

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Manchester
Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology (with clinical competency certificate – CCC)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	21 – 22 March 2012

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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 'Hearing aid dispenser' 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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 23 August 2012. At the Committee meeting on 23 August 2012, 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Hearing aid dispenser profession came onto the register in April 2010 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider and validating body did not validate or review the programmes at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programmes. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Audiology, full time, BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology), full time and MSc Audiology (with clinical competency certificate – CCC), full time. Separate reports exist for these programmes.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Bernadette Waters (Occupational therapist) Richard Sykes (Hearing aid dispenser) Hugh Crawford (Hearing aid dispenser)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	11 students enrol on MSc Audiology (with clinical competency certificate – CCC) but can choose to exit with Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology (with clinical competency certificate – CCC)
First approved intake	June 2007
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Anne Hesketh (University of Manchester)
Secretary	Ryan Hurst (University of Manchester)

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 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 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 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 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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 3 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.

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 all of the programme documentation, and any advertising material, to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of HPC regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted that elements of the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of incorrect or out-of-date terminology in reference to HPC 'accrediting' the programme. The HPC does not accredit education programmes we approve education programmes. The visitors also noted reference to 'state registration' throughout the documentation. The term 'state registered' is no longer used by the professions we regulate and should not be incorporated into any materials relating to an HPC approved programme. The documentation also, on occasion, stated that completion of the programme will enable graduates to register with the HPC. Upon successful completion of the programme all students become eligible to apply for registration with the HPC and as such the language the education provider uses needs to reflect this.

The visitors finally noted reference within the 'MSc Audiology Handbook' (page 8) to the Certificate of Audiological Competence (CAC), administered by the British Academy of Audiology. The visitors noted that this award is no longer available. The visitors considered the current terminology in place could be misleading to applicants and students and therefore require all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to be amended to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology to ensure consistency.

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 the programme documentation to clearly highlight that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the HPC. The education provider must also revisit the programme documentation to ensure that applicants and students are given further information about the option of becoming a hearing aid dispenser and what it entails. The education provider must finally clearly highlight the role of the HPC as the statutory regulator for hearing aid dispensers.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted limited reference to hearing aid dispensers and the fact that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the HPC. The visitors were concerned that the role of a hearing aid dispenser was not clearly highlighted within the programme

documentation and that potential applicants as well as students on the programme would be unaware of the options available to them. The visitors also noted little reference to the role of the HPC as the statutory regulator for hearing aid dispensers. The visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation in relation to information regarding the option of becoming a hearing aid dispenser to ensure that applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

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 all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that potential applicants are made aware of the funding arrangements for the programme and any likely additional costs associated with taking up a place on the programme.

Reason: In discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that all pre-Registration hearing aid dispenser programmes delivered by the education provider will now be funded by fee paying students. From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to locate information relating to the funding of the programme. From discussions with students the visitors also noted that students may be expected to self-fund additional costs associated with taking up a place on the programme. Some students noted that they were required to stay in hospital accommodation when going on placement and that they self-funded the associated costs. Some students also stated that costs associated with accommodation and travel could be claimed back. The visitors were unable to locate information relating to additional costs or funding support within the programme. The visitors therefore require the education provider to ensure that the funding arrangements for the programme and any potential additional costs and funding support associated with the programme are clearly stated to demonstrate that this standard has been met.

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 ensure that a system is in place for gaining students informed consent before they participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: The visitors noted through discussion with the programme team, consent was obtained verbally from students when participating as service users in practical teaching. The visitors also noted that the education provider has plans to develop formal protocols to support the consent process. However, the visitors were not presented with formal protocols to demonstrate that a system is in place for gaining students informed consent before they participate as service users in practical 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).

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 provide evidence of the mechanisms in place that ensure students who have been awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology by other education providers and then undertake the certificate in clinical competency (CCC) awarded by University of Manchester, meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Reason: The visitors noted the approved programme that leads to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register is the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology in combination with the clinical competency certificate (CCC), both awarded by University of Manchester. The visitors were satisfied the learning outcomes ensure those who successfully complete the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology in combination with the clinical competency certificate (CCC) from the University of Manchester, meet the standards of proficiency for the hearing aid dispenser part of the Register. A significant number of the standards of proficiency are mapped against the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology programme and the rest are mapped on the clinical competency certificate (CCC). Through discussion with the programme team it was stated the education provider accepts students on to the clinical competency certificate (CCC) who have been awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology from other education providers. The visitors noted that although a small number of UK education providers offer the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology programme, not all are HPC approved. It is the combination of the learning outcomes associated with both the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology and the clinical competency certificate (CCC) that ensure anybody who successfully completes both awards will meet the standards of proficiency. With this evidence the visitors could not determine how the education provider ensures students admitted to the programme with an Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology by other education providers would be able to fully meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the register.

The visitors therefore require evidence to demonstrate the education provider has mechanisms in place that ensure students who have been awarded an Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology by other education providers and then undertake the certificate in clinical competency (CCC) awarded by University of Manchester, meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider using the accreditation of prior learning mechanisms for applicants who have been awarded an Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology by other education providers and then undertake the certificate in clinical competency (CCC) awarded by University of Manchester.

Reason: The visitors noted the approved programme that leads to eligibility to apply to the HPC Register is the Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology in combination with the clinical competency certificate (CCC), both awarded by University of Manchester. The visitors were satisfied the learning outcomes ensure those who successfully complete the University of Manchester Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology in combination with the clinical competency certificate (CCC), meet the standards of proficiency for the hearing aid dispenser part of the Register.

Through discussion with the programme team it was stated the education provider accepts students on to the clinical competency certificate (CCC) who have been awarded an Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology from other education providers. The visitors recommend the education provider should consider using the accreditation of prior learning mechanisms that are in place for applicants who have been awarded an Postgraduate Diploma in Audiology by other education providers. Using accreditation of prior learning mechanisms will ensure that all prior learning is mapped against the learning outcomes for the programme and all relevant standards of proficiency are covered.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to further highlight learning outcomes specific to the hearing aid dispenser part of the Register.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that the delivery of hearing aid specific content ensures that those who successfully complete the programme can meet the relevant standards of proficiency. The visitors noted that the 'Professional Skills and Aural Rehabilitation' module incorporate professional issues and topics associated with hearing aid dispensing. The visitors also noted that students receive lectures from hearing aid dispensers and that some students get the opportunity to undertake practice placements in non-NHS settings. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors highlighted that it was not always clear which learning outcomes are associated with which standard of proficiency. The visitors recommend that the education provider should consider revisiting the programme

documentation to further emphasise the learning outcomes that are specific to hearing aid dispensing.

4.9 When there is interprofessional learning the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group must be adequately addressed.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider further developing opportunities for interprofessional learning within the programme.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted examples of interprofessional learning within the programme with sessions being shared with speech and language therapy students. The visitors were satisfied that the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group was adequately addressed and therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors also noted that the education provider runs a range of health and social care programmes and recommend that the education provider should continue to develop further opportunities for interprofessional learning within the programme.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing its practice placement audit processes to ensure they are applicable to and include non-NHS placements.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied with the current system for approving and monitoring practice placements. The visitors noted that the education provider has a robust audit process in place for NHS placements. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted future plans to expand the range of practice placements to include non-NHS placements. The visitors also noted the current arrangements in place where students can go to non-NHS settings for a period of ad hoc placement days to gain a greater insight into hearing aid dispensing and private practice. The visitors recommend that the education provider should consider reviewing its practice placement audit processes to ensure they are applicable to and include non-NHS placements. The visitors suggest that this may be an adapted approval and monitoring mechanism for short ad hoc placements but highlight the importance of having some quality safeguards in place at all times.

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the mechanisms in place to monitor the attendance of practice placement educators at practice placement educator training and introduce a requirement for refresher training.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with practice placement educators the visitors noted that the education provider

facilitates an annual 'Clinical Educator Training Day'. The visitors noted that all new practice placement educators must attend this training before they can supervise a student and that they are expected to attend subsequent practice placement educator training events. However, the visitors noted that refresher training is not mandatory and the education provider does not outline a minimum requirement for attendance at subsequent practice placement educator training events. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider should consider reviewing the mechanisms in place to monitor the attendance of practice placement educators at practice placement educator training and introduce a requirement for refresher training to ensure that all practice placement educators remain engaged with the programme and up to date.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider developing a system for checking the HPC registration details of practice placement educators in non-NHS practice placements.

Reason: Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted future plans to expand the range of practice placements to include non-NHS placements. The visitors also noted the current arrangements in place where students can go to non-NHS settings for a period of ad hoc placement days to gain a greater insight into hearing aid dispensing and private practise. The visitors recommend that the education provider should consider developing a system for checking the HPC registration details of practice placement educators in non-NHS practice placements to ensure that this standard continues to be met if the programme increases its use of non-NHS placements.

Bernadette Waters
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Hugh Crawford