![hpc health professions council logo]

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	The University of Northampton
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Podiatry
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC register	Chiropodist / Podiatrist
Relevant entitlement(s)	Local Analgesia and Prescription only medicines
Date of visit	11-12 March 2008

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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 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title Chiropodist / Podiatrist 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.

Inclusive within pre-registration programmes for chiropody / podiatry we currently approve local anaesthetics and prescription-only medicine entitlements.

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 on 3 July 2008. At the Education and Training Committee's meeting on 3 July 2008, 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - curriculum standards and assessment standards. The programme was already approved by the HPC and this visit assessed whether the programme continued to meet the standards of education and training (SETs) and continued to ensure that those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was part of a joint event. The education provider were to consider re-validation of the programme and the professional body to consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider, 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 education provider and the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Paul Frowen (Chiropodist / Podiatrist) Jean Mooney (Chiropodist / Podiatrist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Osama Ammar
HPC observer	Kam Thandi (Partner Administrator)
Proposed student numbers	40
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2008
Chair	Ms Delia Heneghan (The University of Northampton)
Secretary	Mr Matthew Watson (The University of Northampton)
Members of the joint panel	Mrs Chris Ager (The University of Northampton, Internal Panel Member) Mrs Rashmi Dravid (The University of Northampton, Internal Panel Member) Professor Kate Springett (Canterbury Christ Church University, External Panel Member) Mr Michael Wilding (Southwark Primary Care Trust, External Panel Member)

	Dr Wilfred Foxe (Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists, External Panel Member)
	Mr Jim Pickard (Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists, External Panel Member)
	Mrs Elizabeth Zawisza (The University of Northampton, Internal Panel Member)
	Ms Vivien Houghton (The University of Northampton, Observer)

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	☒	☐	☐
Periodic subject review documentatin	☒	☐	☐

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 (e.g. specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 14 SETs/SET.

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 that 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 did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

Conditions

2.1   The admission procedures must give both applicant and the education provider the information they require to make, or take up a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation and advertising materials for the programme to articulate that clearly successful completion of programme leads to eligibility to apply for HPC registration to use the protected titles Chiropodist / Podiatrist.

Reason: In the submitted documentation there were references to state registration and implications that completion of the programme led directly to registration with the HPC. The visitors felt the programme team must update the documentation to prevent applicants and students misunderstanding the route to HPC registration.

2.2.1   The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including evidence of a good command of written and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the IELTS score which is appropriate for entry to the programme.

Reason: In the submitted documentation there was an indication that applicants to the programme may be subject to English language entry criteria, but the documentation did not clearly indicate what the entry criteria were. In discussion, the programme team indicated the entry IELTS score is 6.0. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to articulate this entry requirement clearly.

2.2.2   The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including criminal conviction checks.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly that the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks undertaken on students is at an enhanced level.

Reason: In the submitted documentation there were indications that applicants would be subject to CRB checks as part of the admissions procedures. However, the documentation did not indicate the checks would be conducted at an enhanced level. The visitors felt the documentation must be updated to state the enhanced level of the check so that applicants are aware.

2.2.3 The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly when occupational health checks will be performed on applicants / students.

Reason: The programme documentation indicated applicants would be subject to occupational health checks. However, the visitors required additional information to understand when the occupational health checks will be performed since this may impact on the students' ability to commence activities that involve patient contact. The visitors felt the documentation should be updated to state clearly at which points in the admissions process or programme students may be subject to occupational health checks.

2.2.4 The admission procedures must apply selection criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly that 'A' levels (or their equivalent) from the scientific disciplines would be required for entry to the programme unless the applicant was to undertake further preliminary study eg: via an access course.

Reason: The submitted programme documentation indicated applicants would need to hold A levels but did not specify their relevance to the scientific disciplines. In discussion with the programme team, it was apparent that if an applicant did not have wholly relevant A levels they may be able to undertake an access course. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to clearly articulate the above information.

3.2 The programme must be managed effectively.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the mechanisms and processes in place for effective management of the programme.

Reason: The submitted programme documentation contained internal contradictions and was not a full reflection of the management structures in place for the programme. In discussion with the programme team it was apparent that the documentation lacked some of the details of the mechanisms and processes used to manage the programme. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to articulate clearly how the programme is managed. Once articulated, the effectiveness of the management structure can be adequately assessed. In particular, this redrafting requires the programme team to provide greater detail on the admissions process, placement approval and monitoring, curriculum development and the assessment process.

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

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the system used for the approval and monitoring of placements.

Reason: The submitted programme documentation did not sufficiently detail the process the education provider uses to approve and monitor practice placements. In discussion with the programme team it became apparent that relevant processes were in place to assure quality and parity of placement experience. The visitors felt the processes used should be indicated within the definitive document.

5.7.4 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the following the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the procedures related to failure of the placement elements of the programme. In particular, the visitors felt information was required to relate what action was required in the event of failure owed to student misconduct or concerns over safe practice.

Reason: The submitted documentation did not detail sufficiently the procedures for failure of a placement element of the programme to students or practice educator colleagues. In discussion, it was apparent the protocols for failure were in place as were protocols for failure in the event of student misconduct or concerns over safe practice. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to reflect accurately the protocols practice educators and students would be expected to follow.

5.7.5 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the following communication and lines of responsibility.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the lines of communication and responsibility whilst students are in the practice environment.

Reason: The submitted documentation did not identify clearly the lines of communication and responsibility whilst students are in placement. In discussion with practice educators, the programme team and students, it was apparent the various groups understood their roles and responsibilities. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to reflect clearly the lines of communication and responsibilities as worked within the programme.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the training and profession update opportunities made available to practice educators.

Reason: The programme documentation did not provide information on the training that practice educators were expected to undertake before they were able to receive students. In discussion with the programme team it was clear that practice educators were required to be trained. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to indicate that practice educators must be trained, are trained, and indicate the regularity of training update.

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the over-arching assessment design.

Reason: The programme documentation did not articulate clearly how students are to be assessed throughout the programme, particularly with regard to the assessment of clinical practice. Additionally, from the discussions with the programme team, it was apparent that the programme team may make some further changes to the assessment process. The visitors felt that the programme documentation must be updated to reflect the nature of the assessment, to ensure that the assessment design and assessment procedures give assurance that a student can demonstrate fitness to practice

6.1 The assessment design and procedures must assure that the student can demonstrate fitness to practice.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the assessments related to local analgesia entitlement within the programme.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team and from the programme documentation, it was apparent that the assessment relating to local analgesia entitlement was separated into theory and practice components taking place respectively in years two and three of the programme. The visitors felt the assessment processes associated to the very specific skills related to the local analgesia entitlement must be revised to ensure that both the theory and practical components are linked clearly within the course documentation, and that both are appropriate to ensure graduates are capable of using the access and supply of local anaesthetic POMs entitlement safely and effectively

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

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly the implications on progression through the programme as a result of inadequate clinical based attendance.

Reason: The submitted programme documentation indicated that attendance was to be monitored but did not demonstrate what the impact on student progression may be if attendance at clinical sessions was below the stated threshold. The visitors felt the programme team must update the documentation to clearly indicate that poor clinical attendance may be a barrier to progression.

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

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly that individuals who complete the programme and are awarded an aegrotat degree will not receive eligibility to apply for HPC registration.

Reason: The submitted documentation made clear the default award titles, but did not state definitively that an aegrotat award will not lead to eligibility to apply for HPC registration. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to include this caveat.

6.7.5 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements the appointment of at least one external examiner from the relevant part of the HPC Register unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The education provider must redraft and resubmit the programme documentation to articulate clearly that an external examiner to the programme must be from the appropriate part of the HPC Register unless other arrangements have been agreed with the HPC.

Reason: The submitted documentation did not provide a statement to indicate that external examiner appointments would be subject to the above stipulation of the regulatory body. The visitors felt the programme documentation must be updated to ensure that there is a process in place to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should begin to consider the long term impact of the School / Division of Podiatry's plans for development. In particular this consideration should take into account the impact of the plans to implement a Masters level framework and increase the delivery of a Continuing Professional Development framework on physical and staff resources.

Reason: The programme team were highly praised by students and the joint validation panel for their commitment to the student experience and student support. It was also noted that there were plans to increase the portfolio of course provision within the School. In order to be able to protect their current high level of student satisfaction the visitors felt the School of Podiatry should engage in determining what the impact of the expansion in course provision might have on the pre-registration programme, as soon as possible.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider building a stronger succession plan within the School / Division of Podiatry.

Reason: Again, it was noted that the programme team delivered a high level of support to students and did this using the considerable experience of a dedicated team. The visitors felt that in order to protect the student experience and ensure that the team was able to respond to a number of proposed and possible challenges in the future, that a stronger sense of succession planning would be beneficial.

5.9   There must be collaboration between the education provider and practice placement providers.

 Recommendation: The education provider should consider formalising the arrangements in place for practice placement educators to work alongside the programme team in delivery of the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted the high level of contact time the programme team provided to students and the potential that future pressures may reduce that amount of contact time. The visitors also noted that practice placement educators provided an as yet untapped, but enthusiastic and very capable source of additional support for students in terms of delivery of the clinical aspects of the programme, especially. Therefore the visitors wished to encourage the programme team to utilise this resource available to them to supplement delivery of the programme.

Paul Frowen
Jean Mooney