

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Ulster
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Podiatry
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Chiropodist / Podiatrist
Relevant entitlement(s)	Local anaesthetic Prescription only medicine
Date of visit	29 – 30 April 2009

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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 14 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Chiropodist' or 'Podiatrist' or 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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 25 August 2009. At the Committee meeting on 25 August 2009, 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 continues to meet 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 retains open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - curriculum standards, practice placements standards and assessment standards. The programme was already approved by the HPC and this visit assessed whether the programme continued to meet the standards of education and training (SETs) and continued to ensure that 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 and validating body 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	Emma Supple (Chiropodist / Podiatrist) Paul Blakeman (Chiropodist / Podiatrist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Rachel Greig
HPC observer	Osama Ammar
Proposed student numbers	15
Initial approval	1 September 1997
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	21 September 2009
Chair	Jim Allen (University of Ulster)
Secretary	Catherine Avery (University of Ulster)
Members of the joint panel	Kathy Sinclair (Internal panel member) Robert Ashton (External panel member) Paul Frowen (External panel member) Wilfred Foxe (Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists) Jackie Campbell (Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists)

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 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 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 (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing 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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 9 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing 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 ongoing 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 did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.2.5 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must review the statement in the admissions criteria to stress that the Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT) is applicable to anyone wishing to enter the programme including those entering the programme through Accreditation of Prior Learning routes.

Reason: Although the documents state that applicants who demonstrate accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) can apply for admission onto the programme the visitors felt that their requirement to undertake the Health Professions Admissions Test was not explicit. The visitors would therefore like to see evidence that this requirement is made clear in the documentation.

3.2 The programme must be managed effectively.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the documentation to illustrate the management structure within the programme.

Reason: The visitors felt that the documents did not clearly outline the management structure of the programme. From the documentation it was unclear how the roles of subject coordinator and course director differed and who was in overall control of the programme. In discussions with the senior team these roles were explained along with an indication that the management structure was subject to recent change. The visitors were satisfied with the changed but wish for this to be reflected in the documentation so to outline that the programme is effectively managed.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must review the documentation relating to the teaching of local anaesthesia and prescription only medicine to better articulate how the related standards of proficiency under 2b.4 are discrete elements of the programme and clearly lead to annotations on the Register.

Reason: Completion of modules relating to local anaesthesia and prescription only medicine will lead the successful student to have a separate annotation on the HPC Register. The visitors wished to see evidence as to how these standards of proficiency are delivered and assessed within the programme as discrete elements to ensure that all appropriate learning outcomes are sufficiently attained.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the Standards of Proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must remove reference to supplementary prescribing in any module descriptors.

Reason: The education provider submitted module descriptors that made reference to supplementary prescribing. The visitors noted that Department of Health guidelines indicated individuals undertaking supplementary prescribing programmes should have three years post qualifying experience. In the meeting with the programme team, it was indicated that the references to supplementary prescribing were made in error. The visitors therefore require the updated module descriptors to 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 remove reference to the HPC when referring to the requirement of a student to undertake a minimum of 1000 hours of clinical practice throughout their three year programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that the documentation indicated the number of hours required in practice was a requirement of the regulator and not of the professional body. Accordingly, the visitors felt that the programme documentation must be updated to clearly articulate the requirement for completion of a set number of hours for clinical practice is a requirement of the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists.

4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum to enable safe and effective practice.

Condition: The education provider must review the documentation relating to the delivery of local anaesthesia and prescription only medicine to clearly articulate how theory and practice are integrated.

Reason: The visitors noted that the elements of academic delivery, assessment and clinical practice related to prescription only medicines and local anaesthetics were separated across multiple modules. The visitors felt that clarity was required to illustrate that theory and practice are appropriately integrated to ensure that individuals once registered and annotated will be able to practice safely and effectively. The visitors noted that the current structure of integration may be appropriate, but that it must be made more explicit in the documentation.

5.7.1 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the learning outcomes to be achieved.

Condition: The programme team must review the practice placement assessment documentation to ensure that all placement learning outcomes relate back to those of the module and are measurable.

Reason: The visitors felt that the learning outcomes stated in the assessment tool were very broad and that accordingly students and placement educators may not be entirely clear of the requirements for teaching, learning and assessment of

learning outcomes. The visitors felt that a review of the practice placement assessment tool would work to enhance how the learning outcomes as stated in the module descriptors are translated for delivery and assessment in the practice environment.

5.7.4 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Condition: The programme team must review the practice placement assessment documentation to ensure that all learning outcomes must be achieved before a module can be passed.

Reason: The visitors noted that it was not stated clearly that a student must pass all learning outcomes in practice before progressing. The visitors therefore require evidence to show that a student must pass each learning outcome in a module before progression can occur. This will result in the students and placement educators being fully aware of the assessment requirements and the implications of the failure of a learning outcome.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit the final policy on condonement for programmes at University of Ulster.

Reason: In the discussions with the senior management team and programme team it was apparent that there had been recent changes to the institutional assessment regulations in relation to condonement. The visitors require the finalised assessment regulations to ensure that the procedures will continue to assure that a student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

6.2 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes and skills that are required to practice safely and effectively.

Condition: The education provider must submit all module descriptors relating the programme.

Reason: In the discussions with the programme team it was clear that there are likely to be changes made to the assessment methods of the programme as a result from the recommendations of the validation panel. In order to ensure that the assessment methods will measure the learning outcomes required for safe and effective practice, the visitors will need to scrutinise the updated versions of the module descriptors.

Recommendations

2.3 The admission procedures must ensure that the education provider has an equal opportunities and anti-discriminatory policy in relation to candidates and students, together with an indication of how this must be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should review the impact on equality and diversity as a result of the Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT) and how this impacts programme entry.

Reason: The visitors noted that the HPAT was used as an additional entry requirement in order to determine an individual's appropriateness for the profession and so took into account factors not normally accounted for in traditional entry qualifications. The visitors indicated that the HPAT test may have an impact on the diversity of applicants on the programme and encouraged the programme team to review this impact.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue the training of practice placement educators as a result of the new practice placement assessment tool.

Reason: After meetings with the programme and placement teams the visitors were satisfied that appropriate training was in place for the placement team to accurately measure a student's competence related to different learning outcomes and that placement staff had an accurate expectation of the student. The visitors noted the importance of this training and in order for the new assessment processes to succeed the visitors recommend that placement educator training continues at its current rate so the marking of learning outcomes remains at a consistent and appropriate level.

5.9 There must be collaboration between the education provider and practice placement providers.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to develop their relationship with the placement staff so they have a similar level of support as the programme team in terms of development opportunities.

Reason: In the meetings with the placement team and programme team it was discussed that the practice educator focus group and practice educator committee were useful to the collaboration between education provider and placement providers. The visitors noted that the new involvement of practice educators in assessment would allow increased collaboration and wished to support this work. The visitors felt that practice educators would benefit from the increased opportunities to develop as a result of the collaboration.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should monitor and review the new practice assessment tool on an ongoing basis.

Reason: The visitors recognised the challenges associated with changes to practice assessment. In particular, the visitors felt that this new model of practice assessment may lead to inflation of classifications as a result of the new input of practice educators in the assessment process. However, the visitors also stated that the programme team had an awareness of the potential challenges they faced. Accordingly the visitors wished to support the ongoing review of the new assessment tool with this recommendation.

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

Recommendation: The programme team should review the curriculum structure to reflect academic level objectives at levels 4, 5 and 6.

Reason: It was clear that the programme met this standard as progression and achievement were clearly articulated. The visitors felt though that this programme would benefit both students and the programme team if it were designed to allow exit awards at levels 4, 5 and 6 which would be linked to competencies useful to a range of healthcare career options.

Emma Supple
Paul Blakeman