

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Lancaster
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	15 – 16 May 2013

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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 12 September 2013. 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 professional body considered their endorsement of the Programme. The visit also considered the following Programmes - Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work, MA Social Work and MA Social Work with Religious Studies. 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	Gordon Burrow (Chiropodist / podiatrist) Patricia Higham (Social worker) Beverley Blythe (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Abdur Razzaq
Proposed student numbers	40
Proposed start date of Programme approval	September 2013
Chair	David Smith (University of Lancaster)
Secretary	Andrew Okey (University of Lancaster)
Members of the joint panel	Vicki Lawson-Brown (The College of Social Work) Hilary Burgess (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"/>

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 5 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.

Conditions

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.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants and students are made aware of possible changes to the fee structure and information about the changes to bursary arrangements.

Reason: In the documentation provided, the visitors noted information regarding fees and bursaries. During discussion with the students the visitors learnt that students had to pay extra while on the programme without any prior warning. During discussion with the programme team the visitors noted the education provider had to increase fees for the programme due to changes in bursaries by the government. The visitors highlighted that from September 2013 bursary arrangements for social work students in England are changing even further. The visitors were unable to determine from the documentation if information about possible changes to the fee structure due to changes to the bursaries will be communicated to potential applicants and students. The visitors consider this to be essential information for applicants and therefore, require the education provider to review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants and students are made aware of possible changes to the fee structure and information about the changes to bursary arrangements.

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 evidence of the formal protocols to obtain informed consent from students when they participate as service users and for managing situations when students decline from participating as service users, in practical sessions.

Reason: The visitors noted through discussion with the students and the programme team that students will be asked verbally nonetheless there were no formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated as a service user in practical sessions. The visitors were concerned that without formal consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved with students participating as service users. The visitors could not determine how students were informed about participation requirements 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 and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching.

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

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme documentation to articulate clearly the requirements for student progression and the processes in place to ensure students who receive condonement and progress further within the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs).

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors were unclear about the progression requirements in place for students. The document Assessment Regulations 6.4.1 (page 10) states “To proceed to the final year of a Bachelors with honours degree (or part-time equivalent) all students must achieve, following all opportunities for reassessment, an overall aggregation score of 9 with no more than 30 credits condoned”. During discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the programme team will ensure students receiving condonement meet HCPC’s SOPs. However, the visitors require further evidence of the regulations and processes in place throughout the programme to ensure students who receive condonement and progress further within the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency (SOPs).

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate what awards confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register and those exit awards which do not.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that anyone successfully completing the programme would be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC. It was also clear that anyone who received an exit award would not be eligible to apply to the HCPC Register. However, in the documentation submitted by the education provider the visitors could not determine how students were informed about the various awards and their impact on the eligibility of a student to apply for the Register. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team ensure that students understand which awards confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register and which do not.

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 revisit the programme documentation to clearly state that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors could not determine where in the assessment regulations there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. The document 3.4 Things You Need to Know 2013-14 (page 15) states “Students may not be awarded an aegrotat degree in social work”. The visitors were unable to 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 further evidence to ensure that there is a clear statement included in the programme documentation.

Patricia Higham
Gordon Borrow
Beverley Blythe