

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Hertfordshire
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	7 – 8 December 2011

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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 'Paramedic' 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. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 22 February 2012. At the Committee meeting on 22 February 2012 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 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 part of a joint event. The education provider and reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science, BSc (Hons) Dietetics and BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy. The education provider, the professional body and the HPC 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 HPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Gordon Pollard (Paramedic) Margaret Foster (Occupational Therapist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	30
First approved intake	September 2004
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chairs	David Gayfer (University of Hertfordshire) Jan Turner (University of Hertfordshire)
Secretaries	Liz Mellor (University of Hertfordshire) Paula Dilley (University of Hertfordshire)
Members of the joint panel	Jo Cahill (Internal Panel Member) Bob Willis (College of Paramedics)

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 two conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 56 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining SET.

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.

Conditions

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 include a clear statement in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the register or that other arrangements will be agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the registration status of an external examiner in the external examiner recruitment policy specific to the programme. The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements for the programme but need to see evidence that HPC requirements regarding the external examiner on the programme have been included in the documentation to demonstrate this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The programme team should consider highlighting at the beginning of each academic year that students need to declare any changes in their criminal records status.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team that students' have to go through a criminal convictions check at beginning of the programme. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard continues to be met. However in further discussion with students it was made clear that they were aware of undergoing the check but less clear about declaring any changes to their status. Therefore the visitors recommend that the programme team investigate ways of re-enforcing the fact that students need to make the programme team aware of any changes to their criminal convictions status.

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider how best to facilitate student transfer between this programme and the BSc (Hons) Paramedic science programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors noted that the first year of both the Foundation Degree and BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science programmes are the same for both cohorts. In discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that, dependent on academic achievement, students may wish to transfer between the programmes at the end of their first year of study. However it was clear that, due to the link between the academic programmes and the placement provider, facilitating transfers between the programmes would be problematic. This would be particularly so if large numbers of students transferred between programmes as the placement and academic provision in subsequent years has been allocated and planned for. Therefore there was no policy in place to allow students to transfer easily between programmes after the first year of study. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team continue to investigate how best to manage any transfers between the two programmes and how these transfers may be implemented in the future.

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

Recommendation: The programme team should consider highlighting at the beginning of each academic year that students have given their consent to participate in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team that students' consent is gained at the beginning of the programme for them to participate in practical and clinical teaching. The visitors

also noted in discussion with the students that any issues which may arise around clinical teaching are dealt with quickly and sensitively by the programme team. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard continues to be met. However in further discussion with students it was made clear that several of them could not remember signing the consent form which is required as part of the admissions process. Therefore the visitors recommend that the programme team investigate ways of re-enforcing the fact that students have given their consent to participate in the programme in this way.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and an understanding of:

- the learning outcomes to be achieved;
- the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;
- expectations of professional conduct;
- the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and
- communication and lines of responsibility.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider how best to continue the work currently being undertaken to develop the student skills passport.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team and the practice placement providers it was highlighted that the practice assessment document (PAD) is the main tool utilised by students and practice placement educators to identify what experience a student would need to have while on placement. The PAD was utilised in meetings at the beginning and end of placement while being completed throughout the placement period. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, the visitors noted in the documentation and in discussion with the programme team that a 'skills passport' was being developed to better inform a practice placement educator of the relative experience and skills a student possessed. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team consider how best to continue the development of the skills passport to enhance student and practice placement educator's preparation for placements.

6.6 There must be effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider further monitoring of the assessment moderating mechanisms in place to best address the issues highlighted in the external examiners report.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation, and in discussion with the senior team, that there are comprehensive monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that there are appropriate standards applied in the assessment of students. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard continues to be met. However the visitors noted within the documentation submitted that the programme's external examiner had highlighted that half of one graduating cohort received first class degrees. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that a significant contributor to this set of results was that a new

university wide process had been implemented to calculate degree results. It was also clarified that the utilisation of objectively structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) may also have contributed to this unusual result. The programme team have since implemented a policy of videoing OSCE assessments to enable easier moderation of the marking. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider continues to monitor the situation and investigates how best to mitigate against any unusually high sets of results in the future.

Margaret Foster
Gordon Pollard