Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Greenwich
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time (In Service)
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	5 – 6 December 2013

Contents

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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 13 February. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. 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 (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 education provider reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. The visit also considered the following programmes – MA Social Work and PG Dip Social Work. Separate reports exist for these programmes.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Vicki Lawson-Brown (Social worker) Richard Barker (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
HCPC observers (day two only)	Brendon Edmonds Liz Craig
Proposed student numbers	27 per year
First approved intake	August 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2014
Chair	Martin Snowden (University of Greenwich)
Secretary	Kim Oliver (University of Greenwich)
Members of the joint panel	Corine Delage (Internal Panel Member) Jim Demetre (Internal Panel Member) Marilyn Gregory (External Panel Member) Jane Lindsay (The College of Social Work) Bill Turner (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	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

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

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 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining five 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 have also made a recommendation 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

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence that the attendance and lateness policies that apply to students on the programme are communicated clearly and consistently in the resources provided to support students.

Reason: The visitors noted some inconsistency in the programme documentation's description of the attendance policy, particularly regarding lateness to teaching and the resulting implications for the attendance records of students. In the submission document, it states that students may be admitted to a class up to 15 minutes after it starts (page 56). However, in the programme handbook, page 28, it indicates that ten minutes is the cut off, after which students can enter during a natural break in the session. Discussions with students indicated that they were aware of the overall attendance policy, but there was some confusion as to what is acceptable where lateness for sessions is concerned. The visitors noted that ambiguity in this aspect of how the attendance policy is applied may affect students' attendance records, or lead to their missing large parts of the curriculum's delivery incrementally. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide further evidence as to how they ensure that students on the programme are accurately informed as to the relevant processes and policies applicable to them on the programme. They therefore require the programme team to update the information held in resources to support student learning to ensure they are sufficiently clear and consistent.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence that the resources provided to support students throughout the programme are clear and consistent regarding compensation and condonement regulations throughout the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted from the programme submission document that compensation or condonement will not be applicable to practice based assessments or the final project. At the visit, the programme team explained that condonement for all other courses was permitted under assessment regulations, at the discretion of the Progression and Award Board. It was then further clarified that in exercising this discretion the Progression and Award Board choose not to condone at all for this programme. However, the visitors could not find any indication of this in the documentation provided, and were unclear as to how this is communicated to students. The education provider also explained that compensation for assessments within modules ('courses') is also permitted under assessment regulations, unless the course specification indicates that students are required to pass all components. The visitors noted that some course specifications indicate that all elements must be passed, some outline that assignments only require a minimum of 30 per cent, and some did not have a clear statement (for example, SOCW1181). The visitors considered that the information given to students does not sufficiently communicate the compensation and condonement policy specific to this programme. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revisit the documentation to ensure that the achievement and progression requirements for this programme are communicated consistently and clearly to students.

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 further evidence that where students participate as service users in practical teaching, appropriate protocols are used to obtain their consent.

Reason: The visitors noted through discussions with the students and the programme team that verbal consent was sought for participation as a service user in practical and role play activities. The submission document (page 51) also outlined that, “Participation relies on the implied consent on the students’ behalf”, but the visitors could not find evidence of any formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as a service user in practical teaching. The visitors considered that without consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved where students participate as service users. The visitors could not determine how students were informed about participating within the programme, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained, or 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 formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students (such as a consent form to be signed prior to commencing the programme or annually) and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical teaching or role play.

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 programme team must provide further clarity as to the policy regarding compensation and condonement for the programmes, to demonstrate how all standards of proficiency are assessed.

Reason: The visitors noted from the programme submission document that compensation or condonement will not be applicable to practice based assessments or the final project. At the visit, the programme team explained that condonement for all other courses was permitted under assessment regulations, at the discretion of the Progression and Award Board. It was then further clarified that in exercising this discretion the Progression and Award Board choose not to condone at all for this programme. However, the visitors could not find any indication of this in the documentation provided. The education provider also explained that compensation for assessments within modules (‘courses’) is also permitted under assessment regulations, unless the course specification indicates that students are required to pass all components. The visitors noted that some course specifications indicate that all elements must be passed, some outline that assignments only require a minimum of 30 per cent, and some did not have a clear statement (for example, SOCW1181). Where there are assignments which do not need to be passed in order to complete the programme, the visitors will need information as to the justification for this to ensure that the assessment of all standards of proficiency for social workers in England (SOPs) is not compromised. They therefore require further clarity as to compensation and condonement arrangements for the programme, in order to ensure that all SOPs will be met by students upon graduation.

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 were referred to information within the assessment regulations as evidence for this SET, which stated that "…Aegrotat may be recommended when a Progression and Award Board does not have enough evidence of the student's performance to recommend the award for which the student was a candidate."(5.31(d)). In discussion at the visit, it was confirmed that the education provider are able to give aegrotat awards. However, from the evidence provided the visitors could not determine where there was a clear statement that aegrotat awards would not provide eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. The visitors could therefore not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not lead to eligibility to register as a social worker in England. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to where the policy for aegrotat awards in relation to professional registration is laid out, and how students are informed about this.

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 programme team must submit further evidence 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 were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements. However, the visitors noted in the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. This standard requires the assessment regulations to clearly articulate 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 appropriately registered with the HCPC. The visitors therefore require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiner to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Recommendation: The programme team should keep under review the attendance and lateness policies to ensure they are implemented consistently.

Reason: As noted in the condition against SET 3.8, the visitors noted some inconsistency in the programme documentation's description of the attendance policy, particularly regarding lateness to teaching and the resulting implications for the attendance records of students. In discussions with students at the visit, the visitors noted some confusion as to the rules amongst different cohorts and heard that there appeared to be differences in the way that various lecturers dealt with students who arrived late for sessions. The visitors were content that there was an appropriate attendance policy in place and were satisfied that the programme team were aware of the correct policy for each programme. However, the visitors recommend that the programme team keep the monitoring of attendance under review in order to ensure consistency of implementation of the attendance policy across the programme.

Richard Barker
Vicki Lawson-Brown