

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Ulster
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Speech and language therapist
Date of visit	21 – 23 February 2012

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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 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Speech therapist' or 'Speech and language therapist' 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 23 August 2012. At the Committee meeting on 23 August 2012, 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme management and resources, curriculum and assessment. 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 validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes - BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging and BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology.

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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Lorna Povey (Speech and language therapist) Penny Joyce (Operating department practitioner)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Victoria Adenugba
Proposed student numbers	27
First approved intake	1 September 2001
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	1 September 2012
Chair	Gillian Armstrong (University of Ulster)
Secretary	Grainne Dooher (University of Ulster)
Members of the joint panel	Rachel Mullan (Internal Panel Member) Claire Hartley (External Panel Member) Carol Sacchett (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists) Dominique Lowenthal (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists)

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 programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 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.

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 programme team must revise the advertising materials for this programme to clearly articulate the cost of the HPAT test and the potential additional costs occurring from the health check.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the cost of the HPAT test was not clearly articulated to potential applicants on the education providers' website or in the programme documentation. The visitors were given a link to the HPAT test website in which applicants could find information regarding the cost; however this was not clearly made available on the website for potential applicants. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors also learnt that health checks are conducted by the education provider with no cost to the students however the costs of any additional immunisations were not covered and were dependant on whether or not the student's own GP charged for them. This potential additional cost was not articulated either within the programme documentation or for potential applicants. To ensure applicants are fully aware of all the costs associated with the programme and are able to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on this programme the visitors require the programme documentation to be revisited to clearly articulate all costs associated with the programme.

3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to "State Registration" with HPC. From discussions during the visit the visitors also learnt that documentation submitted for this visit was in draft form due to be finalised and approved by the education provider. The visitors considered the terminology of "State Registration" could be misleading to students and therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology; they also require the programme team to provide evidence of the final programme documentation after it has satisfied the requirements of the education provider.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must revise the marking guidance to ensure the terminology accurately reflects the threshold level required for a student to pass an assessment.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the language used within the marking guidance documents suggested a 'weak' student who had 'significant omissions' and 'limited ability' could pass various assessments. During discussion with the programme team the visitors learnt that this is not the case. The visitors are satisfied the threshold to pass assessments are appropriate, however they are concerned if the current marking guidance remains as it is there could be the possibility of a student passing who was underperforming and therefore not meeting the Standards of proficiency (SOPs) through the assessment of the learning outcomes. To ensure all students who pass an assessment can meet all the SOPs upon graduation the visitors require that the terminology within the marking guidance be corrected to reflect the accurate threshold levels to pass an assessment.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the title of any aegrotat awards for the programme.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail regarding the name of the aegrotat award given to final year (honours degree) students. During discussions with the programme team the visitors learnt that all aegrotat awards are named 'Applied Health Studies'. To ensure this standard is being met, the visitors need to see evidence that the name is clearly communicated within the programme documentation so all students are clear that the aegrotat award would not enable them to be eligible to apply to the Register.

Recommendations

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to carefully monitor practice placement providers to ensure practitioners are appropriately registered.

Reason: The visitors noted that currently the programme has a contract with The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) who commission all their placements. The visitors were aware the programme is seeking to increase their placement provisions which could mean some placements being outside of Northern Ireland or outside of the NHS. The visitors were satisfied the SET has been met, however recommend the programme team continue to apply appropriate monitoring procedures to ensure all placements continue to provide placement educators who are appropriately registered.

Lorna Povey
Penny Joyce