

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Institute of Biomedical Science
Programme name	Certificate of Competence by Equivalence (Biomedical Scientist)
Mode of delivery	Flexible
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	15 – 16 April 2015

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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 approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 27 August 2015. At the Committee meeting, 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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 HCPC 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 and role of HCPC visitors	William Gilmore (Biomedical scientist) David Houlston (Biomedical scientist) Ian Hughes (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officers (in attendance)	Alex Urquhart Jamie Hunt
Proposed student numbers	100 applications a year
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 September 2015
Chair	Sarah Pitt (University of Brighton)
Secretary	Marie-Helen Jean (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	<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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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 HCPC did not review the Practice placement handbook prior to the visit as the documentation does not exist.

The HCPC did not review the external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as there is currently no external examiner as the programme is new.

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 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The HCPC met with students who have completed the Registration Training Portfolio for the Certificate of competence, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it. The HCPC also met with some potential students for the proposed programme.

The HCPC did not see the learning resources and specialist teaching accommodation as the nature of the programme does not require learning resources or any specialist teaching or laboratories at the education provider.

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for 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 approved.

The visitors agreed that 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 6 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 be approved. 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 revise the documentation available to applicants so that it clearly indicates what learning resources are available throughout the programme, specifically the learning resources that are dependent on Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) membership.

Reason: The visitors reviewed the documentation which will be made available to applicants. These documents include the programme specification and the programme handbook. In this documentation it was clear that the students have access to the learning resources at the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) approved laboratory they are currently employed at as well as some online learning resources provided by the IBMS. However during discussions with the programme team it was made clear that some of the learning resources listed as available to students are dependent on students being IBMS members. The visitors noted that some students who do not have current IBMS membership will not be able to have access to some of the learning resources. The visitors noted that this was not made clear in the documentation which will be made available to applicants for the programme. Therefore the visitors noted that this could be misleading to applicants who require this information to take up or a place on the programme. The education provider is therefore required to revise the documentation available to applicants so that it clearly indicates what learning resources are available throughout the programme, specifically the learning resources that are dependent on IBMS membership.

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 revise the documentation that will be made available to applicants so that the academic entry criteria are clear.

Reason: Throughout the documentation which will be made available to applicants the visitors noted that there were discrepancies in the entry criteria including academic requirements. For example page 1 of the programme specification states that a "Minimum of an honours degree" as the academic entry requirement. On the other hand the 'Guide for Applicants 2015-16' stated on page 3 that applicants must have a "minimum of a science degree with honours". The visitors noted that both examples are different enough to potentially cause confusion as to exactly what the academic entry criteria is for the programme. During the meeting with the programme team it was clarified that the academic entry requirement was an honours degree from any discipline. The visitors noted that this discrepancy could be misleading to applicants, therefore the education provider is required to revise the documentation to ensure that the academic entry requirements are clear across all the documentation available to applicants.

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 demonstrating the criteria, including the professional and academic qualifications, required to successfully apply and be appointed as one of the portfolio verifiers.

Reason: The education provider identified the staff in place to deliver the programme as the members of the assessment panel, known as portfolio verifiers, who make a recommendation about whether or not the student's portfolio demonstrates that they have met the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for biomedical scientists. Throughout the visit in discussion with the programme team it was established that the assessment panel is made up of three portfolio verifiers and that panel members are selected from a pool of portfolio verifiers. An assessment panel consists of three members; one HCPC registered biomedical scientist or clinical scientist, a biomedical scientist academic and a lay representative. During the visit the visitors were presented with the role description of the lay representative, however this document did not include information about the specific criteria and professional/academic qualifications to be the lay representative portfolio verifier. From the documentation made available to the visitors the criteria for the HCPC registrant was stated in the Application Form to become A Registrant Portfolio Verifier, this document stated the criteria to become the registrant portfolio verifier. However from the documentation made available the visitors were unsure as to the criteria for the remaining two portfolio verifiers, including the academic and the lay representative. Therefore the education provider must provide further evidence demonstrating the criteria, including the professional and academic qualifications required to apply and be appointed as one of the portfolio verifiers on the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which demonstrates the process by which any concerns about a student's profession related conduct is communicated to the IBMS as the education provider.

Reason: For this standard the education provider stated that it was the responsibility of the practice placement provider to raise concerns about a student's profession related conduct throughout the programme. During the meeting with the programme team it was explained that because the students would be employed by the practice placement provider during the programme, any concerns would be raised and dealt with by the individual laboratory following their employment policies. It was further stated that the student's practice placement educator has the contact details of the Executive Head of Education at the IBMS for the discussion of any concerns. From the evidence provided the visitors were unclear of the procedure outlining a process in place for dealing with any concerns as and when they arrive, and how these concerns would be reported to the IBMS as the education provider. The visitors noted that any issues about a student's profession related conduct would need to be dealt with by the IBMS as the education provider. The visitors further noted that if issues about a student's profession related conduct were dealt with by the individual practice placement provider, there was potential that they would not be dealt with in a clear and consistent basis across the whole programme. Therefore all issues raised would need to be dealt with by the IBMS on a clear and consistent basis. The visitors stated that any issue or concern about a student's profession related conduct should be reported to the IBMS as the education

provider and were therefore unclear as to the process on this programme. The visitors therefore noted that there was a potential risk that an issue of concern about a students' profession related conduct could not be reported to the IBMS, which may impact the student's future registration with the HCPC. Therefore the education provider must provide further evidence which demonstrates the process by which any concerns about a students' profession related conduct is communicated to the IBMS as the education provider and how any concerns are dealt with on a clear and consistent basis.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence demonstrating that the system for approving and monitoring all placements, allows placements to be monitored throughout the duration of the individual placement.

Reason: For this standard the education provider directed the visitors to the process by which a placement is approved. For a student to undertake this programme they must be working in an IBMS approved laboratory. If the student is not working in an approved laboratory then the laboratory must go through the IBMS laboratory approval process before the student can apply to the programme. The visitors were satisfied that this system of approving the placements was sufficient to ensure that all placements were suitable for the programme due to the criteria that a laboratory has to meet to be IBMS approved. The monitoring of the placements involved the 'student's feedback form' which was completed at the end of the placement when the student submits the portfolio. The visitors noted that there was no point whereby placements were monitored between the student being accepted onto the programme and before the student completes the portfolio. Therefore there is no opportunity for the student or the placement provider to highlight any potential problems. Therefore the education provider must provide further evidence demonstrating that the system for approving and monitoring all placements, allows placements to be monitored throughout the duration of the individual placement and how any issues which arise are dealt with.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence clarifying the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Reason: For this standard the visitors are directed to the 'Assessor Guidance 2015-2016' and the 'Guide for Applicants [students] 2015-2016'. In the 'Guide for Applicants [Students] 2015-2016' the visitors looked at stage 3 of the programme which is titled 'The Equivalence Assessment Process'. In this section the requirements for student progression is outlined. From the documentation the visitors could clearly identify the 'levels' of student progression within the process, starting with the declaration by the practice placement educator allowing the student to submit the portfolio to the IBMS and finishing with the three outcomes recommended by the assessment panel. However during discussion with the programme team it became apparent that there were additional stages in the process which impact student progression. For example once the student has submitted their portfolio, the panel has the opportunity to communicate with the student for purposes of clarification and request further documentation before the reports are collated by the chair and sent to the IBMS. The visitors noted that this was not clear in the documentation available and the process

may not be clear to students as the requirements for student progression and achievement were not clear to the visitors. The visitors also noted that there was the potential for the assessors becoming too involved in developing and improving the student portfolio. The visitors could not determine how the functions of the assessment panel as set out in its regulations extends to this type of involvement and development of student portfolios. Therefore some students may be at a disadvantage as other students may have more opportunities to submit further documentation at different stages within the process. Therefore the education provider must revise assessment regulations clearly specifying the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

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 provide further documentation outlining the requirement 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.

Reason: For this standard the education provider directed visitors to the 'Assessor Guidance', from this documentation it was unclear whether an external examiner was to be appointed for the programme. During discussion with the senior team it was stated that an external examiner was going to be appointed for this programme. However it was unclear whether the role of the external examiner was as an external verifier of the programme as a process or as a moderator for the decisions made by the assessment panel. Therefore the education provider is required to provide further evidence which outlines the requirement 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. The education provider also needs to provide further evidence that clearly outlines the exact role of the external examiner in this requirement so that this is clear to both the external examiner and the education provider.

Recommendations

2.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider consider a process which gives the applicant the opportunity to declare that they do or do not have a criminal conviction overseas.

Reason: As part of the application process the student must provide a valid Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) Check. For this reason the visitors were satisfied that the standard had been met. However the visitors noted that the DBS does not check any criminal convictions from overseas and that the education provider had not put in place any mechanisms which gives the student the opportunity to declare any overseas convictions. The education provider stated that from their perspective the responsibility of checking for criminal convictions from overseas fell upon the UK Border Control. However the visitors noted that there was a possibility for someone to apply with a criminal conviction from overseas which may impair on the professional conduct as a student on the programme and as a perspective HCPC registrant and IBMS member, and for this to go unchecked. Therefore the visitors recommend that the education provider considers putting in place a process whereby a student may declare that they do not have any overseas criminal convictions.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider broaden the involvement of service users and carers to include and represent the patient voice in the development of the programme.

Reason: In meeting this standard the education provider has defined services users and carers as the health professionals and medical staff who use the services of biomedical scientists. The visitors met with these representatives in the meeting with service users and cares who said that they have been involved with the design and the development of the programme. Specifically these groups have been involved in the requirement for the student to reflect on the contribution of service users in their development in their portfolio under module 5, professional relationships in relation to SOP 9.3. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that the standard has been met. However the visitors noted that with the involvement there was an opportunity for the patient voice to be further represented in the involvement and development of the programme in the future. This is due to the fact that the role of the biomedical scientist may involve interaction with any patient of one of the health professionals or medical staff who use the services of biomedical scientists. For this reason it is recommended that the education provider consider broadening the involvement of service users and cares to include the patient voice in the development of the programme.

William Gilmore
Ian Hughes
David Houlston