

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of the West of England, Bristol
Programme name	FdSc Paramedic Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC register	Paramedic Science
Date of visit	10 – 11 January 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 'Paramedic' 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 approval of the programme. This report has been approved by the Education and Training Committee and the education provider is currently in the process of meeting their conditions.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC approval for the first time. 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 validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. 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 the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC'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 of HPC visitors and profession	Mr Paul Bates (Paramedic) Mr Glyn Harding (Paramedic)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Osama Ammar
HPC observer	Elisa Simeoni
Proposed student numbers	20
Proposed start date of programme approval	April 2008
Chair	Dr Richard Eke (University of the West of England)
Secretary	Dr Alison Rudd (University of the West of England)
Members of the joint panel	Christine Bearne (Coventry University, External Panel Member) Jacqueline Chelin (University of the West of England, Internal Panel Member) Dr Terry Davies (University of the West of England, Internal Panel Member) Dr Jane Harrington (University of the West of England, Internal Panel Member) John Martin (British Paramedic Association)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Contextual Validation Document	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review a student handbook, placement handbook or mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs prior to the visit as the education provider did not submit it. However, the education provider did table these documents at the visit itself.

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as external examiners' reports have not yet been produced for this new programme.

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"/>

The HPC met with students from the post-registration Emergency Care Practitioner programme, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

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 58 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining five 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.

The visitors have also made a number of commendations. 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, or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the advertising materials for the programme to follow the guidance provided in the HPC “Regulatory status advertising protocol for education providers”.

Reason: At the visit, the HPC panel received documentation provided to students as advertising material. The HPC panel did not have sufficient time to scrutinise the documentation fully, but it was apparent from the text that it did not fully comply with the guidance for advertising issued by HPC. Therefore, in order to provide students with the correct information to make an informed choice about whether to join the programme, the visitors felt the text used for advertising must be amended.

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make, or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme specification to remove a statement in the admissions requirements indicating an appropriate mentor must be available.

Reason: During discussion with the programme team, it became clear that the programme team were not expecting applicants to the programme to source their own mentor for placements as an entry requirement. Rather, the statement in the admissions requirement in the programme specification was intended to reflect that the programme team would not accept a student onto the programme unless there were sufficient appropriate mentors to support the student. Since the requirement for admission was not for the student to meet, the visitors felt the statement should be removed from the admissions requirements section of the programme specification to prevent confusion.

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make, or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to accurately reflect the professional title the HPC protects.

Reason: In the submitted documentation (page 7 of the ‘Contextual Document’) the protected title is indicated to be ‘paramedic practitioner’. The legally protected title is ‘paramedic’ and the visitors felt that in order to prevent any confusion, the protected professional title must be used.

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make, or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to accurately reflect the roles of the HPC and professional body.

Reason: In the submitted documentation (page 8 of the 'Contextual Document') there is some confusion surrounding the roles of the statutory regulator and professional body. Given the precise function of the HPC in holding and maintaining the Register of individuals able to practice under the protected professional titles, the visitors felt the documentation must be amended to clearly articulate the correct function of both organisations.

3.8 The facilities needed to ensure the welfare and well being of students must be both adequate and accessible.

Condition: The education provider must complete and submit the programme specific student handbook.

Reason: In order to meet funding deadlines, the programme documentation was produced in a relatively short period of time. For this reason the programme specific handbook was not complete by the time of the approval visit. The visitors did take sight of the faculty wide handbook which contained much of the information a student on the programme would require. However, to ensure that students have all the required information to ensure that facilities are accessible, the visitors feel the programme specific handbook must be submitted for scrutiny.

4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme specification to amend the aim of the programme to produce not only a safe but also effective paramedic.

Reason: The programme specification submitted to the visitors indicated the programme's aim was to produce a "safe" paramedic. The visitors felt that to effectively reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base of the curriculum guidance, that the aim should be amended to produce a "safe and effective" paramedic.

4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme specification (page 10) to amend the statement that HPC requires a student to complete 1500 hours in practice.

Reason: The programme specification submitted to the visitors indicated HPC had a specific requirement for the number of hours a student must complete in

the practice environment. HPC only requires that the number, duration and range of placements are appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes. The specific requirement for 1500 hours is a requirement of the curriculum guidance issued by the professional body. Therefore, the visitors felt that to reflect the philosophy of the curriculum guidance the specific requirement should be attributed to the professional body.

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the module descriptors for the two modules which are attached to placement learning to clearly articulate the attendance requirement for referral and reassessment of practice assessments.

Reason: The submitted programme documentation indicated that attendance at referral and reassessment of practice assessments was not required. In discussion with the programme team it was apparent that this statement was potentially misleading as it referred to lectures in the academic setting as part of the standard format for University of the West of England module descriptors. The visitors felt that, to prevent confusion amongst the students, the module descriptors must be amended to clearly articulate that attendance in the practice environment was very likely if not compulsory in the event of referral or reassessment.

6.7.1 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must update the programme documentation to clearly articulate the timings of assessment and update the information provided on pre-requisite modules.

Reason: In discussion, it was apparent that the programme team intended to amend the timing of assessments and structure of pre-requisites in the programme to have sufficient time to assess and determine progression from level one to level two. The visitors felt to ensure that the assessment regulations clearly specify requirements for progression, the amended information must be submitted for review.

Recommendations

3.5 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant expertise and knowledge.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to develop paramedic registrants from Great Western Ambulance Service to support the proposed expansion of the programme.

Reason: The visitors recognised that the programme team profile effectively met this standard but noted that further work was being undertaken to develop increased involvement in the programme from paramedics. The visitors wanted to support this continued development with this recommendation, particularly in light of the discussed hopes to increase the student numbers once the programme had been in operation for a number of years.

4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider amending the last aim of the programme to add “and care pathways” to the end of the sentence.

Reason: The visitors felt the aims accurately reflected the curriculum guidance, but that the current wording of the aims of the programme implied a limited range of care pathways available to service users and that a paramedic may choose. The visitors felt the amendment would enhance the aims of the programme.

Commendations

The visitors wish to commend the following aspects of the programme:

Commendation: The visitors commended the Great Western Ambulance Service for securing a practice placement co-ordinator post.

Reason: The visitors recognised the difficulty in obtaining funds within an ambulance service for providing staff dedicated to training and development rather than operational work. The visitors considered this appointment to be a positive step towards increasing the effectiveness of placement co-ordination and for further embedding training and development within the ambulance service.

Commendation: The visitors commended the Placement Learning Unit (PLU) for the continued commitment to develop highly effective mechanisms to co-ordinate and quality assure placement learning.

Reason: The visitors identified in the discussions over placement learning that the PLU exhibited a strong drive to continue to seek and develop mechanisms to manage placement learning. In particular, the visitors were impressed by the Arc system (an online placement co-ordination tool) which is subject to many future changes to enhance the package and therefore increase effective communication between the education provider, students and practice placement providers. Though similar packages exist at other education providers, the level of customisation taking place was indicative of a model for best practice.

Mr Paul Bates
Mr Glyn Harding