
Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Academy for Healthcare Science
Programme name	Certificate of Equivalence
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Clinical scientist
Date of visit	11 – 12 June 2014

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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 clinical 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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 26 August 2014. At the Committee meeting, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the conditions 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 to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme management and resources, curriculum and assessment. The changes were primarily related to the development of two new specialist areas (Critical care science and Reconstructive science).

The programme was already approved by the HCPC 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 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 education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit. The visit also considered a different programme – the Certificate of Attainment. A separate visitors' report exists for this programme.

The Academy for Healthcare Science (AHCS) awards the Certificate of Equivalence to individuals who have worked in healthcare or science seeking recognition and clarification that their previous training, qualifications and experience meets the specified programme outcomes for the Scientific Training Programme (STP) in their chosen modality. Thus avoiding the need to repeat education or training unnecessarily. The Certificate of Equivalence is an approved programme and leads to eligibility to apply for registration and inclusion on the HCPC Register.

The STP was developed as part of the Modernising Scientific Careers: The UK way forward policy and comprises of an academic award (MSc in Clinical Science) with a period of work-based learning. The education provider mapped the learning outcomes and competencies of the STP against the HCPC SOPs

The approval process for the approval of the Certificate of Equivalence was formed of two stages. The first stage of the approval process allowed HCPC visitors to review the documentation related to the learning outcomes and competencies of the STP for Critical care science and Reconstructive science submitted by the education provider. Visitors from each of the specialist areas reviewed the competencies to ensure that they are linked to Clinical scientist SOPs in ways relevant to the specialism. For this first stage, HCPC visitors did not attend the AHCS offices. The stage 1 assessment was undertaken on 1 May 2014 and outcomes forwarded to the education provider shortly afterwards. The outcomes of the stage 1 assessment for Critical care science and Reconstructive science are included as Appendix 1 of this report.

Stage 1 reviewed documentation relating to the learning outcomes, indicative content and competences of the academic and work-based learning elements of the STP.

The second stage of the approval process took the form of a visit to meet with the stakeholders involved with the delivery of the STP and Certificate of Equivalence.

The visit reviewed how the standards of education and training continue to be met by the programme.

Visit details

Name of HCPC visitors and profession	Patrick Kimmitt (Clinical scientist) Melvyn Myers (Clinical scientist) William Gilmore (Biomedical scientist)
HCPC executive officers (in attendance)	Tracey Samuel-Smith
HCPC observer	Hollie Latham
Proposed student numbers	Approximately 500 across the specialisms
First approved intake	October 2012
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2014
Chair	Pat Oakley (Kings College London)
Secretary	Suzie Normanton (Academy for Healthcare 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"/>
Admissions documentation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Higher Education Institution guide for the approval and monitoring processes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work-based learning guide for the approval and monitoring processes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good Scientific Practice	<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC did not review the learning resources or any specialist teaching accommodation as the nature of the Certificate of Equivalence does not require it.

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 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining five 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 not made 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 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

2.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence to show that criminal convictions checks will be applied through the admissions procedure.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to locate where the programme ran appropriate and relevant criminal convictions checks on all applicants. Further to this, in a meeting with the programme team, it was stated that criminal conviction checks were not currently a requirement of the programme and were therefore not included in the process of assessing applicants for the programme. Owing to the positions of responsibility that people on our Register are placed in, the programme is required to run appropriate and relevant criminal convictions checks on all applicants. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to show that all applicants to the programme will undergo an appropriate criminal convictions check.

2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence to show that appropriate health checks will be applied through the admissions procedure.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to locate where the programme applied appropriate health checks on applicants. Further to this, in a meeting with the programme team, it was stated that health checks were not currently a requirement of the programme and were therefore not included in the process of assessing applicants for the programme. The visitors highlighted that there are particular health checks that would be necessary for the safe practice of clinical scientists. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to show that all applicants to the programme will undergo an appropriate health check.

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

Condition: The education provider must revise programme documentation to ensure it accurately reflects the current landscape of regulation for Clinical scientists.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation submitted by the education provider several instances of inaccurate terminology associated with the HCPC. For example, page 7 of the 'Programme Handbook' states "...required of registrants to enter onto and remain on HCPC's professional register" and page 6 of the 'AHCS The Equivalence Process Explained (Scientist Training Programme)' states "...nor automatic admission to a professional register..." These statements could suggest to applicants that the HCPC is a professional body. The HCPC acts as the regulator only.

In addition to this, page 7 of the 'Programme Handbook' states "...threshold standards used by HCPC to approve programmes leading to eligibility to register under a legally protected title.". This is an inaccurate statement as students are eligible to apply for registration but this does not necessarily mean they will be registered, as the HCPC performs a health and character test at the point of registration.

It is important trainees are equipped with accurate information. To ensure students are not unintentionally misinformed about the role of HCPC, the visitors require the education provider revises the programme documentation to correct all instances of inaccurate terminology. In this way the visitors can determine how the resources to support student learning continue to be effectively used.

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 programme team must provide evidence to demonstrate how the learning outcomes of the programme allow students to continue to meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

3a.3 Understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- Be aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health

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 would be made aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health. The education provider completed a SOPs mapping document referencing SOP 3a.3, however, the mapping directed the visitors to a document supporting the Certificate of Attainment only. Consequently, the visitors were unable to determine how the above SOP was being assessed as part of the process for the Certificate of Equivalence to ensure those who successfully complete the programme continue meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to provide further evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure all standards of proficiency, specifically SOP 3a.3, continue to be met.

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 programme team must provide evidence to demonstrate how the assessment of learning outcomes allows students to continue to meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

3a.3 Understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- Be aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health

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 would be made aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health. The education provider completed a SOPs mapping document referencing SOP 3a.3, however, the mapping directed the visitors to a document supporting the Certificate of Attainment only. Consequently, the visitors were unable to determine how the above SOP was being assessed as part of the process for the Certificate of Equivalence to ensure those who successfully complete the programme continue meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to provide further evidence that demonstrates that the learning outcomes ensure all standards of proficiency, specifically SOP 3a.3, continue to be met.

Patrick Kimmitt
Melvyn Myers
William Gilmore