

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Wolverhampton
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Biomedical scientist
Date of visit	18 – 19 May 2010

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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 ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 26 August 2010. At the Committee meeting on 26 August 2010, 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 as it was a new programme which was seeking HPC 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider and validating body did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Robert Williams (Biomedical scientist) Pradeep Agrawal (Biomedical scientist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Paula Lescott
Proposed student numbers	10 per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	13 September 2010
Chair	Alex Hopkins (University of Wolverhampton)
Secretary	Krystyna Boswell (University of Wolverhampton)

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"/>
School of Applied Science handbooks	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
University admissions policy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC reviewed programme documentation from the existing BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science 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	<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 HPC met with students from the existing BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science and BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science programmes.

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 47 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 10 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.

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 for the programme to clearly articulate to applicants the relationship between entry onto the BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science programme and transfer onto the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme. The programme documentation should provide full details of the selection process and key information for prospective students considering applying to the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme.

Reason: In the submitted documentation and in discussion with the programme team the visitors noted the competition for transferring to places on the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme at the end of the second year of the BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science programme. Though it was clear to the visitors that students will be informed of the element of competition, the visitors felt the various factors determining the availability of placements and therefore places on the programme (such as Strategic Health Authority funding, competition between other education providers for placement places and the fact that student numbers on the programme were not set and could vary depending on availability of placement places) made it difficult for the programme team to guarantee placements to any student. The visitors felt the documentation must be amended to more clearly reflect a realistic view of a student's chances of progressing to the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme. The visitors also require the education provider to provide details about the funding arrangements available for students undertaking the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme and details on the likelihood of students receiving financial assistance during the placement year for applicants.

Overall, the visitors considered that detailed information regarding student selection to the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme was not provided to prospective students and therefore the visitors were not satisfied that an applicant could make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require all the programme documentation available to prospective students to more clearly articulate the selection procedures for entry onto the BSc (Hons) Applied Biomedical Science programme.

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 clear information is provided

regarding the various Biomedical Science programmes delivered by the education provider and that the associated routes to HPC registration are clearly outlined.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted the visitors noted that there were a number of biomedical science programmes delivered by the education provider. Throughout the programme documentation different terminology and references were used in relation to these programmes. The information provided to applicants and students did not always clearly explain the different routes associated with these programmes to apply to the HPC Register. In order to prevent confusion amongst applicants and students the visitors require the programme documentation to be explicit and consistent in reference to the various programmes, terminology and references to each programme and the routes to HPC registration. The documentation also needs to clearly outline the programme (and the mode of study of this programme) that is subject to HPC approval, what this entails for students regarding eligibility to apply to the HPC Register on successful completion of the programme and that HPC approval is not retrospective, clearly stating that only students starting the programme after approval is granted would be on an HPC approved programme.

2.2 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including evidence of a good command of reading, writing and spoken English.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials for the programme to clearly articulate the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) standard or equivalent required for entry on to the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors could not determine the IELTS level for entry on to the programme. At the visit the programme team stated that the level was 6.5 and pointed towards the education provider prospectus as the source of this information for applicants. After reviewing the prospectus the visitors discovered that the entry level was set institutionally at 6.0. The visitors require the IELTS entry level to the programme to be clarified and clearly stated in the programme documentation and advertising materials. If students enter the programme with an IELTS score of 6.0 the visitors also require evidence of how the programme team ensures at the point of registration the applicant will attain a score of IELTS 7.0 (Standard of Proficiency 1b.3).

4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Condition: The education provider must submit updated programme documentation if changes are made to the programme curriculum at the programme review event to be held in June 2010.

Reason: At the visit the visitors were informed that the programme was due to be reviewed in conjunction with the practice placement educators at an event in June 2010 in order to update the programme if required. From a review of the

programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that this standard was being met. In order to ensure that this remains the case through the current approval process, if any amendments are made to the programme as a result of the review day the visitors require evidence of these changes to be submitted.

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

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate the mechanism they use to ensure practice placement verifiers undertake appropriate programme specific placement training.

Reason: From the documentation submitted the visitors could not determine fully how the practice placement would be assessed. From discussions with the programme team it was clarified that some elements of the placement would be assessed by the programme team, some by the practice placement educators and the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) portfolio verified by IBMS verifiers. The visitors require further evidence of how verifiers assess students from this programme and how the education provider ensures that the verifiers are trained to ensure that they are fully aware of the assessment requirements of the programme, particularly the Biomedical Science Work Based module BM2022 that they contribute towards. The evidence should include information clarifying the links in place between the assessment of the portfolio and the programme team to ensure this information is clear to all parties involved in placements. The revised documentation should demonstrate that the education provider has ownership of the complete assessment process for this module.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to demonstrate how students, practice placement educators and practice placement providers are fully informed of the assessment procedures for the placement elements in the programme.

Reason: From the submitted documentation and discussion with the programme team and placement providers, the visitors noted that more work was required to ensure students and placement educators understood how assessment in the practice environment would work. The visitors require further evidence that clearly articulates the assessment procedures for the Biomedical Science Work Based module BM2022, including the assessment of the portfolio. This evidence

should demonstrate that the learning outcomes are clearly communicated to all involved, are clearly linked to the assessment criteria and contain details of which roles are allocated to carrying out each assessment. The evidence should include clarification of the links in place between the assessment of the portfolio and the programme team to ensure this information is clear to all parties involved in placements. The revised documentation should demonstrate that the education provider has ownership of the assessment process for this module.

The visitors also noted that the documentation provided gave weightings of assessments for this module. Discussions with the programme team indicated that these weightings were indicative of the time allocations to each element of the assessments rather than the weighting of the contributions these assessments made to the module. The visitors require that this information is clarified in the programme documentation in order to prevent confusion.

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 revisit the programme documentation to demonstrate how the education provider has effective mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards in the assessment for placement elements in the programme.

Reason: From the submitted documentation and discussion with the programme team and placement providers, the visitors noted that more work was required to ensure the standards of assessments in the practice environment were appropriate. The visitors require further evidence that clearly articulates the assessment procedures for the Biomedical Science Work Based module BM2022, including the assessment of the portfolio. This evidence should demonstrate that the learning outcomes are clearly communicated to all involved, are clearly linked to the assessment criteria and contain details of which roles are allocated to carrying out each assessment. The evidence should include clarification of the links in place between the assessment of the portfolio and the programme team to ensure this information is clear to all parties involved in placements. The revised documentation should demonstrate that the education provider has ownership of the assessment process and state how the assessments would be moderated for this module.

The visitors also noted that the documentation provided gave weightings of assessments for this module. Discussions with the programme team indicated that these weightings were indicative of the time allocations to each element of the assessments rather than the weighting of the contributions these assessments made to the module. The visitors require that this information is clarified in the programme documentation in order to prevent confusion.

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to demonstrate how the education provider has effective mechanisms in place to ensure appropriate standards and measurement of the learning outcomes in the assessment for placement elements in the programme.

Reason: From the submitted documentation and discussion with the programme team and placement providers, the visitors noted that more work was required to ensure the standards of assessments in the practice environment were appropriate. The visitors require further evidence that clearly articulates the assessment procedures for the Biomedical Science Work Based module BM2022, including the assessment of the portfolio. This evidence should demonstrate that the learning outcomes are clearly communicated to all involved, are clearly linked to the assessment criteria and contain details of which roles are allocated to carrying out each assessment. The evidence should include clarification of the links in place between the assessment of the portfolio and the programme team to ensure this information is clear to all parties involved in placements. The revised documentation should demonstrate that the education provider has ownership of the assessment process and state how the assessments would be moderated for this module.

The visitors also noted that the documentation provided gave weightings of assessments for this module. Discussions with the programme team indicated that these weightings were indicative of the time allocations to each element of the assessments rather than the weighting of the contributions these assessments made to the module. The visitors require that this information is clarified in the programme documentation in order to prevent confusion.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and clarify the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme as a whole and the placement module of the programme in particular.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not fully determine the assessment regulations around the placement module in the programme. In particular it was not clear what was expected of the students in respect of the timings required in passing the module, what prevents a student from progressing in the programme and the options available for a student that failed this module, including any referral options available. From the detail provided it also was not clear how this information linked in to the various exit awards (BSc Medical Laboratory Science, DipHE Medical Laboratory Science, CertHE Medical Laboratory Science) available from the programme. The visitors therefore require further information to ensure that this standard is being met.

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.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all programme documentation to ensure that it is clearly articulated which programme is subject to HPC approval and clearly states the exit awards for the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation submitted the visitors noted that there were a number of biomedical science programmes delivered by the education provider and the information contained in the programme documentation did not always clearly outline which programme was subject to HPC approval and the different routes associated with these programmes to apply to the HPC Register. The visitors noted that as the assessment regulations were not clearly communicated with regard to progression in the programme and the exit awards available that there was confusion whether students could be given an award that refers to a protected title. Programme titles need to be clear and applicants, students, staff and the public need to understand who is eligible to apply for registration. From discussions with the programme team it was stated that students failing the placement module would be transferred to the BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science programme. As this programme is not an HPC approved programme the information needs to be clarified in the programme documentation that this would not be an exit award but a transfer onto a separate programme that did not have HPC approval and as a result individuals would not be eligible to apply to the Register upon completion of the programme.

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 clearly articulate that external examiners appointed to the programme must be HPC registered unless alternate arrangements have been agreed with the HPC.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail in the external examiner recruitment policy. The visitors were happy with the planned external examiner arrangements for the programme but need to see evidence that HPC requirements regarding the external examiner on the programme have been included in the documentation to demonstrate the recognition of this requirement.

Recommendations

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Recommendation: The visitors wish to recommend that links to information regarding entry requirements for international applicants are strengthened.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors found it difficult to determine the entry requirements for international applicants to the programme. At the visit it became apparent that there was a separate education provider brochure giving further information for international students. The visitors felt that applicants would benefit from having clearer links to this information.

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Recommendation: The visitors wish to recommend that the programme team produces annual course reports which contain increased detail on the programme.

Reason: From a review of the annual course reports provided before the visit it was apparent that there were variations in the level of details contained in the reports over the last number of years. At the visit this variation between reports was explained as being due to changes in education provider requirements for programme monitoring and was likely to be a temporary change. The programme team expressed their intention to produce further details in the annual course report that would be programme specific in the future on top of the education provider requirements. The visitors wished to support the programme team in this action with this recommendation.

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

Recommendation: The visitors wish to recommend that the programme team review the reading lists for the programme to ensure that they reference current and up to date material.

Reason: From a review of the module descriptors the visitors noticed a number of resources listed within these that were not the most recent versions of the texts or that appeared dated. At the visit it was explained that the module descriptors received were not up to date versions and that information about recommended and required reading and resources were usually contained in the module handbooks which the visitors had not received. The visitors therefore wished to recommend that the programme team ensures that the reading lists for the programme contain references to current, up to date texts and material.

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

Recommendation: The visitors wish to recommend that the programme team review the partnership agreements in use and consider removing the Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) requirement.

Reason: From a review of the placement partnership agreements provided before the visit the visitors noticed that these contained a reference to a Clinical Pathology Accreditation (CPA) requirement. The visitors wished to recommend that the programme team review this requirement as, if this status was lost, the partnership agreements could be void.

Robert Williams
Pradeep Agrawal