Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Queen Margaret University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Occupational therapy
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Occupational therapist
Date of visit	18 – 19 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 'Occupational therapist' 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 ongoing 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 25 August 2011, 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 - programme admissions, 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 education provider reviewed the programme and the professional body considered 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	Bernadette Waters (Occupational therapist) Laura Graham (Occupational therapist)
HPC executive officer	Benjamin Potter
Proposed student numbers	40
First approved intake	17 September 1999
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	1 September 2011
Chair	Claire Seaman (Queen Margaret University)
Secretary	Craig Rutherford (Queen Margaret University)
Members of the joint panel	Judith Lane (Internal Panel Member) Michael Stewart (Internal Panel Member) Magda Pieczka (Internal Panel Member) Amy Shanks (Internal Panel Member) Ruth Heames (College of Occupational Therapists) Julie Taylor (College of Occupational Therapists) Remy Reyes (College of Occupational Therapists) Caroline Grant (College of Occupational Therapists)

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 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 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 two 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 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 the programme documentation and any advertising materials to ensure the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation submitted by the education provider that there were some instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to the 'Occupational Therapists Board' of the HPC (Document A, p.65). The HPC does not have an occupational therapists board and students are only eligible to apply to the HPC Register. The documentation also states that HPC expects "…consistent and punctual … attendance at University" (Document E, p12) and that HPC conditions mean that the programme cannot "…allocat[e] extra–time in examinations to students in undergraduate Levels 1 and 2 whose first language is not English" (Document A, p68). HPC sets no attendance requirements on students and does not set any requirements regarding the allocation of additional time to students in examinations. Both of these regulations can be determined by the education provider. The visitors considered this use of terminology to be inaccurate and potentially misleading to applicants and students and therefore require the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout. This is to provide clarity for those on, or applying to, the programme and to ensure this standard is met.

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 articulate how the overarching learning outcomes articulated in the module descriptors ensure all of the standards of proficiency for occupational therapists can be met.

Reason: After discussion with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that the HPC standards of proficiency (SOPs) were utilised and included in the development of the module learning outcomes. However, the visitors were unclear as to how and where the overarching learning outcomes in the module descriptors ensured all relevant SOPs can be met. The visitors therefore require the programme team to describe the distinguishing features, included within the learning outcomes, which ensure that the relevant SOPs are taught and learned. This will then ensure that successful graduates from the programme can meet all of the SOPs for occupational therapists and be eligible to apply to the HPC Register.

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 identify how the assessment of the overarching learning outcomes, stated in the module descriptors, ensure students who successfully complete the programme have met the relevant SOPs.

Reason: As for SET 4.1 the visitors were satisfied that the HPC standards of proficiency (SOPs) were utilised and included in the development of the module learning outcomes and assessments. However the visitors were unclear as to how and where the module assessments ensured all of the relevant SOPs were met. The visitors therefore require the programme team to describe how the distinguishing features of the learning outcomes are assessed to ensure all of the relevant SOPs are met. This will then ensure that successful graduates from the programme can meet all of the SOPs for occupational therapists and that this standard continues to be met.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide a clear statement, or reference to the relevant regulation, in the programme documentation to ensure students are aware the education provider does not confer aegrotat awards.

Reason: From the discussions at the visit the visitors were satisfied the education provider does not confer aegrotat awards. However, the visitors could not identify a clear statement regarding this in the programme documentation. As this regulation regarding aegrotat awards is not included in the programme documentation, this could potentially lead to a successful academic appeal. Therefore the visitors require the programme team to include a clear statement, or reference to the relevant regulation, in the programme documentation that the education provider does not confer aegrotat awards. This will ensure students on the programme will have all of the information they require and that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

5.8 Practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider working towards maintaining a database of practice placement educators and the training they have undertaken.

Reason: The visitors were clear from the programme documentation and discussions at the visit that the programme team offered a wide variety of training for practice placement educators. They were also clear that the learning agreements between the education provider and the practice placement providers ensured all practice placement educators should have undertaken appropriate initial training. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, they feel that the programme team should consider putting in place further monitoring mechanisms for practice placement educators. The visitors suggest the utilisation of a database to record practice placement educators and what additional training they have undertaken to be a useful addition to the monitoring mechanisms in place. This could help the programme team better target some of their training provision for practice placement educators and may help to ensure greater parity of placement experience for students.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider clarifying the progression and achievement requirements for students due to the use of large credit bearing modules.

Reason: The programme documentation provided to the visitors set out clear requirements for student progression through the programme. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. However, in discussion with the programme team it was clear that due to the programme's use of large credit bearing modules this could lead to students, who failed more than one assessment, being required to re-sit a year. This is due to the education provider's regulations requiring that no student can carry more than 80 uncompleted credits from one year of a programme to the next. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team clearly articulate these regulations, along with the possible consequences, to students. They also recommend that the programme team monitor what effect, if any, this may have on student attrition rates throughout the programme. This may help students to be aware of what they are required to achieve, year on year, and will provide the programme team useful information regarding students' progression through the programme.

Laura Graham
Bernadette Waters