Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Ulster
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging (formerly BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic))
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Radiographer
Relevant modality / domain	Diagnostic radiography
Date of visit	21 – 23 February 2012

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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 'Radiographer' or 'Diagnostic radiographer' 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 5 July 2012. At the Committee meeting on 5 July, 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 management and resources, curriculum 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 validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The visit also considered the following programmes - BSc (Hons) Occupational Therapy, BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy, BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology and BSc (Hons) Speech and Language Therapy.

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 all the programmes and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on this programme only. Separate reports exist for the other programmes. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. Separate reports, produced by the education provider and the professional body, outline their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Stephen Boynes (Diagnostic Radiographer) Russell Hart (Therapeutic Radiographer
HPC executive officers (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	48 per cohort once per year
First approved intake	September 1991
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Denise McAlister (University of Ulster)
Secretary	Brian McArthur (University of Ulster)
Members of the joint panel	Lesley Forsyth (College of Radiographers) Sandra Shaw (College of Radiographers) Alison Wright (External Panel Member)

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	☐	☐	☒
Additional programme, faculty and education provider information collated for visit	☒	☐	☐

The HPC did not review external examiners' reports from the last two years prior to the visit as the programme is new therefore external examiners' reports do not exist. The HPC reviewed external examiners' reports from the last two years from the BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic) programme.

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)	☒	☐	☐

The HPC met with students from the BSc (Hons) Radiography (Diagnostic) programme as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it.

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 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 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 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.

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 education provider must provide information to indicate who will have overall professional responsibility for the programme and that this person will be agreed with the HPC.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors were unable to determine who would have overall professional responsibility for the programme and therefore were unable to determine whether they would be appropriately qualified, experienced and supported in the role. It was clarified at the visit a person could not be officially appointed to the role until the programme had been approved through the education provider's approval processes. In order to ensure this standard is met the visitors require details of who is expected to be programme leader and confirmation that if this person is not appointed the programme team will notify the HPC of the programme leader through the major change process.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to remove instances of incorrect information and to clearly articulate that any exit awards from the programme do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation submitted prior to the visit incorrect information. The programme handbook (p29, 2.2.7 Copying and Plagiarism) has a sentence that states "SCOR [Society and College of Radiographers] and the HPC make up the JVC [Joint Validation Committee]." This is incorrect in that the HPC do not contribute to the JVC (which has not existed since the formation of the HPC in 2002). The visitors also noted there was a lack of clarity when considering the exit awards for the programme. The programme specification document clearly specifies the final award confers eligibility to apply for HPC registration. The programme specification does not clearly state that exit awards do not lead to eligibility to apply for HPC registration (pB8). The visitors noted the course specific regulations (which are included in the programme handbook) did not include details about the award that confers eligibility to apply for HPC registration and the exit awards that do not lead to eligibility to apply for HPC registration. The visitors considered the incorrect information to be confusing for students. From discussions during the visit the visitors also learnt that documentation submitted for this visit was in draft form and was due to be finalised and approved by the education provider.

The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to remove instances of incorrect information and to clearly articulate that exit awards from the programme do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

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 provide further evidence to demonstrate how the programme will ensure that upon successful completion of the programme all students' will meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP);

- 3a.1 know the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice
    - o understand the radiobiological principles on which the practice of radiography is based

The education provider must additionally submit any revised module descriptors for the programme or confirmation the previously submitted module descriptors are not subject to change prior to final programme approval by HPC.

Reason: Documentation referenced to evidence this SOP (SOPs mapping document p48) directed the visitors to a number of different modules within the programme and documents submitted for this visit. Due to the number of references given in the SOPs mapping document the visitors were unable to determine where the programme curriculum would explicitly teach and assess the students understanding of radiobiological principles on which the practice of radiography is based. Discussion at the visit also indicated the programme team may amend the module descriptors learning outcomes and assessments as part of the post visit process for the education provider. If any changes are to be made to the descriptors the visitors will need to review them to ensure changes will not adversely affect the learning outcomes or how the programme ensures students can meet the SOPs upon completion of the programme.

The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence to demonstrate how the programme will ensure all students will be able to meet the SOPS in general and SOP 3a.1 in particular their understanding of the radiobiological principles on which the practice of radiography is based, upon completion of the programme. The visitors also require the education provider to resubmit the programme module descriptors if any changes are made, or confirm the previously submitted module descriptors are not subject to change, to ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the 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 provide further evidence to demonstrate where the learning outcomes that allow trainees to meet the following SOP are adequately assessed:

- 3a.1 know the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice
    - o understand the radiobiological principles on which the practice of radiography is based

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The education provider must additionally submit any revised module descriptors for the programme or confirmation the previously submitted module descriptors are not subject to change prior to final programme approval by HPC.

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The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence to demonstrate how the programme will assess the students understanding of SOP 3a.1 in particular their understanding of the radiobiological principles on which the practice of radiography is based. The visitors also require the education provider to resubmit the programme module descriptors if any changes are made, or confirm the previously submitted module descriptors are not subject to change, to ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

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 include a clear statement in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the register or that other arrangements will be agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail regarding external examiner policies for the programme. The programme specification document (B16) did have a section for external examiner policies however there was no information regarding this particular standard. The visitors were satisfied with the arrangements currently in place for the existing programme however, to demonstrate this standard is met for the new programme, the visitors require documentary evidence to show recognition of HPC requirements for the external examiners.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider review programme documentation to ensure consistency across both radiography programmes.

Reason: The visitors were also reviewing the BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology programme at this event. They noted the two programmes whilst very different did however have some aspects which were very similar in terms of education provider processes which applied to both and the standard programme documentation. The visitors noted the documentation submitted did not appear to have been co-ordinated as much as it could have been. The visitors found sections which, when compared, were confusing. For example the programme specifications for both programmes include Criteria for Admission information. The BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology programme describes a "criminal convictions check" whereas the BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging programme describes instead a "Pre-Employment Consultancy Check". The visitors received a placement handbook for staff for the BSc (Hons) Radiotherapy and Oncology programme which had the aims of the course including the aim "To produce competent, safe and proactive radiographers (diagnostic or therapeutic) with a professional qualification that confers eligibility for registration with the HPC" (p4). This document was provided for the therapeutic radiography programme however refers to the diagnostic programme. The BSc (Hons) Diagnostic Radiography and Imaging programme submitted a different Practice Educator's Handbook as part of this submission. The visitors found the differences between the programmes' documentation to be confusing, especially as they seemed to have similar aspects to them which could be co-ordinated for an event such as this one or for anyone using the documentation or reviewing the programme.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider consider implementing a formal forum to update practice educators about changes to the programme.

Reason: The programme documentation indicated the practice educators are appropriately trained to work with students from this programme. The visitors noted there is close communication with individual practice educators through mid-placement visits, through telephone/email communication and through committee meetings that both the programme team and the practice placements are members of. The visitors suggest a more formal forum (such as a training day or specific meeting) for updating practice educators about changes made to the programme would be a useful way of ensuring the same information is communicated to all practice educators. The visitors feel this would encourage consistency and parity across all placement settings.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider include a specific check for the registration status of practice educators into the placement auditing and monitoring process.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme has a detailed auditing and monitoring process with a form that is filled in by the placement provider and then is checked by the education provider. Through discussion it was indicated the programme team would use this process to check the registration status of the practice educators. The visitors were satisfied this would occur however to strengthen the evidence for this standard suggest the programme team include a specific section of the audit form to ensure the registration status of practice educators is being checked at the placement setting.

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 the education provider keep the assessment strategy for the programme under review.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied the assessments in the modules were appropriate to assess module learning outcomes. They noted in the modules overall there were assessments which were similar types but which were weighted at a different percentage of the overall mark and some which had similar percentage weightings but were different assessment types. The assessment strategy for the programme was discussed between the programme team and the visiting panel and it was indicated the assessment strategy was in line with education provider requirements however the visitors felt it could be confusing for students and for external reviewers of the programme. The visitors recommend the programme team keep the assessment strategy under review to ensure consistency in the types of assessments across modules.

Stephen Boynes
Russell Hart