

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Salford
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	30 April – 1 May 2013

Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	3
Visit details	3
Sources of evidence	4
Recommended outcome	5
Conditions.....	6
Recommendations.....	7

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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 22 August 2013. 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 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 – MA in Social Work and BSc (Hons) Integrated Practice Learning Disabilities Nursing and Social Work. 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	Anthony Power (Physiotherapist) Patricia Higham (Social worker) Graham Noyce (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Abdur Razzaq
Proposed student numbers	75 per year
Proposed start date of Programme approval	September 2013
Chair	Debra Leighton (University of Salford)
Secretary	Julie Evans (University of Salford)
Members of the joint panel	Jane Jenkins (University of Salford) Lynn Heath (The College of Social Work) Nigel Simons (The College of Social Work) Helen Wenman (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 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 2 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 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 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

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 any likely additional costs associated with the programme and information about the bursary arrangements.

Reason: In the documentation provided, the visitors noted information regarding fees, criminal record and health checks. The visitors highlighted that from September 2013 bursary arrangements for social work students are changing. The visitors were unable to determine from the documentation if information around the new fee structure and bursary will be communicated to potential applicants and students. The visitors were also unable to find evidence of information about the costs for criminal record and health checks. During discussions with the students it was evident that the students had been required to pay for the criminal record and health checks and had not had consistent information about this during the admissions process. 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 any likely additional costs associated with the programme and information about new bursary arrangements.

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 that 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 incorrect terminology, the programme specification states the programme is “to be accredited by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) formerly GSCC (General Social Care Council) and to be endorsed by The College of Social Work” (page 1). HCPC use the terminology of ‘approving’ programmes and not ‘accreditation’. The Fitness for Professional Practice Procedure document states that programmes leading to professional registration must comply with the regulations and codes of professional conduct of the relevant bodies, specifically: Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Health Professions Council (HPC) and General Social Care Council (GSCC) (page 1). References to the previous regulatory body in the documentation is incorrect as the GSCC no longer exists. Additionally the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) changed its name from Health Professions Council (HPC) on 1 August 2012 when Social Work Professions came on to HCPC Register. 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, reflects the language associated with statutory regulation and avoids any potential confusion for applicants and students.

Recommendations

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Recommendation: The programme team may wish to consider how they communicate to students the processes for feedback.

Reason: Programme documentation provided prior to the visit detailed the programme feedback mechanisms. During discussion with the students the visitors heard about the range of ways to provide feedback to the programme team and heard examples of how they had fed back to the programme team. The visitors heard that some changes had occurred as a result of this feedback; however it was clear that not all students were aware of the changes, or the decisions not to implement changes as a result of the feedback they had given. The visitors were satisfied that feedback from students is considered in a fair way but heard from students that the changes made or rationale for not acting on feedback was not always effectively communicated. The visitors recommend the education provider to review the way it communicates the processes for feedback to the students, effectively closing the feedback loop. They suggest implementing a written response to student feedback so students are aware of how changes were related to anything they had put forward to the programme team.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to explore the possibilities of new and innovative placements to expand their range of placements settings.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team that students had the opportunity to experience a suitable number and range of placements. The visitors were therefore content this standard was met. In the meeting with the students, it was highlighted that not all students had the same opportunity to experience as much variation in their placements between voluntary and statutory settings as each other. The visitors therefore recommended the programme team continues to develop further the variety of placements available to students so that all students experience a wide range of different placement settings.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- the learning outcomes to be achieved;
- the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;
- expectations of professional conduct;
- the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and
- communication and lines of responsibility.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider strengthening links with practice placement educators to ensure they are fully equipped to take students, and have access to any information which may help to support students while on placement.

Reason: During the meeting with practice placement educators and coordinators and tour of the facilities, there was discussion that practice placement staff have access to some education provider resources, but the practice placement staff were not always aware that they could access these resources. The visitors also noted that practice placement educators did not always know what stage students were at when they took them on placement. In the meeting with practice placement staff, the visitors also noted the concerns of some practice placement educators who felt unprepared for taking students on placement. The visitors considered the education provider made information and resources available for the placement provider and so considered this standard to be met at threshold level, however, they recommend the education provider strengthens links with practice placement educators, ensuring they have access to any relevant teaching materials (such as lecture notes on Blackboard) and to learning resources (such as the library). This will help ensure that the placement experience is consistent for practice placement educators and therefore students.

Patricia Higham
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