Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The Open University
Programme name	BA (Honours) Social Work (England)
Mode of delivery	Distance Learning
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	17 – 18 September 2013

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Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'social worker' in England must be registered with us. The HCPC keep a register of health and care professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 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 the Social work profession came onto the register in August 2012 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was 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 endorsement of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Helen Best (Diagnostic radiographer) Teri Rogers (Social worker)
HCPC executive officers (in attendance)	Louise Devlin
Proposed student numbers	260
First approved intake	August 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	December 2013
Chair	Julie Messenger (The Open University)
Secretary	Josie Hughes (The Open 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	☒	☐	☐
Regional information packs for each region	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☐	☐	☒

The HCPC did not see the specialist teaching accommodation as the nature of teaching at the education provider means that teaching facilities are not on site.

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing 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 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 6 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors did not make any recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing 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 threshold level.

Conditions

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the programme management structure, indicating the roles and responsibilities of the programme team members and how the roles interlink.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team at the visit, the visitors noted that the programme management structure is complex, in that there are a number of different job titles within the structure, for example, 'Programme tutor', 'Staff tutor' and 'Link tutor'. In discussion with the students it was clear that they understood the roles and responsibilities of various members of the programme team, and who their main points of contact were. However, from a review of the documentation the visitors could not see evidence that the programme management structure was documented, and as such the visitors could not be assured that future students and staff of the programme would have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in the day to day management of the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the roles and lines of responsibility of the programme team, to ensure that the programme continues to be effectively managed.

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

Condition: The education provider will need to ensure that all documentation relating to the programme is updated so that it is reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation for Social Workers in England.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted references to the previous regulator for Social workers in England in the programme specification (page 8). In factsheet 8 the visitors also noted reference to 'accreditation' and the previous regulator. HCPC 'approve' Social work programmes in England rather than accredit them, and the visitors therefore require that the programme documentation is reviewed to ensure that the terminology in use is reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation for Social workers in England, so that the resources to support student learning are being effectively used.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that the learning outcomes for modules K101 'An introduction to Health and Social Care', K312 'Working together for children', K313 'Leadership and management in Health and Social Care', and K319 'Adulthood, ageing and the life course' ensure that students upon successful completion of the programme, meet all standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that the following module descriptors were not provided, and therefore had not been mapped to the HCPC Standards of proficiency (SOPs)**:** K101 'An introduction to Health and Social Care', K312 'Working together for children', K313 'Leadership and management in Health and Social Care', and K319 'Adulthood, ageing and the life course'. At the visit,

the programme team had provided these module descriptors, and the visitors reviewed them. Whilst the visitors were satisfied with the content of the modules, as the SOPs had not been mapped to these modules, the visitors could not be sure of the contribution they were making towards meeting the standards of proficiency. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the SOPs that are delivered through these modules to ensure that the learning outcomes are appropriate in allowing students to meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of where the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics are taught and met throughout the programme, and that students understand these standards, including how and when they apply.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that there was detailed information regarding the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE's) in the student handbook (page 27). However, from a review of the module descriptors the visitors could not see how the SCPE's were incorporated into the curriculum, and therefore how the education provider ensures that students understand the implications of the SCPE's. At the visit, the programme team informed the visitors that they were in the process of updating the curriculum from the standards of conduct of the previous regulator, to the HCPC standards. The visitors therefore require evidence of where within the curriculum, the SCPE's are taught and met throughout the programme to ensure that this standard is met.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the assessment strategy for modules K101 'An introduction to Health and Social Care', K312 'Working together for children', K313 'Leadership and management in Health and Social Care', and K319 'Adulthood, ageing and the life course' to ensure that they are appropriate to assess the standards of proficiency that are being met through these modules.

Reason: In line with the reasoning provided for SET 4.1, as modules K101 'An introduction to Health and Social Care', K312 'Working together for children', K313 'Leadership and management in Health and Social Care', and K319 'Adulthood, ageing and the life course', had not been mapped to the HCPC Standards of proficiency (SOPs), it was not clear which SOPs were being delivered through these modules, and therefore that the methods of assessment for these modules were appropriate in assessing the SOPs. The visitors therefore require further evidence of which SOPs are being met through these modules, and the methods of assessment for these modules to ensure that students who successfully complete the programme have met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

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 evidence of where it is clearly articulated within the programme documentation that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme must be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register, unless alternative arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: From discussion with the programme team it was clarified that the education provider has an external examiner for each module of the programme, and that currently more than one of these examiners is registered with the HCPC as a Social worker. However, from a review of the documentation the visitors could not see where the requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of the Register was stated within the assessment regulations. The visitors therefore require further evidence of where this is stated to ensure that this will be a requirement of the programme going forward.

Helen Best
Teri Rogers