

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Portsmouth
Programme name	BSc (Hons) in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	25 – 26 February 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. 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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 15 May. 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 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 professional body also considered their endorsement of the programme. The visit also considered the MSc Social Work programme. 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. A separate report exists for the other programme. 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 professional body, outlines their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Vicki Lawson-Brown (Social worker) Dorothy Smith (Social worker) Gail Stephenson (Orthoptist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Louise Devlin
Proposed student numbers	51 per year
First approved intake	July 2003
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	May 2014
Chair	David Franklin (University of Portsmouth)
Secretary	Kirsty Mitchell (University of Portsmouth)
Members of the joint panel	Hilary Burgess (The College of Social Work) Jane Lindsay (The College of Social Work) Nigel Simons (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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining four 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.

The visitors have also made a recommendation 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

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that there are appropriate protocols in place to obtain informed consent, where students participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: From a review of the SETs mapping document provided, the visitors were directed to a 'Consent to undertake simulation activities and/or use images for University publicity, promotion, teaching and learning' form, as evidence of meeting this standard. On review of this form, the visitors noted that the section requiring completion by the student/individual only referred to permission for an individuals' image to be used, rather than for providing consent to participate in role play activities when acting as service users. The visitors also could not see how students were told about the risk of emotional distress through participating in role plays, and any impact on their academic progression if they chose to opt out of participating. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how students on the programme are able to give informed consent to participate in role play activities, when they are acting as service users.

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 programme team must revise the programme documentation to ensure that the attendance requirements are clearly identified, and students are aware of the action taken for low attendance in taught elements of the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were informed that the attendance requirement for both the university and the placement setting was 100 per cent, and that tutors would contact the student if more than three lectures were missed. In discussion with the students, whilst they were very clear that this was the case for the placement setting, some indicated that they believed that the requirement for attendance for taught elements of the programme was 80 per cent. Furthermore, the students did not demonstrate an awareness of the action taken for non-attendance, and suggested that the approach was not always consistent across the programme. In the student handbook provided, the visitors noted that students were "...expected to attend regularly and punctually" (page 11), but there was not an explicit statement that the requirement is 100 per cent, or of any actions taken when lectures are missed. Whilst the visitors noted that the practice placement handbook states the requirement of "...100% attendance both in University and Practice settings" (subsection eight), the visitors could not see how students were informed of any consequences of missing university based elements of the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how students are informed of the procedures that are in place regarding non-attendance to taught elements of the programme.

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 noted that there was information provided regarding aegrotat awards, but they could not determine where there was a clear statement indicating that they do not provide eligibility for admission to the HCPC Register. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that there is a clear statement included in the programme documentation, 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 revisit the programme documentation to make it clear that external examiners appointed to the programme must be from the relevant part of the HCPC Register, unless alternative arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that there was information provided regarding the appointment of external examiners, but the visitors could not locate any information regarding the registration requirements of external examiners for the programme. The visitors therefore require evidence of where it clearly specifies the requirement 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.

Recommendation

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should re-consider when key information regarding the programme, for example information regarding bursary arrangements, and all costs associated with the programme, is provided to potential applicants.

Reason: From a review of the admissions documentation provided, the visitors were satisfied that applicants to the programme are given sufficient information to allow them to make an informed choice regarding whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme, and therefore that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that a lot of information regarding the programme is not provided to potential applicants until they attend an interview, for example, the letter applicants receive including Frequently Asked Questions (section nine). The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team consider providing more detailed information regarding the programme, in particular regarding funding arrangements and all costs associated with the programme, to applicants at an earlier stage. In this way potential applicants may be better placed to make a decision regarding whether to apply to the programme.

Vicki Lawson-Brown
Dorothy Smith
Gail Stephenson