

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Worcester
Programme name	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	17 – 18 March 2015

Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction.....	4
Visit details	4
Sources of evidence	5
Recommended outcome	6
Conditions.....	7
Recommendations.....	9

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 4 June 2015. At the Committee 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 work 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 part of a joint event. The education provider reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered a MA in Social Work – Full time programme. The education provider, the professional body and the HCPC 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 HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. A separate report exists for the other programme. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Dorothy Smith (Social worker in England) Diane Whitlock (Lay visitor) Paula Sobiechowska (Social worker in England)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Baker
Proposed student numbers	20 per cohort, one cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
Chair	Marie Stowell (University of Worcester)
Secretary	Teresa Nahajski (University of Worcester)
Members of the joint panel	Suzanne Horton (Internal Panel Member) Madalina Brait (Internal Panel Member) Gabrielle Hesk (External Panel Member) Robert Johns (The College of Social Work) Helen Tipton (The College of Social Work)

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

The HCPC did not review External examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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

The HCPC met with students from the MA in Social Work and Heart of Worcestershire College (validated by University of Worcester) - BA (Hons) Social Work programmes, 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 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 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining three 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 revisit information provided to applicants to ensure it is clear about the programme's academic calendar and the requirements of the placement experience.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the admissions documentation provided to applicants, including the relevant webpages, prior to the visit. In discussion with the programme team at the visit, it was evident that there would be the need for students to return to study earlier than the standard term dates as set out at the education provider, in order to complete the required amount of placement days within the programme structure. The visitors therefore require this to be communicated to students at the admissions stage to ensure that they are given the information required to make an informed choice about joining the programme. The visitors noted that there was detail on placements, including the nature of placement experience, when placements happen, how settings are allocated and the commitment required by students provided on the webpage for the MA in Social Work programme. However, the visitors were not able to find this level of detail on the webpage of the BA (Hons) Social Work programme. They therefore require further evidence that the programme will provide all applicants with the information they need to make an informed choice as to whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

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 evidence how they implement appropriate protocols to obtain consent where students participate in practical teaching, such as roleplays.

Reason: The completed SETs mapping document stated that this was not applicable for the programme. The visitors noted through discussions with the students that participation in practical role play activities was a regular learning activity on the programme. However, the visitors could not see evidence of any formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated in practical teaching. In discussion with the programme team, they explained that their understanding of this standard was that it applied to situations where students would need to share or roleplay their own service user experiences. The visitors considered that even in situations where students are not directly playing out their own story, there is the potential for issues to arise which cause personal discomfort. The visitors could not identify how the programme team worked consistently across the programme to identify any potential issues that may arise and how they mitigate any risk of emotional distress involved with students participating as service users. The visitors could not identify how students were informed about the implications of participating in role play, or how situations where students declined from participation were managed with alternative learning arrangements so there would be no impact on their learning. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide evidence of formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students, and how these protocols are put into practice as part of the programme.

5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

Condition: The education provider must review the process for gathering and handling student feedback on placements to ensure it is effective in gaining quality feedback for monitoring purposes.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme uses the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) framework in monitoring the quality of placements. As part of this, students are required to submit a feedback form for their placement within their portfolio, prior to this being assessed. The visitors heard from discussions with the students and programme team at the visit, that this had been raised as a cause for concern by some students, as there was a limit to the level of honest, quality feedback that can be given where the student remains in a vulnerable position pending the assessment of their portfolio by the practice placement educator. This student feedback form is a key element in monitoring the placement experience and influences decisions on whether the education provider will use the placement again. The visitors could therefore not determine that the process of gathering student feedback on placements was effective and robust for monitoring placements. As such, the visitors require further evidence to ensure this SET will be met.

Recommendations

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Recommendation: The education provider should ensure that changes to the social work provision at the education provider are reported to the HCPC through the major change process to demonstrate how the programme continues to have a secure place in the business plan.

Reason: The provision presented under this approval process is for 20 students per cohort on the new BA (Hons) Social Work programme starting in September 2015, and the current MA in Social Work programme numbers as outlined. The visitors heard from the senior management team that there were ongoing discussions with regards to a Bachelor level programme previously validated by the University of Worcester and delivered at a partner college. This programme ceased recruitment in 2014, but there are students in all years who will need to complete their studies. The education provider has offered places directly into years two and three in September 2015 to any students who wish to continue their studies towards the University of Worcester award, and has assured students that there will be sufficient resource in place for this. Given the large shifts in parameters in the scenario that some, or all, of the students from the previously validated programme transfer in to complete their studies, the visitors recommend that the education provider keep the HCPC abreast of the situation through the major change process. The visitors also noted from discussions at the visit that one of the placement providers was currently undergoing a tendering process for collaborative activities with education providers in the region. The senior management team outlined their approach to offering places on this programme in line with the number of placements that were confirmed currently, with a view to expanding the programme's intake in future if they secure arrangements for additional placements through the tendering process with this placement provider. There are also initiatives under development for post-registration and continuing professional development to be delivered by the education provider's social work team. The way in which the education provider meets this SET, and potentially other SETs, would be affected by the above changes to social work provision at the education provider. The programme team is therefore reminded to report to the HCPC through the major change process to ensure that this programme continues to have a secure place in the business plan, and sufficient resources are in place for its effective delivery.

3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should ensure that changes to the social work provision at the education provider are reported to the HCPC through the major change process to demonstrate how the number of qualified and experienced staff continues to be appropriate.

Reason: The provision presented under this approval process is for 20 students per cohort on the new BA (Hons) Social Work programme starting in September 2015, and the current MA in Social Work programme numbers as outlined. The visitors heard from the senior management team that there were ongoing discussions with regards to a Bachelor level programme previously validated by the University of Worcester and delivered at a partner college. This programme ceased recruitment in 2014, but there

are students in all years who will need to complete their studies. The education provider has offered places directly into years two and three in September 2015 to any students who wish to continue their studies towards the University of Worcester award, and has assured students that there will be sufficient resource in place for this. Given the large shifts in parameters in the scenario that some, or all, of the students from the previously validated programme transfer in to complete their studies, the visitors recommend that the education provider keep the HCPC abreast of the situation through the major change process. The visitors also noted from discussions at the visit that one of the placement providers was currently undergoing a tendering process for collaborative activities with education providers in the region. The senior management team outlined their approach to offering places on this programme in line with the number of placements that were confirmed currently, with a view to expanding the programme's intake in future if they secure arrangements for additional placements through the tendering process with this placement provider. There are also initiatives under development for post-registration and continuing professional development to be delivered by the education provider's social work team. The way in which the education provider meets this SET, and potentially other SETs, would be affected by the above changes to social work provision at the education provider. The programme team is therefore reminded to report to the HCPC through the major change process to demonstrate that there continues to be an appropriate number of qualified and experienced staff in place for the delivery of the programme.

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 programme team is advised to monitor the number of practice placements and practice placement educators available, to ensure there continues to be sufficient quality placements to support the delivery of the programme.

Reason: The visitors reviewed partnership agreements for the programme with a number of placement providers in the region, and discussed the education provider's approach to securing placement provision. In the meeting with placement providers and educators, the number of available practice placement educators was acknowledged as a challenge in the region. The visitors noted that a placement provider was currently out to tender for education providers for their placement provision and collaborative activities. The visitors also heard intentions to develop an 'Enabling Others' programme at the education provider, which would provide training to widen the pool of practice educators available for placements for the programme. From the evidence, the visitors were content that this standard was currently being met. However, given the introduction of this new programme and the vulnerability of placement provision where Social Work education provision is set to grow in the region, the visitors recommend the programme team keep under review the number of practice placements and practice placement educators to ensure there continues to be appropriate numbers available.

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

Recommendation: The education provider is reminded to ensure that approved programmes are the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors noted references to another programme provided by the education provider: MA Social Work and Community Studies. The visitors discussed this programme with the senior team, who indicated that the programme had now closed for recruitment. The education provider also provided documentation to confirm this at the visit. The visitors also heard that a summer school was under development under a similar title. The HCPC requires approved programmes to be the only programmes which contain any reference to an HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their award, and therefore formally note with the education provider to ensure any future provision adheres to these regulatory requirements.

Paula Sobiechowska
Diane Whitlock
Dorothy Smith