

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Durham
Programme name	Master of Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	30 – 31 October 2014

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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 14 May. 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 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 reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. The education provider, 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 education provider and the professional body outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Alan Murphy (Social worker in England) Deborah Kouzarides (Social worker in England) Manoj Mistry (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Amal Hussein
HCPC observer	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	32 per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 September 2015
Chair	Douglas Halliday (University of Durham)
Secretary	Ellen Chapman (University of Durham)
Members of the joint panel	Robert Johns (The College of Social Work) Sue Furness (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"/>
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 46 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 12 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 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 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

2.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the process in place for dealing with criminal convictions checks and how this process ensures consistency, transparency and equity at the admission stage when dealing with any declaration.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation provided prior to the visit, that the education provider has a process in place to carry out criminal conviction checks. However, it was not clear from the documentation how this process is carried out or what this process involves. During discussions with the programme team, the visitors learnt that the disclosure of conviction is required on the initial UCAS application form. From the time of application, applicants can declare any previous conviction(s) at any stage of the admission process. However, the visitors noted that it is not clear how the decision to allow the applicant to declare a conviction is determined. They also noted that it was not clear who had the final authority to make a decision on suitability of an applicant, as the Policy for considering applications with Criminal Convictions states that the admissions tutor will decide prior to the interview with the programme director. However if declared at interview the decision is by the programme director, admissions tutor and member of PMC (programme management committee) who must be a partner agency rep. In addition at this stage the candidate may be invited to give their own statement about the conviction whereas previously they are not. The visitors noted inconsistent information from the documentation relating to how this process is carried out. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to provide further evidence of the process in place dealing with criminal convictions checks and how this, when carried out ensures consistency, transparency and equity.

2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the process in place for checking that applicants can meet the health requirements of the programme and how this process ensures consistency and transparency at the admission stage when dealing with any health declaration.

Reason: The visitors noted from the documentation provided prior to the visit, that the education provider has a process in place to carry out health checks to ensure that reasonable adjustments can be made for students who may require them. However, it was not clear from the documentation how this process is carried out or what this process involves. The visitors noted that health requirements are discussed at the interview stage with applicants. However, they were unable to determine how applicants would be alerted to the fact that they would need to declare or discuss their health requirement at the interview stage. It was also not clear how the handling of any declaration relating to an applicant's health would be monitored and who would have overall responsibility for this monitoring to ensure consistency in decision making. The visitors also noted that the application form for the programme has a section for disability, but not a section for health declaration. From this, the visitors were unclear how decisions regarding an applicants' health may be made when it is not considered a disability. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to provide further

evidence of the process in place for checking any health requirements and how when carried out, the process ensures consistency and transparency.

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and / or professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must provide further information on the selection and entry criteria applied in relation to applicants' previous experience, how these criteria will be communicated to potential applicants.

Reason: The visitors noted the academic entry requirement for this programme in the admission information submitted. Document 13 (page six) states 'applicants holding a Lower Second class Honours degree (2:2) may be considered where there is evidence of extensive relevant employed work experience in a social care setting'. Discussions with the students revealed confusion regarding what would be considered appropriate work experience and the length of experience required to get on to the programme. From the documentation and discussions with the programme team it was not clear what type of experience would be considered, the length of experience, and how applicants would be informed of these criteria. It was also unclear how these criteria would be applied to ensure that there was consistency in making admissions decisions when applicants do not meet the academic criteria for entry onto the programme. The visitors therefore require further information on the selection and entry criteria applied in relation to applicant previous experience and how this criterion will be communicated to potential applicants.

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 formal protocols to obtain informed consent from students when they participate as service users and for managing situations when students decline from participating in these sessions.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors noted that in the SETs mapping document under SET 3.14 the education provider states 'students are not required to participate as service users in practical teaching'. The visitors noted through discussion with the students and the programme team that role play is used in teaching and students are required to participate as service users in practical simulation and role play activities. The programme team revealed that students are asked to draw up a guide line on how to work effectively in a group; the guideline typically covers agreements around confidentiality of information shared in group and classroom settings. From this information, the visitors could not find evidence of any formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participate as service users in practical teaching. The visitors considered that without consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved when students participated as service users. The visitors could not determine how students were informed about the requirement for them to participate and how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained. Also the visitors could not determine how situations where students declined from participation were managed with alternative learning arrangements so there would be 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 and how this is monitored should a student decline to participate.

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence regarding the plans for continued service user and carer involvement within the programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors were made aware that service users and carers are involved in the programme. Discussion at the visit indicated there were dedicated service users who had long standing relationships with the programme and who contributed to the programme in a number of ways. Discussion with the students indicated the contribution of these individuals was valuable to their learning. However, from the discussions with the programme team it was clear that formal future plans have yet to be made to involve service users in the programme. It was indicated by the service users group that they plan to develop a service user and carer forum, but the programme team provided limited detail about how this forum would run, or how it would involve service users and carers in the programme or how often the forum would take place. The visitors were unable to determine from the discussion and the documentation provided that a plan is in place on how service users will continue to be involved in the programme. In order to determine that this standard is met the visitors require further evidence demonstrating the plans for further service user and carer involvement.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit evidence to demonstrate how they maintain a thorough and effective system of approving and monitoring all placements.

Reason: The visitors noted a number of different documents submitted by the education provider to demonstrate how the programme meets this standard. However, in considering the programme documentation and discussions held at the visit, the visitors could not find any evidence of overarching policies, systems and procedures in place regarding the approval and monitoring of placements used by the programme. As such, the visitors could not determine the criteria used by the programme team to assess a placement and the overall process undertaken to approve it, as well as how activities such as the practice educator and students' questionnaires feed into this. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the overarching policies, systems and procedures in place regarding the approval and monitoring of placements, and how they are put into practice, to ensure this standard is met. In particular, the visitors require further evidence of the criteria used to approve placement providers and settings, the overall process for the approval and ongoing monitoring of placements, and how information gathered from placement providers at approval, or during a placement experience is considered and acted upon. Any such evidence should articulate what the process in place is and how this supports the review of the quality of a placement.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: Further evidence must be provided to demonstrate how the approval and monitoring processes in place ensure that placement providers have equality and diversity policies in place and that any issues which arise as a result of these policies are fed back effectively to the education provider.

Reason: The documentation submitted prior to the visit included the procedures for approving and monitoring practice placement providers. The visitors noted, from the documentation provided, that the education provider at the time of approving placements, invite placement providers to have explicit discussions around equality and diversity policies at the placements. However the visitors could not determine, from the evidence provided, how the equality and diversity policies, ensures that any relevant equality and diversity data was being monitored. They were also unsure how any issues, if they arose, would be flagged and who would be responsible for resolving these issues. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate how the approval and monitoring processes in place ensure that placement providers have equality and diversity policies in place and that any issues which arise as a result of these policies are fed back effectively to the education provider. In this way the visitors will be able to consider how this standard can be met by the programme.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement educators have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: The visitors noted the roles and responsibilities of staff involved with supporting students whilst on placement, as set out in the Practice Education Module(s) Handbook and Practice learning Handbook. The SETs mapping document outlines that the education provider is committed to providing ongoing training and support for practice placement educators. In considering the programme documentation and discussions held at the visit, the visitors could not find any evidence of policies and procedures in place regarding the approval and monitoring of placements used by the programme. In line with the condition for this standard, the visitors were unable to determine how the programme team ensures all placement settings have placement educators who have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience. In particular, how the audit process ensures all placement settings have practice placement educators who have relevant knowledge, skills and experience. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the policies and procedures in place regarding the approval and monitoring of placements, and how they are put into practice, to ensure this standard is met.

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence as to their processes to ensure that practice placement educators have undertaken the appropriate placement educator training.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors were made aware of the Placement Approval Process used in approving and monitoring placements. However, the documentation did not provide information around how the process is used to ensure that practice educators have undertaken the appropriate practice placement educator training. The programme team and placement providers discussed various practice educators training options that are offered and what level of qualification is required from the practice placement educators for each placement. The visitors

acknowledged that there were several training opportunities and workshops provided by the education provider for practice placement educators but were unable to see how each individual practice placement educator's training is monitored, or how the requirements for training feed into partnership agreements with the providers. The visitors were also unclear about the steps taken to ensure that suitably trained practice placement educators were in place for students. To ensure that this standard is met, the visitors require the education provider to articulate clearly the training requirements for placement educators and the processes in place for ensuring these requirements are met and monitored in practice.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The programme team must further demonstrate how they will ensure and monitor that the practice educators are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors were made aware of the Placement Approval Process used in approving and monitoring placements. However, the documentation provided limited information around how the process is used to ensure that practice placement educators are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed. The visitors however, noticed in the SETs mapping document that the education provider evidenced document 23 (List of Practice Educators, Placements and PEPs Compliance) as evidence to meet this standard. Upon receiving this document, the visitors noted that this document does not record whether practice placement educators are appropriately registered, or if other arrangements have been agreed. Discussion with the programme team revealed that the team are currently in the process of obtaining practice placement educator registration details. To ensure this standard is met, the visitors require the education provider to articulate clearly the requirements for registration or other arrangements for placement educators at each placement, and the processes in place for ensuring these requirements are implemented and monitored.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the effective collaboration with local authorities providing practice placements.

Reason: The visitors noted the relationship the education provider has with Durham County Council, Gateshead Council and placements in Sunderland. In meeting with the senior team and practice placement providers and educators the visitors were informed that regular meetings took place between Durham County Council and the education provider in which both parties discuss the programme and matters regarding the provision of placements. The visitors were provided with programme management committee minutes between the two organisations. However, from the minutes the visitors were unable to gather an understanding of the strategic involvement between the two organisations, or a written document that details how regular meetings will take place. The visitors noted that some of the key members in maintaining a regular and effective collaboration are new in post. In discussion with the practice placement providers and educators it was made clear that there was not a regular, formal communication mechanism in place to manage communication between the education

provider and organisations providing placements. The visitors therefore require further evidence of regular collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement providers.

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 an appropriate professional register

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which makes clear in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail about the external examiner recruitment policy. It was not evident that there was an explicit requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register. In order to determine this standard is met, the visitors require further evidence of the HCPC requirements regarding external examiners within the programme documentation.

Recommendations

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and / or professional entry standards.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the programme team consider changing the wording in document 14e (Guidance for Interviews with International Students) to clearly articulate that the interview questions for international students are in essence the same questions as for home students.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied the programme has appropriate admission procedures that applies selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and / or professional entry standards and therefore consider this standard to be met. However, reviewing the documentation prior to the visit, the visitors were under the understanding that interview questions vary between international students and home students. Discussions with the programme team reveal that the questions at the interview stage are the same. However, the programme team recognises that cultural differences for international students may exist and in order not to disadvantage any international applicant, confirmed that certain words would be altered or clarified. Based on this rationale, the visitors would like to encourage the programme team to consider changing the wording used in document 14e (Guidance for Interviews with International Students), so there is no confusion that the interview questions in essence are the same but take into account cultural differences.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the programme team consider the best way to communicate the availability of resources to students.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied the programme has appropriate resources to support student learning in all settings and so considered this standard to be met. However, from discussion with the students it was clear that students were not aware of all of the resources available for this programme, such as the policy to order additional books if students felt that they required it for this programme. The programme team indicated that they are aware of this problem but revealed that they have a budget for book that goes unspent each year, and that they have tried to inform students of this. The visitors would like to encourage the programme team to consider how best to communicate the availability of resources to students.

3.11 There must be adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the programme team consider reviewing the facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of student particularly around social space.

Reason: The visitors are satisfied the programme provides support for the students in all settings and are therefore satisfied this standard is met. However, discussion with the student revealed that at times they struggled with finding social space within the School. The programme team agreed that space is often a problem and that they are aware of this continuing issue with students. This issue was raised with the senior team,

who revealed that there is currently a consultation out for a new building. The visitors in the meantime would like to encourage the programme team to consider reviewing the social space facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Recommendation: The visitors would like to encourage the programme team to consider changing the title of the exit award from "Research in Social Work" so that it no longer contains the profession.

Reason: The visitors identified from the documentation before the visit that none of the exit awards from the programme include specific reference to the protected title of 'social worker' or the 'social worker' part of the HCPC register in their named award. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. However, the visitors noted from the documentation that the exit award is named "Research in Social Work", although it is clearly labelled that this award does not lead to eligibility to register with the HCPC. The visitors consider the words 'social work' within the exit award title could cause confusion for the lay person as it is a close link to 'social worker' the protected title. Therefore, the visitors would like to encourage the programme team to consider changing the title of the exit award from "Research in Social Work" so that it no longer contains the profession. In this way, the visitors can be sure that no confusion will arise from the exit award.

Alan Murphy
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