

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Hertfordshire
Programme name	MSc Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	20 – 21 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 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 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

The HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Social work profession came onto the register in 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 validated the programme. The visit also considered the BSc (Hons) Social work – Full time. 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. A separate report exists for the other programme. 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, outlines their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Alan Murphy (Social worker) George Delafield (Practitioner psychologist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Amal Hussein
Proposed student numbers	36 Full time once per year
First approved intake	September 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2014
Chair	Petros Khoudian (University of Hertfordshire)
Secretary	Liz Mellor (University of Hertfordshire)
Members of the joint panel	Jan Bowyer (Internal Panel Member) Hannah Chiswick (Internal Panel Member) Keith Popple (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	<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 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

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the admissions information to clarify the accreditation for prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme specification (page eight), that the programme will follow University policy and guidelines regarding APEL. However, from the documentation provided, the visitors were unsure what the university wide policy and guidelines were. Discussion with the programme team indicated that the APEL policy was not regularly used, however a student would technically be able to come onto the programme through an APEL route. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the generic AP(E)L policy applies to this programme, and how potential applicants are made aware of what could be considered through AP(E)L. The visitors also require further evidence of how the programme team actively monitor the AP(E)L process against the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs).

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of how equality and diversity policies are implemented and monitored in relation to the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted in the SETs mapping document that the education provider signposted the visitors to the 'Student Handbook' as the source of evidence for this standard. However, after reviewing the 'University of Hertfordshire Equal Opportunities Policies' in the student handbook, the visitors were unable to determine what the equality and diversity policy being implemented and used by the education provider was. Discussion with the senior team revealed how the equality and diversity policy works in relation to applicants and students. However, it was still not clear to the visitors how the policy is implemented and monitored on this programme. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate determine how the equality and diversity policy is implemented and how the implications of this policy are monitored to 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 further evidence of a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme, and ensure that they are consistently referenced throughout the programme documentation.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme handbook (page five) that a number of management roles had been outlined, including the Dean of Health and Social Work, the Head of the Department of Nursing and Social Work, and the Professional Lead in Social Work. From this information provided it was not clear who the named person was, that has overall professional responsibility for the programme. The visitors also felt

that this was not made clear in discussion with the programme team. The visitors therefore require further evidence of who the named person who has overall professional responsibility is, and require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to reflect this. In this way, the visitors can determine that this person is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, from the relevant part of the HCPC Register.

3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Condition: The education provider must provide further information regarding how concerns about students' profession related conduct are dealt with clearly and consistently, and how this process works in tandem with the education provider's fitness to practice procedure.

Reason: In discussions at the visit and from the documentation, the visitors were made aware that there are processes in place which deal with concerns about students' profession-related conduct. For example, the suitability procedures for the suspension and exclusion of students from the programme on the grounds of professional unsuitability. However, the visitors were unable to determine a clear, definitive, formal procedure for dealing with issues around student professional conduct to ensure that issues of this kind are dealt with clearly and consistently. They were also unclear how this process links into the established fitness to practice procedure. As a result the visitors could not determine what criteria are used to determine when an issue around students' profession related conduct is referred to the fitness to practice procedure and how this is communicated to students, staff and placement educators to ensure consistency. Therefore the visitors require clear evidence of the formal procedure in place to deal with issues around students' profession-related conduct and how this procedure connects to the fitness to practice processes in determining if students can continue on the programme. This evidence should also highlight explicit information for students and placement educators around this process so that visitors can determine how this standard is being met.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not lead to registration with the HCPC.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors could not determine where in the programme documentation there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. This SET requires the programme documentation to clearly state that an aegrotat award will not provide eligibility for admission to the Register. The visitors could not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not enable them to be eligible to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require the education provider to update the programme documentation, to clearly specify that an aegrotat award would not provide eligibility for admission to the Register. This is to provide clarity for students and to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the information given to potential applicants via the website.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the website and found that many of the key information necessary for potential applicants to make informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme was available on the website. Therefore, the visitors were satisfied that this standard is being met. However, discussion with the students revealed that many of them found navigating through the website to be tricky and confusing. Therefore, the visitors would like to encourage the education provider to consider reviewing how crucial information regarding the programme is presented to potential applicants through the website.

Alan Murphy
George Delafield