hpc **health professions council**

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Birmingham Metropolitan College
Validating body / Awarding body	Aston University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Podiatry
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Chiropodist / Podiatrist
Relevant entitlement(s)	Local anaesthetic Prescription only medicine
Date of visit	9 – 10 November 2010

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Chiropodist'or 'Podiatrist' 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 on 9 December 2010. At the Committee meeting on 16 February 2011, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider issues raised by the previous year's annual monitoring process. The issues raised by annual monitoring affected the following standards - programme management and resources, and practice placements. The programme was already approved by the HPC and this visit assessed whether the programme continued to meet the standards of education and training (SETs) and continued to ensure that those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was an HPC only visit. The education provider and 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	Paul Blakeman (Chiropodist/Podiatrist) Phil Mandy (Chiropodist/Podiatrist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	34 per cohort once a year
Initial approval	9 May 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	26 September 2011
Chair	Kim Pankhurst (Birmingham Metropolitan University)
Secretary	Siân Davies (Birmingham Metropolitan University)

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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐
Internal annual monitoring reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐
Response to HPC Annual monitoring visitors' report	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg 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 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 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 have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

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

Condition: The education provider must submit revised programme documentation that has had instances of confusing and incorrect information removed.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation submitted prior to the visit inconsistencies and confusing information. In particular there were instances of modules being called by differing titles through the documents (for example within the Student handbook on pages 6, 11 and 23 the same module is referred to as, "Functional Anatomy", "Anatomy" and "Functional Anatomy of the Lower Limb"). There was also a misleading statement saying the programme leads to "registration with the Health Professions Council" (Programme Specification – 'Educational aims of the programme' and Student Handbook p11). This statement is inaccurate in that the qualification leads to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register rather than leading to registration. As an important resource for the programme, the visitors considered the documentation currently to be confusing for students and staff. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise documentation to remove incorrect information as noted and to clarify the module titles where needed.

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 implement formal written protocols to obtain consent when students participate as service users and for managing situations when students decline from participating as service users in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation and through discussion with the programme team, consent was obtained verbally from students when participating as service users in clinical and practical teaching. There was no formal information regarding consent protocols in place, how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained or how situations where students declined from participation were managed. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from students or could appropriately manage situations where students declined to participate in the practical and clinical teaching. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement formal protocols for obtaining consent from students (such as a consent form to be signed prior to commencing the programme) and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching (such as alternative learning arrangements).

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Condition: The education provider must submit revised documentation that includes information regarding their interim awards for this programme.

Reason: The documentation provided (the Programme Specification and Student Handbook) prior to the visit clearly stated the programme would not award interim awards to students exiting the programme before full completion of the approved programme award. Upon further discussions at the visit the education provider stated they did grant interim awards to students who chose to exit the programme before fully completing the approved programme in the form of a certificate or diploma of higher education that did not contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register. For clarity for students, staff and any external assessors, the visitors require this information to be updated in the relevant documents.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the requirement for at least one external examiner appointed to the programme to be HPC registered unless alternate arrangements have been agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail in the external examiner recruitment policy specific to the programme. The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements for the programme but need to see evidence that HPC requirements regarding the external examiner on the programme have been included in the documentation to demonstrate the recognition of this requirement.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider additional improvements for the Research dissertation module.

Reason: Discussions at the visit indicated that the module handbook for the Research dissertation module needed to be updated as a matter of course. The visitors were happy with the module content, assessment and plan to update the handbook but would like to recommend some additional improvements for this module.

They recommend the education provider consider implementing a formal arrangement for supervising the student working on the research dissertation such as a signed agreement or contract to set out the roles and boundaries for the student and for the project supervisor. The visitors recommend the education provider also consider clearly identifying the required hours for the supervisor to give to the student so as to avoid instances where more time is given than is appropriate. During discussion at the visit it was stated that there was an informal arrangement in place whereby tutors who had not supervised a student undertaking a research dissertation were mentored by more experienced tutors. The visitors wish to recommend the education provider formalise this arrangement and expand it to include some additional training for all project supervisors.

The visitors felt these additions to the research dissertation module would enhance the learning and teaching experience for students and staff and provide a standard level of knowledge and experience across the board for all involved in the programme.

4.6 The delivery of the programme must support and develop autonomous and reflective thinking.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the way in which they communicate the importance of personal development to the students.

Reason: Discussions at the visit with the programme team indicated they felt the students were well informed of the importance and use of a personal development plan. The students were familiar with the concepts of autonomous and reflective thinking as indicated by their engagement with the programme and their knowledge of the profession and of their own development but were not fully aware of the terminology of a personal development plan. Whilst the visitors were satisfied this standard was met, discussions with the programme team indicated that perhaps the terminology had not been properly communicated to students and that recent changes to the modules would address this and strengthen the understanding of personal development through the programmes duration. The visitors were happy with the changes proposed but would like to recommend the

education provider continually consider how they communicate the importance of the personal development plan to the students to be sure they are fully aware of the implications and purpose of having such an understanding of their own development through the programme and through their professional careers.

<div align="right">Phil Mandy
Paul Blakeman</div>