

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Warwick
Programme name	MA in Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	11 – 12 February 2015

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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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 30 June 2015. At this meeting, the programme was approved. 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 worker in England profession came onto the register in 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 an HCPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their endorsement of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Vicki Lawson-Brown (Social worker) David Ward (Social worker)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Alex Urquhart
Proposed student numbers	60 per cohort, one cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
Chair	Gillian Hundt (University of Warwick)
Secretary	Andrea Wyld (University of Warwick)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not review the programme specification prior to the visit as the education provider did not submit it. However, they did provide the proposal of the amendments to the current programme specification previously submitted to an internal validation event. It is the policy of the education provider that programme specifications are not created for amendments of a programme.

The HCPC did not review the external examiners' reports from the last two years as one of the reports has not been submitted from the external examiner for academic year 2013–14.

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"/>
Service users and carers	<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 satisfied 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 the relevant 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 six SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally 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 clearly specify in the admissions documentation that it is the responsibility of the applicant to pay for the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

Reason: Prior to the visit, the visitors reviewed documentation available to potential applicants. This information, found on page 12 of the programme handbook and the programme web page stated “An enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS)... is mandatory, however applications will be considered on a case by case basis”. Further, the letter inviting applicants to selection day’s states that applicants should bring the original DBS certificate to the day. During the meeting with students and the programme team, the visitors were informed that it was the responsibility of the applicant to cover the cost of the DBS check. However, this is not reflected in the admissions documentation presented to the visitors which could be misleading to potential applicants. Therefore, the visitors require that the education provider amends the admissions documentation so it clearly states the cost of the DBS check and that the applicant would need to cover this cost prior to application.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there are appropriate protocols to obtain explicit consent where students participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: The documentation reviewed by the visitors prior to the visit did not state whether or not the programme team obtain formal consent from students when they participate as service users in practical teaching. The SETs mapping document provided as part of the education provider’s documentary submission stated that this standard was “not applicable”. The students stated that throughout their experience on the programme they have not given formal consent when participating as service users in practical and clinical teaching, and that there was no formal appropriate protocol for giving consent. During the meeting with the programme team the visitors were informed that there is an informal agreement with students that they have given consent to participate in role play and that if they did not want to participate they could opt out of the session. However, the visitors could not see how students were formally told about the risk of physical or emotional distress through participating in these activities, and any impact on their academic progression if they chose to opt out of participating. Therefore the visitors require the introduction and implementation of appropriate protocol for gaining consent from students for the learning activities that are undertaken as part of the teaching on the programme which involve students participating as service users.

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The programme team must review associated monitoring mechanisms so that absences are formally reported on a more regular basis in order that the protocol for missed teaching can be triggered.

Reason: Prior to the visit the visitors reviewed the documentation about attendance. The SETs mapping document states that “Student attendance is monitored through an attendance register that is circulated and completed by students during each teaching session”, the mapping document further states that the attendance register is collated on a monthly basis. However at the visit, the programme team confirmed that attendance records were collated on a semesterly basis. The visitors noted that this could be misleading as the stated policy on attendance is different to how attendance is recorded in practice. As a consequence, teaching could be missed and not identified in enough time to trigger the protocol for compensatory work. The visitors also noted that the policy regarding how attendance is recorded and monitored was not in the programme handbook or any documentation that is circulated to the students. This could be misleading to students as they may be unaware as to how attendance is recorded throughout the programme. Therefore in order for the standard to be met the programme team must review associated monitoring mechanisms so that absences are formally reported allowing sufficient time for the protocol for missed teaching to be triggered. The programme team are also required to demonstrate how they communicate the procedure of recording attendance to students on the programme.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure that all staff placement settings are appropriately qualified and experienced.

Reason: The documentation submitted included the “Protocol for independent and offsite practice educators which outlined process of selection and expectations of practice educators. Page three of this document outlined the minimum requirements that the education provider makes of independent and off-site practice educators that supervise students on practice placements. Requirements included “[b]e a registered social worker” and “hold a current Disclosure and Barring Service enhanced clearance”. The visitors were satisfied with the arrangements for independent and off site practice educators. During the meeting with the programme team the visitors were informed that all practice educators meet these requirements, but noted that there was not a formal policy in place setting out requirements for other practice educators, such as those in statutory and agency settings. Therefore, the visitors were not satisfied that the education provider was ensuring that all practice educators were appropriately qualified and experienced. The visitors require further information to demonstrate how the education provider ensures that all practice educators are appropriately qualified and experienced.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they ensure regular and effective collaboration with the practice placement providers.

Reason: In the mapping document for this standard, the education provider stated that “The MASW course has a team of Placement Coordinators, from both academia and practice, who establish and maintain strong and consistent relationships with Practice Educators and Agencies”. However there was no formal policy which outlines the collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement providers. Throughout the visit the visitors discovered that the collaboration was embedded in a historical relationship between the education provider and practice placement providers. Although the visitors were satisfied that there is collaboration between the two interest groups, there was concern about the regularity of the feedback and evaluation mechanisms which are formally embedded in the collaboration. During the meeting with practice placement providers it was identified that although there were feedback mechanisms they did not receive the feedback about the students experience of the placement from the education provider. During the meeting with the programme team the visitors were told that the response to feedback from practice educators was limited, and that the only regular feedback about practice placements was from the students as part of their placement portfolios. During discussions with the programme team the visitors were told that there is a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the education provider and practice placement providers, but that this was first created when the programme started in 2004, and has not been updated since. The visitors were unsure how this MOU in its current form supported the regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider. Therefore the education provider is required to produce documentation which clearly outlines the policy allowing the regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

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 state that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider the visitors noted that an aegrotat award was not mentioned, nor was it made clear that aegrotat award do not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. During the meeting with the programme team, the visitors were told that there is no aegrotat award given. The programme team were able to confirm that there is an exit award which students who complete the first year and accumulate enough credits will receive (a Postgraduate certificate in health studies). The HCPC defines aegrotat as an award given to a student who was not able to complete the programme due to illness. This standard requires the education provider to specify that the awarding of an aegrotat award does not provide eligibility for admission to the Register. Therefore the programme team are required to revisit the programme documentation and ensure that it clearly states that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

Recommendations

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the programme team review the policy on external examiners to ensure external examiners submit finalised reports within a reasonable timeframe so that actions can be taken on any issues raised.

Reason: The programme has incorporated regular monitoring and evaluation systems outlined in the programme handbook which the visitors review prior to the visit. The feedback and monitoring systems gathered feedback from students, practice educators, the Practice assessment Panel, stakeholder agencies, service users and carers and external examiners. These systems of feedback were discussed with the programme team and the visitors were satisfied that the standard was met. However the programme team stated that an external examiner report from the previous academic year had not yet been submitted by one of the external examiners. The visitors reviewed the eligibility for appointment of external examiners document and noted that there were no deadlines set for the submission of the external examiner's report. Consequently this meant that if there are delays in external examiner reports being submitted, actions cannot be taken on any issues raised or recommendations in good time. The visitors therefore recommend that the policy is amended so that the external examiner is subject to a deadline regarding the submission of their report so that any issues raised can be taken into consideration within a reasonable timeframe.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the programme team review the criteria for selecting placements for students, to ensure that all students experience contrasting placements.

Reason: Pages 56 through to 61 of the programme handbook detailed the procedure for selecting placements. Students on the programme undertake a 70 day placement in the first year and a 100 day placement in the second year. Placements are allocated to students after students have completed student profiles which summarise previous experience and learning. Students are then linked to a placement based on these profiles and consideration is given to previous experience and learning needs as outlined in the student profiles. For this reason the visitors were satisfied that the programme met this standard at a threshold level as the number range and duration of placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme. However, during the meeting with students it was noted that there is a possibility of similar children's service settings in both year one and two.. The visitors explored this further in the meeting with the programme team where it was established that there were occasions where students were placed on similar placements in second year. The visitors noted that all students graduating from the programme must be qualified as generic social workers, and that therefore the curriculum must provide opportunities to experience all aspects of social work. It is therefore advisable that students undertake placements with contrasting service user groups, using a range of different legislation, rather than specialise during the course of the programme. If two placements in children and

families social work, for example, are unavoidable due to a paucity of opportunities, they must be sufficiently contrasting to fulfil the generic requirements of the curriculum. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team review the process of selecting placements.

Vicki Lawson-Brown
David Ward