

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Sussex
Programme name	MA in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	29 – 30 April 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 2 July 2014. 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 BA (Hons) Social work and the PG Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only).

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	Gary Hickman (Social worker) Graham Noyce (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Louise Devlin
Proposed student numbers	30 per cohort once a year (across both Masters and PG Dip exit route)
First approved intake	September 2014
Chair	Robert Johns (University of East London)
Secretary	Jana Valekova (University of Sussex)
Members of the joint panel	Jim Greer (The College of Social Work) Terry Williams (The College of Social Work) Annie Hudson (The College of Social Work) (Observing)

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 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

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 the bursary arrangements in relation to the programme.

Reason: In the documentation provided, the visitors noted some references to a limited number of bursaries for social work students, and changes to the system for social work bursaries. However, the visitors were unable to determine from the documentation how information around the new bursary structure and allocation process will be communicated to potential applicants of the programme. The visitors consider this to be essential information for potential applicants and therefore, require the education provider to review the programme documentation including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants and students have a clear understanding of the bursary allocation process, and are kept up to date regarding possible changes to the bursary structure. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme can meet this standard by ensuring that applicants have all the information they require in order to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme.

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the admissions information to clarify the accreditation for 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, whereby applications through this route will be considered on an individual basis, and there is a thorough matching process between an applicants' prior learning and the learning outcomes of the programme. However, 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 the programme.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate which awards confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register and which do not.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that anyone successfully completing an HCPC approved programme would be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC. It was also clear that anyone who received an exit award other than the PG Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only) would not be eligible to apply to the HCPC Register. However, in the documentation submitted by the education provider, the visitors could not determine how this was clearly communicated to students, and therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team ensure that students understand which awards confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register and which do not.

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 there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards, 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 regarding the aegrotat award policy, to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider making the equality and diversity policy available to potential applicants of the programme.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that the programme has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, and therefore that this standard is met. Whilst the equality and diversity policy was included in the student handbook, the visitors recommend that this is also made available to potential applicants of the programme, to ensure that applicants are able to understand them in relation to the admissions procedures of the programme.

Gary Hickman
Graham Noyce