

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The Robert Gordon University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Occupational therapist
Date of visit	28 – 29 September 2010

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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 'Occupational therapist' 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. The education provider has until 17 November 2010 to provide observations on this report. This is independent of meeting any conditions. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 9 December 2010. At this meeting, the Committee will accept the visitors' recommended outcome, including the conditions. If necessary, the Committee may decide to vary the conditions.

The education provider is due to redraft and resubmit documentary evidence in response to the conditions outlined in this report by 12 November 2010. The visitors will consider this response and make a separate recommendation to the Committee on the ongoing approval of the programme. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made to the Committee on 9 December 2010.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme management and resources, curriculum, practice placements and assessment. The programme was already approved by the HPC 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 HPC only visit. The education provider did not 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. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration) and Post Graduate Diploma in Physiotherapy (Pre-registration). Separate reports exist for these programmes.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Sarah Johnson (Occupational Therapist) Joanna Goodwin (Occupational Therapist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	38
Initial approval	November 1994
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	January 2011
Chairs	Jo Royle (Robert Gordon University) Susan Gibb (Robert Gordon University)
Secretaries	Lucy Jack (Robert Gordon University) Alison Smart (Robert Gordon University)

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"/>

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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 2 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 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 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 the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme.

Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

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 and admissions documentation to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The programme and admissions information submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by the HPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to HPC being a professional body, accrediting a programme or requiring a certain number of practice hours for the programme. There was also a reference to HPC regulations superseding the university regulations and not allowing more than '...one retrieval opportunity in academic or practice education'. The HPC does not accredit programmes and does not set any requirements on a programme such as number of practice hours or the number of assessment re-takes that are permitted. In addition there were references to students on completion of the programme being able to apply for registration with the HPC rather than being 'eligible to apply for registration with the HPC.' The visitors considered the terminology to be misleading to applicants and students and therefore require the programme and admissions documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout. This will ensure that applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all relevant instances in programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the English-language entry criteria are clear.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted it was unclear what the English-language requirements were for entry to the programme. This was due to different International English Language Testing System (IELTS) levels being specified in different parts of the programme documentation (p22 of the student handbook). At the visit, discussions with the programme team clarified that this should be level 7. To ensure that there is no confusion for students, or potential applicants, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate that the programme documentation clearly and consistently states the English-language requirements for entry to the programme, to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider including references to the HPC Guidance on conduct and ethics for students in relevant reading lists.

Reason: The visitors were content that the education provider was including the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics along with the professional body code of ethics in the detailed module descriptor and referring to the document in the sessions regarding conduct. The visitors considered that including the HPC Guidance on conduct and ethics for students in relevant module reading lists would enhance the student learning and provide the students with the tools to understand what is required of them when they become practitioners.

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 consider including role emerging placements as part of the programme at all stages and not just for the final placement.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation, in discussions at the visit that role emerging placements were being utilised and were providing key learning experiences for the students. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this SET continues to be met. However, they suggest that as the experience provided by these placements appeared positive and beneficial to both student and practice placement, including the possibility of going to a role emerging placement could be introduced earlier in the programme and not limited to the final year.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider monitoring the grading of placements, including the negotiation aspect of awarding grades, to ensure there continues to be objective measurement of the learning outcomes.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation and discussions with students, practice placement providers and the programme team that the current system of assessing the experience and performance of students uses a mixture of assessment methods. Some placements are assessed and are subsequently graded, in which an element of negotiation between the student and the practice placement educator is included. As the assessment of placement experience is clearly linked to learning outcomes and the fitness to practice policy, the visitors are satisfied that this standard is met. However they recommend that the programme team continues to monitor this mix of assessment styles and consider moving toward a pass/fail method of assessment for all practice placements. In this way the programme team may

avoid the difficulties inherent in grading practice placements, may make marking of placement experience simpler and by removing the element of negotiation may make the assessment more objective.

Joanna Goodwin
Sarah Johnson