hpc health professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Manchester Metropolitan University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science – Life Sciences (Cellular Sciences)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	26 – 27 June 2012

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Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Biomedical scientist'must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health.

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 13 September 2012. At the Committee meeting on 13 September 2012, the programme was approved. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Introduction

This visit was the result of the education provider amending their currently approved BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programmes and reforming them into a new training route. Given the similarity between the approved programmes and the new programme, it was agreed the approval of this programme would incorporate those who enrolled for the September 2012 cohort. Those students will be eligible to apply for registration upon successful completion of the programme with the caveat that the education provider will have to meet all conditions in this report including any conditions the visitors set specifically for the first cohort of students who will commence the programme in September 2012.

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 visit also considered the following programmes: BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science - Life Sciences (Infection Sciences), BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science - Life Sciences (Genetic Sciences), and BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science - Life Sciences (Blood Sciences). 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. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. 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 visitor and profession	Robert Keeble (Biomedical Scientist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Niall Lennon
HPC observer	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	20
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2012
Chair	Patricia Rees (Manchester Metropolitan University)
Secretary	Carmen Corral (Manchester Metropolitan University)
Members of the joint panel	Alan Wainwright (Institute of Biomedical Science)
	Christine Murphy (Institute of Biomedical Science)
	Jill Rodney (Institute of Biomedical Science)

	Andrew Usher (Institute of Biomedical Science)		

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	☒	☐	☐
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	☐	☒	☐
Supplementary Documentation	☒	☐	☐

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as there have been no past external examiners' reports as this programme is new.

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

The HPC met with students from the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

Recommended outcome

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

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

The visitors agreed that 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 7 SETs.

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

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

Conditions

2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence of the information provided to applicants which clearly explains the pathways through the programme and the application process for these pathways.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitor noted that while the programme is advertised as BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science - Life Sciences this is not the title of any of the programmes which lead to eligibility for registration with the HPC. Instead this is the generic title of a suite of programmes. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified that applicants apply to this generic programme title and prior to enrolling are required to choose a pathway through the programme. However, the visitor did not see sufficient evidence of how applicants are suitably informed about the pathways through the programme. He also could not determine how applicants were informed about what these pathways entail, how to apply to these pathways and which of these would lead to eligibility to apply to the HPC register. The visitor therefore requires the programme team to provide further evidence which shows how applicants are provided with enough suitable information to ensure they are able to make an informed choice about whether to take up a place on the programme.

3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence to clearly outline the management structure of the programme including the lines of responsibility and links to the management of practice placement providers.

Reason: From the documentation provided and discussions at the visit the visitor reviewed the management processes in place for the programme. At the visit itself, the visitor met with the programme team, senior staff and practice placement supervisors and discussed how various aspects of the programme are managed. However, from a review of the programme documentation and discussions at the visit the visitor noted that in some instances students may have to change placement during the programme due to the number of places available. The visitor noted that this could result in the student having not completed all of the expected competencies before having to move to an alternative placement site. The visitor was subsequently unclear about how a student progress would be monitored from one placement to another. The visitor requires the programme team to provide further evidence which clearly articulates how this would be managed and what processes are in place to ensure required learning outcomes would continue to be met.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence which clearly outlines how the programme documentation ensures students are given specific information regarding the pathways through the programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitor noted that while the programme documentation contains information regarding all aspects of the programme the information itself was quite generic. The visitor also noted that documentation provided to students contained information on all pathways through the programme and both the physiological sciences and the life sciences routes. The visitor was concerned that as a result of this a student may have difficulty accessing relevant information specific to their route and pathway of choice. The visitor therefore requires the programme team to provide further evidence which shows how students are provided with clear and detailed information about aspects of the programme which are relevant to them specifically.

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 update the programme documentation to clearly specify the indicative timetable for the first practice placement and what learning outcomes are to be achieved.

Reason: The documentation provided prior to the visit included details of the practice placements and specifically that during the first academic year students will spend 10 weeks on placement. However, during the visit it became clear that students stay with the education provider for the first two weeks of this practice placement and that only seven weeks would be spent at a specific laboratory. It was also articulated that this placement was intended more of a 'placement experience' rather than a period of time for students to start undertaking practical work. From the documentation provided the visitor could not determine where in the programme documentation the specific details of this placement were outlined. As this was the case, the visitor could not easily determine what was involved in this placement and which, if any, the standards of proficiency could be met by students undertaking this first placement. Therefore the education provider must provide further information to clearly explain the indicative timetable for the first practice placement. This information should also include which areas of competency students are intended to cover by the end of the first year placement. In this way the visitor can be sure that the duration and range of this practice placement is appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

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 of the formal processes which are in place involving the initial process of approving placements.

Reason: The visitor noted discussions with the programme team outlining the procedure in place for approving and monitoring placements. In particular the visitor was made aware that the first stage of approval of a placement provider is a placement agreement signed between the education provider, the Strategic Health Authority and the practice placement provider. However, the visitor could not determine, form the documentation provided, what this agreement concerns covers or includes.. Therefore the visitor requires further evidence of the initial process involved with the approval of placements and how the signing of the placement agreement forms part of this process. In this way the visitor can be sure that the programme's system of approving and monitoring practice placements is thorough and effective.

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 of how they ensure that the practice placement educators and students are fully prepared to for practice placement.

Reason: The visitor noted during discussions at the visit that there has been a significant change in the way students will undertake placements in the new programme. Instead of taking one year to undertake all of their practical experience students will undertake smaller period of placement experience in each of the three years of the programme. However, through discussion with the practice placement providers the visitor was unclear about how the information about the new model of practice placement education had been provided to practice placement providers and educators. It was also the case that in reviewing the programme documentation the visitor was unclear about how students were provided with all of the relevant information they would need to be prepared for their placements. The visitor therefore requires further evidence of how the programme team ensure that students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators are fully prepared for placement. In particular how they are made aware of the learning outcomes to be achieved on each placement, the relative timings and duration of any placement experience, expectations of professional conduct, the assessment procedures and the communication and lines of responsibility while a student is on placement. In this way the visitor can be sure that everyone is fully prepared for placement and that this standard can be met.

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 what awards confer eligibility to apply to the HPC Register those exit awards which do not.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitor was satisfied that anyone successfully completing the programme would be eligible to apply for registration with the HPC. It was also clear that anyone who received an exit award would not be eligible to apply to the HPC Register. However, in the documentation submitted by the education provider the visitor could not determine how students were informed about the various awards and their impact on the eligibility of a student to apply for the Register. Therefore the visitor requires further evidence of how the programme team ensure that students understand which awards confer eligibility to apply to the HPC Register and which do not.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how best to split the current UCAS code to clearly identify the different routes a student may be able to take through the BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science programmes.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation provided and in discussion at the visit the visitors were satisfied with the information provided for applicants regarding the UCAS code which relates solely to the overarching title for this suite of programmes; BSc (Hons) Healthcare Science. The visitor felt however that the application process for the programme may benefit with regards clarity should the UCAS code be split to better represent the differing routes offered through the BSc (Hons). Therefore the visitor recommends the education provider consider having two separate UCAS codes one which relates to the physiological sciences programmes and one for the life sciences programmes. In this way applicants to the programme may be able to more easily identify the differing programmes associated with the healthcare science and in particular those associated with the life sciences.

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

Recommendation: The visitor recommends the programme team consider producing a student handbook specifically for the life sciences programmes.

Reason: From documentation and discussion at the visit the visitor noted that the programme handbook contained relevant information for both the physiological sciences route and the life sciences route. The visitor felt however that students would benefit from having a student handbook specifically for the life sciences route as this would help ensure appropriate relevant information is readily available for students on these programmes. Therefore the visitor recommends the education provider consider having a student handbook specifically for the life sciences programmes. In this way the education provider may be able to further enhance the way the resources available support student learning on these programmes.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Recommendation: The visitor recommends the programme team continue to monitor how student consent is gained when they act as service users in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: The visitor noted in discussion with the practice placement providers and educators that students' consent is gained when they act as subjects for research purposes. This was reinforced in discussion with the programme team.

However, in the documentation provided the visitor noted that no evidence was provided to meet this standard. The visitor therefore recommends that the programme team continue to closely monitor how this consent is obtained to help ensure the protocols that are currently in place continue to be adhered to going forward. In this way the programme team may enhance how the programme meets this standard.

Robert Keeble