

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Bristol
Programme name	MSc in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	18 – 19 February 2015

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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. 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 30 June 2015. At this 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 part of a joint event. The education provider and awarding body reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The professional body and the HCPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit, this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Patricia Higham (Social worker) Manoj Mistry (Lay visitor) Alan Murphy (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Amal Hussein
HCPC observer	Nicole Casey
Proposed student numbers	50 per cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
Chair	Kate Whittington (University of Bristol)
Secretary	Lulli Knight (University of Bristol)
Members of the joint panel	Andrew Linton (College of Social Work) Rosean Connelly (College of Social Work)

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	<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 HCPC 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"/>
Service users and carers	<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 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 programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining seven SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 can be approved. 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

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 all programme documentation, including advertising material and website, to ensure that potential applicants have contemporary information about changes to bursary arrangements.

Reason: From the information provided, the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider ensures that applicants to the programme have all of the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme. In discussion with the students, it was highlighted that students on the programme are aware of the changes in bursary arrangements for social work students in England. Students gave very detailed accounts of being supported by the admission tutor and the information given to them was up to date. However, the visitors were unable to determine from the documentation and website if and how information about possible changes to the fee structure due to changes in bursaries will be communicated to potential applicants. The visitors consider this to be essential information for applicants and therefore, require the education provider to review the programme documentation including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants are informed and kept up to date regarding possible changes to the fee structure. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme can meet this standard by ensuring that applicants have all the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme.

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 to demonstrate how they ensure potential applicants to the programme are fully informed about the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks required for the admissions process.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were satisfied that there is a DBS process in place for the programme. However, the visitors noted the programme advertising materials did not include explicit information about the required DBS checks, in particular that applicants will be asked to declare any convictions at the interview stage. The visitors considered information about the DBS checks to be important to enable potential applicants to make informed decisions about this programme. This includes the requirement for the DBS check and why this is needed along with details about the process. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating how they ensure potential applicants to the programme are fully informed about the criminal conviction checks required for the admissions process.

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 to demonstrate how they ensure potential applicants to the programme are fully informed about the health declaration required for the admission procedures.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were satisfied that there is a process for checking compliance with health requirements. However, the visitors noted the programme advertising materials did not include explicit information about the required health checks, in particular that applicants will be asked to declare any health related issues at the interview stage. As such the visitors could not determine where information about the health declaration was made available to enable potential applicants to make informed decisions about this programme. In particular they could not identify where details about the health check process and clarity about the confidentiality commitments made to the applicants in the application process are provided. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating how they will ensure potential applicants to the programme are fully informed about the health declaration required for the admission process.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to show that the partnership arrangements between the education provider and the partner organisations have been finalised and agreed.

Reason: The visitors noted the longstanding relationship the education provider has with placement providers such as Bristol City, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. In meeting with the senior team and placement educators, the visitors were informed that regular meetings took place between the education provider and placement providers to discuss the programme and matters regarding the provision of placements. In addition, the visitors were provided with a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the programme and the providers. However, during discussions with the placement providers, the visitors heard that the MOA is still in development and may be changed from its existing state. The visitors were therefore, unsure of the current status of the agreements and were therefore unable to identify how the arrangements will ensure that this programme has a secure position in the education provider's business plan. The visitors will require further evidence to show the draft of these partnership agreements are finalised and signed, to determine how the programme has a secure place in the education provider's business plan. In this way the visitors will be able to consider how the programme can meet this standard.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure the programme documentation accurately reflects the current landscape of regulation for social workers, in England.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider contained several instances of incorrect terminology. For example, on the programme's website the language used suggests students will become registered as a Social Worker on graduation and in Document 1 (MSc Social Work Booklet), the HCPC is referred to as the "Health & Care Professionals Council" page 4. All successful graduates from the

programme need to apply for Registration with the HCPC before they can work as a Social Worker, in England, and that all references to the HCPC should read as 'Health and Care Professions Council'. In addition, throughout the documentation the visitors noted the use of the phrase "...re-accredited by the HCPC" (such as in Document 32, Programme Specification page 1). The HCPC does not accredit programmes and as such the term re-approved should be used instead. The visitors noted other instances such as these throughout the documentation submitted. Incorrect and inconsistent statements have the potential to mislead potential applicants and students. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, and ensure that the terminology used is accurate, consistent and reflects the language associated with statutory regulation.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the appropriate protocols to obtain informed consent from students when they participate as service users and for managing situations when students decline from participating as service users in practical sessions.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the SETs mapping document provided prior to the visit and noted that the programme team were in the process of developing a consent form. The visitors also noted in the mapping document provided that, "All students are encouraged to think about a learning agreement in the form of Ground Rules which acknowledge the importance of confidentiality". Through discussions with the students and the programme team the visitors learnt that students were encouraged to develop their own ground rules which they must abide to whilst on the programme. The education provider submitted the ground rule as evidence to meet this standard. However, the visitors were unable to determine where within the development of these ground rules that consent was discussed and what protocols were in place for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as service users in practical and clinical teaching. As such the visitors could not determine how students were informed about the requirement for them to participate in this form of teaching and how records were maintained to indicate consent had been gained. The visitors also could not determine, from the evidence provided, how situations where students declined to participate were managed and what alternative learning arrangements would be provided to ensure that there was no impact on their learning. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide evidence of the formal protocols that are in place to obtain informed consent.

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

Condition: The programme team must clarify the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme, and how this information will be communicated to students.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the SETs mapping document provided prior to the visit and noted a web link to the education provider's regulation and procedures under SET 6.7. Upon reviewing the web link, the visitors could not easily identify which parts of the information provided were pertinent to the requirements for student progression and achievement within this particular programme. From the discussions with the

programme team, the visitors were not certain what criteria are used for students' progression within the programme and how this information would be communicated to students. The visitors were unable to see how the assessment regulations regarding student progression and achievement would be made clear to students so they can understand what is expected of them at each stage of the programme. The visitors were provided with additional information around this standard on the second day of the visit. However, the visitors noticed that information provided was still awaiting approval from the 'Assessment Standing Group' and therefore, the information presented may still change. As such, the visitors require the finalised documentation which defines the programme's assessment regulations regarding how students will progress through the programme and how this information would be communicated to students.

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

Reason: The visitors reviewed the SETs mapping document provided prior to the visit and noted that "the regulations are currently being amended within the programme-specific regulations to reflect" this standard. The visitors were provided with additional information around this standard on the second day of the visit. However, the visitors noticed that information provided was still awaiting approval from the 'Assessment Standing Group' and therefore, the information presented may still change. As such, the visitors require the finalised documentation which defines the programme's assessment regulation. This standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme clearly state that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility to apply to 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 submit further evidence that assessment regulations clearly specify requirements that there will be at least one external examiner who will be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the SETs mapping document provided prior to the visit and noted the education provider's 'Policy for External Examining of Taught Programmes' (Doc 29). Upon reviewing the document the visitors were unable to locate the appropriate information that clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner being appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register. The visitors were provided with additional information around this standard on the second day of the visit. However, the visitors noticed that information provided was still awaiting approval from the 'Assessment Standing Group' and therefore, the information presented may still change. As such, the visitors require the finalised documentation which defines the programme's assessment regulation and determines how the programme may meet this standard.

Patricia Higham
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