

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Wiltshire College
Validating body	University of Bath
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Social Work
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	21 – 22 January 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 14 May 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 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 part of a joint event. The professional body, the College of Social Work (TCSW), considered their endorsement of the programme. 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 the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Michael Branicki (Social worker) Graeme Currie (Social worker) Susanne Roff (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Alex Urquhart
HCPC observer	Jamie Hunt
Proposed student numbers	25 per cohort, one cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
First approved intake	8 August 2003
Chair	Adrian Vatcher (University of the West of England)
Secretary	Wendy Lloyd (Wiltshire College)
Members of the joint panel	Robert Johns (The College of Social Work) Terry Williams (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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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.

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 6 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 recommendation 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 revise the admissions guidance about the health check so that applicants have the information available to make an informed choice about whether or not to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

Reason: The programme specification detailed that one of the admissions requirements was the completion of a satisfactory health check. The visitors considered this could be misleading as the admissions documentation did not specify what the criteria for passing the health check were. The visitors would like to see this criteria in more detail, to understand the purpose of, and the criteria for passing the health check. The visitors concluded that there was not sufficient information regarding the health check to allow a potential applicant to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme. During the visit it was established that the health check has a dual role. The first purpose of the health check is to ensure that the applicant is healthy enough to successfully take up a place on the programme. The second purpose is to identify where special requirements or adjustments may need to be made so that an individual is appropriately supported on the programme. The current wording of the admission criteria does not mention the second purpose of the health check, the visitors considered that a potential applicant may view this criteria as a barrier to admission. This information should be available for potential applicants and that the current statement about the health check could be misleading. To ensure that the standard is met the visitors would like to see the documentation state more clearly what the purpose of the health check is and what is involved.

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 revise the admissions guidance to clearly identify how many hours of voluntary or paid work in a social services or welfare setting is required as a condition of application for the programme.

Reason: Page 10 of the programme specification document states "It is a condition of application that an applicant has 200 hours experience either voluntary or paid work in a social services or welfare setting (to be completed at time of application or by time of course commencement) with a reference to support this work." Further discussion with the programme team discovered that this was no longer the case and the number of hours was being reduced for future cohorts. The visitors agreed that this inaccuracy could be misleading to potential applicants when considering applying for the programme. To ensure the standard is met, the visitors would like to see the correct statement in the programme specification so that potential applicants are clear about the admissions criteria and can make an informed choice about whether to apply for admission to the programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will effectively manage the programme considering their intention to increase cohort size to 25 per year.

Reason: The Wiltshire College business plan states that as of the 2015–16 academic year the planned cohort size as agreed with the University of Bath is 25. This is a significant increase to the current number of students which totals 37 across all three years. The visitors were satisfied that the programme is effectively managed for the current student number, allowing students that complete the programme to meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for the profession. However, the visitors were concerned that if student numbers rise to 25 per cohort as planned, then the current management of the programme would not be able to deliver an effective programme. The visitors noted that the teaching and administrative staff, learning resources and practice placement provision would need to be readdressed in order to accommodate the proposed increase in cohort and deliver an effective programme, allowing successful students to meet the SOPs. In order to be satisfied that this standard is met, the visitors require evidence for the effective management of the programme for the planned expansion of the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme for staff development, and demonstrate how this programme is monitored so it ensures continuing professional and research development.

Reason: the education provider currently has a programme for staff development in place, however the visitors considered that the education provider should be doing more to support staff teaching on a higher education programme. The visitors considered that the current programme for staff development was more relevant to further education teaching. Further discussion discovered that as a further education institution the requirement for programme staff to be actively involved in research was not expected due to the nature of the resources available to the education provider. The visitors considered staff development as important to the programme to ensure that the curriculum is taught by staff with relevant expertise and experience to deliver an effective programme. The visitors considered that the current staff development programme should be focused more to a higher education setting. To ensure that the standard is met the visitors would like to see a programme for staff development which is more relevant to the teaching of this higher education programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure the terminology used is accurate, consistent and reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation and the HCPC.

Reason: The visitors noted that throughout the programme handbook and module guides there were inaccuracies regarding the role of the HCPC, for example on page 15 in the programme handbooks it states “It is an HCPC requirement that students must complete 170 days placement over the course of the programme and 30 skills days”,

the HCPC does not specify a specific number of days on placement or skills days, this is a requirement of the professional body. Similarly, the programme specification on page 2 states “The professional capabilities framework developed by the HCPC and TCSW has replaced the previous competence based model developed by the General Social care Council (GSCC)”. This statement is incorrect as the HCPC has no involvement with the development of the professional capabilities framework. There were other instances of inaccurate information in the documentation as well. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to revise all documentation and remove any inaccurate information so that students are correctly informed about the role and remit of the HCPC in relation to the programme of study and the profession.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate that physical learning resources are effectively used to support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Reason: The visitors were given a tour of the physical learning resources as part of the visit agenda. The visitors observed that some of the higher education (HE) learning rooms, which were intended as dedicated spaces for HE students, were available for use by other students at the college. During the visit the students noted that there were occasions where role play teaching and confidential learning sessions were held in the learning rooms which were also publically used. The visitors concluded that this use of rooms was not appropriate for required teaching and learning activities. To ensure this standard is met, the visitors require evidence that the education provider is able to promote a learning environment that is more conducive for the teaching of social work.

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 provide further evidence that a robust monitoring system for students attendance is in place which includes information as to what would trigger procedures for poor attendance.

Reason: The current attendance policy, on page 15 of the social work programme handbook, states that “Attendance is compulsory for all elements of the programme and we expect your attendance to be 100%.” This clearly explains what the attendance is for all aspects of teaching on the programme. However, the visitors noted in the documentation and throughout the visit that there was no policy in place to monitor attendance, or trigger procedures for poor attendance. The visitors would like to see an attendance policy which clearly specifies what the required attendance for all aspects of the programme and how this is monitored, including the protocol for handling poor attendance.

Recommendations

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The visitors would like to encourage the programme team to make it clear to the students that resources are available from the University of Bath.

Reason: As part of the licencing arrangement with the University of Bath, students at Wiltshire College have walk-in access to the learning resources at the University of Bath. This was made clear to the visitors during the tour of facilities. Under this arrangement Wiltshire College students can visit the library during weekends and University vacation days. This access included access to 'e-learning' resources, including library books and journals, both hard copies and online. It is not possible to borrow books or to print or save material. It was noted that access was limited due to a recent change to the arrangements with the University of Bath. It used to be that Wiltshire College students could visit the University of Bath and borrow books at any time, due to geographical and financial limitations it was noted by the education provider that this was rarely used by students on the programme. The policy changed to accommodate this meaning that students are now required to book a time to visit the University of Bath Library. It also become apparent that there was a share scheme allowing students at Wiltshire College to order books from the University of Bath and the University of the West of England, as well as other libraries throughout Wiltshire by using the South West Regional Library service (SWRL) agreement which gives Wiltshire College students access to 51 libraries. Under current licensing arrangements Wiltshire College students can request University of Bath External Library Membership, which allows them to borrow 5 books at a time and to visit the Library 24/7 throughout the year. There is a modest fee for this membership which Wiltshire College pays for on request by the students. Although it was apparent to the visitors that there was a pool of resources from Bath, and that students studying on the programme had access to these resources, they noted during the meeting with students that there was generally a poor understanding of the accessibility and availability of learning resources from the University of Bath. The visitors decided that, as the programme was a HE programme set in a further education setting, it was imperative that students had access to HE learning materials, specifically when it came to writing their final dissertations. The visitors further considered that the confusion among students could have a negative impact on their access to resources. For this reason the visitors recommend that the programme team make it clear to all students what access they have to learning resources for external education providers and how they can gain this access.

Michael Branicki
Graeme Currie
Susanne Roff