Visitors' report

Name of education provider	London Metropolitan University
Programme name	MSc Dietetics and Nutrition (Formerly MSc Human Nutrition and Dietetics)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Dietitian
Date of visit	17 – 18 May 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 'Dietitian' 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 25 August 2011. At the Committee meeting on 13 October 2011, 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 HPC visited the programme at the education provider to consider major changes proposed to the programme. The major change affected the following standards - programme admissions, programme management and resources, curriculum, practice placements and assessment. 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 professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the Post Graduate Diploma in Dietetics and Nutrition. 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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on this programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Alison Nicholls (Dietitian) Fiona McCullough (Dietitian)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Mandy Hargood
Proposed student numbers	10
First approved intake	7 January 2002
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Bob Gilchrist (London Metropolitan University)
Secretary	Mohbub Uddin (London Metropolitan University)
Members of the joint panel	Susan Shandley (British Dietetic Association)

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	☒	☐	☐

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)	☒	☐	☐

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 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 recommendation 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 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 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 programme documentation including advertising materials to ensure that the terminology in use is reflective of current statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation that there were several instances of incorrect or out of date terminology in reference to the current environment of statutory regulation. They highlighted that on a number of occasions the HPC was referred to as accrediting the programme. The HPC approves programmes and does not offer accreditation. There were also instances where the term "state registration" was used. Again this is no longer part of the terminology within statutory regulation. The use of this language may mislead applicants and not provide them with sufficient information to make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

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

Condition: The education provider must implement formal protocols to obtain consent when students participate as service users to ensure consent is obtained.

Reason: In the standards of education and training (SETs) mapping received prior to the visit the visitors noted that they were referred to student employment policies via a website. From this information the visitors were unclear if any appropriate protocols were being used to ensure that students gave consent to participate as service users.

In the meeting with the students, the students said they had participated in role play as patients as part of the programme. However the students had no recollection of signing any document or protocol giving their consent to take part in role play or similar activity.

In the meeting with the programme team the visitors discussed what the students had said. The programme team said they did not have any protocols or forms that the students complete to take part in role play and similar activity. The team considered that by signing up to do the programme then the students were consenting to any participant activity, although there was no section in the admissions form that asked students to sign giving consent to participate in role play or similar activity.

In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from students or could appropriately manage situations where students

declined to participate in the practical and clinical teaching once on the programme. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement formal protocols for obtaining consent from students (such as a consent form to be signed prior to commencing the programme) and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching (such as alternative learning arrangements).

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.

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme module descriptors to make explicit how the learning outcomes of the programme allow students to meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP);

- **1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession**

    o **understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council**

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors were unclear as to how the above standard of proficiency was met within the module descriptors.

In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that professionalism and the legal and ethical aspects of the profession were a theme that ran through all the modules throughout the programme. The team also said that by completing the portfolio the students would also learn about professionalism and the legal and ethical aspects of the profession. The visitors were satisfied with this explanation but could not see how this translated in the documentation.

In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard is met they would like to receive revised documentation that clearly articulates how the standard of proficiency is met.

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.

Condition: The education provider must review the module descriptors to make explicit that where the learning outcomes allow students to meet the following standard of proficiency, and that they are adequately assessed;

- **1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession**
    o **understand what is required of them by the Health Professions Council**

Reason: As in SET 4.1, from the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors were unclear as to how the above standard of proficiency was met within the module descriptors.

In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that professionalism and the legal and ethical aspects of the profession were a theme that ran through all the modules throughout the programme. The team also said that by completing the portfolio the students would also learn about professionalism and the legal and ethical aspects of the profession. The visitors were satisfied with this explanation but could not see how this translated in the documentation.

The visitors were therefore unclear about how the SOP was met and how the learning outcomes ensure that students completing the programme can meet the relevant standard of proficiency. The visitors therefore require the programme team to demonstrate within the programme documentation how the learning outcomes are assessed thereby ensuring that students can meet this SOP when completing the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must clearly specify the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Reason: The visitors noted that in the programme documentation the statement in the module descriptors that 'Students must be assessed on all learning outcomes to meet the requirements of the British Dietetic Association and Health Professions Council.'

The visitors discussed this with the programme team as the Health Professions Council does not state this requirement. The requirement of the HPC is that the assessment regulations must clearly specify the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme and that the assessment strategy and design must ensure that a student who successfully completes the programme has met the standard of proficiency.

The programme team reported that this had been included to ensure that students knew that everything had to be passed in order to progress and complete the programme. However the team did say that the pass mark was 50% which was the education provider's assessment regulation and that this applied across all components of the modules. There was no compensation for any component within any of the modules.

The visitors considered that it could be misleading by making reference to the Health Professions Council and not clearly stating the assessment regulations for progression through the programme. Therefore the visitors require revised documentation that clearly specifies the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the titles for the fall back awards to make sure that any possible reference to an HPC protected title is negated in the assessment regulations for the programme.

Reason: Whilst the visitors were happy that this standard had been met, they considered that the programme team might want to consider the title for the fall back award being Post graduate Certificate in Diet and Health Studies. Whilst the title is not directly part of an HPC protected title, it could lead to misunderstanding by the public and possibly students on the programme as to whether this title could be used and therefore whether someone holding this qualification could work within the profession. The visitors wanted to make the programme team aware of this potential misunderstanding.

Alison Nicholls
Fiona McCullough