

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Chester
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Dietetics
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Dietitian
Date of visit	16 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 'dietitian' 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 21 September 2017. At the Committee meeting on 21 September 2017, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

The HCPC visited the programme at the education provider 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 an HCPC only visit. The education provider and validating body 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 the following programmes – MSc Nutrition and Dietetics and PG Dip Nutrition and Dietetics. Separate reports exist for these programmes.

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Tracy Clephan (Dietician) David Packwood (Practitioner Psychologist) Kathleen Taylor (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ben Potter
Proposed student numbers	16 per cohort, 1 cohort per year
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2017
Chair	Garfield Southall (University of Chester)
Secretary	Sue Sutton (University of Chester)

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"/>

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"/>
Service users and carers	<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"/>

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 programme can be reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 9 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 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 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 provide further evidence of the information applicants and prospective students receive about the fees for the programme.

Reason: In their reading of the documentation that was provided prior to the visit the visitors were clear that, due to the change in commissioning, all students from September 2017 will have to pay fees to take up a place on this programme. This was confirmed during discussions at the visit. However, in their reading of the documentation visitors could not identify what information prospective students and applicants to the programme would be provided with regarding any fees that they may have to pay. In further discussions it was highlighted that the level of the fee had not yet been agreed, and as such information about the level of the fees for this programme wasn't yet available. The visitors therefore could not determine how the education provider ensures that applicants and prospective students have all the information they need, about the fees they will need to pay, in order for them to make an informed choice about applying to the programme. Because of this the visitors require further evidence as to how the about how the education provider ensures that applicants have all of the information they require to make an informed choice about taking up a place on this programme.

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence as to what information is generated by their quality assurance procedures and how this enables any issues raised to be dealt with in a timely manner.

Reason: From their discussions at the visit, and from their reading of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors were aware of the quality assurance mechanisms that are in place for the programme. In the senior team meeting it was highlighted that a lot of information is generated by the quality assurance processes and that this feeds into relevant management meetings at key points during the year. The visitors were also aware, from the evidence provided, that there was significant pressure on the programme team currently as a result of a number of staff members leaving and, at the time of the visit, not having been replaced. This had placed significant burden on the remaining members of the programme team to ensure that the programme was continuing to be delivered as intended. However the visitors could not determine, from the evidence provided, if the regular monitoring and evaluation procedures in place had identified the issues in regards to the number of available programme team members. In particular the visitors were not clear how this information would have been generated and how it would then have been fed into the relevant management structures for the programme. As such they could not identify how the regular monitoring and evaluation processes in place ensured that the right information reached the relevant people in order for any issues, in regards to staffing, to be addressed in a timely manner. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the information generated by the monitoring and evaluations systems identifies

issues in regards to staffing and how this is utilised to address any issues in a timely manner.

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 evidence as to how they ensure that is a sufficient number of professionally qualified, experienced dietetic staff in place to deliver the programme effectively.

Reason: From their reading of the programme documentation, the visitors were unclear as to the number of staff that are responsible for the effective delivery of this programme. In discussions at the visit it was clarified that there are contributors to the programme from staff across the department of clinical sciences and nutrition. Therefore the visitors understood that there were a number of members of staff who are responsible for aspects of the programme's delivery but who aren't members of the core programme team. The visitors were also aware that the core programme team consisted of qualified and experienced dieticians who were responsible for the profession specific aspects of the programme delivery including teaching, personal tutoring and support for students, practice placement providers and educators. However, from the evidence provided the visitors were clear that a number of the core programme team had recently left the education provider and, at the time of the visit, had not been replaced. This had placed significant burden on the remaining members of the team to ensure that the programme was continuing to be delivered as intended. As such the visitors could not determine, from the evidence provided, how the education provider was ensuring that there was adequate numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver the programme. In particular they could not determine how the education provider was ensuring that, for the profession specific aspects of the programme, there are adequate numbers of staff in place who are experienced, qualified, dietitians. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the education provider is ensuring that there are adequate numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver this programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence as to how they ensure that is a sufficient amount of staff in place with specialist expertise and knowledge.

Reason: Through discussions at the visit, the visitors clarified that there are staff across the department of clinical sciences and nutrition who contribute to the programme. Therefore the visitors understood that there were a number of members of staff who are responsible for aspects of the programme's delivery but who aren't members of the core programme team. The visitors were also aware that the core programme team consisted of qualified and experienced dieticians who were responsible for the profession specific aspects of the programme delivery. This includes delivery of the teaching and learning aspects of the programme that are specific to the dietetics profession. However, from the evidence provided the visitors were clear that a number of the core programme team had recently left the education provider and, at the time of the visit, had not been replaced. This had placed significant burden on the remaining members of the team to ensure that the dietetic specific teaching and learning aspects

of the programme were continuing to be delivered as intended. As such the visitors could not determine, from the evidence provided, how the education provider was ensuring that there was an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver the programme. In particular they could not determine how the education provider was ensuring that, for the profession specific aspects of the programme, there are adequate numbers of staff in place who are experienced, qualified dietitians. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the education provider is ensuring that programme is being delivered by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

3.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Condition: The education provider must provide additional evidence as to how they ensure that staff responsible for the delivery of this programme are supported in undertaking relevant continuing professional development.

Reason: From their reading of the evidence provided prior to the visit, and in discussions at the visit, the visitors were made aware that there was a programme for staff development that is in place. They were clear that as part of the professional development process line managers and members of staff have conversations about development opportunities and prioritise opportunities for development over the coming year. Professional development is then factored into workload planning to ensure time is available to take up opportunities on offer. However, from the evidence provided the visitors were clear that a number of the core programme team had recently left the education provider and, at the time of the visit, had not been replaced. This had placed significant burden on the remaining members of the team to ensure that the dietetic programme was continuing to be delivered as intended. This has led to some members of staff having to take on additional responsibilities until new members of the core programme team have been recruited. As such the visitors were unclear how the programme for staff development was being implemented as the time available for some members of staff to undertake this activity was being squeezed or limited due to taking on these additional responsibilities. In particular the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider was ensuring that there was support in place for the members of the core team to enable them to take up opportunities for professional development. Therefore the visitors require further information as to how the education provider is ensuring that staff on the programme team are being supported to take up the opportunities for professional development.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how the staff responsible for the pastoral and academic student support systems are supported to undertake this role.

Reason: From their reading of the evidence provided prior to the visit, and in discussions at the visit, the visitors were made aware that there was a system for academic and pastoral student support in place. They were clear that as part of this process each student would be allocated a personal academic tutor (PAT) in the first week of the programme. Students would then be expected to have a meeting with their PAT at least once a semester to review their progress through the programme. The visitors also understood that students could arrange additional meetings with their PAT

if required and if their PAT is available. From the evidence provided (such as section 31 of the programme specification) the visitors were clear that for this programme each students' PAT would be a dietitian and as such would be member of the core programme team. However, the visitors were clear that a number of the core programme team had recently left the education provider and, at the time of the visit, had not been replaced. This had placed significant burden on the remaining members of the team to ensure that the dietetic programme was continuing to be delivered as intended. This has led to some members of staff having to take on additional responsibilities until new members of the core programme team have been recruited. As such the visitors were unclear how the system of academic and pastoral support was being implemented as the time available for some members of staff to undertake this role was being squeezed or limited due to taking on additional responsibilities. In particular the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider was ensuring that there was support in place for the members of the core team to act as PATs. Therefore the visitors require further information as to how the education provider is ensuring that staff on the programme team are being supported to act as PATs and provide students with the academic and pastoral support required.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further information to demonstrate how they ensure students on the programme are aware of who their personal academic tutor (PAT) is and how they can contact their tutor.

Reason: From their reading of the evidence provided prior to the visit, and in discussions at the visit, the visitors were made aware that there was a system for academic and pastoral student support in place. They were clear that as part of this process each student would be allocated a PAT in the first week of the programme. Students would then be expected to have a meeting with their PAT at least once a semester to review their progress through the programme. The visitors also understood that students could arrange additional meetings with their PAT if required and if their PAT is available. From the evidence provided (such as section 31 of the programme specification) the visitors were clear that for this programme each students' PAT would be a dietitian and as such would be member of the core programme team. However, in their discussions with students the visitors were made aware that while some students knew who their PAT was, others did not. As such there were some students who did not understand who their PAT was or what role they played in supporting their studies. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the programme team ensure that students on this programme are aware of the academic and pastoral systems that are in place. In particular this evidence should demonstrate how students are made aware of their PAT, when they would be expected to meet and how, if required, they could contact them outside of formal meetings.

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 programme team must provide further evidence as to what the attendance requirements are for this programme and how students are made aware of these requirements.

Reason: From their review of the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors were clear about the mechanisms that the education provider has in place to monitor students' attendance. However, they were unclear as to the attendance expectations for students and in particular what level of non-attendance would trigger action by the programme team. In discussion with students the visitors heard that while there is general expectation that attendance at all sessions is mandatory, students gave varying figures as to what the threshold would be to trigger any action to address non-attendance. As such the visitors were unclear as to how the programme team have identified where attendance is mandatory on the programme and also what level of non-attendance at these mandatory parts of the programme would trigger interventions. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the attendance requirements of the programme are communicated to students and also what level of non-attendance will trigger action by the programme team.

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

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how the approval and monitoring processes in place provide the programme team with feedback from students and enable them to address any issues on placement as and when they arise.

Reason: In reading the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors were made aware of the processes that are in place to approve and monitor placements. This was clarified during discussions at the visit and it was clear that feedback from students is gathered from them via meetings during and after the placements have taken place. However, in discussions with students it was highlighted that individuals had experienced issues while on placements in regards to the support that was being provided and the types of experience being offered. In further discussions it was suggested to visitors that some placements were better than others but that overall the experience was positive across all the different placement experiences. When asked about the placement feedback the students highlighted that this was provided in a group forum, facilitated by their PATs, when they returned from placement, a change from a previous system when this was done as part of scheduled meetings between PATs and students. However, the visitors were not clear as to how that feedback was then used and utilised by the programme team to facilitate at the practice placement settings. As such the visitors were unclear as to how issues that arise on placement are identified and addressed in a timely manner, through the regular monitoring systems that are in place. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the regular monitoring and approval of practice placements provide the programme team with useful, timely feedback from students. This evidence should also highlight how this feedback is used by the programme team to address any issues which may have arisen at the practice placement setting.

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 further evidence as to how practice placement educators are kept up-to-date with developments on the programme and can assess students effectively while on placement.

Reason: In their reading of the programme documentation, and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were clear that all practice placement educators must have undertaken relevant training before supervising students from this programme. This is monitored and forms part of the approval and monitoring of all practice placements. The visitors were also made aware that the education provider provides refresher training for practice placement educators that is optional and does not have to be undertaken by educators supervising students from this programme. In discussion with the programme team the visitors clarified that the refresher training is used mainly as a tool to train educators who may not have supervised a student for some time, or for someone who may have recently moved into the area. As such the visitors were unclear as to how, if a practice placement educator had undertaken the mandatory training some time previously, they had been kept up-to-date with any changes that may have been made to the programme. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to how the education provider disseminates information to practice placement educators to keep them up-to-date about changes and developments on the programme. In particular this evidence should highlight how, if a practice placement educator has not been subject to refresher training for some time they are still fully prepared to supervise, and assess, students from this programme.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to monitor this programme's place in the institution's business plan to ensure that it continues to have the resources required to be delivered as intended.

Reason: In discussions at the visit, the visitors heard that the dietetics provision at the education provider was held in high regard and that the programme were resourced as well as any other at the institution. The visitors were also informed that when issues around the staffing resources for the programme were identified, funding to replace staff who had left was allocated as quickly as it was possible to do. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that while resources had been allocated to the programme at the time of the visit there were a number of vacancies on the core programme team that had not been filled. This had required additional responsibilities to be taken on by the remaining members of the programme team and for additional support to be sought to support the programme team. As such the visitors recommend that the education provider continues to monitor the place this programme has in the business plan of the educator to ensure that available resources are allocated to the programme as and when they are required. In this way the education provider may be better placed to allocate the available resources to the programme in a timely way. This may also reduce the risks associated with the programme being delivered by a reduced programme team for significant periods of time.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider monitoring the management structures of the programme, and department, to ensure that when the programme is faced with adverse circumstances it continues to be delivered as intended.

Reason: The visitors were aware, from the evidence provided, of the structures that are in place to effectively manage this programme. As such they were satisfied that this standard was met at a threshold level. However, the visitors noted that while the education provider had allocated resources to the programme, when the visit occurred there were a number of vacancies on the core programme team that had not been filled. This had required additional responsibilities to be taken on by the remaining members of the programme team and for additional support to be sought to support the programme team. Therefore the visitors suggest that the education provider continues to monitor how the programme is managed so that it is clear how information about staffing is gathered and informs decisions about resource allocation. In this way the education provider may be better placed to ensure that management responses to adverse circumstances are determined and implemented in a timely way. This may also reduce the risks associated with the programme being delivered by a reduced programme team for significant periods of time.

5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.

Recommendation: The programme team should consider how best to encourage practice placement providers in specialist settings to provide more placements for students on this programme.

Reason: The visitors were aware from the evidence provided, that there are regular, formal meetings between training leads at practice placement providers and minutes from these meetings are disseminated widely. They are also aware that there are strong informal links between practice placements and that members of the core programme team visit placement sites on a regular basis. As such the visitors are content that the programme meets this standard. However, in discussion with the practice placement providers it was clear that there were some placements that were offered in specialist NHS settings. But these placements were limited due to the type of placements that were offered and as such only a few students may get to experience these placement settings. The visitors recommend that the programme team continue to work with these practice placement providers and explore all possibilities to develop the type of placements that they may offer. In this way there may be more placement experiences on offer and more students from this programme may gain a greater breadth of experience while on practice placement.

Tracy Clephan
Dave Packwood
Kathleen Taylor