hcpc health & care professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Hertfordshire
Programme name	Postgraduate Certificate Applied Mental Health Practice Formerly: 1) MSc Social Interventions (Mental Health) and 2) Postgraduate Diploma Social Interventions (Mental Health).
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Type of programme	Approved mental health professional
Date of visit	6 – 7 May 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 a protected title 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.

As well as approving educational programmes for people who want to join the Register or have an annotation on their Registration record, the HCPC also approve a small number of programmes which are not linked to HCPC Registration. These programmes are for the profession of approved mental health professionals (AMHPs) (for social workers, mental health and learning disabilities nurses, occupational therapists and practitioner psychologists).

The HCPC criteria for approving AMHP programmes set out the systems and processes an education provider is expected to have in place to deliver an AMHP programme, as well as the competencies professionals must achieve on completing the programme.

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 26 August 2014. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the conditions 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

When the regulation of social workers in England transferred from the General Social Care Council (GSCC) to ourselves, we took responsibility for approving AMHP programmes in England. The Health and Social Care Act (2012) gives us powers to set criteria for approving AMHP programmes. A decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing AMHP programmes. This visit is to assess the programmes against the criteria for approving AMHP programmes and professionals who complete it will be able to achieve the criteria for approved mental health professionals.

This visit was part of a joint event. The education provider also reviewed the programme. The education provider 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. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the criteria for approving approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes. A separate report produced by the education provider, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and visitor role	David Abrahart (Approved mental health professional) Christine Stogdon (Approved mental health professional)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	30 maximum per cohort, two intakes a year (September and January)
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2014
Chair	Jo Cahill (University of Hertfordshire)
Secretary	Liz Mellor (University of Hertfordshire)
Members of the joint panel	Jan Bowyer (Internal Panel Member) Alison Fraser (Internal Panel Member) Sharon Korek (Internal Panel Member) Mandy Schofield (External Panel Member)

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 criteria for approving AMHP programmes	☒	☐	☐
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 criteria for approving AMHP programmes and professionals who complete it will be able to achieve the criteria for approved mental health professionals

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 41 of the criteria have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining nine criteria.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for approval. Conditions are set when certain criteria have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the criterion 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 criterion has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

A.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 the admissions materials to ensure it is clear, consistent and provides applicants with the information they require making an informed decision about the programme.

Reason: From the documentation submitted before the visit the visitors noted further clarifications could be added for some of the entry requirements. The applicants are asked for a "reference as to suitability" (Programme specification, section F). Upon discussion it was clarified applicants needed to be recommended by the lead Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP) along with an agreement from their line manager. The requirements also ask for "Achievement of a further relevant programme of study" (Programme specification, section F). Discussion with the programme team indicated this could mean a specific pre-AMHP module but may not. There was limited information about the pre-AMHP module within the information provided. Discussion also indicated the local authority or the programme team makes the decision of whether or not the pre-AMHP module is an entry requirement for an applicant. From the documentation the visitors were also unclear as to how the admissions processes apply the accredited prior certificated learning (APCL) and accredited prior experiential learning (APEL) policies. Through discussion it was indicated these would be used for students who had interrupted their studies and were re-joining the programme. The visitors considered the admissions materials should enable applicants to make an informed decision about the programme and therefore should include clarifications about:

- the suitability reference;
- the further relevant programme of study;
- the pre-AMHP module; and
- the APCL / APEL policies).

The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the admissions materials to ensure it is clear, consistent and provides applicants with the information they require making an informed decision about the programme.

B.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used

Condition: The education provider must submit revised programme documentation.

Reason: During discussions at the visit it was indicated for the education provider revalidation purposes the programme team would be making extensive changes to the programme specification, programme handbook, module descriptors and placement portfolio. The visitors additionally noted some errors through the documentation that require correcting. The programme handbook (page 7) states that graduates "will need to register as an AMHP with HCPC". HCPC do not register AMHPs and so this statement needs to be corrected. The Practice Assessors Guidance document (page 1) states HCPC have specified terminology to be used for the role of practice supervisors / practice assessors. This is incorrect; the HCPC does not specify any terminology in this way. The visitors also noted there was inconsistency when referring

to the number of placement days required. Discussion indicated there are 30 placement days and 2 additional days for writing up the portfolio. The visitors are required to ensure the resources to support student learning are effectively used and therefore require the education provider to submit the revised programme documentation as specified above and ensure the incorrect references are corrected.

C.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the criteria in section 2

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate the programme ensures those who successfully complete the programme will be able to meet the criteria in section 2 of the approval criteria for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes.

Reason: From the section 2 criteria mapping submitted the visitors could not identify how the learning outcomes for the modules mapped to the criteria because the mapping document referred in the main to timetabled lectures. The visitors were particularly concerned with where in the programme content and learning outcomes, child protection procedures in relation to AMHP practice (criterion 1.8) would be covered. Discussion with the programme team indicated adult protection procedures were specifically included however the programme team were unable to identify where and how child protection was located within the curriculum. The visitors suggest the education provider submit another mapping document which clearly identifies the module learning outcomes which will address each criterion and provides further explanations and evidence for criterion 1.8. As indicated above, the visitors therefore require further evidence demonstrating this criterion is met.

D.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence demonstrating there is a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Reason: During discussion at the visit, it was indicated there are formal relationships between the education provider and the practice placement provider held within a contract. It was further discussed this contract is at strategic level and does not include operational management procedures. The programme team highlighted placement quality assurance processes occurred through initial meetings prior to involving students, through mid-way meetings as part of the students' placements and then were reinforced by feedback after the students' placements had ended. The programme team indicated there were no formal procedures and associated documentation in place and that they would need to do further work to formalise the quality and monitoring arrangements. The visitors note that Section D of the criteria should be considered when approving and monitoring all placements. In order to determine this criterion is met the visitors therefore require further evidence.

D.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence demonstrating how they ensure practice placement educators have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: During discussion at the visit, it was indicated there are formal relationships between the education provider and the practice placement provider held within a contract. It was further discussed how the contract is a strategic level contract and does not include operational management procedures. The programme team highlighted placement quality assurance processes occurred through initial meetings prior to involving students, through mid-way meetings as part of the students' placements and then were reinforced by feedback after the students' placements had ended. The programme team indicated there were no formal procedures and associated documentation in place and that they would need to do further work to formalise the quality and monitoring arrangements. The visitors note that criterion D.4 should be considered here. The visitors suggest the programme team work to hold lists of appropriate practice educators as part of the formal approval and monitoring processes. In order to determine this criterion is met the visitors therefore require further evidence.

E.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the competencies set out in section 2 of the criteria

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate the assessment strategy and design ensures those who successfully complete the programme will be able to meet the criteria in section 2 of the approval criteria for approved mental health professional (AMHP) programmes.

Reason: From the section 2 criteria mapping submitted the visitors could not identify how the assessment of the learning outcomes for the modules mapped to the criteria because the mapping document referred in the main to timetabled lectures. The visitors were particularly concerned with where child protection procedures in relation to AMHP practice (criterion 1.8) would be assessed. Discussion with the programme team indicated adult protection procedures were specifically included however the programme team were unable to identify where and how child protection was assessed within the curriculum. The internal revalidation panel indicated to the programme team they could use module guide templates which allow for the mapping of module learning outcomes to assessments. The visitors suggest this could be appropriate method of evidencing this criterion. This condition is linked to the condition under C.1. As indicated above, the visitors therefore require further evidence demonstrating this criterion is met.

E.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes

Condition: The education provider must submit revised programme documentation demonstrating the assessment methods.

Reason: During discussions at the visit it was indicated the programme team would be making extensive changes to the module descriptors to update the content, correct any inaccuracies in the assessment methods listed and ensure they were complete. In order to determine that the assessment methods are appropriate to ensure the learning outcomes are being met the visitors require the education provider to submit the revised programme documentation demonstrating the assessment methods.

E.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure safe and effective practice as an AMHP

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence to assure the visitors the measurement of student performance ensures safe and effective practice as an AMHP.

Reason: Discussion at the visit articulated the assessment processes for the programme portfolio. The portfolio is assessed in the first instance by the student's practice assessor. The portfolio is then reviewed by two practice assessors who are unknown to the student. The two practice assessors then come together to agree final outcomes on the student's demonstration of whether the AMHP competencies have been met. Members of the programme team then undertake the academic assessment of the portfolio before the recommendation on the student is taken to the Board of Examiners. The visitors noted this is an integrated programme with academic and practical elements of the programme delivered and assessed. However, the visitors were concerned there is no integration of the academic theory and practice learning assessments. The visitors reflected this may not appropriately assess the students' demonstration of evidence based practice and how it informs their safe and effective practice as an AMHP. The visitors therefore require further evidence to assure the visitors that the measurement of student performance ensures safe and effective practice as an AMHP.

E.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme

Condition: The education provider must confirm the programme awards and ensure the programme documentation, including advertising materials, articulates it clearly.

Reason: This criterion requires education providers to clearly articulate the awards that can and cannot lead to eligibility to apply to work as an AMHP. At the visit, the internal panel indicated the programme award title presented for validation could not be used as it was already in use for an existing programme award. In order to determine this criterion is met the visitors require the education provider to confirm the approved programme title and ensure the programme documentation, including advertising materials, articulates it clearly.

Recommendation

C.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics and / or the NMC's code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives on their practice as an AMHP

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider reviews the programme documentation with the intention to further emphasise the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics and / or the NMC's code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and the discussion with the students the visitors were satisfied this criterion is met. The visitors did note that there were areas in the documentation provided that could also have mentioned the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics and / or the NMC's code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives. The visitors therefore recommend the education provider reviews the programme documentation with the intention to further emphasise the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics and / or the NMC's code: standards of conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives where appropriate.

David Abrahart
Christine Stogdon