

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	St George's University of London
Programme name	MSc Physiotherapy (Pre-registration)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Physiotherapist
Date of visit	11 – 12 October 2012

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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. The HCPC is a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HCPC currently regulates 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Physiotherapist' or 'Physical therapist' 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 14 February 2013. At the Committee meeting on 14 February 2013 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 part of a joint event. The education provider validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The education provider, the professional body and the HCPC 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 HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC'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 HCPC visitors and profession	Julia Cutforth (Physiotherapist) Fleur Kitsell (Physiotherapist)
HCPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ben Potter
HCPC observer	Matthew Nelson
Proposed student numbers	25
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 September 2013
Chair	Andy Kent (St George's University of London)
Secretary	Elaine Nutley (St George's University of London)
Members of the joint panel	Derek Baldwinson (Internal Panel Member) Janette Myers (Internal Panel Member) Ros Hilton (External Panel Member) Elizabeth Hancock (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy) Nina Thomson (Chartered Society of Physiotherapy)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HCPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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"/>

The HCPC met with students from the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy 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 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 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

3.4 There must be a named person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme who must be appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be on the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team need to clarify who the person who has overall professional responsibility for the programme is, and ensure that they are consistently referenced throughout the programme documentation.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided that the person who has overall professional responsibility was inconsistently referenced in the programme documentation. The visitors also felt that it was not made clear in discussion with the programme team who, when the programme commences, would have overall professional responsibility for the programme. The visitors therefore need a clear statement of who this person will be and require the programme team to revise the programme documentation to reflect this. In this way the visitors can determine that this person is appropriately qualified and experienced and, unless other arrangements are agreed, is on the relevant part of the HCPC Register.

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 should provide additional evidence about the planning processes undertaken to ensure that an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff will be available to deliver the programme effectively.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team and the senior team the visitors noted that the number of commissioned physiotherapy students at the institution has risen to meet the demands of the commissioning body. They also noted that the education provider intended to utilise the expertise of the staff who currently deliver other programmes at the institution to deliver this programme. However, the visitors were unclear as to the processes that the education provider had used to ensure that the staffing resource in place is sufficient for the MSc programme to be delivered effectively. It was also the case that in meeting with students the visitors were made aware that some students refrained from organising personal tutor meetings as the staff delivering the current physiotherapy programme appeared extremely busy. The visitors could also not determine how the workload associated with this new programme and the additional student numbers would be allocated to existing staff members to ensure that there was sufficient time available for staff to undertake the work required. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the education provider has planned for the increase in student numbers and reassurance that the number of staff on the programme team is appropriate to deliver an effective programme.

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

Condition: The programme team must revisit programme documentation to ensure the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation and the HCPC.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the relevant guidance issued by HCPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to students acquiring a 'license to practice' (e.g. Definitive Validation Document, p53; Student Handbook, p66), and that external examiners would be approved by the COP and HCPC joint validation committee (e.g. Student handbook, p74). The HCPC does not provide a 'license to practice' and the joint validation committee was a committee of the council for professions supplementary to medicine (CSPM) and was discontinued when the HCPC came into operation in 2003. The visitors also noted that as the draft programme documentation was produced prior to August 2012 it still referenced the previous name of the HCPC. The visitors considered the use of these instances of terminology potentially misleading to students and therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instances of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout. In this way the visitors can be sure that the documentary resources available support students' learning are being effectively used and that this standard can be met.

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 revisit the programme documentation to make it clear that external examiners appointed to the programme must be HCPC registered unless alternative arrangements have previously been agreed with the HCPC.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. This standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme states that any external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HCPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiner to the programme have been included in the relevant documentation to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

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 visitors recommend that the programme team continue to monitor and develop the resources available to deliver the professional practice sessions to ensure that the quality of these sessions is maintained for this programme.

Reason: From the programme documentation provided and from the tour of resources the visitors were made aware of the variety and volume of resources available to support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme. They were therefore satisfied that this standard can be met. However, in discussion with the students it was highlighted that the number of students involved in the professional practice sessions sometimes led to a short amount of time being available for staff to observe students demonstrating the relevant skills. In discussion with the programme team the visitors noted that the provision of information technology resources to the clinical skills laboratories was being reviewed to better aid staff in delivering these sessions. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team and the education provider continue to monitor and develop the resources available for staff to deliver these sessions. In this way the team may be best placed to utilise the resources available and continue to deliver these sessions at the current standard to an enlarged cohort of students across all physiotherapy programmes delivered by the education provider.

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the programme team continue their work to ensure that there is a standardised approach to all students' mid-placement visits.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team it was highlighted that the process for undertaking mid-placement visits had been formally agreed and written down for the programmes that are currently delivered at the education provider. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard can be met. However, in discussion with the students it was highlighted that students who were struggling on placement often received the time they required during their mid-placement visit in order to determine how best to resolve any issues they were experiencing. This had the impact that a small number of high achieving students did not feel they received a similar amount of time during their mid-placement visit to discuss how they were progressing. When raised with the programme team it was made clear that the process to be followed on each mid-placement visit was shortly to be reviewed to ensure that each student received a consistent visit in both time and scope. The visitors recommend that the programme team continue their work to ensure consistency across all mid-placement visits. In this way the programme team may be better placed to offer consistent mid-placement support to both struggling students and to those who wish to be stretched and develop their skills further.

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 visitors recommend that the programme team formalise the process undertaken by the clinical co-ordinators to ensure that students have met all of the required learning outcomes associated with the practice placement elements of the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted, in discussion with the programme team, that the clinical co-ordinators for the programme will collate the feedback and reflections of students as they complete each stage of their practice placement experience. In this way the programme team can ensure that students are achieving all of the required learning outcomes associated with the practice placement elements of the programme. The visitors are therefore satisfied that this standard can be met. However, the visitors noted that no documentary evidence of this process was included as part of the submission provided prior to the visit. The visitors therefore recommend that the process undertaken by the clinical co-ordinators is formalised and provided to students in written format. In this way the programme team may be better placed to articulate how this process is undertaken and how the elements of the process ensure that each student completing the programme will have gained the required placement experience. By formalising this process the programme team may also be better placed to ensure that this process is undertaken clearly and consistently for each student and provide a useful record if any decision regarding placement experience is challenged.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that, if in the future there is the possibility for students to transfer between this programme and any programme with which it shares educational content, this is clearly articulated to students.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation provided that there was a clear indication of the requirements for students' progression through the programme. Therefore the visitors are satisfied that the programme meets this standard. The visitors also noted that there was no facility currently envisioned for students to transfer from this programme to any others at the education provider. However, due to the shared nature of many of the modules the visitors articulated there may be the option, in the future, for students to transfer to the programmes with which this programme shares modules, in particular the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy. The visitors therefore recommend that if this development occurs any requirements a student would need to satisfy in order to effect a transfer of this sort should be clearly delineated in the relevant programme documentation. In this way the programme team may be able to most effectively support students in any transfer and help students identify which education and training programme would allow them to best demonstrate how they meet the relevant SOPs.

Fleur Kitsell
Julia Cutforth