

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Plymouth
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Infection Science)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	30 – 31 October 2013

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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 'Biomedical scientist' 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 27 March. 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 it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC approval for the first time. 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 considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes - BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Blood Science) full time and BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Cellular Science) full time. 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HCPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. 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 the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Phil Warren (Biomedical scientist) Mary Popeck (Biomedical scientist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Abdur Razzaq
Proposed student numbers	24 (includes all specialisms)
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2014
Chair	Mel Joyner (University of Plymouth)
Secretary	Sara wing (University of Plymouth)
Members of the joint panel	Nymeth Ali (The Institute of Biomedical Science) Alan Wainwright (The Institute of Biomedical Science) Patrick Naughton (The Institute of Biomedical Science)

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"/>
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 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 programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining six SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for 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 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 review the advertising materials and programme documentation to make it clear that upon successful completion of the programme the individual will be eligible to apply for registration as a biomedical scientist with the HCPC.

Reason: The visitors found inconsistent advice about registration with the HCPC in the advertising materials and programme documentation. For example, there were several references in the documentation to registration as a “Healthcare science practitioner”, but not specifically as a “biomedical scientist” with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). To an applicant, this may cause confusion. The visitors require the advertising materials and programme documentation to include further explanation of the importance of registration with the HCPC as a biomedical scientist and what this entails in order to be satisfied that this condition has been met.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit finalised programme documentation.

Reason: It was highlighted this programme is part of a suite of healthcare science programmes. During the approval visit, it was indicated that programme documents would be amended and possibly rewritten to ensure programme specific information is clear. The visitors require the education provider to submit the finalised programme documentation so they can be assured it will provide correct information and effectively support student learning.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must provide further details of how the education provider ensures practice placement providers, practice educators and students are made aware of the programme specific information and how it fully prepares practice placement educators to supervise students.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that the practice placement providers and the education provider demonstrated a good working relationship at the visit, but also noted that there is a significant change in the way students will undertake placements in the new programme. Instead of taking one year to undertake all of their practical experience

students will undertake smaller periods of placement experience in each of the three years of the programme. The visitors received information about placements in the Placement Handbook, however during the meeting with the practice placement providers and educators the visitors noted inconsistent understanding of the learning outcomes to be achieved, the expectations of professional conduct and of the students' progression. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme team ensure that students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators are fully prepared for placements particularly considering, the learning outcomes to be achieved on each placement, the assessment procedures, expectations of professional conduct, and the communication and lines of responsibility while a student is on placement. In this way the visitors can be sure that everyone is fully prepared for placement and that this standard can be met.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence to demonstrate how students' placement assessment criteria, including clinical skills portfolio and students' competencies is applied consistently, objectively and ensure fitness to practice.

Reason: From the documentation received, the visitors noted students will be assessed whilst on placement and their clinical skills portfolios will be assessed as part of it. During the meeting with placement providers, the visitors learnt the education provider has assessment criteria for assessing students whilst on placement. However, the visitors noted the practice educators assess students based on their own experience and their observation of students. The visitors could not determine from the documentation how the education provider will ensure students' placement assessment criteria, including clinical skills portfolio and students' competencies are applied consistently, objectively and ensure fitness to practice. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence of how this SET is met.

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 HCPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence that they have regulations or policies in place that ensure approved programmes are the only programmes which contain any reference to the protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Reason: The visitors were concerned that the programme and admission documents did not provide enough clarity for students that exit awards do not lead to HCPC registration. Additionally, the visitors did not see the evidence in the documentation to inform students that the successful completion of the programme will lead to eligibility to apply for registration with HCPC. During the programme team meeting, the visitors learnt the programme team will update the programme documents to reflect that the final award will lead to eligibility to apply for registration with HCPC. However, the visitors require evidence that the final draft of programme documents are produced in line with HCPC requirements to be satisfied that this standard is met.

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 include a clear statement in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the Register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail about the external examiner recruitment policy. It was not evident that there was an explicit requirement for at least one of the external examiners to be from the relevant part of the Register. The visitors saw curriculum vitae for the current external examiner at the visit however were unable to determine if they were registered as a biomedical scientist with the HCPC. In discussion with the programme team it was indicated the programme team would take account of this standard when updating programme documents. In order to determine this standard is met, the visitors need to see evidence of the HCPC requirements regarding external examiners within the programme documentation.

Phil Warren
Mary Popeck