

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Coventry University
Programme name	BSc (Hons) Dietetics and Human Nutrition
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of the HCPC Register	Dietitian
Date of visit	9– 10 May 2017

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Executive summary

The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health and care professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. We are a statutory regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. We currently regulate 16 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'dietitian' must be registered with us. The HCPC keep a register of health and care 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 24 August 2017. At the Committee meeting on 24 August 2017, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the conditions 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 HCPC visited the programme at the education provider as it was a new programme which was seeking HCPC 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 part of a joint event as the education provider considered their validation of the programme. The education provider and the HCPC 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 HCPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HCPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HCPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the education provider, outlines their decisions on the programme's status

Visit details

Name and role of HCPC visitors	Tracy Clephan (Dietitian) Angela Duxbury (Radiographer) Diane Whitlock (Lay visitor)
HCPC executive officer	Jasmine Pokuaa Oduro-Bonsrah
Proposed student numbers	41 per cohort, one cohort per year
Proposed start date of programme approval	September 2017
Chair	Ian Dunn (Coventry University) (for day 2)
Secretary	Stevie West (Coventry University)
Members of the joint panel	Lorraine Gearing (Internal Panel Member) Douglas Howat (Internal Panel Member) Michelle Brooker (Observer)

Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HCPC 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	☐	☐	☒

The HCPC did not review external examiners' reports from two year ago prior to the visit as there are currently no external examiners as the programme is new.

During the visit the HCPC 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	☒	☐	☐
Service users and carers	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

The HCPC met with students from the BSc (Hons) Dietetics programme at the education provider, as the programme seeking approval currently does not have any students enrolled on it as it is not approved.

Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for approval, the visitors must be satisfied 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 the relevant 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 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining seven SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be approved. 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 can be approved. Recommendations are made to encourage further enhancements to the programme, normally 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 ensure that all the information available to applicants is accurate and consistent to enable them to make informed choices about whether taking up an offer of a place on the programme.

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors noted that the length of the programme will be changing to be three years from the 2017-18 academic year. This was confirmed by the programme team at the visit. However, the visitors noted on the programme website for the 2017-2018 academic year that the programme length will be four years. The visitors note that the programme length is an important factor in applicants being able to make an informed decision about whether to take up an offer of a place on this programme. Furthermore, the visitors noted that this programme is advertised on the programme website as an “undergraduate NHS degree”. The visitors noted that this information could be misleading to applicants as there are no longer NHS commissioned places available to applicants who are considering taking up an offer of a place on this programme. The education provider will therefore need to ensure that all the admissions information available to potential applicants is consistent, accurate and clear in order for these applicants to be make an informed choice about taking up an offer of a place on the 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 demonstrate how they ensure that international applicants are informed about the criminal convictions checks requirements for the programme.

Reason: At the visit the programme team and the students told the visitors that students will have to undertake a criminal convictions check before being accepted on the programme. Through the discussions at the visit, the visitors learnt that international students have to go through different criminal convictions checks processes. The faculty registrar explained that international applicants are given specific information on criminal convictions checks depending on what country that applicant is from. The visitors however, did not see any information regarding how international students are told about the criminal convictions checks before being admitted on the programme. Therefore they could not determine what information was provided or determine how the information is appropriate through the provision of detail to ensure that international students are aware of the criminal convictions checks requirements. The education provider will therefore, need to provide further evidence to demonstrate what information will be available to international applicants, regarding what the criminal convictions checks they would need to undertake before being admitted onto the programme.

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 communicate any changes to the programme learning outcomes, and demonstrate that these ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for dietitians.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation prior to the visit the visitors were made aware of the learning outcomes for the programme and how they ensure that those who successfully complete the programme will meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for dietitians. However, during the meeting with the programme team and the informal feedback meeting at the visit it was stated that the internal validation panel will ask the programme team to consider changing some of the learning outcomes. As such the visitors have not had the evidence of the final, confirmed, learning outcomes for the programme. Therefore they cannot determine how the final, confirmed, learning outcomes will ensure that successful graduates can meet the SOPs for dietitians. The visitors will therefore require the education provider to provide additional evidence which will communicate any changes made to the learning outcomes, so they can make a determinations as to how the programme can meet this standard.

5.1 Practice placements must be integral to the programme.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate that there are arrangements in place to secure practice placements for all students.

Reason: As part of the review of this new programme, the pattern of placement learning has changed to ensure that students will get a similar placement experience over three years as they did over the previous four year BSc (Hons) dietetics programme. It was made clear that students currently on the previous programme will continue to study over four years while students on this programme will study over three years and there will be a period while the two programmes will run in parallel. To evidence how the programme meets this standard the visitors were directed to the course specification, module directory, practice placement handbooks and practice placement guides. In reviewing this evidence the visitors noted that there were formal agreements in place between the practice placement providers and the education provider, to provide placements for the previous four year programme. However, the visitors could not find any formal agreements between the education provider and the practice placement providers for this programme. During the programme team and practice placement provider meetings the visitors were told that the education provider had a “verbal commitment which is honoured” by the practice placement providers and while they had not formalised any placements yet, there is an expectation that they will not need placements for at least 18 months. As such, from the evidence provided, the visitors could not determine how the programme team and education provider can be sure that there will be sufficient practice placements available for the programme. In particular the visitors could not see how the programme team can be sure that there will be sufficient placement opportunities for this programme and if there will be sufficient placements to support both cohorts on the three and four year programmes when they cross-over. Therefore the visitors require further evidence as to what agreements are in place to ensure that there will be sufficient placement opportunities for all students on this programme.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how the placement number, range and length will support the learning outcomes of the programme.

Reason: As part of the review of this new programme, the pattern of placement learning has changed to ensure that students will get a similar placement experience on this programme (over three years) as students do over four years on the previous programme. The visitors learnt during the placement provider meeting that one of the placement providers will trial a “2 for 1” placement experience. In further discussion with the practice placement providers the visitors understood that this is where a practice placement provider is responsible for two students at the same time, where previously they may have only been responsible for one. The visitors heard that this model of placement provision was hopefully going to be more widely rolled out for this programme, once the trial had been completed. In discussion with the programme team the visitors were made aware that the 2 for 1 placement model may lead to “3 for 1” and “4 for 1” practice placement learning experiences being developed. From the evidence provided the visitors could not determine how these different models of placement provision were designed to work in practice. They were also unclear as to how these structures, as described, would support students in achieving the learning outcomes associated with the practice placements. The visitors therefore require further evidence as to what models of practice placement will be used for this programme, what impact this will have on placement provision and how these models will support students in achieving the relevant learning outcomes.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence as to how practice placement educators are kept up-to-date with the expectations of the programme team.

Reason: From the documentation provided, the visitors noted that new practice placement educators undergo a two day training session conducted by the education provider. A list of new practice placement educators is kept by the education provider, to ensure that all new practice educators have undertaken the training before they take up their responsibilities. In addition to the training offered to new practice educators, an optional annual study day is provided for experienced clinical educators. During the visit the programme team confirmed that attendance to the refresher training was not compulsory and that the education provider only keeps a list of educators who have attended the refresher training. Therefore, the visitors could not determine how the programme team ensure that practice placement educators keep up-to-date with developments on the programme. In particular the visitors could not determine how practice placement educators who had not attended refresher training would be aware of changes to the programme such as changes to the structure of placements. Because of this the education provider will need to provide further evidence as to how the optional refresher training helps the programme team ensure that practice placement educators are up-to-date with the expectations of their role.

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 communicate any changes to the assessment strategy and design, and demonstrate that these ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency dietitians.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation prior to the visit the visitors were made aware of the assessment strategy and design for the programme which is designed to ensure that those who successfully complete the programme will meet the SOPs for dietitians. However, during the meeting with the programme team and the informal feedback meeting at the visit it was stated that the internal validation panel will ask the programme team to consider changing some of the assessment strategy and design, in particular, the assessment of the practice placement modules. As such the visitors have not had the evidence of the final, confirmed, assessment strategy and design for the programme. Therefore they cannot determine how the final, confirmed, learning assessment strategy will ensure that successful graduates can meet the SOPs for dietitians. The visitors will therefore require the education provider to provide additional evidence which will communicate any changes to the assessment strategy and design, so they can make determinations about how the programme can meet this standard.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure that the programme documentation clearly articulates the requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to course specification A, Practice placement handbooks, course handbook and practice placement assignment guide. Within the documentation provided the visitors noted statements which outline how students can progress within the programme including sentences such as students “must normally/ usually pass all credit bearing” elements of the programme to progress. However, in their reading of the documentation, and in the discussions at the visit, the visitors were unsure what ‘normal’ or ‘usual’ circumstances consisted of. Because of this they were unsure about how students would know what circumstances they would not ‘normally’ be expected to pass. The visitors were also unclear, from the evidence provided, what ‘usual’ or ‘unusual’ circumstances would prompt staff to apply the assessment regulations in different ways. Therefore the programme team will need to provide further evidence as to how the programme documentation clearly articulates to students and staff what the requirements for student achievement and progression are. The evidence should also provide information about what criteria staff are to use should they need to make distinctions between usual and unusual circumstances to ensure that they can apply the assessment regulations consistently.

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

Condition: The education provider should provide further evidence of which assessment regulations apply to the programme once the university validation process has completed.

Reason: To evidence this standard the visitors were directed to course specification A, practice placement assignment guide and practice placement, course and faculty handbook. The visitors noted in the faculty handbook that the programme uses university-wide assessment regulations. However, in discussions at the visit between the internal panel and the programme team, the visitors were informed that the wording used in the course handbook and course specification which outlines the requirements for student progression did not comply with the university's assessment regulations. As such through the internal re-validation of this programme the assessment regulations that apply to the programme may change. Due to this, the visitors are currently unclear about what regulations will apply to this programme, and are aware that the wording could change once the regulations go through the education provider's validation process. Therefore, the visitors require further evidence from the programme team to determine which assessment regulations apply to the programme, once the internal re-validation process has been completed.

Recommendations

3.17 Service users and carers must be involved in the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the current level of service user and carer involvement for the programme

Reason: From the documentation and discussions with the programme team and service user and carer group (SUCE), it was clear that there is currently service user and carer involvement in the programme and appropriate support is in place for these members. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that there was low levels of service users and carer involvement in the programme and this involvement is currently on an ad hoc basis. Whilst the visitors noted that there is a faculty wide strategy in place and were satisfied that service users and carers are involved and supported, they considered that the current involvement specifically, in the BSc (Hons) Dietetics programme poses a risk to continued involvement for the programme. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team considers reviewing the current level of service user and carer involvement for the programme, and how this involvement can be enhanced to ensure that this does not fall below a threshold level.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how best to continue monitoring the number, and availability, of practice placement educators.

Reason: From discussions with the programme and practice placement providers, it was clear that there is currently an adequate number of appropriately experienced and qualified staff to the practice placement setting. Therefore the visitors were satisfied that this standard is met. However, throughout the meetings the visitors noted that only the practice placement providers had the full list of practice placement educators. Furthermore, the visitors were told that the practice placement providers were responsible for telling the education provider about new practice placement educators, to ensure that they undertake the appropriate training before they take up their responsibilities as practice placement educators. The visitors therefore, recommend that the programme team and the practice placement team consider sharing the responsibility of ensuring that there are adequate number of practice placement educators in place. The visitors recommend that the programme team considers ways to enhance collaboration with the practice placement providers and better ensure that there are practice placement educators in place to support students, in particular while there will be a temporary increase in students undertaking placements.

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