallel with the process indicated by Penna Consulting and the partnership. The evidence also states that the education provider's Steering Board oversee selection as part of its remit, including consideration of over and under representation, and ensuring candidates from diverse backgrounds are recruited. In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were not able to determine how the equality and diversity policies are applied and monitored across the various stages of admissions, through the Penna Consulting sift, assessment centres, local authority selection and within RHUL. The minutes of recent Steering Boards were provided on the day of the visit, but there were no statistics as to the representation of previous or current candidates, and the visitors were unable to determine just how equality and diversity, including representation issues had been overseen in the selection process. The visitors considered that more evidence as to the implementation and monitoring of equality and diversity in the various stages of admissions, and clarity as to how this is overseen, was needed in order for this standard to be met.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of effective academic management and engagement in the Step Up programme's provision.

Reason: At the visit, the visitors noted a lack of representation from the academic staff at RHUL who will be responsible for delivering the taught elements of the programme. The visitors were therefore not provided with evidence of engagement from the whole academic programme team and assurance that the theoretic elements of the programme will be organised and delivered effectively by those identified in the programme's Course Syllabi. As the programme being delivered with RHUL is a new provision, the visitors need to be satisfied that there are effective systems in place to manage the programme, and that the people involved at the education provider have the skills and expertise to work within these systems. They therefore require further evidence that there is real engagement in the Step-up Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work's provision from those who will be teaching the courses. In this way they will ensure that the standard is met.

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence that there are regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place for placement learning.

Reason: The documentation provided included the Quality Assurance of Placement Learning (QAPL) Student Feedback Form which will be used in the quality assurance of practice placements, and the Placement Provision Form used for other social work programmes at RHUL. At the visit, the visitors heard that the placements are identified, monitored and scrutinised by the partner host agencies. The mapping document states that local systems are then subject to the scrutiny of the Steering Board, and the Practice Learning and Development Manager at RHUL. However, the visitors were could not see further evidence in the documentation of the formal processes for this scrutiny or to what extent the agencies themselves are given responsibility for quality assuring their own placements. The visitors were also not provided with any completed QAPL reports from RHUL showing how this audit tool is used in social work placement provision, results or action plans. They were therefore not provided with sufficient evidence of a robust procedure for quality assuring, monitoring and evaluating the partner agency placements. The visitors therefore require documentary evidence of the formalised regular monitoring and evaluation system that the education provider will use to ensure that all their practice placements are appropriate and effective for the programme to ensure this standard is being met.

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

Condition: Further evidence must be submitted to demonstrate that there is a system in place for training, and quality assuring the input of external contributors to the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that specialist visiting lecturers, external

contributors and practitioners from the local authorities are integral to the delivery of the taught curriculum. The visitors were confident that the external contributors identified would have appropriate knowledge and experience to strengthen the delivery of the programme in the context of current practice. However, the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider prepares and supports the contributors and guarantees the quality of this teaching. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the policies or procedures used to guarantee and safeguard the quality of the teaching from external contributors, who may not be subject to the institution's staff development and evaluation systems.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The programme documentation must be revised and resubmitted to provide evidence that students will be clearly informed as to the unique requirements of the Step-up Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work programme.

Reason: The visitors were provided with the Programme Specification and Student Handbook for this programme. The Student Handbook makes several references to the MSc in Social Work, rather than this programme, which may cause confusion to students. The Programme Specification states that there may be opportunity for a student to complete the MSc in Social Work at RHUL programme. However, it is not made clear whether the student would need to wait until they have finished the MSc in order to get their award (and therefore to register with HCPC), or if they would be awarded the Post-Graduate Diploma and later have to 'trade' this in once they have completed the additional module for the MSc. These areas of the documentation must be reviewed in order to ensure that the programme's student-facing documentation is fully-informative and accurate for students. It was also noted that a lot of the documents submitted, including the Programme Schedule and Course Syllabi still appeared to be in 'draft' status. The visitors will therefore need to see final versions of any documentation which is revised following the visit, in order to ensure that the programme resources will be effectively used.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The programme documentation must be revised and resubmitted to provide evidence that students will be clearly informed as to the financial and employment implications in the context of progression and reassessment within the programme.

Reason: The visitors were provided with the Programme Specification and Student Handbook for this programme. However, some areas within reassessment and progression did not seem to give students fully comprehensive information regarding this programme's unique arrangements where it diverges from RHUL regulations. For example, the Student Handbook (page 43) in regards to repeating failed courses, informs students '…you will need to register for the course in the next academic session', but there is no information as to what consequences this would have on their progress or completion of the programme, or employment arrangements. There is also limited information as to the timing or deadlines for resubmission of assignments or second attempts at placements under the tight programme schedule, and the implications of any failed assessment on the student's progression or bursary contract. These areas of the documentation must be reviewed in order to ensure that the

programme's student-facing documentation is fully-informative and accurate for students. In this way the visitors can ensure that this standard is met.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The programme team must revisit programme documentation to ensure the terminology in use is reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation and the HCPC.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the relevant guidance issued by HCPC. For example, there were multiple references to the programme being "validated by the HCPC" (for example, page two of the Programme Specification). Under the Health and Social Work Professions Order (2001), the HCPC is given power to grant 'approval' for a programme. There were also references which did not accurately reflect the HCPC's standards, processes or guidance, or appeared to use the terminology of the previous regulatory body. For example, the Student Handbook refers to, "HCPC Codes of Practice" (page 24) and, "HCPC's Code of Conduct for Practice and Ethics" (page 51). The visitors therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instances of incorrect or out-of-date terminology. In this way the visitors can be sure that the documentary resources available to support students' learning are being effectively used and that this standard can be met.

3.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide further detail as to the arrangement of tutorials in delivering tutor support within the tight timescales of the programme.

Reason: The Student Handbook (page 14) states that, "The Tutor complements wider educational support by offering group and individual tutorials across the programme", and lists the possible areas which tutors can help with. A schedule for the programme was submitted within the student handbook, which states that tutorials will be integrated via negotiation through the course. The SETs mapping stated that tutors will be available on a twice termly basis, and would make two visits per placement. However, the visitors could not find further details in the documentation of the timing, purpose or content of individual or group tutorials. The visitors therefore require further information as to how the tutorials will be arranged, when they will take place, and clear definition as to what purpose these will have, for groups or for individuals, throughout the programme. In this way the visitors can ensure that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there are appropriate protocols to obtain explicit consent where students participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: Discussion with the student at the visit indicated they understood the programme may at times raise personal issues they would have to manage. In discussions with the programme team it was highlighted that students are briefed at the start of the programme and verbally accept that they have the right to withdraw from

participating if necessary, but that consistent refusal to participate in practical teaching would be reviewed. The visitors reasoned the programme could potentially cause emotional distress to students and so the implications of consenting to participate needs to be explicitly clear on entry to the programme. The programme team can then be assured that the programme and students are aware of how to manage or prevent any emotional distress. The visitors therefore require evidence to demonstrate the education provider ensures students understand the implications of consent and managing emotional distress.

4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in any relevant curriculum guidance.

Condition: Further evidence must be provided that the programme reflects the relevant curriculum guidance and external reference frameworks.

Reason: The programme intends to deliver graduates that are eligible to apply to the HCPC Register as a social worker in England. The Programme Specification states "The curriculum is designed to meet the requirements for social work training specified by The College of Social Work (Professional Capability Framework and Curriculum Guides), QAA benchmarks for Social Work and the HCPC Standards of Proficiency for Social Work" (page 2). The SETs mapping also directed the visitors to the QAA institutional audit report for Royal Holloway, University of London. However, the visitors could not find through the programme documentation any further references or mapping to the 2008 QAA benchmark statements for Social Work. The visitors were also unable to find reference to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in the documentation. The visitors therefore could not determine from the documentation how these external frameworks are reflected in the programme or how the programme team worked to include the benchmarks within the curriculum. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the curriculum reflects the philosophy, core values, skills and knowledge of the social work profession and qualification.

4.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Condition: The programme team must provide further clarity as to the quantity of independent study required to support learning throughout the programme, including evidence as to how this is communicated to students.

Reason: The visitors noted that there were a range of learning and teaching approaches used during the programme, however, the Course Syllabi did not specify for each course how many hours the students would be expected to undertake in independent study. In discussion at the visit, the programme team reasoned that the students will be made aware of the 'notional output' required for credits. They will also be informed at the beginning of the programme as to the fact that they will need to put in their own individual study time in addition to time spent in taught sessions or seminars. However the visitors were not able to see, for each course, the extent of student-directed learning which will be required of the students and could not determine how the parameters for this learning approach will be communicated to students and implemented in order to be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum. Further evidence is therefore required in ensuring that this standard will be met.

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

Condition: There must be further evidence provided that there is a thorough and effective system for overseeing the approval and monitoring of all placements.

Reason: The documentation provided included the Quality Assurance of Placement Learning (QAPL) Student Feedback Form which will be used in the quality assurance of practice placements, and the Placement Provision Form used for other social work programmes at RHUL. At the visit, the visitors heard that the placements are identified, monitored and scrutinised by the partner host agencies. The standard of education and training mapping document states that local systems are then subject to the scrutiny of the Steering Board, and the Practice Learning and Development Manager at RHUL. However, the visitors were not provided with further detail as to what depth the Steering Board look at placements, and how the education provider ensures sufficient oversight in placement allocation in order to provide all students the opportunities to cover a full range of experiences over the placements. They were therefore unclear as to what extent the agencies themselves are given responsibility for quality assuring their own placements. The visitors were also not provided with any completed QAPL reports from RHUL showing how this audit tool is used in social work placement provision, results or action plans. The visitors therefore require further documentary evidence of the formalised approval and monitoring processes that the education provider will use to ensure that all their practice placements are appropriate and effective for the programme, to ensure this standard is being met.

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 to demonstrate that the timescale implications of the Step-up Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work programme's placements are effectively communicated to practice placement educators and students.

Reason: The visitors were directed to the Practice Learning Handbook as evidence that this standard of education and training (SET) will be met. The visitors were not clear as to how the placement staff and students will be fully informed of the reassessment arrangements and attendance requirements under the tight timescales of the programme. The Practice Learning Handbook reminds students that there will be financial and employment implications of low attendance (page 15) or a failed placement (page 40), but does not go into detail as to what these involve or what the arrangements for repeat placements will be. At the visit, the importance of resolving issues as early as possible was discussed, but the visitors could not determine the clear procedures in place where there is a delay in successful completion due to low attendance or failure to achieve the relevant learning outcomes on placement. It was

indicated at the visit that extraordinary Practice Assessment Panels may need to take place in such circumstances in order to review the student's progression or achievement. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to the formal systems and scope that is in place to allow students to complete placements late or repeat a placement, including how this interacts with the dates of relevant Practice Assessment Panel or Steering Board deadlines. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the information provided to placement staff and students will provide them with sufficient understanding of the reassessment arrangements and attendance requirements under the tight timescales of the programme. In this way, the visitors will be able to determine whether this SET has been met.

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 to demonstrate that the importance of the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers in England in placements are effectively communicated to practice placement educators and students.

Reason: As stated in the recommendations for standards of education and training (SETs) 4.1 and 6.1, the visitors were content that each SOP will be met by students on completion of the programme. However, they noted that the practice learning document has a heavy focus on achievement of the skills outlined by the professional body's framework, but is not explicitly linked to the HCPC's SOPs. In discussion with the placement educators, the visitors noted that the SOPs were, "to be kept in mind" throughout placements, though there was no explicit connections made of each SOP to learning opportunities or outcomes in the placement experiences. Visitors were therefore concerned that the fact that the SOPs are directly concerned with knowledge, skills and practice of social workers in England, and that registrants will be responsible for ensuring they continue to meet the SOPs in their professional practice, may be lost. The visitors noted that there will be briefings offered to the placement educators in respect to this programme, but were not provided with evidence that the relevance of the SOPs would be covered in detail in these briefings. The visitors therefore require evidence as to how the placement educators and students will be made aware of where, and how the HCPC's SOPs are being covered.

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 information as to the marking procedures and internal moderation processes in place to ensure that appropriate standards of assessment are met.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the assessment strategy as outlined in the programme documentation, but were unable to determine from the evidence provided, the internal moderation systems that were in place for ensuring consistency in marking. The Programme Handbook outlines the marking procedure on page 39. In discussion at the visit the programme team gave a brief outline of the marking strategy specific to this programme which indicated that markers (and second markers) would be generally academics but there may be some aspects of the assessment undertaken by individuals outside of the academic programme team, such as local authority partners. The visitors could not find detail in the documentation as to these arrangements, or how people outside the programme team would be trained for involvement in assessing. They were also not clear on the details of moderation for the assignments within the academic team, and therefore were unable to determine a clear internal moderation strategy in relation to this programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to the marking procedures and internal moderation processes in place to ensure that appropriate standards of assessment are met.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that equality and diversity policies will be appropriately implemented in the context of progression and achievement within the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that the tight timescales of the programme mean it will be very difficult for students to progress if they are unable to attend, or require extra time due to an illness or disability. In discussions at the visit, the programme team indicated that it would not be possible for students to progress through the programme if they were temporarily unable to attend or were in need of extra time. In the Student Handbook, it states, "In recognition of its legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, the College may adjust the attendance requirement", and that this will be done on a case by case basis, ensuring that this does not impact on the competence standards or ability of a student to meet the learning outcomes. In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were unable to determine what would be considered as reasonable in terms of this adjustment, or what could be put in place in the case of this programme that would not inhibit a student's ability to meet the standards of proficiency for social workers in England, given the tight timescales. The programme team also indicated that, as there is no certainty as to future cohorts, depending on the particular case and stage through the programme, it may be possible for students who were unable to complete the programme to defer their studies or transfer credit onto the MSc Social Work at Royal Holloway, University of London. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that inclusivity will be ensured where possible, and that there are clear policies available to students, with information as to what a student should do if they feel they have been discriminated against. In this way, they can 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 provide further evidence that the assessment regulations clearly specify the requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors could not identify where it is clearly stated that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility to apply to the Register. The visitors were also unclear as to how this information is clearly communicated to students. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate where in the programme documentation it is clearly stated that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility to apply to the Register. In this way the visitors can be sure that this information is available to students and 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 provide further information to demonstrate how the criteria for appointing external examiners for the programme ensures that at least one will be appropriately experienced, qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, on the HCPC Register.

Reason: From Steering Board minutes tabled at the visit, the visitors were able to see that an external examiner has now been appointed to the programme, and though they are not registered with the HCPC as they operate outside of England, the visitors were satisfied with the arrangements. The evidence provided for this SET referred to Royal Holloway, University of London's regulations in reference to examiners and assessors. This document outlines the criteria for appointment of external examiners, including that, "…where a programme has external accreditation from a Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body, the programme specification may state additional criteria to be met in the appointment of a Visiting Examiner". However, in the Programme Specification document provided for the programme, the visitors could not see a clear policy set out that specifies HCPC registration requirements, or other criteria that will be required if they are not HCPC registered. Therefore the visitors require evidence that the additional requirements for the appointment of external examiners to this programme have been included in the programme documentation, to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The programme team should ensure that any IT issues that may inhibit access to learning resources in placement settings are minimised.

Reason: The education provider submitted information as to the library resources and IT facilities which students will have access to during the programme. A large amount of relevant resources for the programme will be available online through Moodle, and the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. It was noted that the students will be taught in Bedford Square, where there is a small stock of books available, and the remainder of their time will largely be spent in their local authority on placements. The visitors noted that access issues resulting from firewalls at local authorities can often act as a barrier to enabling students and staff to access learning materials in the placement situation. In discussion at the visit, the visitors heard how the programme team are working with the relevant people at RHUL to make Moodle access available to students whilst on placements, as well as to placement educators. As the students will therefore be expected to undertake a large amount of academic work alongside their placements, the visitors recommend that the programme team undertake regular checks to ensure that learning resources are readily available in all settings, and that this standard continues to be met.

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 programme team should consider revisiting the documentation provided to students and placement educators in support of practice learning, to ensure that the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers in England are explicitly addressed.

Reason: The visitors were provided with a SOPs mapping document for the programme, outlining where each standard is addressed in the curriculum. The visitors were content that each SOP will be met by students on completion of the programme. However, they noted that the practice learning document has a heavy focus on achievement of the skills outlined by the professional body's framework, but is not overtly linked to the HCPC's SOPs. In discussion with the placement educators, the visitors noted that the SOPs were, "to be kept in mind" throughout placements, though there was no explicit linking of each SOP to learning opportunities or outcomes in the placement experiences. Visitors were therefore concerned that the fact that the SOPs are directly concerned with knowledge, skills and practice of social workers in England, and that registrants will be responsible for ensuring they continue to meet the SOPs in their professional practice, may be lost. The visitors noted that this SET could be further demonstrated if the documents supporting practice placements were to more explicitly reflect the importance of achievement of the SOPs in practice. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider considers revisiting the relevant modules' documents, and the materials available to support students and practice educators in placements, to further highlight where, and how the HCPC's SOPs are being covered.

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.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider revisiting the documentation provided to students and placement educators around assessment of practice, to ensure that the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers in England are explicitly assessed.

Reason: The visitors were provided with a SOPs mapping document for the programme, outlining where each standard is addressed in the curriculum. The visitors were content that each SOP will be met by students on completion of the programme. However, they noted that the practice learning document has a heavy focus on achievement of the skills outlined by the professional body's framework, but is not overtly linked to the HCPC's SOPs. In discussion with the placement educators, the visitors noted that the SOPs were, "to be kept in mind" throughout placements, though there was no explicit linking of each SOP to assessment in the placement experiences. They considered that this SET could be further demonstrated if the documents supporting practice placements were to more explicitly reflect the importance of achievement of the SOPs in practice. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider considers revisiting the assessment strategy, and documents to support students and practice educators in placements, to further highlight where, and how the HCPC's SOPs are being assessed.

Beverley Blythe
Aidan Worsley