

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Welsh Ambulance Service Trust	
Programme name	IHCD Paramedic award	
Validating body/awarding body	IHCD (part of Edexcel)	
Mode of delivery	Full time	
Relevant part of HPC register	Paramedic Science	
Date of visit	11 and 12 March 2008	

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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 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Paramedic' 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 March 2009. At the Committee meeting on 25 March 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 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 as it was an approved programme which had not been approved since the publication of the QAA subject benchmark statements. 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 HPC only visit. The education provider and validating/awarding body 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	Mrs Jane Topham (Paramedic) Mr Robert Cartwright (Paramedic) Mrs Patricia Fillis (Radiographer)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Mrs Tracey Samuel-Smith
HPC observer	Miss Elisa Simeoni
Proposed student numbers	50 over the 2008/2009 financial year over two sites - currently 13 at Swansea training centre and 11 at Abergele training centre
Initial approval	September 2000
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	1 June 2009
Chair	Mrs Diane Mort (Swansea University)
Secretary	Ms Carol Neilson (Welsh Ambulance Service Trust)

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			\boxtimes
Descriptions of the modules	\boxtimes		
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	\boxtimes		
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	\boxtimes		
Practice placement handbook	\boxtimes		
Student handbook	\boxtimes		
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	\boxtimes		
External examiners' reports from the last two years			\boxtimes
Facilities and resource documentation	\boxtimes		
External verifier reports from the last two years	\boxtimes		

The HPC did not review a programme specification or any external examiners' reports prior to the visit as these documents do not exist.

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			
Programme team	\boxtimes		
Placements providers and educators/mentors			
Students			
Learning resources			
Specialist teaching accommodation (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)			

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 41 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 22 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 agreed that the education provider may wish to discuss some of these conditions with the validating/awarding body before attempting to respond to the conditions. The visitors have identified, within the condition, those which they feel the education provider may wish to discuss with the validating/awarding body.

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 have also made a commendation. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the advertising materials for the programme follow the guidelines provided in the HPC "Regulatory status advertising protocol for education providers".

Reason: From the documentation submitted it was clear that the advertising materials for the programme did not fully comply with the advertising guidelines issued by HPC. Therefore, to provide applicants with full and clear information in order to make an informed choice about whether to join the programme, the visitors felt that the advertising material must be amended.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure the accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (ap(e)I) policies are clearly articulated within the admission procedures.

Reason: From the discussion with the programme team the visitors learnt that the education provider follows the validating/awarding body ap(e)I policies and has had a number of enquiries from international students, though no one has been through the process. It was apparent from the discussion with the students that they did not know about the ap(e)I policies, this included a nurse who may have been eligible. The visitors therefore felt that the ap(e)I policies must be clearly articulated to all applicants.

3.6 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that the staff development policy applies to visiting lecturers and practice placement educators.

Reason: From the discussion with the programme team the visitors learnt that all tutors must undertake the IHCD Tutor Development award and through their personal development review, appropriate training is made available. The visitors were unsure of the programme for staff development for visiting lecturers and practice placement educators. They felt that further evidence was required to assure them that all staff had the opportunity to develop and maintain their professional skills, to make sure that they continued to deliver the programme effectively.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit the training centre policies which cover the availability and use of resources outside of tutor contact hours.

Reason: From the tour of the facilities and discussion with the programme team the visitors learnt that during the classroom based element of the programme, students are residents at the training centres, from Monday to Friday. A Training Officer is on site until 9.00pm each day to provide support or assistance if needed. Students can access the resources of the training centres once the Training Officer has left for the evening; allowing students to practice at the most convenient time for them. The visitors were concerned that students were able to practice using resources such as the defibrillator, sharps and drugs without supervision. The visitors were told that policies are in place to cover these areas but they were not provided during the visit. The visitors would like to review these policies to ensure that all the resources at the Swansea and Abergele training centres are being used effectively.

3.9 Where students participate as patients or clients in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the protocols used to gain student consent are clearly articulated.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions with the programme team and students it was clear that all students participate as patients or clients in practical and clinical teaching. The visitors recognise that as all the students came from an ambulance technician background, they were familiar and comfortable with participating in situations such as these. However, the visitors felt that to help make sure that education and placement providers acknowledge the risk factors associated with the programme and that as students may join the programme through the ap(e)I policies, the protocols to gain student consent must clearly articulate all the situations a student may be asked to participate in and the ability of a student to opt out at a later date.

3.11 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 education provider must ensure the training centre attendance policy is clearly articulated to students.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team it was clear that the placement attendance policy, including any mandatory attendance, was clearly communicated to students and was monitored. While the visitors received confirmation from the documentation and students that a register was taken before each class, the visitors were unsure which stages of the theory element were mandatory and how this was communicated to students.

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 ensure that students who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency.

Reason: The education provider offers both the theory (at the training centres) and practical (in-hospital placements) elements of the IHCD Paramedic award. In addition, the education provider offers placements in paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies. Students are treated as supernumerary during all these placements.

From discussions with the programme team it was clear that students do not undertake an ambulance placement under the supervision of a paramedic. Nor is it guaranteed that while students are working as an ambulance technician and taking the paramedic award (individuals hold dual status as students and employees), they will be 'on shift' with a paramedic. Should students be in a position where they are 'on shift' with a paramedic, they will not be in a supernumerary capacity. The visitors were worried that without guaranteed supervision by a paramedic on an ambulance the knowledge students gained during the theory element of the programme could stay as theory and not be translated into practice. The visitors felt this resulted in an inappropriate period of clinical supervision and as a result, the visitors were doubtful that the programme design enabled a student to meet the standards of proficiency to practise safely and effectively.

The visitors recognise that this situation has developed as there is no requirement by the validating/awarding body for students to gain guaranteed clinical supervision by a paramedic on an ambulance. They felt the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

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 ensure the programme reflects the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.

Reason: The education provider offers both the theory (at the training centres) and practical (in-hospital placements) elements of the IHCD Paramedic award. In addition, the education provider offers placements in paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies. Students are treated as supernumerary during all these placements.

From discussions with the programme team it was clear that students do not undertake an ambulance placement under the supervision of a paramedic. Nor is it guaranteed that while students are working as an ambulance technician and taking the paramedic award (individuals hold dual status as students and employees), they will be 'on shift' with a paramedic. Should students be in a

position where they are 'on shift' with a paramedic, they will not be in a supernumerary capacity.

One of the placement areas recommended by the British Paramedic Association (BPA) is emergency ambulance which states 'this allows the student to work with Paramedics and Technicians dealing with emergency and urgent cases in a clinical setting, and also to consolidate theoretical knowledge in practice'. The visitors were concerned that, as this placement area is not covered within the programme, the integration of theory into practice and the development of clinical skills to a level recommended by the BPA ('a thorough understanding') is doubtful.

The visitors recognise that this situation has developed as the validating/awarding body award has not been updated since the introduction of the professional body guidance. They feel that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure the programme clearly articulates how theory and practice are integrated to ensure safe and effective practice.

Reason: The education provider offers both the theory (at the training centres) and practical (in-hospital placements) elements of the IHCD Paramedic award. In addition, the education provider offers placements in paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies. Students are treated as supernumerary during all these placements.

From discussions with the programme team it was clear that students do not undertake an ambulance placement under the supervision of a paramedic. Nor is it guaranteed that while students are working as an ambulance technician and taking the paramedic award (individuals hold dual status as students and employees), they will be 'on shift' with a paramedic. Should students be in a position where they are 'on shift' with a paramedic, they will not be in a supernumerary capacity. The visitors were worried that without guaranteed supervision by a paramedic on an ambulance the knowledge students gained during the theory element of the programme could stay as theory and not be translated into practice. The visitors were doubtful that the programme design integrated theory and practice sufficiently to enable students to develop the clinical skills to practice safely and effectively.

The visitors recognise that this situation has developed as there is no requirement by the validating/awarding body for students to gain guaranteed clinical supervision by a paramedic on an ambulance. They felt the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

5.5 The number, duration and range of placements must be appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the programme guarantees that students will gain supervised paramedic experience on an ambulance.

Reason: The education provider offers both the theory (at the training centres) and practical (in-hospital placements) elements of the IHCD Paramedic award. In addition, the education provider offers placements in paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies. Students are treated as supernumerary during all these placements.

From discussions with the programme team it was clear that students do not undertake an ambulance placement under the supervision of a paramedic. Nor is it guaranteed that while students are working as an ambulance technician and taking the paramedic award (individuals hold dual status as students and employees), they will be 'on shift' with a paramedic. Should students be in a position where they are 'on shift' with a paramedic, they will not be in a supernumerary capacity.

The visitors were concerned that as the programme does not guarantee students will receive supervised paramedic experience on an ambulance, a students' achievement of the learning outcomes may be affected and the student may not be able to meet all the standards of proficiency. The visitors therefore felt that the number and range of placements were not appropriate to the learning outcomes of the programme.

The visitors recognise that this situation has developed as there is no requirement by the validating/awarding body for students to gain guaranteed clinical supervision by a paramedic on an ambulance. They felt the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

- 5.7 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the following:
 - 5.7.1 the learning outcomes to be achieved;

Condition: The education provider must ensure the learning outcomes during placement are clearly articulated to students and practice placement educators.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team it was clear that learning outcomes have been produced for the paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies placements. An example learning outcome for the paediatric emergency management placement is 'Discuss/observe the features of a seriously ill child'. The visitors felt that the learning outcomes for these placements were too wide reaching and did not provide the student or the placement provider with sufficient information about the specific learning outcomes which must be attained.

5.7 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the following:

5.7.3 expectations of professional conduct;

Condition: The education provider must ensure that references to the expectations of professional conduct are accurate and up to date.

Reason: During discussions with the programme team, placement providers and students it was clear that students are taught about the behaviour expected of them on their placement and that their placements help prepare them for entry to the profession. However, references in the documentation direct students to HPC's code of conduct. The visitors felt that in order to direct students to the standards HPC expects of them once they have joined the profession, the programme documentation must be updated to state HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

It was also clear from the documentation that there was confusion within the code of conduct and standards of professional behaviour regarding an individual's duty as a Registrant. The visitors felt that this must be updated to remove references to 'the Paramedic Board of the Health Professions Council' and to clarify that the standards of conduct, performance and ethics are produced by the HPC and not the Ambulance Service Association.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure students and practice placement educators are provided with detailed information about the assessment procedures, including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team it was clear that the education provider gives students the validating/awarding body document 'ambulance service paramedic training; training record with continuous assessment reports' which applies to the in-hospital placements. This document requires practice placement educators to witness a student undertaking specific techniques a set number of times. Every time a student 'successfully' performs a technique, the training record is signed. Once the student has successfully performed the technique a set number of times, the learning outcome has been met. From the discussion with the placement providers it was clear that the validating/awarding body does not provide guidelines on the assessment regulations associated with this document, including: the definition of 'successfully'; how many attempts a student has to perform a technique; or what to do in the case of a failing student. The visitors recognise that this document is produced by the validating/awarding body however they were concerned that without guidelines, there was a risk that assessments could be interpreted and applied differently depending on the mentor.

It was also clear from the documentation and discussion with the programme team that the education provider gives students internally produced clinical objectives for the paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies placements. Again, these documents require practice placement educators to witness a student undertaking specific techniques and if the student performs these techniques to a 'satisfactory' level, the clinical objectives record is signed. From the discussion with the placement providers it was clear that the education provider does not provide guidelines on the assessment regulations associated with this document, including: the definition of 'satisfactory'; how many attempts a student has to perform a technique; or what to do in the case of a failing student. The visitors were again concerned that without guidelines, there was a risk that assessments could be interpreted and applied differently depending on the mentor.

The visitors recognise that this situation has partly arisen due to the documentation produced by the validating/awarding body. They felt that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

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

Condition: The education provider must review the process of practice placement educator training.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team it was clear that the education provider has a process in place to provide mentorship training. However, from the discussion with the placement providers it was apparent that not all of the practice placement educators had received training about the validating/awarding body or education provider assessment regulations. The visitors felt that the process of practice placement educator training must be reviewed in order to ensure practice placement educators gain the knowledge, skills and experience of the appropriate assessment regulations to be able to support students accurately and effectively.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that students who complete the programme can meet the standards of proficiency and are fit to practice.

Reason: The conditions which are attached to SETs 4 and 5 will require the education provider to revise the programme curriculum and placement arrangements. As a result it is likely that new or amended learning outcomes will be proposed. The visitors will need to receive evidence that the assessment procedures and methods test the academic and theoretical learning, as well and the practical application of skills, in all the standards of proficiency.

The visitors felt that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

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 clearly articulate the assessment methods which measure the learning outcomes and skills required to practice safely and effectively.

Reason: The conditions which are attached to SETs 4 and 5 will require the education provider to revise the programme curriculum and placement arrangements. As a result it is likely that new or amended learning outcomes will be proposed. The visitors will need to receive evidence that the assessment procedures and methods test the academic and theoretical learning, as well and the practical application of skills, leading to safe and effective practice.

The visitors felt that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

6.3 All assessments must provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external reference frameworks can be measured.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the assessment design; procedures and methods provide a rigorous and effective process.

Reason: The conditions which are attached to SETs 4 and 5 will require the education provider to revise the programme curriculum and placement arrangements. As a result it is likely that new or amended learning outcomes will be proposed. The visitors will need to receive evidence that the assessment procedures and methods provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external reference frameworks can be measured.

The visitors feel that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

6.4 The measurement of student performance and progression must be an integral part of the wider process of monitoring and evaluation, and use objective criteria.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the assessment regulations clearly specify the requirements for the measurement of student performance and progression.

Reason: The conditions which are attached to SETs 4 and 5 will require the education provider to revise the programme curriculum and placement arrangements. As a result it is likely that new or amended learning outcomes and assessment procedures will be proposed. The visitors will need to receive evidence that the assessment procedures and methods measure student performance and progression through the use of objective criteria.

The visitors felt that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

6.5 There must be effective mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards in the assessment.

Condition: The education provider must ensure there are mechanisms in place to assure appropriate standards in assessment.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team the visitors learnt that there was no external examiner for the programme. The visitors recognise that the validating/awarding body visits the education provider every year to assess the programme against their rules and regulations. However, as the external verifier does not review the paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies placements, which are offered in addition to the in-hospital placements required by the validating/awarding body, the visitors felt this was not equivalent to an external examiner's assessment of a programme.

In addition, from the documentation it was clear that there was no requirement by the validating/awarding body for the education provider to undertake a regular internal review of the programme.

The visitors were concerned that there was no moderation of the programme, either internally or externally, to ensure that the assessment criteria were applied appropriately and consistently. The visitors felt that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure the assessment regulations clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement during placements.

Reason: The conditions which are attached to SETs 4 and 5 will require the education provider to revise the programme curriculum and placement arrangements. As a result it is likely that new or amended learning outcomes and assessment procedures will be proposed. The visitors will need to receive evidence that the assessment procedures and methods measure student performance and progression through the use of objective criteria.

The visitors feel that the education provider may wish to discuss this condition with the validating/awarding body.

6.7.4 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.

Condition: The education provider must ensure the procedure for a right of appeal for students is up to date.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions with the programme team and placement providers it was clear there was an assessment, failure, referral and appeals; hospital secondment policy. Within this policy the visitors noted that the local Paramedic Steering Committee played an important role. However, from

the discussion with the placement providers the visitors learnt that the Paramedic Steering Committee no longer operated. The visitors therefore felt that the procedure must be updated to reflect this change.

6.7.5 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner from the relevant part of the HPC Register unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The education provider must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner from the relevant part of the HPC Register or propose alternative arrangements.

Reason: From the documentation and discussion with the programme team it was apparent that there was no external examiner for the programme. The visitors recognise that the validating/awarding body visits the education provider every year to assess the programme against their rules and regulations. However, the visitors did not feel this was the equivalent of an external examiner's review of a programme as paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies placements, which are offered in addition to the in-hospital placements required by the validating body, are reviewed. The visitors therefore felt the assessment regulations must either clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner or propose alternative arrangements.

Recommendations

2.1 The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider should review the use of external advertising materials to promote the programme.

Reason: From the documentation it was clear that the education provider uses material produced by the National Leadership and Innovation Agency to promote the programme. The visitors were concerned that this material included incorrect information about continuing professional development and what registrants are required to do to remain on the HPC Register and as such, could be misleading to applicants. The visitors recognise that this material is not produced by the education provider and therefore the education provider can not be expected to update the material. However, the visitors felt that the education provider should review the use of external material such as this to ensure that it is correct and up to date, and make a decision on its usefulness for applicants.

3.12 The resources provided, both on and off site, must adequately support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider enhancing students' access to online medical resources.

Reason: The visitors are satisfied that the available resources adequately support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme. The visitors understand the education provider plans to run the programme for two more years only and there are no plans to enhance the physical library resources within the training centres. However, the visitors felt there are many online medical resources which are readily available and which could be useful to students to enhance their learning experience.

Commendations

The visitors wish to commend the following aspects of the programme:

Commendation: The visitors would like to commend the education provider on the inclusion of paediatric emergency management and emergency obstetric and related gynaecological emergencies placements within the programme.

Reason: The visitors recognise that these placements are in addition to the inhospital placements required by the validating body and enhance the student experience. The visitors felt these placements are highly unusual and are therefore best practice which must be commended.

Mrs Jane Topham Mr Robert Cartright Mrs Patricia Fillis