

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Chester
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	17 – 18 April 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 4 July 2013. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures 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 (in England) came onto the register on 1 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 professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – MA Social Work and Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only). 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. 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 of HCPC visitors and profession	Dorothy Smith (Social worker) Gary Dicken (Social worker) Joanna Jackson (Physiotherapist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
Proposed student numbers	40
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2013
Chair	Roger Kay (University of Chester)
Secretary	Roger Whiteley (University of Chester)
Members of the joint panel	Kath Morris (The College of Social Work) Jane Heyes (The 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"/>
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 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 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 8 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 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 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 clarify the information provided to potential applicants, particularly around timescales associated with placements, in order to ensure they can make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the programme documentation prior to the visit. The programme team provided links to the webpage, a copy of the presentation given at open days, a leaflet for interview days and a copy of the funding presentation given at interview days. The web link provided contained references to the previous regulator, though it was noted at the visit that the website has now been updated. In discussion with the students and the programme team, the visitors heard that students on the programme are not guaranteed to be on placements by the end of the academic year and may therefore need to continue into the summer in order to get their full placement experience. If a placement is not allocated within the set timeframes, this could delay the student's assessment into the next academic year and may affect progression. The visitors heard from discussions with the programme team that this information is covered in presentations at the interview day. However, they did not see sufficient evidence that all applicants to the programme are informed of this aspect of placements, and they could also not see from the presentation and the website information submitted, where applicants are informed as to the requirement of an enhanced DBS check or health declaration. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation, including all advertising materials, to ensure all information is accurate and up to date, and to highlight to potential applicants the potential issues associated with securing and attending placements. In this way, the visitors can ensure that this standard is being met.

3.4 There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence that the named person with overall professional responsibility for the programme is registered as a social worker, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: It was noted from the documentation that not all of the staff teaching on the programme are HCPC registered social workers, and in particular that the programme lead was not registered. At the visit, the senior team confirmed that there are currently several staff in the process of becoming registered, and that they expect those who are eligible to register, to do so over the next year. In order to confirm that this SET is being met, the visitors require evidence that the named person with overall professional responsibility for the programme is registered as a social worker, unless other arrangements are agreed. If this person is not registered with the HCPC, further detail as to their qualifications and experience, and the support that they will receive for the role will be required.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide the panel with final programme documentation following any changes made as a result of the internal review process.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the programme documentation and resources available to support students through the programme prior to the visit. The visitors noted that the programme was reviewed by an internal panel on the 5 March 2013. During the HCPC's visit, the visitors heard that there would be amendments made to the programme documentation in response to issues raised through the internal review process. They also learned that the programme team were, at the time of the visit, still seeking 'derogations' from the education provider's regulations in relation to compensation and progression throughout the programme. If the derogations are not permitted, this would need to be reflected in changes to the resources supporting students through the programme. To ensure the programme meets this standard the visitors will need to review any revised programme documentation in order to ensure that the resources to support student learning are effectively used, and that the SETs continue to be met following any changes. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to submit the revised programme documentation, highlighting where changes have been made.

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 ensure that a formal system is in place for gaining students informed consent before they participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: Through discussion with the students and programme team, the visitors noted that consent from students when participating as service users in practical teaching was discussed with students verbally at the beginning of the programme. However, the visitors were not presented with evidence of clear protocols to demonstrate that a formal system is in place for explicitly gaining students' informed consent before they participate as service users in practical teaching. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide evidence of formal protocols for obtaining and recording consent from students, and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical teaching.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence that the assessment of student performance in practice placements is objective, consistent and ensures fitness to practise.

Reason: The visitors were provided with the documents that would be used to support students and practice educators in the placement setting. The 'practice report' document will be used in the practice setting to map evidence to the standards of proficiency and the professional body's capabilities framework. However, through discussions with the placement providers and programme team, the visitors did not see evidence of clear guidance for practice educators as to the criteria for assessing against

these frameworks at each level. As practice educators will be responsible for assessing students in practice, the visitors therefore need further evidence as to how the programme team will ensure that students have demonstrated the SOPs and capabilities at the required level in each placement, and therefore met the learning outcomes. The visitors also require further evidence as to how the assessment criteria for the level which students are required to meet on each placement block are clearly communicated to practice educators and students. In this way, the visitors will be able to determine whether this SET has been met.

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 further evidence that there will be effective and rigorous monitoring mechanisms to ensure consistent and appropriate standards in the assessment of placements.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the assessment procedures as outlined in the programme documentation. They were satisfied that there are both internal and external moderation processes being carried out for the assessments taking place at the education provider. However, they were unable to determine from the documentation provided, the moderation systems that were in place for ensuring the appropriate standards of assessment of practice placements. In discussion with the programme team, the visitors heard that the personal tutor is able to pick up issues on placements, and will collaborate with the placement provider to help provide consistency in placement experiences. The visitors also noted that the 'second opinion process' can be initiated where concerns about a placement performance exist. However, as specified in the condition for SET 6.5, the visitors did not see evidence as to clear guidance for criteria in assessing placements. They were therefore unable to determine how the programme team will apply monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure parity of assessment in placements and meet this SET. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to how the marking procedures and internal moderation processes in place will ensure that appropriate standards of assessment are met in placements.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence as to how the staff will be enabled to apply assessment criteria consistently when assessing students' achievement in practice placements.

Reason: As outlined in the condition for SET 6.5, the visitors were provided with the documents that would be used to support practice educators in assessing student achievement in the placement setting. The 'practice report' document will be used in the practice setting to map evidence to the standards of proficiency and the professional body's capabilities framework. However, through discussions with the placement providers and programme team, the visitors did not see evidence of clear guidance for practice educators as to the criteria for assessing against these frameworks at each level. The visitors were therefore unable to determine how the requirements for student achievement were clearly specified for the practice elements of the programme. For this reason, the visitors require further evidence as to how the programme team will ensure that students have demonstrated the SOPs and capabilities at the required level in each placement, and therefore achieved the learning outcomes. They therefore require the

programme team to revisit the documentation supporting practice placement assessment to ensure that assessors will be fully enabled to measure all of the learning outcomes effectively and consistently.

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 clearly specify in assessment regulations the 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.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. The visitors were happy that the current external examiners meet the requirement of the HCPC. However, this standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme state that any external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered, or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiners to the programme are included in the assessment regulations, to ensure that this standard is met.

Joanna Jackson
Dorothy Smith
Gary Dicken