Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Plymouth
Programme name	PG Dip Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	22 – 23 April 2015

Contents

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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 27 August 2015. At the Committee meeting, the programme was approved. 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 worker 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 reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their endorsement of the programme. The education provider, 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 the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. 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 and the professional body outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Jane McLenachan(Social worker in England) Ian Hughes (Lay visitor) Kim Bown (Social worker in England)
HCPC executive officer	Amal Hussein
Proposed student numbers	60 per cohort, per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2016
Chair	Ruth Weaver (University of Plymouth)
Secretary	Cirstie Rennie (University of Plymouth) Joanna Melhuish (University of Plymouth)
Members of the joint panel	Lynn Heath (The College of Social Work) Michael Branicki (The College of Social Work) Peter Wild (External Panel Member) Janet Warren (External Panel Member) Jo Triplett (Internal Panel Member) Sharon Wilkinson (Internal 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	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators / mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Service users and carers	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be satisfied 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 the relevant 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 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining eight SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 did not make any recommendations for the programme

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

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 the admissions information to clarify the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were satisfied that there is an accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy in place for the programme. The visitors noted that there is a thorough matching process between an applicant's prior learning and the learning outcomes of the programme. However, whilst the programme specification mentions AP(E)L, the visitors could not see how applicants to the programme would be informed about the process, told what amount of credit could be considered through AP(E)L, and whether practice learning could be transferred or not. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the education provider informs potential applicants of the AP(E)L policy and process for the programme. This will ensure that applicants are given the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on this programme.

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 provider further information on how they ensure potential overseas applicants are fully informed of the requirements for entry to programme in regards to disclosure and barring service (DBS).

Reason: The documentation submitted prior to the visit demonstrated DBS checks were undertaken appropriately through the admissions processes. However, discussions with the students revealed that oversea students are expected to obtain an equivalent DBS clearance from their home country. The visitors noted the programme advertising materials online and programme documentation did not include explicit information about the requirements for DBS checks for overseas applicants. The visitors consider information about the DBS checks to be important to enable potential oversea applicants to make informed decisions about this programme. This includes the requirement for the DBS checks, information about the level required from their country and why this is needed along with details about the process. The visitors therefore require the education provider to submit further evidence demonstrating how they ensure potential overseas applicants to the programme are fully informed about the DBS checks required for the admissions procedures.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure the terminology used is accurate, consistent and reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation and the HCPC.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider contained several instances of incorrect terminology and information. For example, page 21 of the MA Social Work handbook states "The University is accredited by the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC)". The HCPC does not accredit Universities, instead we approve health and care education and training programmes, therefore this statement is incorrect. In addition, the visitors noted page 52 of the same document, "Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)". This should read "Health and Care Professions Council" or "HCPC". The visitors noted other instances such as these throughout the documentation submitted. Incorrect and inconsistent statements have the potential to mislead potential applicants and students. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, and ensure that the terminology used is accurate, consistent and reflects the language associated with statutory regulation.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of any changes to the programme documentation following the approval visit.

Reason: Through discussion at the visit, and from the final conclusions of the internal validation and external visiting panel it was clear that revisions will be made to programme documentation to meet conditions set by internal panel. The visitors consider the programme documentation that students routinely refer to as an important resource to support student learning. In particular, the conditions set by internal panel referred to amendments to module descriptors and the programme specification document. To ensure the programme meets this standard the visitors need to review revised documentation to ensure the resources to support student learning are effectively used. Therefore the visitors require the education provider to submit the revised programme documentation the students routinely refer to.

3.13 There must be a student complaints process in place.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the complaints process is clearly articulated in the programme documentation for students.

Reason: From a review of programme documentations, the visitors noted that the education provider has an institution wide student complaints process. The visitors were satisfied that this process ensures that students concerns and complaints are dealt with. However, from a review of the documentation submitted for this programme, the visitors were unable to find reference to the student complaints process. The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the complaints process is clearly articulated to students.

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 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 reviewed the evidence provided by the programme team prior to the visit, and noted that the documentation provided gave no specific details of how consent is obtained for this programme. During the course of the visit, the visitors were presented with a consent form and were informed that the intention is to introduce the form during induction week where students will be expected to sign it, and the process will then be repeated annually. From the documentation, the visitors were unable to see where this was documented, or how students were informed about the requirement for them to participate, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained and the process for checking this annually. Furthermore, the visitors could also not determine 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 the formal protocols that are in place to obtain informed consent.

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to identify where attendance is mandatory, where students are informed of this within the programme documentation and how attendance is monitored across all elements of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors could not identify what the attendance requirements for students were across the programme. The visitors were also unclear as to how students are informed about the elements of the programme where attendance is mandatory. In discussion with the programme team, it was clarified that student' attendance is mandatory across all practical elements of the programme and that this is monitored closely. However, it was also highlighted that while full attendance was expected at all taught modules an attendance sheet was not completed for every module session. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to clarify where attendance is mandatory for students, and the effects non-attendance may have on their progression through the programme. The visitors also require further evidence of how attendance throughout the course of the programme is monitored, and at what point the programme team would intervene if attendance became an issue.

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 revise the programme documentation to clearly articulate the process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct and how this process will be communicated to students.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors noted the references made to the "University Fitness for Practice" procedure (Programme handbook, page 5). However, the documentation submitted did not provided any detail of the "University Fitness for Practice" procedure or how this process in place deals with concerns about students' profession-related conduct. In discussions at the visit, the visitors were made aware that there is clear, definitive, formal procedure for dealing with issues around student professional conduct. The programme team spoke in detail of the process in place and how it ensures issues of fitness to practice are dealt with clearly and

consistently. From the discussion, the visitors were satisfied that there is a process in place. However, the visitors noted that the process discussed at visit, is not reflected in the programme documentation. The visitors were unsure how, if the process is not recorded in the programme documentation, information regarding fitness to practice is communicated to students, or how students are made aware of the criteria used to determine when an issues around students' profession related conduct is referred to the fitness to practice procedure. Therefore, the visitors require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to clearly articulate the process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct and evidence of how this process will be communicated to students. In this way the visitors can determine if this standard can be 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 a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards was. 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.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which makes clear in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail about the external examiner recruitment policy. It was not evident that there was an explicit requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of an appropriate professional register. In order to determine this standard is met, the visitors require further evidence of the HCPC requirements regarding external examiners within the programme documentation.

Jane McLenachan
Ian Hughes
Kim Bown