

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Plymouth
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
Mode of delivery	Full Time
Relevant part of HPC register	Physiotherapy
Date of visit	8 – 10 April 2008

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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 'Physiotherapist' 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 reconfirmed. 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - curriculum 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 and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy and BSc (Hons) Podiatry. The education provider, the professional body 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. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Anthony Power (Physiotherapist) Jacqueline Waterfield (Physiotherapist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Osama Ammar
Proposed student numbers	60
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2008
Chair	Richard Linford (University of Plymouth)
Secretary	Chelle Grant (University of Plymouth)
Members of the joint panel	Ann Green (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy)

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	<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"/>
Online access to relevant policies and documents	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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	<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 (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 59 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 SETs.

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 did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the reason or purpose for registration is to entitle an individual to use the protected title 'physiotherapist' and not to provide entitlement for employment in the National Health Service (NHS)

Reason: In the submitted programme documentation (page 12 of the programme handbook), there is an indication that registration with HPC is required for employment in the NHS. As registration only allows an individual to use a protected title and does not entitle someone to be employed in the NHS or elsewhere, the visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to accurately describe the purpose of registration.

2.2.1 The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including evidence of a good command of written and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that the entry requirement for English language when it is not an applicant's first language is IELTS 7.0.

Reason: In the submitted documentation there were contradictions in the level of IELTS required for entry to the programme. In the discussion with the programme team it was indicated that the correct level of entry is IELTS is 7.0. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be amended to ensure consistency.

2.2.4 The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to remove references to a "strong academic profile" in relation to entry requirements for overseas applicants and include in its place an indication that equivalency in entry qualifications will be determined.

Reason: The programme documentation indicated that the entry requirements for overseas applicants to the programme would include a "strong academic profile". The visitors felt this requirement did not provide sufficient detail to advise applicants and admissions staff on the appropriate academic entry standards. In discussion with the programme team it was apparent that overseas applicants would be assessed for equivalency to standard entry requirements. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to better reflect the entry requirement.

6.4 The measurement of student performance and progression must be an integral part of the wider process of monitoring and evaluation, and use objective criteria.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to ensure that the final year practice assessment criteria ensure that individuals at the pass level and above will demonstrate autonomous, safe and effective practice.

Reason: The final year practice assessment criteria in the submitted documentation contained wording that indicated that someone performing at a pass level and above may not demonstrate autonomous, safe and effective practice. The visitors felt the objective criteria must be revisited to more effectively measure student performance for the final year practice assessment criteria to ensure that anyone performing at the pass level and above must have demonstrated safe and effective practice.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider increasing the regularity of obtaining consent from students on the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that a protocol for obtaining consent was in place at the start of the programme. However, the visitors recommended that consent should be obtained at the commencement of each year to ensure that students gave consent based on more current information.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the arrangements for practice placement educator training with an aim to increase the regularity of updating sessions and clarifying the input of Practice Development Teams in the training.

Reason: The visitors recognised that the practice educator training and updating programme was in place and adequate to the needs of the programme. However, the visitors wanted to encourage the programme team to increase the regularity of updating to increase the effectiveness of the training programme. Additionally, the visitors felt the role of the Practice Development Teams in training and updating could be more clearly articulated.

5.10 The education provider must ensure necessary information is supplied to practice placement providers.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the communication to all parties surrounding the role of the Practice Development Teams.

Reason: From discussion with the senior management team, programme team, placement providers and students, it was clear that there have been some changes to the placement co-ordination /supervision relatively recently. Whilst the visitors recognise the benefit and value of these changes to the programmes of study on which they impact, it was apparent that the various parties involved in the changes had differing levels of awareness. In order to improve understanding of the role of the Practice Development Teams, the visitors recommend that the communication strategy to this work is revisited.

Anthony Power
Jacqueline Waterfield