

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Swansea University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Audiology
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Hearing aid dispensers
Date of visit	21-22 June 2011

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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 'Hearing aid dispenser' 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 ongoing approval of the programme. The education provider has until 16 August 2011 to provide observations on this report. This is independent of meeting any conditions. The report and any observations received will be considered by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 8 September 2011. At this meeting, the Committee will accept the visitors' recommended outcome, including the conditions. If necessary, the Committee may decide to vary the conditions.

The education provider is due to redraft and resubmit documentary evidence in response to the conditions outlined in this report by 16 September 2011. The visitors will consider this response and make a separate recommendation to the Committee on the ongoing approval of the programme. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be made to the Committee on 13 October 2011.

Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the hearing aid dispenser programme profession came onto the register in April 2010 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. 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 as the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. 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 the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. 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 professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Richard Sykes (Hearing aid dispenser) Timothy Pringle (Hearing aid dispenser) Mary Ann Elston (Lay visitor)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	16
First approved intake	1 September 2001
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	1 September 2011
Chair	Jane Thomas (Swansea University)
Secretary	Jayne Walters (Swansea University)
Members of the joint panel	Kim Howell (Swansea University) Sara Callen (Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists) Avril Minto (Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists) Adrian Kendrick (Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists) Tim Killan (British Association of Audiologists)

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"/>

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"/>

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 5 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have 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 ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors have also made a commendation. 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 of the programme documentation, and any advertising material, to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of HPC regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted that elements of the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not 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 (e.g. p2, 4&6 of the 'Curriculum Document'). The HPC does not accredit education programmes we approve education programmes. The visitors also noted that the programme documentation stated that the HPC regulates 'Hearing aid audiologists' (e.g. p2 of the Curriculum document and p4 of the Audiology handbook). The HPC regulates hearing aid dispensers but does not regulate hearing aid audiologists. The visitors considered this use of terminology to be inaccurate and potentially misleading to applicants and students and therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout. This is to provide clarity for those on or applying to the programme and to ensure that this standard can be met.

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

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate in the programme handbook where the teaching and learning on the programme ensures that students understand the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation, in discussions with students and with the programme team that general standards of conduct, performance and ethics are dealt with in the curriculum. However in discussion with the students it was clear that they were not aware of the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors considered that students should be aware of the implications of the HPC standards of conduct performance and ethics on their time as a student and for their practice in the future. The visitors therefore require evidence to demonstrate that the programme documentation includes sufficient information about the HPC's standards of conduct performance and ethics and where this is delivered in the curriculum. This is to demonstrate that students understand the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

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 education provider must demonstrate how the range of practice placements allows students to implement key professional skills in a practical setting.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team it was made clear that the theoretical learning gained in the academic setting provided students with sufficient knowledge to meet all of the standards of proficiency for hearing aid dispensers. However, the visitors noted that students on the programme complete their practical experience exclusively in public sector settings. The visitors were therefore unclear as to how the range of practice placement settings afforded students the chance to demonstrate profession specific skills. In particular the visitors were unsure how students applied their knowledge about a range of hearing aid technologies and also utilised their communication skills to outline and explain the financial implications of a hearing aid. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure that practice placements provide opportunities for students to put the relevant theoretical skills into practice. In this way the visitors can be sure that number, duration and range of practice placements are affording students the opportunities to put key professional skills into practice.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that any exit awards from the programme do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that anyone achieving an exit award other than the BSc (Hons) Audiology would not be eligible to apply for registration with the HPC. However, in the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail regarding any alternative exit awards from the programme. This could lead to the assumption that these awards may allow students to apply to the Register for HPC registration when it does not. Therefore, visitors need to see evidence that the documentation clearly articulates that any exit awards, other than the BSc (Hons) Audiology, would not confer eligibility to apply to the Register on any student, to ensure that this standard can be met.

6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that aegrotat awards will not be awarded to students on this programme. However, in the documentation submitted by the education provider there was

insufficient detail regarding the policy for aegrotat awards. This could lead to the assumption that the education provider's regulations supersede the programme specific regulations in this instance and that an aegrotat award may be conferred. Therefore visitors need to see evidence that this policy is clearly communicated within the programme documentation, so that it is clear that aegrotat awards would not enable students to be eligible to apply to the Register.

Recommendations

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider further work to access private sources of additional resources such as impression materials.

Reason: From discussion at the visit, and the tour of facilities, the visitors felt that the resources available effectively supported the learning and teaching activities of the programme. They were therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, in discussion with the students it was highlighted that some students struggled to access resources, such as impression materials, when there was a period of high demand. The visitor noted in discussions with the programme team that they were aware of this issue and that work had been done to provide as much access as possible to the available resources. To further enhance this work the visitors recommend that the programme team consider accessing private sources of additional resource. They highlight that many companies involved in the production and manufacture of hearing aids are very active in education settings and would be likely to provide resources such as impression materials if approached. In this way the programme team may be able to improve students' access to such resources, even at periods of high demand.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider communicating to students how they are meeting the relevant professional skills needed to register as a hearing aid dispenser with the HPC.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation, and in discussions at the visit, that the learning outcomes of the programme enable successful students to meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for hearing aid dispensers. They are therefore content that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, in discussion with the students it was made clear that students were unsure as to how they were meeting the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers and where in the programme they were meeting these standards. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team work to enhance their communication to students to better highlight where in the programme students are meeting these SOPs. In this way the programme team can enhance how students' awareness of the professional skills they are gaining through the successful completion of the programme. This work may also enhance students' awareness of the independent sector and the need to register with the HPC in order to practice as a hearing aid dispenser.

4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how best to integrate the theoretical teaching and the practice of the key skills required to register as a hearing aid dispenser. .

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation, and in discussions at the visit, that the theoretical teaching of the SOPs needed to register were integrated into the broad learning outcomes associated with practical experience. They are therefore content that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, the visitors were aware from discussion with students that the link between the theoretical teaching of the standards and the practical application of these skills was not always clear. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team work to highlight where key skills learned at the education provider can be applied when in practice. In this way the programme team can enhance how students' awareness of the professional skills they are gaining through the completion of the programme. This work may also enhance students' awareness of the independent sector and the need to register with the HPC in order to practice as a hearing aid dispenser.

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 highlighting where the clinical skills gained articulated in the 'Clinical log books' ensure that students are meeting the relevant HPC standards of proficiency (SOPs).

Reason: From the programme documentation, and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were satisfied that students spent an appropriate amount of time on placements of various lengths throughout the programme.. The visitors noted in discussions with the students that the students were not clear as to where in the programme they were meeting the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consider highlighting where the achievement of the clinical skills articulated in the 'Clinical log books' relates to the HPC SOPs. In this way the programme team can enhance students' awareness of the professional skills they are gaining through the completion of the programme, and how they are gaining these skills. This work may also enhance students' awareness of the independent sector and the need to register with the HPC in order to practice as a hearing aid dispenser.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider making HPC aware of any changes made to the approval and monitoring mechanisms in place to approve any placement settings outside of the National Health Service (NHS).

Reason: Through scrutiny of the programme's documentation, and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors noted that agreements were in place to ensure that there were appropriate placements provided for students.

The visitors were also satisfied that there was a thorough and effective system in place for monitoring these practice placements. However, further discussion with the programme team highlighted that discussions were underway to broaden the provision and offer practice placements in private settings. As these setting would be outside of the NHS the rules and regulations, which form a key part of the current placement agreements, would not necessarily be in place. Therefore the programme team would have to change the mechanisms in place to ensure that placements in private settings would be thoroughly and effectively approved and monitored. As this is the case the visitors recommend that the programme team informs the HPC of any changes to the approval and monitoring mechanisms in place to approve any placement settings outside of the National Health Service. In this way the HPC can identify if the changes affect how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training and ensure that the programme can continue to have ongoing approval.

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 consider making HPC aware of any changes made to mechanism for ensuring that an equality and diversity policy is in place at any placement setting outside of the NHS.

Reason: Through scrutiny of the programme's documentation, and from discussions with the programme team, the visitors noted that agreements were in place to ensure that placements had appropriate equality and diversity policies in relation to students. However, further discussion with the programme team highlighted that discussions were underway to broaden the placement provision and offer practice placements in private settings. As these setting would be in a private setting the equality and diversity polices required in the NHS would not necessarily be in place. Therefore the programme team would have to change the mechanisms in place to ensure that placements in private settings would have equality and diversity policies in relation to students. As this is the case the visitors recommend that the programme team informs the HPC of any changes to the approval and monitoring mechanisms in place to approve any placement not in an NHS setting. In this way the HPC can identify if the changes affect how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training and ensure that the programme can continue to have ongoing approval.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider making HPC aware of any changes made to the training offered to practice placement educators who are working in a private setting.

Reason: From the documentation provided, and through discussion with the programme team and practice placement staff, the visitors had sufficient evidence to be sure that the programme meets this standard. However, in further discussions with the programme team it was highlighted that discussions were underway to broaden the placement provision and offer practice placements in

private settings. The visitors highlighted that as private settings would not have the same mechanisms and policies in place as the NHS to provide student placements, staff from a private setting may have different training needs compared to NHS staff. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team informs the HPC of any changes to the training provided to practice placement providers and educators. In this way the HPC can identify if the changes affect how the programme continues to meet the standards of education and training and ensure that the programme can continue to have ongoing approval.

5.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider involving service users, where possible, in the development and delivery of the programme.

Reason: From discussions at the visit the visitors noted that a range of teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users were in place throughout the practice placements. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. However, the visitors noted that there was currently little direct involvement of service users in the delivery of the programme. Therefore the visitors recommend that the programme team consider setting up formal mechanisms to include service users, particularly older adults and the hearing impaired, in the development and delivery of some elements of the programme. In combination with utilising the national good practice on the involvement of service users in allied health professions' education, this will allow the programme to integrate service users and carers fully into the programme. In turn this will benefit graduates from the programme by providing them with an insight as to how service users will interact with them as future health professionals.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider communicating to students how the programme's assessments ensure they are meeting the relevant professional skills needed to register with the HPC.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation, and in discussions at the visit, that the assessment of the programme's learning outcomes ensure that successful students meet the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers. They are therefore content that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, in discussion with the students it was made clear that they not clear as to where in the programme they were meeting the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers. It was also made clear that the student were unaware as to how the assessments they undertook were ensuring that they are meeting these standards. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team work to communicate how students are meeting these SOPs. In this way the programme team can enhance how students' awareness of the professional skills they are gaining through the successful completion of the programme. This work may also enhance students'

awareness of the independent sector and the need to register with the HPC in order to practice as a hearing aid dispenser.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider highlighting where the learning outcomes achieved through completion of the in the 'Clinical log book' link to the HPC standards of proficiency.

Reason: From the programme documentation, and from discussions at the visit, the visitors were satisfied that the 'Clinical log book' measured the learning outcomes associated with practice placement experience. The visitors therefore felt that this, in collaboration with the other assessments on the programme, was sufficient evidence to say that this standard was met. However, the visitors also noted in discussions with the students that the students were not clear as to where in the programme they were meeting the SOPs for hearing aid dispensers. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consider highlighting where the achievement of the learning outcomes articulated in the 'Clinical log books' relates to the HPC SOPs. In this way the programme team can enhance students' awareness of the professional skills they are gaining through the achievement of the outcomes. This work may also enhance students' awareness of the independent sector and the need to register with the HPC in order to practice as a hearing aid dispenser.

Commendations

Commendation: The visitors wish to commend the independent verification process used by the programme team for the assessment of students while on practice placement.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation that the programme team had a process in place to moderate the assessment of students' practice placement experience. From discussion with the programme team the visitors noted that members of the programme team visited practice placements to observe how assessments were being undertaken. Feedback is then provided to the assessor as to how the process of assessment was completed. This process has been called independent verification (IV). The visitors would like to commend the team on the development, and use, of this IV system to address potential issues of inconsistency in the assessment of students' placement experience.

Information about this can be found at the following web link

www.swansea.ac.uk/humanandhealthsciences/

www.swansea.ac.uk/ugcourses/humanandhealthsciences/bscaudiology/

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