

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Queen Margaret University
Programme name	Postgraduate Diploma (pre-registration) in Speech and Language Therapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Speech and language therapist
Date of visit	8 – 9 December 2009

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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 14 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Speech therapist' or 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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 10 March 2010. At the Committee meeting on 20 May 2010, 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC 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 education provider and validating body validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programme – MSc (pre-registration) in 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. A separate report exists for the other programme. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Aileen Patterson (Speech and Language Therapist) Gillian Stevenson (Speech and Language Therapist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Rachel Greig
HPC observer	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	30
Proposed start date of programme approval	August 2010
Chair	Alister Landrock (Queen Margaret University)
Secretary	Sheila Adamson (Queen Margaret University)
Members of the joint panel	Helen Riddell (Internal Panel Member) Frederike van Wijck (Internal Panel Member) Michèle Hipwell (Internal Panel Member) Kamila Sosnowska (Internal Panel Member) Rubana Hussein (Royal College of Speech and Language Therapy) Jois Stansfield (Royal College of

	Speech and Language Therapy)
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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"/>

Although the programme is new the visitors reviewed external examiners reports from the existing Graduate Diploma in Speech and Language Therapy programme.

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"/>

The HPC met with students from the Graduate Diploma in Speech and Language Therapy programme, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

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 does 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.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

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 revisit all programme documentation and advertising materials made available to applicants to ensure that all potential applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

Reason: After discussions with the students the visitors were of the view that these students had not been fully informed about the nature of teaching on the programme nor the implications of the award that it led to. Additionally during the meeting with the programme team it was stated that potential students can gain information about the programme during the University Open Day. However the programme documentation stated that the programme would be of interest to people from abroad as well as within the UK and discussions with the senior management informed that the programme wished to recruit students from the EU, Canada and world wide. Since an Open Day may not be accessible to all potential students both nationally and internationally the visitors want to be assured that those students not able to attend in person still have access to all requisite information relating to the programme to allow them to make an informed choice as to whether or not to take up a place on the programme.

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the accreditation of prior learning and other inclusion mechanisms are clearly articulated within the programme documentation.

Reason: During discussions with the programme team it was stated that no accreditation of prior learning would be offered on the postgraduate programme. This fact is not reflected in the programme documentation and therefore should be made explicit.

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and accurately state the proposed number of students for the postgraduate programme.

Reason: The programme documentation stated that the proposed number of students for the programme was 30 in the first year increasing to 45 thereafter. However during discussions with the Dean of Faculty it was stated that the number of students on the programme would be 25 per year with a total of 50 students on the PgDip (pre-registration) in Speech and Language Therapy/MSc

(pre-registration) in Speech and Language Therapy programmes by the 2011/12 academic year. During the meeting with the programme team it was stated that if the numbers were to be those stated in the programme documentation and not those stated by the Dean this would put a strain on placement availability and may impact on the programme's resources both human and physical. Therefore the visitors would like the proposed student numbers for the programme to be formally and accurately stated in the programme documentation so they can be assured the programme is secure within the education provider and adequate resources are provided to deliver the programme.

3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide further documentation to evidence there is a sufficient number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff to deliver an effective programme. This evidence should detail planned staff numbers and their proposed responsibilities and input into the programme.

Reason: Upon review of the programme documentation the visitors were concerned there was not a core staff dedicated to the postgraduate programme. They also felt staff commitments on the undergraduate programme as well as the associated current Graduate Diploma in Speech and Language Therapy programme and research activity including supervision of post graduate students may impact on the ability of staff to deliver an effective programme. Additionally, during meetings with the students and programme team the visitors noted a concern regarding the staffing levels. In particular, it was noted not all staff that had left the speech and language therapy team had been replaced and in the cases where replacements had been made these were not always made promptly. It was also noted that staff on long term sick leave and/or maternity leave had not been replaced which, along with the non-replacement of other staff members meant the existing staff were overstretched when teaching on the undergraduate and graduate diploma programmes. The Dean also indicated that sick leave and maternity cover had to come from within existing resources.

The current proposal is that during the academic year 2010/11 the teaching of the postgraduate programme will overlap with the undergraduate and the graduate diploma programmes. The visitors feel that this overlap, in terms of teaching demands, will put a large amount of pressure on the existing staff consequently affecting their ability to deliver an effective programme, especially as the new programme is designed to be independent and does not articulate with the existing programmes in any shared teaching.

The visitors require further evidence to be satisfied that there is an adequate number of staff in place to deliver the programme and that these staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. This evidence should outline the proposed input staff have will have into the programme and their responsibilities across this and other programmes and awards. The evidence should also address research/extra-curricular commitments which would have a direct impact on the capacity and ability of staff to deliver the programme.

3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide further documentation to evidence that there is flexibility or arrangements in place within the programme to deal with situations related to long term staff absences.

Reason: After discussions with the programme team and students the visitors were informed there had been some situations involving long term absence from the speech and language therapy programme team. The visitors were concerned to learn that there seemed to be no system in place to deal with these absences and staff had not been replaced resulting in an added workload for the remaining staff. Therefore in order for the visitors to be assured there is an adequate number of staff to deliver an effective programme they will want to see evidence of a system in place to deal with long term absences so remaining staff are not overburdened.

3.11 There must be adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings.

Condition: The education provider must ensure there are explicit mechanisms in place to ensure staff are readily accessible to students and their and other pastoral support is delivered in a timely manner.

Reason: During discussions held with the students they commented that it was often difficult to have face to face discussions with staff and when it came to discussing problems students were encouraged to email the programme staff or use the facilities available on WebCT. Students felt that these methods of contact were not sufficient to answer their problems in a short time frame. They also felt they were ill informed when it came to knowing which members of staff to contact regarding certain pieces of work and when staff were available to help.

The visitors felt that communication systems provided by the education provider for students need to be exploited to ensure that staff are ensuring that the welfare of students is not compromised and that appropriate personnel are available to deal with issues promptly both when students are on campus and in placement situations. The visitors would therefore like to see evidence of what these communications mechanisms are and how they are being used and exploited to address student support issues.

3.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence they have a robust system of academic and pastoral support in place and that students have access to it.

Reason: From discussions with the students it was stated they felt there was no facility to contact the education provider whilst they were on placement. Students understanding appeared to be that the placement provider was their only means of support while in practice placements. The visitors therefore felt that the education provider must provide and make explicit to the student the form of support to students during placement and how and when this should be accessed. They therefore require evidence that there is a robust system of

academic and pastoral support in place for students and they have adequate access to it at all times including during placement.

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 amend the programme documentation to clearly articulate the expectations for attendance on the programme and how this will be monitored.

Reason: On review of the documentation and from discussions with the programme team it appeared that although it was expected students should attend a minimum of 85 per cent of the contact hours of taught classes and 85 per cent of placement hours only attendance on placement was monitored. Therefore the visitors would like to receive revised documentation which clearly details how attendance of the whole programme is monitored and not just attendance on placements.

3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Condition: The education provider must amend the programme documentation to clearly articulate their policy for dealing with concerns about students' professional-related conduct.

Reason: The programme documentation reviewed prior to the visit made reference to Queen Margaret University's Fitness to Practise Panel which students are referred to in cases where students have behaved in a way that contravenes professional expectations. The exact terms of reference of this process were missing however and during discussions the programme team were unsure of the exact policy. To ensure the education provider plays a role in identifying students who may not be fit for practice and to help them address concerns about a student's professional-related conduct the visitors would like the programme documentation updated to clearly outline this policy and that it be articulated in students' documentation.

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

Conditions: The education provider must provide evidence to show that the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics are specifically addressed within the curriculum.

Reason: After discussions with the students the visitors felt that although some knew about the role and function of HPC, due to specific group work undertaken, others did not and they showed little awareness of the HPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors also felt that these standards were not sufficiently detailed in the programme documentation. Therefore the visitors would like to receive evidence that HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics are built into, and are referred to specifically in the curriculum.

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

Conditions: The education provider must provide evidence which illustrates a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements including new placements not currently used by the programme.

Reason: Through discussions with the programme team it was noted that placements in the Highlands and Grampian may be used in the future for students on the postgraduate programme. The programme team mentioned that they use student feedback forms to assess placements after they were completed by a student; however there was limited evidence of exactly how placements were assessed before students were placed within facilities. Therefore the visitors would need to be satisfied that a thorough and effective system for approving all placements, across and outside the UK, was in place. As the education provider must take responsibility for placement management further evidence is required to ensure that this standard is met and how new placements are evaluated and monitored.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of how placements will take into account equality and diversity policies in relation to students and how these policies are implemented and monitored.

Reason: During discussions with the placement educators they stated that they did not know their placements equality and diversity policies in relation to placement students and there was no guidance in place for dealing with issues relating to equality and diversity. This was particularly evident when issues arose involving students who were non native English speakers, those with non local dialects or accents and those students with dyslexia. Therefore the visitors wish to see how the education provider makes sure that equality and diversity policies are in place in the placement setting and that they cover all of the practice placement activities.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence on how they assure themselves that all practice placement educators across and outside of the UK undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Reason: From the documentation submitted prior to the visit and in discussions with the programme team it was clear that there was a process in place for the training of placement educators. It was also noted there were opportunities for placement educators to have additional training by attending study days or completing a generic online training programme specific to the university which were considered to be relevant and useful. The study days however were only accessible to those 'within reach of Edinburgh' and it was noted that the uptake

of the online programme by speech and language therapists was very low. It was discussed during the programme team meeting that some students choose to complete their placements outside Scotland and occasionally outside the UK, and also that new placement places were being sought in parts of Grampian and The Highlands. The visitors were therefore concerned that if students were on placements out with the local area these educators may not have accessed the QMU specific guidance and training or be adequately trained to teach students or those from QMU. The visitors therefore require evidence that all placement educators across the country and beyond undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

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 evidence they have a system in place where students have information about what is expected of them during placement. Specifically a system should be in place where there are discussions between University staff, practice placement educators and individual students to set goals for the students' continuous learning on placement.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and students the visitors were satisfied that systems were in place to give students and placement educators' information at the start of placements however the visitors did not feel that these systems extended to the whole of the placement. Specifically it was not evidenced how students were informed about what was expected of them during placements in terms of achievement and there seemed to be no overt system in place to deal with students who were experiencing difficulty. Furthermore there was no debriefing session following placement. The visitors feel that in order for the standard to be met it is important that students are guided on the goals they have to achieve during placement so they have a full understanding of the learning outcomes that need to be achieved and also that explicit feedback mechanisms are in place to provide detail on achievements, strengths and weaknesses during and at the end of placement.

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of how they ensure that assessment methods are appropriate to the progression of the learning outcomes and reflect the development of skills and knowledge related to clinical learning.

Reason: Upon review of the programme documentation prior to the visit and during discussions with the programme team it was noted that learning outcomes

for some of the placement modules on the programme were very similar and assessment methods did not distinguish between those learning outcomes taught and to be evidenced at different levels. The visitors therefore require information about chosen assessment methods to assure them those methods are in line with the learning outcomes of each module.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence they have mechanisms in place to ensure robust inter-rater reliability during assessment across a range of settings and personnel.

Reason: During discussions with the students they felt that in some cases the assessments they received from placement educators were not standardised and marking varied between practice educators. The visitors acknowledged that this is not an uncommon observation by students but additionally during discussions with the programme team the visitors were told that students were not debriefed after placement and feedback was not routinely provided to students. The visitors therefore felt that there was insufficient evidence that the measurement of student performance was being made objectively and students at different stages in their learning were not sufficiently being monitored or measured or such measures were not being clearly articulated to them. The visitors therefore require evidence that there is a system in place to ensure that students at different stages of learning are being monitored effectively for their performance and all educators adhere to the same assessment criteria and the university has a clear process to ensure standards of equity and for moderating these marks.

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

Condition: The education provider must update assessment regulations to clearly articulate assessment criteria and pass marks for all assessed elements of the programme and make this information accessible to students including the implications of assessment failure and resit opportunities specific to the programme.

Reason: During discussions with students it was stated that in many cases they were unsure of specific assessment criteria of the programme and they did not receive a marking criteria specific to their assignments. Additionally the visitors felt that the information in the programme documentation relating to how students are assessed to make sure they continue to progress within the programme was not clear and the consequence of failure was not explained. The visitors therefore felt students may not necessarily know what was expected of them at each stage of the programme. The visitors therefore require assessment regulations to be revisited so they clearly state the requirements for student progression and achievement on the programme.

6.10 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.

Condition: The education provider must include the procedure for the right of appeal for students in the programme documentation.

Reason: When reviewing the programme documentation prior to the visit the visitors were directed to a webpage which outlined the right of appeal for students. They were also shown a student diary which outlined the appeals process. The visitors however felt that in order for students to have ready access to information about this procedure reference to it should be made in the specific documentation to the programme and student handbook.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the balance of clinical and non-clinically qualified staff when employing additional staff onto the programme team.

Reason: The visitors felt it important that the core programme team continues to consist of a balance of staff from both clinical and non-clinical backgrounds to ensure there is a sufficient core team of speech and language therapists in place to ensure all aspects of speech and language therapy are delivered to the students. Although at the present time the visitors felt this balance was adequate they felt that when additions are made to the programme team it is important to consider the need for professionally qualified speech and language therapists with relevant clinical experience as well as relevant teaching and research.

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The education provider should ensure there is an adequate supply of web-based material to support student learning across the whole programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that in many cases staff were off site and not always available to students. The physical resourcing of the University site also made direct access for students to staff difficult. The visitors noted that there was online support available and assessable to students but recommend this is maintained to a high quality and that explicit systems be in place to take account of the fact there is often limited availability of staff coupled with a low number of practical contact hours.

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider involving practice placement educators in programme design/review to ensure the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

Reason: During discussions with the practice placement educators they stated that they had not had any involvement in the design of the proposed postgraduate programme. The visitors would like the education provider to consider involving them during subsequent reviews of the proposed programme to ensure the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to monitor all placement settings to ensure there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff.

Reason: The programme team expressed the possibility of extending placements to the Highlands and Grampian regions. The visitors would therefore recommend that all placement settings, current and new, are monitored by the education provider to ensure there are enough members of staff to support students in their learning and that these staff have the appropriate level of qualification and experience.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to monitor the placement setting to ensure placement educators are appropriately registered.

Reason: The programme team expressed the possibility of extending placements to the Highlands and Grampian regions. The visitors therefore recommend that all placement settings, current and new, are monitored by the education provider to ensure the placement educators are appropriately registered in a relevant profession.

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider marking the student portfolio and ensure it is given due consideration.

Reason: During the student and programme team meetings the visitors learned that the students' portfolio is not graded and has only to contain certain pieces of completed work. Since the portfolio is used to demonstrate the students' progression and their ability to meet the programme learning outcomes the visitors felt this should be given due consideration, by the education provider perhaps by grading or assessing the document and clearly mapping against the Standards of Proficiency.

Gillian Stevenson
Aileen Patterson