

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Kent
Programme name	MA in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	13 – 14 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. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 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 condition 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 did not review the programme, but the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the BA (Hons) Social Work and PG Diploma in Social Work (masters exit route only). 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	David Ward (Social worker) David Childs (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
Proposed student numbers	15 per year inclusive of students from the PG Diploma in Social Work (masters exit route only) programme
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2014
Chair	Peter Jeffries (University of Kent)
Secretaries	Chloe Ewen (University of Kent) Taryn Duhig (University of Kent) Louise Tollervey (University of Kent) Annikki Laitinen (University of Kent) Justine Reid (University of Kent)
Members of the joint panel	Kate Johnson (The College of Social Work) Andrew Linton (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"/>

The HCPC saw external examiner reports for the BA (Hons) Social Work programme. There are no past external examiner reports for this programme because it is a new programme.

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"/>

The HCPC met with students from the BA (Hons) Social Work programme, and one student on the MA in Social Work was present for part of the meeting.

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

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 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 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

2.7 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 further demonstrate how they prepare those involved in assessing applicants in the admissions process in relation to equality and diversity policies in admissions.

Reason: The visitors noted that service users and carers are involved in the admissions process through observing and assessing group discussions, and social work practitioners sit alongside lecturers on interview panels. In discussion the visitors heard how the programme team have good working relationships with the practitioners. As social workers, it is expected they will come with the appropriate values for implementing equality and diversity policies and fairness in interviewing applicants. The practitioners are often asked to attend early on interview days to prepare with the academic staff for the interviewing process. Service users and carers receive preparatory training and will sit in on a group discussion prior to being an observer who is assessing. The visitors were not clear as to whether this preparation covers equality and diversity, or whether there is a formal process in place to ensure everyone involved in the admissions process, including academic staff, are informed on the education provider's policies, and are implementing them appropriately. The visitors also reviewed the Admissions Handbook document, and noted there is a section on Equality and Diversity (page 4). This information details the equality and diversity initiatives in place for students once they are on the programme, but the visitors could not clearly see how assessors or interviewers are prepared to implement the policy in the admissions process. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the mechanisms used to ensure the education provider's equality and diversity policies are put into practice in the admissions process.

Recommendations

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Recommendation: The education provider is advised to monitor the communication mechanisms with key stakeholders to ensure the appropriate feedback loops are in place.

Reason: In discussion with students at the visit, there were a number of instances where students were unclear on the reasons behind decisions on the programme, or where they would appreciate further information in response to feedback they give. For instance, students were unclear on the reasons for the decision taken in bursary allocation or the consistency of decisions in the concessions process. The visitors clarified these matters with the programme team and were satisfied that the programme was being managed effectively, but advise the programme team to monitor the way they communicate decisions, processes and actions with students. The visitors also noted that the external examiners for the BA (Hons) Social Work programme (there were no external examiner reports for this programme as this is the first year running) had raised the issue of anonymity at examination boards for the last two years. The visitors heard the education provider's response to this at the visit and were satisfied this standard of education and training is met, however, the fact that the issue was raised by the external examiners over a number of years indicated that the response provided to them by the education provider had not clarified the matter for them. They also state that they did not receive a response to their recommendations to the University the previous year (page 12, Appendix 1). The visitors therefore recommend the communication mechanisms with external examiners are also kept under review going forward.

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

Recommendation: The education provider is advised to review the provision of transport arrangements for those who require wheelchair access to ensure there are accessible facilities for students in all settings.

Reason: The visitors noted a comment in the minutes of the Partnership Initiative Meeting (Monday 14th October 2013) with service user and carer contributors to the programme, referring to the lack of wheelchair access on the campus shuttle buses which serve the University of Kent at the Medway Campus. The education provider confirmed at the visit that there is currently no wheelchair access on the shuttle service, but that anyone requiring transport with wheelchair access will have a taxi supplied. A travel coordinator will also work with anyone requiring wheelchair access to discuss their travel plan. The visitors were satisfied that the facilities to support students were sufficient, but recommend that the availability and accessibility of transport for wheelchair users be monitored to ensure there are accessible facilities to support students and programme contributors on campus.

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

Recommendation: The programme team is advised to keep under review the collaboration and contributions of placement providers at strategic level, to ensure this continues to be effective.

Reason: In discussion with the practice placement providers and educators, and the programme team at the visit, the visitors heard the various communication channels which help to build effective collaboration with the education provider and partners. The visitors heard how the practice assessment panel, partnership agreements and social work education group provide the required mechanisms for collaborative working to ensure that there are quality placements available for the students. The placement provider representatives discussed the way they communicate with the programme team and attend the Board of Studies when they are able. Many also stated that they were not consulted about the new programme provision, and the visitors heard that there is currently only a limited amount of collaborative working with practice placement providers at a strategic, management level. The programme team confirmed that they have upcoming meetings and plans to try and encourage more regular collaborative opportunities at director level. The visitors recommend that the collaboration at a strategic level is kept as a focus to ensure it is effective in providing overarching direction for the provision and support of quality placements on the programme.

David Ward
David Childs