hcpc health & care professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Staffordshire University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	10 – 11 May 2017

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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 'biomedical 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 (delete as appropriate) of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 24 August 2017. At the Committee meeting on 24 August 2017, the programme 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 meet 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 admissions, programme management and resources, curriculum, practice placements and assessment. 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 part of a joint event. The professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following awards:
- BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Blood Sciences)
- BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Infection Sciences)
- BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Cellular Sciences); and
- BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science (Genetic Sciences).

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 outlines their decision on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Pradeep Agrawal (Biomedical scientist) Robert Keeble (Biomedical scientist) Sophie Gamwell (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Rebecca Stent
Proposed student numbers	6 per cohort, 1 cohort per year
First approved intake	September 2012
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2017
Chair	David Hawkins (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Meg Goodwin (Staffordshire University)
Members of the joint panel	Jocelyn Price (Institute of Biomedical Science) Christine Murphy (Institute of Biomedical Science) Betty Kyle (Institute of Biomedical 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	☒	☐	☐
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 ongoing 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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 53 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 have its ongoing approval reconfirmed. 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 recommendation for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme can have its ongoing approval reconfirmed. 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

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 demonstrate that information regarding English language requirements for applicants who do not have English as their first language is accurate and consistent in the documentation available to applicants.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation, the visitors noted that there were discrepancies regarding the English language requirements for applicants who do not have English as their first language. On the programme website, the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score required is stated as "at least 7.0, with no element below 6.5" whereas, on page 9 of the programme specification provided on the same website, the IELTS requirement is listed as "6.0 or better." At the visit, the programme team confirmed that they require an IELTS score of at least 7.0. Therefore, the visitors noted that applicants are currently receiving different information about the English language requirements for this programme at the point of application. As such, the education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate that applicants will be given accurate and consistent information about the English language requirements for applicants who do not have English as their first language so that they are able to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

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

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

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme documentation submitted by the education provider contained inaccuracies in relation to HCPC regulation. For example, the visitors noted a reference to "HPC" rather than the "HCPC" on page 1 of the programme specification on the programme website, and a lack of clarity for students regarding the named programme leader in the programme handbook (page 2). They also noted the following incorrect statement on page 9 of the programme handbook: "All health professionals have to be registered with the HCPC". Furthermore, the visitors noted the following statement on page 3 of the programme specification: "The aims of BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science and BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science are… to satisfy section 13 of the Health and Care Professions Council standards of proficiency." At the visit, the programme team acknowledged that this statement was incorrect and misleading to students. Therefore, the visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to ensure that it is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation and the HCPC so that the resources to support student learning in all settings will be effectively used.

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 provide documentary evidence to demonstrate that students are informed of attendance requirements in all settings, the monitoring mechanisms in place and any consequences of non-attendance.

Reason: In the mapping document provided prior to the visit, the visitors received some information about the attendance requirements for the programme and they were referred to the programme handbook for further detail. However, the visitors were unable to locate the attendance policy in the documentation provided. In discussions with the programme team, the visitors heard that there were clear attendance requirements with monitoring mechanisms in place as well as consequences of non-attendance. However, without seeing documentary evidence, the visitors could not be assured that all students would be clear about the attendance requirements for this programme. As such, the visitors require documentary evidence to demonstrate that students are informed of attendance requirements in all settings as well as the monitoring mechanisms in place and any consequences of non-attendance.

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors noted that there are several mechanisms utilised by the education provider in order to maintain currency of the curriculum such as external reviews and staff research activities. However, in the Placement Training Programme document, the visitors also noted some more outdated references to techniques and a "recent" article published in 2007. As such, the visitors were unclear how the process and mechanisms for reviewing the curriculum were robust enough to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant. At the visit, the programme team stated that some aspects may have been missed when they were updating the documentation but the visitors did not receive sufficient detail as to how the programme would continue to ensure that the curriculum remains up to date going forward. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence of the mechanisms in place to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to current practice.

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 demonstrate that the programme team has a policy to ensure that external examiners have the appropriate experience and qualifications for this programme and, unless other arrangements are agreed by HCPC, from the relevant part of the Register.

Reason: For this standard, the visitors were given information in the mapping document about the experience, qualifications and registration of the current external examiner for this programme. However, the visitors did not see evidence that the programme team has a documented policy which they use to ensure that there is at least one external

examiner who is appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, from the relevant part of the Register. Therefore, the visitors require evidence of the policy the programme team use for the recruitment of external examiners to determine whether this standard is met.

Recommendations

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider increases and consolidates future service user involvement in this programme.

Reason: Prior to the visit, the visitors reviewed a service user strategy document highlighting service user involvement in the programme. At the visit, the visitors heard that there had been some involvement of service users previously and met with a current service user who currently inputs into the development of the programme and the service user and carer strategy. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met at threshold. The visitors also noted from discussions at the visit that the education provider plans to increase the number of service users and carers and increase the level of involvement in the programme, for example, in the selection and interview process. The visitors would encourage the education provider to document and implement these plans to involve service users further in the programme and to keep service user involvement under review.

Pradeep Agrawal
Robert Keeble
Sophie Gamwell