

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Ulster
Programme name	MSc Dietetics
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Dietitian
Date of visit	28 – 29 April 2010

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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 'Dietitian' 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 21 October 2010. At the Committee meeting on 21 October 2010, 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 – curriculum and practice placements. 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	June Copeman (Dietitian) Maureen Henderson (Dietitian)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	2
Initial approval	01 April 1996
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	20 September 2010
Chair	Robert Hutchinson (University of Ulster)
Secretary	Grainne Dooher (University of Ulster)

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"/>
Professional practice workbooks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University assessment handbook	<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 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 2 SET.

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

2.1 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 the terminology in use is reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology. In particular the visitors noted that the documentation stated on several occasions that completion of the programme will enable graduates to register with the HPC. All students need to apply to register after they have completed the programme and as such the language the education provider uses needs to reflect this. The education provider needs to make it clear to applicants and students that completion of the programme means they are eligible to apply for registration with the HPC. The visitors also noted on a number of occasions the HPC was referred to as accrediting the programme. The HPC approves programmes and does not offer accreditation. Therefore the visitors require further evidence before this standard can be met.

2.2 The admissions procedure must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation including advertising materials, to ensure that the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) entry criteria are clear.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted and discussions with the programme team it was apparent that the education provider does not clearly state its IELTS entry requirements to applicants. The education provider must make applicants aware of the fact that, at the end of the programme, all students must have the necessary level of English for the standards of proficiency for their profession. The visitors require the education provider to clearly state that students who complete the programme and wish to be eligible to apply to the register must be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 in the IELTS, with no element below 6.5. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to ensure that where common modules are used across both undergraduate and postgraduate learning there is clarity to indicate which academic level the learning is being assessed at. The education provider should also consider revisiting the programme documentation to ensure that inconsistencies including typographical errors are corrected.

Reason: The visitors noted that where common modules are used for undergraduate and postgraduate learning the education provider needs to be clear that the level of assessment fulfils the appropriate taxonomy of award. The visitors in particular noted that the definitive course document should reflect the revised programme specifications in terms of the way levels of assessment are communicated.

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 HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation and specify that step-off or exit awards do not lead to the person receiving them being eligible to apply for registration.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit the visitors were happy that the requirements of the HPC relating to the titles of step-off or exit awards were being met. The visitors did however feel that students would benefit from a statement that clearly outlines that the alternative award of BSc (Hons) Human Nutrition would not lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC register.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register and ensure consistency throughout the documentation.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit the visitors were happy that the requirements of the HPC relating to this standard are being met. The visitors did however feel that the aegrotat policy could be more clearly communicated and consistently used within the documentation. The visitors felt that the use of the term aegrotat award was inconsistently used within the documentation.

June Copeman
Maureen Henderson