Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Liverpool
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC register	Radiography
Relevant modality	Therapeutic radiography
Date of visit	9 - 11 April 2008

Contents

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 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Radiographer'or 'Therapeutic radiographer' 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 on 18 August 2008. At the Education and Training Committee's meeting on 18 August 2008, 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 changes affected the following standards - programme admissions standards, programme management and resources standards, curriculum standards, practice placements standards and assessment standards. 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 reviewed the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography, BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Orthoptics and BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy. The education provider 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, outlines their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Professor Angela Duxbury (Radiography) Mr Russell Hart (Radiography) Dr Martin Benwell (Radiographer)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Mandy Hargood
Proposed student numbers	45
Initial approval	4 January 1998
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2008
Chair	Ms Julie Walton (University of Liverpool)
Secretary	Ms Janis Paine (University of Liverpool)
Members of the joint panel	Professor Cynthia Pine (University of Liverpool/Internal Panel Member) Professor Gordon Tatlock (University of Liverpool/Internal Panel Member)

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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐
Other Assessment handbook	☒	☐	☐
Other Context document	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

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 a condition is set on the programme, which must be met before the ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 62 of the SETs have been met and a condition 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.

The visitors have also made a number of commendations. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

3.9 Where students participate as patients or clients in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the student consent form and the policy associated with it to clarify the information provided to students regarding participation and consent as a client or patient in all practice settings.

Reason: In the documentation provided by the education provider for the visit the policy that accompanied the consent form stated “normally students will be expected to consent…” Therefore although consent was always obtained, students could opt out if there was an issue with a particular situation for that student. Although the education provider explained that students were counselled as to the consequences of opting out the visitors were concerned that if a student took this option then the student may not be able to meet all of the standards of proficiency for the programme.

Recommendations

5.5 The number, duration and range of placements must be appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to monitor and develop clinical placement capacity.

Reason: The visitors recognised that there were limited placements for the radiotherapy programme at present. However as the student numbers increase on the programme, the visitors felt that the education provider would need to keep the current placements and the need for the new placements under review in order to maintain the range on placements available for students.

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing how student feedback on written coursework might be enhanced to maximise the benefits to the student.

Reason: The visitors noted in discussions with students that feedback on written coursework was often generic in nature and therefore was not always sufficient for the students needs. The visitors felt that there was an opportunity for the education provider to review the nature of the feedback given to enhance the student's knowledge and understanding of the subject material studied.

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider amending the assessment marking descriptors to provide more detail on the learning opportunities and assessment outcomes.

Reason: From review of the submitted documentation, the visitors felt that the assessment marking descriptors are currently restrictive with regard to the learning and assessment opportunities available to students. To better reflect the wide range of learning and assessment opportunities, the visitors felt the programme team should revisit the assessment marking descriptors.

Commendations

The visitors wish to commend the following aspects of the programme:

Commendation: The visitors wished to congratulate the School of Health Sciences on introducing monthly "drop-in" sessions for students within the School in support of the work of the Faculty Clinical Psychology Advisory Service to provide student counselling and support.

Reason: The visitors felt that this "drop-in" sessions was an enhancement to the School's facilities for ensuring the welfare and well-being of the students during their time at University and a model for best practice.

Commendation: The visitors wished to congratulate the programme team on their partnership working with the clinical placements providers.

Reason: During the meeting with the placement providers the visitors were impressed by the obvious close collaboration between the programme team and the placement providers and the extraordinary support that both groups provided for the students in what is a relatively small area of specialist placements with the demands from a large group of learners. This was seen as best practice.

Professor Angela Duxbury
Mr Russell Hart
Dr Martin Benwell