

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The Open University
Programme name	Diploma in Higher Education in Paramedic Sciences
Mode of delivery	Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	28 January 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 14 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 20 May 2010. At the Committee meeting on 7 July 2010, 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 major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme admissions, programme management and resources, curriculum 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 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. The visit also considered the Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science. A separate visitor report exists for this programme.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Vince Clarke (Paramedic) Jim Petter (Paramedic)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Rachel Greig
Proposed student numbers	100
Initial approval	1 October 2008
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	August 2010
Chair	Prof Trevor Herbert (The Open University)
Secretary	Alison Nash (The Open 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	<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review SETs mapping documents prior to the visit as the education provider did not submit it. However, these were reviewed at the visit itself.

The HPC did not review SOPs mapping, practice placement handbook, curriculum vitae for relevant staff or external examiners reports prior to the visit as these documents were not required by the visitors and not necessary to assess the change.

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	<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"/>
Learning resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not see the learning resources or specialist teaching accommodation as the nature of the major change did not effect these areas.

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 condition is set on the programme, which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 54 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 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 did not make any 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

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must submit the final version of the APEL learning guide for review.

Reason: The document entitled 'SZL110 Demonstrating practice in health sciences. APEL Learning Guide' was review by the visitors prior and during the visit. This document outlines details relating to the proposed APEL module, SZL110, which formed part of the education providers major change submission. Upon review of this document and through discussions with the programme team the visitors were happy to approve the major change and accept the module as an avenue for students to access the programme via APEL. However, the visitors noted the document was still in draft form and identified some incorrect wording relating to who would be entitled to undertake the module. Therefore, in order for the visitors to be ensured the information in the APEL Learning Guide is accurate and correct they require this document to be finalised and resubmitted for review.

5.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must submit documentation that demonstrates to sponsors that practice placements are integral to the programme.

Reason: Currently the education provider uses the Collaborative Agreement to delegate responsibility of arranging placements to a students' sponsor. In the programme documentation there is a list of placements that students are expected to complete in order to achieve the learning outcomes and thus the standards of proficiency. Currently it is stated that these placements are mandatory. As part of the major change submission the education provider wishes to change the wording around placements from 'required' to 'indicative'. However, the visitors were concerned that changes of this wording may result in some sponsors neglecting to arrange placements for their students. If this was the case the visitors felt the programme would no longer meet the SET as placements may not remain an integral part of the programme.

During discussions with the head of department the visitors learned that as a requirement for student progression and completion of the programme students had to submit a placement time log which was assessed along with their portfolio containing reflective accounts of each of their placements. If at the end of the programme a students time log was judged by the education provider to not be adequate eg the placements were not sufficiently varied or the student had not completed enough placement hours then that student would fail. Similarly, if after the first year of the programme the education provider had concerns over the students' attendance of placements this would be investigated further to ensure adequate progression.

The visitors were satisfied that the assessment of the time log was a suitable tool for the education provider to ensure placements remained an integral part of the programme however would like to see documentary evidence describing this system. Additionally, the visitors would like to see evidence of how this system is communicated to the signatories of the Collaborative Agreement. The visitors feel by communicating this to the sponsors it will be understood that placements must form an integral part of the programme and student progression and completion is dependent on their attendance of placements.

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.

Condition: The education provider must submit documentation that demonstrates to sponsors the importance of an appropriate number, range and duration of placements to support programme delivery and achievement of the learning outcomes.

Reason: Currently the education provider uses the Collaborative Agreement to delegate responsibility of arranging placements to a students' sponsor. In the programme documentation there is a list of placements that students are expected to complete in order to achieve the learning outcomes and thus the standards of proficiency. Currently it is stated that these placements are mandatory. As part of the major change submission the education provider wishes to change the wording around placements from 'required' to 'indicative'. However, the visitors were concerned that changes of this wording may result in some sponsors neglecting to arrange placements for their students and certain competencies may be signed off without appropriate placement experience. If this was the case the visitors felt the programme would no longer meet the SET as the number, duration and range of placements would not be sufficient to delivery the programme.

During discussions with the head of department the visitors learned that as a requirement for student progression and completion of the programme students had to submit a placement time log which was assessed along with their portfolio containing reflective accounts of each of their placements. If at the end of the programme a students time log was judged by the education provider to not be adequate eg the placements were not sufficiently varied or the student had not completed enough placement hours then that student would fail. Similarly, if after the first year of the programme the education provider had concerns over the students' attendance of placements this would be investigated further to ensure adequate progression.

The visitors were satisfied that the assessment of the time log was a suitable tool for the education provider to ensure students had access to the appropriate number, duration and range of placements however would like to see documentary evidence describing this system. Additionally, the visitors would like to see evidence of how this system is communicated to the signatories of the Collaborative Agreement. The visitors feel by communicating this to the sponsors it will be understood that student progression and completion of the programme is dependent on their attendance of a wide range and number of placements over an appropriate time scale.

Vince Clarke
Jim Petter