Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Birmingham City University
Programme name	FdSc Health and Social Care Paramedic Science (2 years)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Paramedic
Date of visit	2 – 3 June 2009

Contents

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 13 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Paramedic' 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 November 2009. At the Committee meeting on 25 November 2009, 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 standards, programme management and resources standards, curriculum standards, practice placements standards and assessment standards. 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. The visit also considered the following programme – FdSc Health and Social Care Paramedic Science (40 weeks). The education provider 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. A separate report exists for the other programme. 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, outlines their decisions on the programmes' status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	John Martin (Paramedic) Glyn Harding (Paramedic)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	Brendon Edmonds
Proposed student numbers	60 (2 intakes of 30 across 2 year and 40 week programmes)
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2009
Initial approval	05 July 2007
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2009
Chair	David White (Birmingham City University)
Secretary	Barbara Nugent (Birmingham City University) Tess Clarke (Birmingham City University)
Members of the joint panel	Laurence Leonard (Queens University) Sarah Jardine (University of Hertfordshire) Andrew Carroll (Paramedic, Hull) Richard Burton (Former Student

		Representative, Birmingham)

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	☒	☐	☐
Mentor Training, Mentor Register, Academic Regulations	☒	☐	☐

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)	☒	☐	☐

Although the HPC did meet with the Head of Education and Training for the West Midlands Trust, the HPC did not meet with the placement mentors and assessors as they were unable to attend the visit.

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.
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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 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 13 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.

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 admission procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must revisit all the programme documentation to ensure that the terminology in use is reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to the registered status of individuals such as "state registered" or "professional registration". It should also be made clear throughout all documentation that HPC approval of a programme does not automatically lead to HPC registration for those who complete the programme but rather to 'eligibility to apply for HPC registration'. The visitors considered the terminology could be misleading to applicants and students and therefore require all the programme documentation (including websites) to be thoroughly reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology.

2.1 The admission procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to make or take up the offer of a place on a programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of the publications used to advertise the programme to prospective students.

Reason: The visitors did not receive any documentation addressing how the programme is advertised to prospective students. The programme team advised the visitors the programme is specifically targeted to technicians working in the West Midlands Ambulance Service. Furthermore, given this targeted recruitment strategy, it was their intention to remove any reference of the programme from the university prospectus and website.

The visitors require further evidence of the publications used to advertise the programme to prospective students. Furthermore, the visitors will expect any publications would include comprehensive information regarding the demands of the programme (e.g. workload, annual leave, employment arrangements) to the student, the specific entry criteria that would be applied and any other entry requirements that would be applicable.

2.2.2 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of the formal procedures in place for conducting criminal convictions checks upon entry to the programme.

Reason: In the meeting with the programme team the visitors noted there were no formal procedures in place for conducting criminal convictions checks upon admission. The visitors were advised the education provider traditionally relied upon the West Midlands Ambulance Service to ensure that any applicants were suitable for entry onto the programme. However, the programme documentation advised that CRB checks are carried out on students at the beginning of the course.

The visitors require further evidence to be satisfied there are formal procedures in place for conducting criminal convictions checks which are applied as part of the admissions procedures for the programme. The procedures must demonstrate how this process is managed by the education provider. Furthermore, the procedures must also address how issues arising from criminal convictions checks are managed at admissions and throughout the duration of the programme.

2.2.3 The admission procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The education provider must implement a formal procedure for conducting health checks to students entering the programme.

Reason: The programme documentation did not specify the requirement for health checks as part of the admissions criteria for the programme. The visitors were advised the education provider traditionally relied upon the West Midlands Ambulance Service to ensure that any applicants were suitable for entry onto the programme. The programme documentation did specify students must follow employer policies and procedures for undergoing occupational health clearances.

The visitors need further evidence to be satisfied there is a formal procedure in place for conducting health checks upon admission to the programme and that these procedures are managed by the education provider. Furthermore, the procedures must address how issues arising from health checks are managed at admissions and throughout the duration of the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must revise the entry criteria to specify applicants must hold an Institute Healthcare Development (IHCD) Ambulance Technician Award with minimum 1 year post qualification experience or equivalent.

Reason: The entry criteria articulated within the programme documentation did not specify the requirement for applicants to hold an IHCD Ambulance Technician Award with minimum 1 year post qualification experience or equivalent. However the programme team advised the IHCD qualification and associated experience was a mandatory requirement for entry to the programme.

The visitors were not satisfied the entry criteria was clear to prospective students. Furthermore, the entry criteria as outlined in the documentation provided an opportunity for applicants to apply to the programme without holding the necessary qualifications and experience to undertake the foundation degree. The education provider must redraft and resubmit the entry criteria contained within the programme documentation to clearly specify and adhere to the entry criteria outlined above.

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must submit the report from the Strategic Health Authority commissioning meeting which confirms the commissioning numbers for the 2009/2010 academic year.

Reason: The senior team could not confirm the agreed commissioning numbers for the 2009/2010 academic year. However, the senior team did indicate it is most likely that the programme will be commissioned to undertake two intakes of 30 students with flexibility to apply these across the 2 year and 40 week foundation programmes.

The senior team advised that the meeting to confirm these numbers was being held on 3 June 2009. The visitors require the report from the Strategic Health Authority commissioning meeting which must confirm the commissioning numbers for the 2009/2010 academic year. The visitors need to be satisfied the proposed student numbers are confirmed for the programme to be assured of the programmes security for the coming academic year.

3.2 The programme must be managed effectively.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that the programme leadership can manage the programme effectively.

Reason: After the approvals event, the Associate Dean of the Academic Quality Department contacted the HPC to advise the programme leader had admitted 2 cohorts of students beginning in September 2008 to a shortened version of the 2 year programme. This shortened pathway was not an approved programme with the HPC and was not validated by the education provider. The students completing this programme are not eligible to apply to the Register upon successful completion of the programme.

At no stage was this information provided to the HPC and the Academic Quality department had only recently been given this information. In the light of this

information, the visitors require further evidence to be satisfied the current programme leadership can manage the programme effectively.

3.11 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The education provider must amend the programme documentation to clearly articulate the expectations for attendance on the programme.

Reason: The programme documentation advised the requirement for students to attend all university sessions and that up to 10 days of absence would be allowed whilst on placement. However the visitors noted in its meeting with the programme team that students are allowed up to 10 days of absence across all elements of the programme including university sessions.

The visitors considered the disparity between the programme documentation and the expectations of the programme team regarding attendance could be misleading to students. The visitors require the education provider to redraft the programme documentation to clearly articulate the requirements for attendance on the programme. Furthermore the visitors need to be satisfied the documentation clearly articulates how attendance will be monitored across all aspects of the programme and the implications to students for non-attendance.

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

Condition: The education provider must submit further evidence of the placement assessors and mentors across all placement sites and their involvement in placement provision across all higher education institutions in the West Midlands region.

Reason: The visitors were provided with a list of mentors used for the programme. The visitors also met with students who advised placement provision on the programme was adequate but found it difficult at times to access their mentors and assessors. The programme team advised that the placement sites must cater for student paramedics from a variety of higher education institutions across the region.

The visitors need to be satisfied that given the proposed increase to student cohort numbers, there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at all placement sites. The visitors require further evidence of the workload of the assessors and mentors with specific reference to the number of students they are responsible for teaching from higher education institutions across the West Midlands region.

5.3.1 The practice placement settings must provide a safe environment.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of the systems used to guarantee the provision of a safe environment within all placement settings.

Reason: The visitors were not provided with any documentation which addressed how the education provider ensures that all placements settings provide a safe environment to students.

The visitors require evidence of the systems used by the education provider to be satisfied that all placement settings provide a safe environment for students.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence that a thorough and effective system is in place for the approving and monitoring of all placements.

Reason: The visitors were not provided with documentation outlining how the education provider maintains a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring placements. The programme team advised that placements had been acquired within settings which had been previously quality assured by other programmes within the faculty which were offering foundation degrees. The use of an audit tool was also highlighted, however this was not provided within the programme documentation. Furthermore, it was indicated that the on-going partnerships between the education provider and the West Midlands Ambulance Service ensured the quality of the placement experience.

The visitors need to be satisfied the education provider has a thorough and effective system in place for the initial approval and ongoing monitoring of all placements. The visitors require further documentation outlining the placement approval and monitoring system currently being used. Furthermore, the visitors expect to receive an example of the audit tool that is used for the approval and monitoring of placements and how this audit tool feeds into the overall system of placement approval and monitoring for the programme.

5.7.2 Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained.

Condition: The education provider must amend the student handbook to clearly articulate the placement structure, timing and duration of placements.

Reason: The student handbook provided no information of the placement structure, timing and duration of placements. The visitors considered the inclusion of information about the placement experience within the student handbook was vital to a students understanding of all the expectations required

of them on the programme. Furthermore, the visitors consider the inclusion of this information important in preparing students for placement.

The visitors require the education provider to amend the student handbook to clearly articulate the placement structure, timing and duration of placements.

5.10   The education provider must ensure necessary information is supplied to practice placement providers.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of the information supplied to practice placement providers prior to students attending scheduled placements.

Reason: Through meetings with the programme team and practice placement providers, the visitors noted the relationships which had been formed to assist in creating a quality placement experience for students.

To be satisfied the SET is met, the visitors require further evidence of the information supplied to practice placement educators prior to receiving students on placement. The visitors would expect to see this information in the form of a practice placement educators' handbook or a suitable equivalent.

6.4   The measurement of student performance and progression must be an integral part of the wider process of monitoring and evaluation, and use objective criteria.

Condition: The education provider must amend the programme documentation to clearly articulate the requirements for student progression within the programme.

Reason: The programme documentation provided information to students advising the importance of taking all the assessments. However, this information did not clearly advise students of the specific guidelines governing progression and achievement. Instead, students were referred to the 'Standard Undergraduate Assessment Regulations' which applied to all programmes across the university.

The programme team also advised the visitors of the options available to students for re-sits, referrals and extensions of pieces of assessment. The visitors are satisfied academic regulations are in place to measure student performance and progression. However, the lack of clarity of these regulations and the support mechanisms in place within the programme documentation specific to the foundation degree could be potentially misleading to students.

The visitors need to be satisfied that students are given clear information about the relevant assessment regulations that govern the measurement of performance and progression, and options for failing students that are specific to their programme of study. The education provider must therefore amend the programme documentation to clearly articulate the requirements for student progression within the programme.

Recommendations

3.4 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the current provision of full time (and/or full time equivalent) staff to continue to ensure the delivery of an effective programme.

Reason: The visitors noted there was reliance on one seconded full time paramedic staff member employed from by the West Midlands Ambulance Service to deliver and develop the programme. Furthermore, there was also a reliance on locally trained IHCD tutors to deliver the programme and assist with assessment.

Whilst the visitors are satisfied there is an adequate number of staff in place to deliver an effective programme, the education provider should consider reviewing these current provisions with a view to appointing more full time or full time equivalent staff from the appropriate part of the register.

3.6 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the inclusion of professional development for seconded paramedic staff in accordance with the education providers' staff development policies.

Reason: Through meeting with the programme team and in the programme documentation, the visitors noted the staff development opportunities available within the faculty and the development programme which manages this process. The visitors also noted seconded staff from the West Midlands Ambulance Service were not subject to the staff development policies of the faculty.

Although the visitors are satisfied this SET has been met, they recommend the current arrangements are reviewed to formalise an agreement to include seconded staff on the staff development programme.

4.2 The programme must reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base as articulated in the curriculum guidance for the profession.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revising the curriculum content to reflect the broader scope of practice as articulated in the College of Paramedics curriculum guidance.

Reason: The visitors noted through the programme documentation and in meetings with the programme team and students the focus on trauma and time critical emergencies in the curriculum content.

Although the visitors are satisfied the programme does reflect the philosophy, values, skills and knowledge base of the profession, they recommend the programme team consider the course content in relation to the broader scope of practice for paramedics as articulated in the College of Paramedics curriculum guidance.

4.4   The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revising the curriculum content to reflect the broader scope of practice as articulated in the College of Paramedics curriculum guidance.

Reason: The visitors noted through the programme documentation and in meetings with the programme team and students the focus on trauma and time critical emergencies in the curriculum content.

Although the visitors are satisfied the programme does remain relevant to current practice, they recommend the programme team consider the course content in relation to the broader scope of practice for paramedics as articulated in the College of Paramedics curriculum guidance.

5.5   The number, duration and range of placements must be appropriate to the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider widening the range of paramedic placement areas to those articulated in the College of Paramedics curriculum guidance.

Reason: The visitors noted through meetings with the programme team that students currently undertook placement experiences in traditional ambulance service settings and also in theatre, maternity and accident and emergency departments within hospitals.

The visitors were satisfied the students were being provided with a range of placement experiences appropriate to the achievement of learning outcomes. However, they recommend the programme team develop the scope of placement experiences to include those articulated in the curriculum guidance for the College of Paramedics.

5.7.4   Students and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about and understanding of the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider redrafting the programme documentation to more clearly articulate the assessment procedures governing the implications of failure to a student on placement.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied students and practice placement educators were aware of the implications of failing individual competencies whilst on placement. However, the programme team further articulated the opportunities that were available to students to demonstrate competent practice for different areas of assessment. In particular, the 'Workbased Placement Handbook' is used throughout the duration of the programme and therefore students can be reassessed at different points throughout the duration of the programme whilst on placement and may have every opportunity to demonstrate competence up to the conclusion of the final placement.

The visitors recommend the programme team consider further articulating these reassessment opportunities to further ensure students are informed of the all the implications of failing assessment on placement.

5.8.3 Unless other arrangements are agreed, practice placement educators must undertake appropriate practice placement educator training.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider aligning the management of practice placement educator training with the Department of Practice and Learning at the university.

Reason: The visitors noted other health programmes offering the foundation degree within the faculty managed practice placement educator training in conjunction with the Department of Practice and Learning at the university. The department was responsible for ensuring the quality of the training offered to all mentors and assessors across a variety of allied health programmes.

The visitors recommend the programme team consider aligning the management of placement educator training with this department to further ensure the quality of the training conducted and to reduce the burden of solely managing this process.

6.6 Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both the education setting and practice placement.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider the addition of specific reference to HPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics to curriculum content associated with professional aspects of practice.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation students were informed of the professional aspects of practice being an important factor in determining whether an individual is 'fit to practice'. Furthermore, the course structure included content specifically relating to the professional aspects of practice for a paramedic.

The visitors recommend the programme team consider reviewing the programme documentation to include specific reference to the HPC's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics. The visitors consider this would be beneficial to the student in enhancing their awareness of the professional standards which apply to registered paramedics in the UK.

John Martin
Glyn Harding