

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Ulster
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Physiotherapist
Date of visit	21 – 23 February 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 'Physiotherapist' or 'Physical therapist' 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 5 July 2012. At the Committee meeting on 5 July 2012, 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 management and resources, curriculum and assessment. 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 part of a joint event. The education provider validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes - BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography, BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology and BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy.

The education provider, the professional body and the HPC 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 HPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Valerie Maehle (Physiotherapist) Joanna Goodwin (Occupational therapist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ben Potter
Proposed student numbers	59 per cohort
First approved intake	October 1980
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Hugh McKenna (University of Ulster)
Secretary	Catherine Avery (University of Ulster)
Members of the joint panel	Diana Davis (Chartered Society of Physiotherapists) Nina Thomson (Chartered Society of Physiotherapists)

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 programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 56 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining SET.

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

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

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to ensure the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to HPC 'accrediting' the programme (e.g. document B1 p1 and p15), and that successful completion of the programme will lead to 'state registration' with the HPC (e.g. document B1 p80). The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes, as a statutory regulator we 'approve' education programmes. It is also the case that registration is with the HPC and not with the state. The visitors considered the terminology could be misleading to students and therefore required the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instances of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of any changes to the programme documentation, if any are made, to ensure it effectively supports student learning in all settings.

Reason: Through reviewing programme documentation the visitors were aware of the documentation that will be provided to students to support their learning in all settings. However, the visitors noted in discussion with the programme team that the university has set certain conditions on the programme as part of the re-validation process. As part of these conditions several aspects of the programme documentation may be changed to fit the education providers' requirements. In particular the education provider had highlighted areas for discussion around the module descriptors and also the titles of the exit awards from the programme. The visitors highlighted that if the programme documentation changes as a result of the education provider's processes this may affect how the programme continues to meet this standard. The visitors therefore require the programme team to consider what effect, if any, changes made to the programme documentation may have on how the programme continues to meet this standard. In particular the visitors require the programme team to articulate if any changes have been made so they can be sure the documentation to be used by the programme to effectively support student learning in all settings.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider including a formalised method of ensuring that practice placement educators' are HPC registered as part of the practice placement approval and monitoring processes.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, and the practice placement providers, it was confirmed that an effective method of ensuring that practice placement educators are HPC registered is in place. The visitors were therefore satisfied this standard is met. However, the visitors noted this method did not form part of the education provider's formal mechanisms for approving and monitoring practice placements. Instead an increased burden fell on practice placement providers to ensure the practice placement educators supervising students from the programme are appropriately registered. The visitors recommend the education provider consider a formalised way, through their existing approval mechanisms, in which they can capture the information regarding practice placement educators' registration. In this way the education provider may reduce some of the burden on practice placement providers and have a more robust set of data to quality assure practice placements.

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

Recommendation: The programme team should consider identifying, through the module descriptors, which specific learning outcomes will be met through successful completion of specific assessments.

Reason: Through reviewing the programme documentation the visitors noted each module descriptor had comprehensive information about what learning outcomes a student may meet through the completion of each module. They were therefore satisfied this standard is met. However, in discussion with the programme team it was clarified that a certain number of these learning outcomes may be compounded and shared between several modules. As such the list of learning outcomes for each module may not refer specifically to the actions undertaken in that module but from several modules undertaken as part of the programme. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team consider articulating within the module descriptors the specific learning outcomes that will be met as a result of successfully completing the assessment associated with that module. In this way the programme team may be able to more clearly articulate which learning outcomes are being assessed and how. In turn this may aid students' understanding of their progression through the programme by identifying where and how they have met key learning outcomes.

Valerie Maehle
Joanna Goodwin