

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Northumbria University at Newcastle
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science (Sandwich)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	9 – 10 November 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 '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 22 February 2012. At the Committee meeting on 22 February 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 adding 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 2011 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 commenced the programme in September 2011.

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 HPC only visit. The education provider and validating body did not validate or review the programmes at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programmes. The education provider supplied a secretary for the visit. The visit also considered the following programmes – BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science – full time and part time. A separate report exists for these programmes.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Robert Williams (Biomedical scientist) Mary Macdonald (Biomedical scientist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	Maximum of 30 students split across full time, part time and sandwich routes
Proposed start date of programme approval	1 September 2011
Secretary	Fahmeeda Rashid (Northumbria University at Newcastle)

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	<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 HPC 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"/>

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.

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 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 8 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 did not make any 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 revisit the programme and admissions documentation to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate, consistent and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted a number of instances where out of date or incorrect terminology is used. The visitors require the education provider to review the programme and admissions documentation to ensure that it is accurate, current and consistent. The visitors noted a reference within the Practice Placement Handbook to the programme ‘...seeking HPC approval of the degree in 2007’. The HPC visited the programme in 2007 and this statement is now out of date. The visitors also noted a reference within the same document to the requirement for applicants to the HPC Register needing to obtain a health reference from a GP. Applicants to the HPC Register are now required to sign a declaration about their health status. The visitors therefore require this documentation to be updated.

The visitors finally noted in discussions with the programme team it was stated that students transfer on to the applied route at the end of year two of the programme before the placement year. However, from a review of the Overview Document the visitors noted on page 26 that it states ‘students on the Biomedical Science programme who undertake a 1-year placement in an approved training laboratory as part of a sandwich degree are offered a transfer to the Applied Biomedical Science (sandwich) programme for the final year if they have successfully completed the IBMS Portfolio and gained the Certificate of Competence. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation to be reviewed to ensure it is consistent and students are clear of the transfer point within the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure that all students undertake an appropriate criminal convictions check.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted that the education provider has a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) policy in place. However, from discussions with the students the visitors also noted that some students stated that they had not undertaken a criminal convictions check. Through discussions with the programme team it was highlighted that they often rely on the individual practice placement providers to facilitate the criminal convictions check. The programme team also stated that they can facilitate this check where a practice placement provider did not offer or require it. The visitors finally noted that in the Practice Placement Handbook it states that students must ‘provide a satisfactory disclosure from the CRB before you will be allowed to undertake the placement and transfer to the Applied Biomedical Sciences

degree'. The visitors therefore require clarification and further evidence that demonstrates that the CRB policy is applied and that the admissions procedures ensure that all students undertake an appropriate criminal convictions check.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of how the approval and monitoring of practice placements ensures that the available resources in all placement settings are effectively used to support student learning.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). The visitors also noted that the programme team additionally use a number of informal mechanisms to check and monitor the quality of practice placements. These include looking at the placement environment during placement visits throughout the year and ensuring that all placements sign a self-declaration to state that they continue to meet the CPA and IBMS standards.

However the visitors did not have sufficient evidence of how the programme team ensures that each placement setting effectively uses the resources available to support student learning. Therefore the visitors require further evidence, including the audit tools, of how the programme team ensures that placements effectively use the available resources to support student learning in all settings.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of how the approval and monitoring of practice placements ensures that the available resources in all placement settings effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). The visitors also noted that the programme team additionally use a number of informal mechanisms to check and monitor the quality of practice placements. These include looking at the placement environment during placement visits throughout the year and ensuring that all placements sign a self-declaration to state that they continue to meet the CPA and IBMS standards.

However the visitors did not have sufficient evidence of how the programme team ensures that each placement setting effectively uses the resources available to support student learning. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team ensure that placements have sufficient resources in place at all placement settings.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the formal mechanisms in place which ensure that all practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). The visitors also noted that the programme team additionally use a number of informal mechanisms to check and monitor the quality of practice placements. These include looking at the placement environment during placement visits throughout the year and ensuring that all placements sign a self-declaration to state that they continue to meet the CPA and IBMS standards.

However, the visitors noted that the informal mechanisms, outlined through discussions at the visit, did not demonstrate a consistent approach to auditing practice placements. As this was the case the visitors were unclear as to how the education provider takes responsibility for ensuring that all practice placement learning is conducted in a safe and supportive environment. To be sure that this standard is met the visitors require further evidence of the formal mechanisms, including audit tools, that the education provider uses to ensure that placements provide safe and supportive environments.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of the audit tool and supporting mechanisms used to approve and monitor all placements.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). The visitors also noted that the programme team additionally use a number of informal mechanisms to check and monitor the quality of practice placements. These include looking at the placement environment during placement visits throughout the year and ensuring that all placements sign a self-declaration to state that they continue to meet the CPA and IBMS standards.

However, the visitors did not have enough evidence from discussions at the visit and from the documentation provided, to demonstrate that a thorough and effective system is in place for the approval and monitoring of placements. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the education providers auditing process along with any policies and procedures used to support the approval and monitoring of all placements settings.

5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of how the approval and monitoring of practice placements ensures that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at all practice placement settings.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). The visitors also noted that the programme team additionally use a number of informal mechanisms to check and monitor the quality of practice placements. These include looking at the placement environment during placement visits throughout the year and ensuring that all placements sign a self-declaration to state that they continue to meet the CPA and IBMS standards.

However, the visitors did not have enough evidence of the systems or processes the programme team use to ensure that all placements have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place. The visitors require further evidence, including the auditing tools, to demonstrate how they ensure that placement providers have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to supervise students and ensure they gain the experience they require.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence to demonstrate how they ensure that practice placement educators are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider only uses practice placements that are Clinical Pathology Accredited (CPA) and have been approved as training laboratories by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). However, the visitors did not have enough evidence, from discussions at the visit and from the documentation provided, of the systems or processes in place to ensure that practice placement educators in all settings are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the systems or process to demonstrate how they ensure that practice placement educators in all settings are appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Mary Macdonald
Robert Williams