Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Nottingham
Programme name	PG Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)
Mode of delivery	Full time Work based learning
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Social worker in England
Date of visit	21 – 22 May 2015

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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 'social worker' in England 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 August 2015. 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 the Social work profession came onto the register in 2012 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 part of a joint event. The professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes – MA in Social Work and BA Social Work. 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 by the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Clare Bates (Lay visitor) Vicki Lawson-Brown (Social worker in England) Gerry Mulcahy (Social worker in England)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Nicola Byrom
Proposed student numbers	30 per cohort, one cohort per year recruited to MA in Social Work
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2015
Chair	Penny Standen (University of Nottingham)
Secretary	Clare Barton / Angela Peer (University of Nottingham)
Members of the joint panel	Jane Lindsay (The College of Social Work) Kath Morris (The College of Social Work)

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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators / mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Service users and carers	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be satisfied 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 the relevant 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 55 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 approved. 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 can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

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 further evidence how they implement appropriate protocols to obtain consent where students participate in practical teaching, such as roleplays, sharing of personal experiences and digital recording.

Reason: The visitors noted from the evidence provided that there is a statement in the student handbook acknowledging that students will be asked to engage in roleplays and experiential learning (page 24). In discussions with the students and the programme team, it was confirmed that participation in roleplays, sharing of personal experiences and digital recording were expectations of students throughout the programme. However, the visitors could not find evidence of formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students before they participated in practical teaching. The visitors considered that without formal consent protocols in place it would be hard to mitigate any risk involved where students are involved in roleplaying scenarios and experiential work. The visitors also could not determine how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained, or how situations where students consistently declined from participation were managed with alternative learning arrangements so there would be no impact on their learning. The visitors therefore require the programme team to provide evidence of formal protocols for obtaining informed consent from students (such as a consent form to be signed prior to commencing the programme or annually) and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical teaching or role play.

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 further evidence that the assessment regulations clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Reason: The visitors were referred to information on alternative awards and exit routes from the programme in the programme specification and student handbook as evidence for this SET. In discussions with the senior team at the visit, it was confirmed that the education provider are able to give aegrotat awards. However, from the documentation provided the visitors could not determine where there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. The visitors could therefore not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not lead to eligibility to apply to the Register as a social worker in England. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to where the policy for aegrotat awards in relation to professional registration is laid out, and how students are informed about this.

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 further evidence that the assessment regulations specify requirements for the appointment of an external examiner who is

appropriately qualified and experienced, and from the relevant part of the HCPC Register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements. However, the visitors could not find detail concerning the recruitment and appointment criteria of external examiners to the programme in the documentation submitted by the education provider. This standard requires the assessment regulations to clearly articulate the requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be appropriately registered with the HCPC. The visitors therefore require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiner to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard will be met.

Clare Bates
Vicki Lawson-Brown
Gerry Mulcahy