

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Southampton
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Hearing aid dispenser
Date of visit	7 – 8 May 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. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 16 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 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 10 October 2013. 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 an HCPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the MSc Audiology programme. A separate visitor report exists for this programme.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Hugh Crawford (Hearing aid dispenser) Tim Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Louise Devlin
Proposed student numbers	30
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2013

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 40 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 17 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 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 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 ensure that the admissions materials in use are reflective of the programme, and gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a programme.

Reason: From a review of the admissions documentation, the visitors found that there were a series of omissions and errors. From the evidence provided the visitors could find little reference to the role of the HCPC as the statutory regulator for hearing aid dispensers. The education provider must revisit the admissions material to clearly state that successful completion of the programme leads to eligibility to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the HCPC. The visitors also noted that the admissions material provided related to the 'Healthcare Science (Neurosensory)' programme and did not reference this programme. The programme team explained that the information provided is generic, and will be the same information that will be provided for applicants to both programmes. The visitors require that the admissions material is updated to state that it relates to the 'BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Audiology)' programme, and within this documentation, that all references to 'CRB' checks are updated to 'Disclosure and Barring' (DBS) checks to ensure that the terminology used is accurate. In this way the visitors will be able 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 the admissions information to clarify the accreditation for prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors were unable to locate any clear, detailed information regarding an AP(E)L process or policy within the information provided to applicants to this programme. Whilst the visitors are aware that there may be a university-wide policy on AP(E)L, they could not see where a potential applicant for the programme could easily access this information. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the AP(E)L policy for the programme is communicated clearly to potential applicants, to allow them to make an informed choice regarding whether to apply to the programme.

3.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of the expertise and knowledge of the programme team, to enable them to deliver the hearing aid dispenser specific areas of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not clearly see which members of the programme team are registered hearing aid dispensers. As such the visitors could not determine what relevant specialist expertise and knowledge the programme team have of the hearing aid profession, or of statutory regulation, to enable them to deliver the hearing aid dispensing specific aspects of the

programme, or the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs). They could also not determine what input into the programme there would be from HCPC registered professionals in order to do this, if these aspects of the programme are not to be delivered by the core programme team. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of the relevant specialist expertise and knowledge that will be utilised by the programme team to enable them to deliver the modules specific to hearing aid dispensers and the HCPC SCPE's.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of how staff keep the skills specific to hearing aid dispensing up to date, to allow them to deliver the programme effectively.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, there was no reference to how staff would keep up to date with skills specific to hearing aid dispensing, or how they would ensure they are aware of developments within the profession to inform their teaching of the programme. From discussion with the programme team, the visitors were informed that there are plans for new members of staff who will ensure that students are kept up to date with developments within the profession. However, it was not clear how the education provider will ensure that continuing professional development will be utilised by the team in order for them to keep up to date with developments in hearing aid dispensing. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team will ensure that their skills and knowledge, in relation to the hearing aid profession, will be kept up to date to allow them to deliver the programme effectively.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all documentation relating to the programme is updated so that it is reflective of the cohort of the approved programme, programme title and the current landscape of statutory regulation for Hearing aid dispensers.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted that all documentation related to the academic year 2012/13. As such module documentation referred to the previous BSc Audiology programme, rather than this programme. The visitors therefore require that all programme documentation is updated so that it is reflective of this programme. The visitors also noted references to the "Health and care professional council" and "HPC" such as in the programme specification (p1). Additionally in the SETs mapping document, the visitors noted reference to "the recognised list of accredited professional courses". The HCPC approves education and training programmes and does not accredit professional courses. The visitors therefore require that this is updated so that it is reflective of the language associated with the statutory regulation of hearing aid dispensers. Finally, the visitors noted that an aim of the programme as outlined in the programme specification was "to meet your academic needs for registration as a Healthcare science practitioner under the HPC or RCCP" (p1). The HCPC is not the regulatory body for healthcare science practitioners, and therefore the visitors require that this is updated to clarify that following successful completion of the programme, students will be eligible to apply for registration as a hearing aid dispenser with the Health and care professions council (HCPC). The visitors feel that these errors in the use of terminology may be misleading for students and

therefore require the programme documentation to be updated to be sure that the learning resources of the programme are being used effectively.

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 evidence of the documentary resources available to students that are specific to the hearing aid dispensing profession.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors could not identify what hearing aid specific documentary resources are available to students on the course. In particular the visitors could not determine what reading material was available to students in order for them to learn about hearing aid dispensing, and keep up to date with developments in the profession. The visitors could also not identify what hearing aid dispensing specific material is included on any required reading lists. The visitors therefore require evidence of what documentary resources are available to support the learning and teaching activities of the programme specific to hearing aid dispensing. The visitors also require further information about what material students are required to read to ensure that they are kept up to date with developments within the profession.

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 there is a system 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 that there was a faculty wide policy on informed consent, but that this hadn't been incorporated into the programme fully. Discussion with the students indicated an awareness that they could opt out of participating as service users if they wished to, but that there was no formal information regarding consent protocols in place. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence of how the formal protocols for obtaining consent from students will be implemented full on the programme in order for them to determine how the programme can meet this standard.

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 education provider must provide evidence to identify where attendance is mandatory, where students are informed of this within the programme documentation and how attendance is monitored across all elements of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation, the visitors could not identify what the attendance requirements for students were across the programme. The visitors were also unclear as to how students are informed about the elements of the programme where attendance is mandatory. In discussion with the programme team, it was clarified that students' attendance is mandatory across all practical elements of the programme and that this is monitored closely. However, it was also highlighted that while full attendance was expected at all taught modules an attendance sheet was not completed for every module session. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to clarify where attendance is mandatory for students,

and the effects non-attendance may have on their progression through the programme. The visitors also require further evidence of how attendance throughout the course of the programme is monitored, and at what point the programme team would intervene if attendance became an issue.

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 that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the following standards of proficiency;

- **1b.3 – be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems.**
- **2b.3 - be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users.**
- **2b.4 – be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system and performance settings and/or associated technologies for service users.**
- **2c.2 – be aware of emerging technologies and new developments in hearing assistance.**

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team, the visitors were unable to determine where in the curriculum the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet standard of proficiency 1b.3, 2b.3, 2b.4 and 2.c2. Although the education provider completed a standard of proficiency mapping document, the visitors could not see that the above mentioned standards of proficiency, specific to hearing aid dispensers were being taught within the curriculum. The visitors require the education provider to provide evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet all standards of proficiency, and specifically where standards 1b.3, 2b.3, 2b.4 and 2.c2 are addressed within the curriculum, and therefore that those who successfully complete the programme meet these profession specific standards of proficiency.

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that the curriculum remains relevant to current hearing aid dispensing practice.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussion with the students, the visitors were aware of the input from audiologists and the audiologist profession. However, the visitors could not see where in the curriculum students were made aware of advances in hearing aid dispensing, for example of the developments and advances in hearing aid technology. The visitors could also not identify where the programme team ensures that there is relevant and experienced hearing aid dispensing input into the programme curriculum. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme team ensures that the curriculum remains relevant to current hearing aid dispensing practice.

4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Condition: The education provider must review the programme documentation to refer to the HCPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE's) and provide evidence of how these are taught throughout the programme.

Reason: From the documentation submitted, the visitors could not identify where students are made aware of the implications of the HCPC SCPE's. The visitors therefore require further evidence that demonstrates how the programme team ensure that students understand the implications of these standards. In particular the visitors require further evidence about where in the programme students are made aware of the SCPE's, if they are included in any teaching, and if there is opportunity for students to access the HCPC 'Student guide to conduct and ethics'. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme may meet this standard.

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 provide further evidence to demonstrate that the range of placements on the programme reflect the nature of modern practice within hearing aid dispensing and support the achievement of the required learning outcomes.

Reason: In discussion with the students, the visitors asked questions regarding the opportunities they have for seeing various types of hearing aid devices that would be used in private hearing aid dispensing practice whilst on placement. The students discussed experience of only working with devices that they would see within the public sector, and the programme team explained that within taught modules the main focus would be on devices students would see with the public sector, as this is what they will be experiencing on placement. As such the visitors did not have sufficient evidence to identify how the number, duration and range of placements on offer would support the delivery of the programme and facilitate students in getting the experience they need to meet the relevant standards of proficiency. In particular the visitors could not identify how the range of placements are appropriate to support the achievement of the learning outcomes that would teach the profession specific standards of proficiency, 1b.3, 2b.3, 2b.4 and 2.c2, as identified in conditions around SETs 4.1 and 6.1. The visitors therefore require further evidence that the range of practice placements available allow students to gain experience of working with a wider range of hearing aid devices, and therefore further support the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide a finalised version of the audit tool that is currently in development to ensure that there is a thorough and effective system in place for monitoring and approving all placements.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, the visitors were informed that an audit tool is currently being developed to approve and monitor all practice placements. The programme team explained that they are currently negotiating resources to support the delivery of the audit tool and explained that there is a lot of preparation work that needs to be completed before the tool is finalised, for example collaborating with the placement providers to arrange to visit each of the 26 placement centres. As the main mechanism for approving and monitoring placements for the programme is still being developed, the visitors did not have sufficient evidence to determine how this standard is can be met. Therefore further evidence is required to demonstrate how the

programme team will implement the system currently being developed to approve monitor all placements thoroughly and effectively.

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

Condition: The education provider needs to provide further information regarding the system that is in place to ensure that practice placement educators in all settings receive appropriate training, and that this training is kept up to date.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team at the visit, the visitors were informed that all new practice placement educators are required to complete appropriate training, but the visitors could not see evidence of a process in place to monitor which placement educators had received training, and when. The programme team also discussed the opportunities for placement educators to attend training courses that the education provider is running, but that this was not mandatory and there was not any official refresher training sessions for practice educators provided. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that there is an effective system in place to monitor which practice educators have undergone training and when, and how the education provider ensures that the skills and knowledge of practice placement educators are kept up to date.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that demonstrates that the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the programme meet the following standards of proficiency.

- **1b.3 – be able to explain the financial implications of suitable hearing aid systems.**
- **2b.3 - be able to formulate and provide appropriate advice regarding hearing aids and associated technologies and their use to facilitate informed choices by service users.**
- **2b.4 – be able to select and evaluate the most appropriate hearing aid system and performance settings and/or associated technologies for service users.**
- **2c.2 – be aware of emerging technologies and new developments in hearing assistance.**

Reason: In the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not see how the assessment strategy and design ensured that the above mentioned standards of proficiency, specific to hearing aid dispensers were being taught and therefore how the education provider ensured that the relevant profession specific learning outcomes were assessed. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet all standards of proficiency, and specifically how standards 1b.3, 2b.3, 2b.4 and 2c.2 are assessed within the curriculum, and therefore that the assessment strategy and design ensures that those who successfully complete the programme meet the profession specific standards of proficiency for Hearing aid dispensers.

6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of where within the programme documentation it states which modules are mandatory for students to undertake and pass in order to progress and which modules are optional.

Reason: In the meeting with the programme team, there was discussion regarding the addition of modules to the curriculum that would focus specifically on hearing aid dispensing within the private sector, and that these could be mandatory modules. However in reviewing the programme documentation the visitors could not clearly see which modules students had to undertake and pass, and which modules were optional. As such the visitors were unclear about how students could progress through the programme, and what subject areas they had to study in order to progress and achieve on this programme. The visitors were also unclear about the marks students would have to achieve for each in order to progress through the programme. The visitors therefore need to see evidence of finalised module descriptors which indicate which modules are core and which are optional, and also the pass mark for each module. This will ensure that students clearly understand the requirements for progression and achievement within each module of the programme, and therefore that this standard is met.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of where within the assessment regulations it clearly specifies that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility for admission to the HCPC Register.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not see evidence of where in the programme documentation that it clearly states that the award of an aegrotat degree would not provide eligibility for a student to apply to the HCPC Register. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence of where within the programme documentation this is stated, to ensure that students on this programme are aware of this and that this standard can be 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 revisit the programme documentation to make it clear within the assessment regulations that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme must be HCPC registered unless alternative arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. This standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme states that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiners to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider including the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) as part of the reading list provided to students of the programme.

Reason: The visitors note that the education provider does not currently refer to the standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPEs) within the reading list for the programme. The visitors wish to encourage the programme team to consider this addition to the reading list to allow students to gain a greater understanding of these standards, in preparation for the requirement for the SCPEs to be adhered to by all registrants of the HCPC.

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

Condition: If the education provider incorporates 'multiprofessional learning' into the programme the HCPC should be informed through the major change process to ensure that the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training (SETs).

Reason: From discussions with the programme team, the visitors were informed that there is currently no interprofessional learning incorporated into this programme. Therefore the visits are satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors were informed of plans to incorporate interprofessional learning into the curriculum through 'mutiprofessional learning' in October 2013. If this development occurs the visitors recommend that the programme team inform the HCPC of this change at the earliest opportunity through the major change process. In this way the HCPC can ensure that the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group is being adequately addressed through this interprofessional learning and that this standard continues to be 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 education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to clearly state that any exit awards for the programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register.

Reason: The visitors identified from the documentation before the visit that none of the exit awards from the programme include any reference to a protected title or part of the HCPC register in their named award. Therefore the visitors were happy that this standard was met. However, the visitors could not see from the documentation provided that it is made clear to students that the exit awards from this programme do not lead to eligibility to apply to the HCPC Register. The visitors recommend that the education provider makes this explicit in the programme documentation to avoid any possible confusion for the students. In this way they may be able to enhance students' ability to make an informed decision if deciding to take an exit award from the programme.

Hugh Crawford
Tim Pringle