

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	St Georges', University of London
Programme name	Foundation Science Degree in Paramedic Science (Gibraltar)
Mode of delivery	Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	13 – 14 March 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 'Paramedic' 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 May 2012. At the Committee meeting on 10 May 2012 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 an HPC 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.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Mark Nevins (Paramedic) Glyn Harding (Paramedic)
HPC executive officers (in attendance)	Ben Potter
Proposed student numbers	4
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 September 2012
Chair	Sean Hilton (St Georges' University of London)
Secretary	Derek Baldwinson (St Georges' University of London)

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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not review External examiners' reports from the last two years for this Gibraltar based programme, as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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 certificate in pre-hospital care, 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 46 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 11 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 programme team must revise the programme documentation to ensure that it is reflective of the current academic requirements required for successful admission to the programme.

Reason: Through a review of the documentation provided the visitors identified that the programme set a minimum number of UCAS points for entry to the foundation science degree in paramedic science. However they noted in the 'Programme specification' (p7) that the requirement was 200 UCAS points while in the 'FdSc in Paramedic science definitive document' (p25) the requirement was for 260 UCAS points. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that the entry requirement had been reviewed upwards recently and that that the requirement for successful entry to the programme is 260 UCAS points. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation to be reviewed to ensure that the UCAS requirement for successful entry to the programme is consistently used to avoid any confusion for students or applicants to the programme. In this way the visitors can be sure that applicants to the programme have all of the information they require in order to make an informed choice about applying to the programme.

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 programme must provide further evidence of the simulated learning resources available to students and teaching staff in Gibraltar.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and from the tour of facilities at St Bernard's Hospital in Gibraltar the visitors were made aware of the accommodation available for the delivery of the clinical skills components of the programme. However, the visitors noted that details of the equipment used to support clinical skills teaching was not included in the 'Resource document' (p7) and that the equipment seen during the tour was only an indicative sample of what is available. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the equipment available to support the clinical skills components of the course, and in particular the simulated learning tools that are available in Gibraltar. In this way the visitors can be sure there is sufficient resource to support the delivery of the clinical skills elements of the curriculum.

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 revisit the programme documentation and any advertising material to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation and the HPC.

Reason: The visitors noted that 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 (Programme specification, p1) and that HPC requires full attendance for the duration of the programme (Gibraltar cohort student handbook, p40). The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes instead we 'approve' education programmes and the HPC does not set a requirement regarding student attendance on the programme, this is for an education provider to determine. The visitors considered the terminology to be misleading to applicants and students and therefore required the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout.

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 programme team must revise the programme documentation to ensure that it accurately reflects the nature and context of the Gibraltar programme and the likely access students will have to London based resources.

Reason: In reviewing the programme documentation the visitors noted that it was based on the documentation produced for the programme delivered in London and edited to be suitable for students based in Gibraltar. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that access to any of the resources in London was possible for students based in Gibraltar but that the most likely route for access was through the internet or via telephone. Further discussions also highlighted that there were alternative resources and support mechanisms based in Gibraltar and that these were accessed through the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA). However, the visitors articulated that the programme documentation still heavily focused on the support available at the education provider in London and did not articulate how these resources could be best accessed by the Gibraltar cohort. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to better articulate what resources are directly available to students and how those resources based in London can be best accessed and utilised. In this way the programme documentation will reflect the nature and context of the programme in Gibraltar and highlight the resources available to support student learning in all settings.

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 further information which demonstrates how students will achieve all of the required learning outcomes associated with placement and practical learning in the time available.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students will spend four weeks on practice placement in the UK as a supernumerary member of a paramedic team. This experience is in addition to the practice placements based in Gibraltar which span the two years of the programme. During the tour of facilities and in discussion with the Gibraltar based practice placement providers the visitors clarified that there were no registered paramedics in Gibraltar currently available to supervise the students. The visitors were made aware that the students would be supervised by other health professionals or programme staff when undertaking placements in Gibraltar. In this way the students are provided with a breadth of experiences, including all aspects of hospital care, and can demonstrate how they meet the required competencies in a range of settings. Students are also able to demonstrate some paramedic specific competencies when undertaking their role as emergency paramedic technicians and supervised by programme staff.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how a range of role, and profession specific, competencies could be met by a student if they were only able to demonstrate them in the four weeks based in the UK. Due to the episodic nature of paramedic work the visitors were also unclear as to how the programme team would be able to ensure that a student would be able to experience the range of situations needed to meet all of the competencies. The visitors therefore require further information about the programme teams' expectations of how and during which placement a student will demonstrate that they meet the required competencies. In particular the visitors require further information about how and when the profession specific competencies are expected to be met and what remedial actions can be taken if the experience a student receives is not sufficient for them to demonstrate these skills. In this way the visitors can determine how those students who successfully complete the programme will be able to meet all of the standards of proficiency for paramedics.

4.6 The delivery of the programme must support and develop autonomous and reflective thinking.

Condition: The programme team must provide further information about the support available for students to develop skills in reflective and autonomous thinking during their practice placement experience.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided, and in discussion with the programme team, that the curriculum emphasises reflection and provides students with the theoretical basis to become autonomous practitioners. During the tour of facilities, and in discussion with the Gibraltar based practice placement providers, the visitors clarified that there were no registered paramedics in Gibraltar currently available to supervise the students. The visitors were made aware that the students would be supervised by other health professionals or programme staff when undertaking placements in Gibraltar. In this way the students are provided with a breadth of experiences, including all aspects of hospital care, and can demonstrate how they meet the required competencies in a range of settings. Students are also able to demonstrate some paramedic specific competencies when undertaking their role as emergency paramedic technicians and supervised by programme staff.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how the arrangements for students to be supervised by other health professionals reinforced and developed the skills of reflective thinking and allowed students to develop the skills necessary to act as autonomous paramedics. The visitors were also unclear as to how students reflected on their practical experience between periods of supervised practice and their time in the UK. The visitors therefore require further information about the programme teams' expectations of how students will develop their reflective skills during practice placement. In particular they require further evidence of how this reflective practice benefits students and aids them in developing the skills necessary to become autonomous paramedic professionals. In this way the visitors can determine how the delivery of the programme and in particular the practice placements, supports and develops autonomous and reflective thinking.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how the interprofessional periods of placement experience allow students to demonstrate their professional specific skills and meet the required competencies.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students will spend four weeks on practice placement in the UK as a supernumerary member of a paramedic team. This experience is in addition to the hospital based practice placements based in Gibraltar which span the two years of the programme. The visitors were made aware that the students would be supervised by other health professionals while they undertake hospital placements in Gibraltar. This means that students are provided with a breadth of experiences, including all aspects of hospital care, and can demonstrate how they meet the required competencies in a range of hospital settings.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how a range of role, and profession specific, competencies could be met by a student during their time on placement in hospital. The visitors therefore require further information about the programme teams' expectations of how and during which placement a student will demonstrate that they meet the required competencies. In particular the visitors require further information about how and when the specific competencies are expected to be met and what remedial actions can be taken if the experience a student receives is not sufficient for them to demonstrate these skills. In this way the visitors can determine how on these interprofessional placements profession-specific skills and knowledge are adequately addressed.

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 programme team must provide further information to demonstrate how the number, duration and range of practice placements allows students to meet the required learning outcomes in the time available.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students will spend four weeks on practice placement in the UK as a supernumerary member of a paramedic team. This experience is in addition to the hospital based practice placements based in Gibraltar which span the two years of the programme. Students are also able to demonstrate some paramedic specific competencies when undertaking their role as emergency paramedic technicians. These supervisory sessions will be available to students eight times across the two year programme to coincide with visits to Gibraltar from members of the programme team.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how a range of role, and profession specific, competencies could be met by a student if the time available meant that they were only able to demonstrate them in the four weeks based in the UK. Due to the episodic nature of paramedic work the visitors could not determine the processes in place to ensure that a student would be able to experience the range of situations needed to meet all of the competencies. The visitors therefore require further information about the programme teams' expectations of how and during which placement a student will demonstrate that they meet the required competencies. In particular the visitors require further information about how and when the profession specific competencies are expected to be met and what remedial actions can be taken if the experience a student receives is not sufficient for them to demonstrate these skills. In this way the visitors can determine how the number, duration and range of practice placements support the delivery of the programme and students' achievement of the learning outcomes.

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 further information about how the assessment strategy ensures that successful students have met the required learning outcomes associated with placement and practical learning in the time available.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students will spend four weeks on practice placement in the UK as a supernumerary member of a paramedic team. This experience is in addition to the practice placements based in Gibraltar which span the two years of the programme. During the tour of facilities and in discussion with the Gibraltar based practice placement providers the visitors clarified that there were no registered paramedics in Gibraltar currently available to supervise the students. The visitors were made aware that the students would be supervised by other health professionals or programme staff when undertaking placements in Gibraltar. In this way the students are provided with a breadth of experiences, including all aspects of hospital care, and can demonstrate how they meet the required competencies in a range of settings. Students are also able to demonstrate some paramedic specific competencies when undertaking their role as emergency paramedic technicians and supervised by programme staff.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how a student could be assessed on a range of role, and profession specific, competencies if students could only

demonstrate them in the four weeks when they are based in the UK. Due to the episodic nature of paramedic work the visitors were also unclear as to how the assessment strategy ensures that a student could be assessed on all of the required competencies if the range of situations needed to demonstrate them were not available. The visitors therefore require further information about how and during which placement a student will be assessed to ensure that they meet the required competencies. In particular the visitors require further information about how and when the profession specific competencies are expected to be met and what remedial actions can be taken if the experience a student receives is not sufficient for them to demonstrate these skills. In this way the visitors can determine how the assessment strategy ensures that students who successfully complete the programme meet all of the standards of proficiency for paramedics.

6.3 Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both the education setting and practice placement setting.

Condition: The programme team must provide further information about how the assessment strategy ensures that professional aspects of practice are covered in the interprofessional periods of practice placement.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that students will spend four weeks on practice placement in the UK as a supernumerary member of a paramedic team. This experience is in addition to the hospital based practice placements based in Gibraltar which span the two years of the programme. The visitors were made aware that the students would be supervised by other health professionals while they undertake hospital placements in Gibraltar. This means that students are provided with a breadth of experiences, including all aspects of hospital care, and can demonstrate how they meet the required competencies in a range of hospital settings.

However, the visitors were unclear as to how the assessment strategy ensures that profession specific aspects of practice are covered in the interprofessional periods of practice placement. The visitors therefore require further information about the programme teams' expectations of how and during which placements a student will demonstrate that they meet the required competencies. In particular the visitors require further information about how professional aspects of practice are included in the assessment strategy and how and where this is expected to be demonstrated by students. In this way the visitors can determine how the assessment strategy ensures that professional aspects of practice are integral to the assessment of a students' practice placement experience.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of the competency portfolio and assessment tools used to assess how students have met relevant learning outcomes while they are on practice placement.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team the visitors noted that there are several assessment tools used by the programme team to assess how students are meeting the relevant competencies required to successfully complete the

programme. The visitors were also made aware that students would have to meet all of these competencies in order to meet the required learning outcomes associated with practice placement and successfully complete the programme. However, the visitors were unclear about what the individual tools require and how they are utilised to ensure that students meet all of the required competencies and the learning outcomes associated with practice placements. The visitors were therefore unsure about how these tools worked in tandem with one another to assess students' practice experience. The visitors therefore require further information about the competency portfolio and the associated tools used by students and practice placement educators to record and assess how students have met the required learning outcomes. This is to ensure that students and practice placement educators are aware of the requirements for successful completion of each placement and that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how a student is expected to progress through the programme and what a student is expected to achieve at each stage of the academic programme or in professional practice.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team the visitors noted that there are several assessment tools used by the programme team to assess how students are meeting the relevant competencies required to successfully complete the programme. The visitors were also made aware that students would have to meet all of these competencies in order to meet the required learning outcomes associated with practice placement. However, the visitors were unclear about how the competencies that were required to be demonstrated during each placement are clearly communicated to students and practice placement educators. The programme documentation did not provide sufficient evidence for the visitors to determine what broad set of competencies each student would be expected to have met after each placement or stage of the programme. The visitors were therefore unsure about how the programme team ensured that the students would be demonstrating competencies which were within their scope of practice at each stage of the programme. The visitors therefore require further information about how the programme team ensure that the set of competencies a student would be expected to meet on each placement block is clearly communicated to student and practice placement educators. This is to ensure that students and practice placement educators are aware of the requirements for successful completion of each placement and that this standard is 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 that external examiners appointed to the programme must be HPC registered unless alternate arrangements have previously been agreed with the HPC.

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 any external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiner 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 HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider including the HPC 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' a core text rather than recommended reading for relevant modules.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documents provided that the HPC standards of conduct performance and ethics are covered in a number of modules and that the implications of these standards are included as part of the curriculum. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, through a review of the module descriptors the visitors noted that while the HPC 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' is included on the reading lists for a number of modules it is included as recommended reading. The visitors recommend that this publication is included as a core text for at least one module. In this way the programme team may encourage more students to read HPC's 'Guidance on conduct and ethics for students' and possibly increase their understanding of the implications of HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

4.6 The delivery of the programme must support and develop autonomous and reflective thinking.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider how best to support students in reflecting on their placement experience and in developing their autonomous and reflective practice.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided, and also in discussion with the programme team, that the curriculum emphasises the reflection and provides students with the theoretical basis to become autonomous practitioners. The visitors also noted that support for reflective thinking could be provided for students remotely via email or via web-link after a web-based seminar or tutorial. However, in discussion with the students it was highlighted that they sometimes supported one another in their reflection on practice rather than wait for a more formal link to be made with a paramedic tutor from London. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team consider how best to facilitate students being able to more frequently reflect on their experiences with a registered paramedic in Gibraltar. In this way the programme team may be able to provide students with a suitable professional opinion on aspects of experience or practice which can help the students become autonomous and reflective practitioners.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider increasing the frequency of visits that tutors and lecturers undertake to Gibraltar.

Reason: In discussion with the practice placement providers, in Gibraltar, and with the programme team the visitors were made aware that the visits undertaken by programme staff to Gibraltar also provided opportunities for practice placement supervision. These visits take place eight times over the two year period of the programme and lasted for two days at a time. During these visits the programme staff accompany students in their work as emergency medical technicians and sign off students when they have demonstrated certain key areas of competence. The visitors highlighted that this was a valuable part of the programme and that it provided students with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate professional skills; progress through the programme and reflect on their practice. The visitors also articulated that these visits reduced the burden of demonstrating a wide set of competencies during the four weeks of experience the students would get in the UK when working as a member of an ambulance crew. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider consider increasing the opportunities staff and students have for undertaking these periods of supervised practice in Gibraltar.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should keep the implementation of the Gibraltar Health Authority equality and diversity policy under review to ensure that any issues are reported to the appropriate education provider committees.

Reason: In discussion with the senior team and the programme team the visitors were made aware of the equality and diversity policies which have been implemented by the Gibraltar Health Authority (GHA). The visitors were also made aware that these policies would be aligned with the education providers' own mechanisms for reporting any issues and taking appropriate actions to resolve them. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, the visitors also noted from discussions with the programme team that the GHA equality and diversity policy had been relatively recently formulated and implemented. The visitors also noted that while the policy was based on recommendations from relevant commissions in the UK there was no oversight of the policy required by these bodies due to Gibraltar's status as a Great British protectorate. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider keep the implementation of this policy under review to ensure that it aligns with its own policies and procedures. In this way the education provider can better ensure that these policies can work in tandem and that the required reporting mechanisms, through the education provider committee structure, can be as effective as possible in dealing with any issues that arise.

Glyn Harding
Mark Nevins