

## Frequently asked questions - Social work education seminars

### Introduction

This document provides a summary of all the common questions which delegates asked across all of our social work education seminars delivered in summer 2012. If you require any further information regarding any of the information contained within this document please contact us at: [education@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:education@hcpc-uk.org)

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### **? Which programmes has the HCPC approved?**

All qualifying social work and approved mental health professionals (AMHP) programmes which were approved by the General Social Care Council (GSCC) on the day of transfer (1 August 2012) have automatically received transitional approval. The register of approved programmes can be found at:

[www.hpc-uk.org/education/programmes/register/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/programmes/register/)

The HCPC has also recognised a number of social work and AMHP programmes which are no longer open to new students and these have been granted HCPC approval for set historic periods. These programmes have been approved (for the set historic periods) so that anyone who has successfully completed one is still eligible to apply for registration with us. The list of historically approved programmes can be found at: [www.hpc-uk.org/education/programmes/historical/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/programmes/historical/)

### **? When will the HCPC begin approving social work degree programmes?**

All approved social work programmes will be subject to an approval visit by the HCPC to assess that they meet the standards of education and training (SETs). These visits will take place over the academic years 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. Education providers were sent a detailed mailing at the beginning of August 2012 providing further information about their approval visits. A copy of the correspondence can be found at:

[www.hpc-uk.org/education/socialworkers/communications/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/socialworkers/communications/)

More information about the visit schedule can be found at:

[www.hpc-uk.org/education/socialworkers/prioritisation/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/socialworkers/prioritisation/)

Once programmes have had their approval confirmed by the HCPC, they will be subject to the HCPC's standard monitoring processes.

### **? What does an approval visit involve?**

Education providers will need to send us an approval visit request form not less than six months before the proposed visit. When we carry out an approval visit, we are represented by what we refer to as the HCPC panel (this is normally made up of one education executive and two visitors). There are no fees for an approval visit.

Throughout the visit, we ask questions of education provider staff, students, senior managers and practice placement providers. We relate all our discussions back to our standards.

At the end of the approval visit, our panel will make a judgement about whether, or to what extent, the programme meets our standards and make the appropriate recommendation to our Education and Training Committee which makes the final decision.

When we have approved a programme, we grant the programme what we refer to as 'open-ended approval' and we then monitor it using the annual monitoring and major change processes.

The Approval process - supplementary information for education providers document provides in-depth information about the approval process. We strongly recommend that education providers read this guidance document to prepare for approval visits. It can be found at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/approval/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/approval/)

### **? Where will approval visits be held?**

The HCPC normally holds visits at the site where the programme is delivered. This is to allow us to see the facilities available to students. During our meeting with the senior management team we would expect to speak with a representative of the validating/awarding body (if different from education provider). We do not visit practice placement settings however we expect to meet with practice placement providers during an approval visit.

### **? Can an education provider hold a joint visit between the HCPC and The College of Social Work (TCSW)?**

Yes. The HCPC is happy to attend a joint visit where a number of representatives, such as an internal validation panel, a professional body, the HCPC or other regulators, are each approving the programme for different purposes.

Professional bodies have an important role in promoting and representing their professions and the HCPC will participate in joint discussions with any relevant professional bodies and other stakeholders at a visit, but under legislation, the HCPC panel must assess the programme against our standards independently.

### **? What documentation will the HCPC need before an approval visit?**

Eight weeks before an approval visit education providers will need to submit 3 hard copies and an electronic copy of key documents as evidence of how their programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and standards of

proficiency (SOPs).

You will need to send us the following documents:

- a proposed agenda;
- a programme specification;
- descriptions of the modules;
- completed mapping document for the SETs;
- completed mapping document for the SOPs;
- a practice placement handbook;
- a student handbook;
- a draft agenda;
- curriculum vitae for relevant staff; and
- external examiners' reports for the last two years if appropriate.

When preparing documents for a visit, you should consider whether there is any further information you can send which will help the visitors prior to the visit.

You can download the standards of education and training and standards of proficiency mapping document from: [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/downloads/)

The Approval process - supplementary information for education providers document provides in-depth information about the approval process. We strongly recommend that education providers read this guidance document to prepare for approval visits. It can be found at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/approval/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/processes/approval/)

### **? Who makes the decisions on programme approval for the HCPC?**

The HCPC's Education and Training Committee has statutory responsibility for approving and monitoring education programmes leading to eligibility to apply to register with them. Visitors will be appointed by the HCPC to visit education providers offering social work education programmes and assess monitoring submissions. These visitors will predominantly be social workers, coming from a range of backgrounds including higher education and frontline practice. Social worker visitors will work as partners of the HCPC (and not employees) and provide the expertise the HCPC's Education and Training Committee need for their decision-making. Visitors normally operate in panels of two or three, rather than individually. All visitors will be selected with due regard to their education or practitioner experience. Visitors will represent the HCPC and no other body when they undertake an approval and monitoring exercise to ensure an entirely independent outcome.

**? What happens if approval is not granted?**

If the HCPC panel recommends non-approval or withdrawal of approval from a programme, individuals who successfully complete the programme will not be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC and as such will not be able to practise using the protected title 'Social worker'. We do not take the decision not to approve a programme, or withdraw approval from a programme lightly.

**? Will we have a dedicated education officer looking after our programme at the HCPC?**

No. Work will be distributed between the HCPC education officers. However in the run up to a visit there will be a dedicated education officer who will coordinate the visit and make up part of the HCPC panel, as the education executive.

**? What standards do social work programmes have to meet?**

In order to be approved by the HCPC, all social work programmes will need to meet the standards of education and training (SETs), which ensure that individuals who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for social workers and have an understanding of the standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

**? Do all academic staff working on social work degree programmes have to be HCPC registered?**

There is no specific requirement that everyone involved with an HCPC approved programme must be registered with us; however our SETs include broad requirements for the qualifications and experience of members on the programme team of an approved programme. More information is available in our Standards of education and training guidance (specifically in SETs 3.4 – 3.6) which can be found at: [www.hpc-uk.org/education/downloads/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/downloads/)

Anyone who wishes to use the protected title 'social worker' will need to be registered with the HCPC, irrespective of their workplace or sector.

**? Does the HCPC approve programmes below the bachelor degree with honours level?**

HCPC's Council normally expects that the threshold entry route to the Register will be a Bachelor degree with honours for social work education and training programmes. However a programme can be designed which leads to a different qualification but still meets the rest of the SETs and the SOPs, and so can still be approved by us. This includes programmes set at levels above the given threshold level of qualification for entry to the Register.

**? Why does the HCPC require pass lists?**

HCPC expects all education providers to submit pass lists to them to support new or recent graduates applying for registration with us. Pass lists are used by the HCPC in the registration process to verify that an applicant has successfully completed an approved programme. We require education providers to submit an electronic pass list to our Registrations Department once a cohort has successfully completed the programme in order for us to process an individual's application to the Register (via the UK approved programme route).

We do not ask prospective registrants to submit programme certificates (originals or copies) to us. Instead we ask them to tell us:

- the name of their qualification;
- the institution they attended; and
- the start and end dates of their programme.

We then use this information alongside the pass lists to confirm that the applicant has completed an approved programme. We do not ask applicants to submit certificates as we recognise that these are often issued sometime after students complete the programme and we do not want to delay their application for registration. We do not ask applicants to submit certified copies of their certificate as we appreciate that this would create additional work for education providers. The cross reference to pass lists also allows us to safeguard against fraudulent applications to the Register.

We cannot process registration applications via the UK approved programme route without a pass list. Any delay or failure to supply a pass list results in applicants being unable to register with us and therefore use the protected titles.

**? Where can I find out more about pass lists?**

We have provided a series of frequently asked questions on our website at [www.hpc-uk.org/education/providers/passlists/](http://www.hpc-uk.org/education/providers/passlists/)

If you have any further questions, please contact the HCPC Registration Department on: [xpl@hcpc-uk.org](mailto:xpl@hcpc-uk.org) or **0845 3004 472** (Monday – Friday, 8am - 6pm).

**? What does the transfer mean for students?**

All social work degree programmes that transferred from the GSCC to the HCPC on 1 August 2012 are approved by the HCPC. This means that any student who has recently completed, or who is due to shortly complete one of these programmes will be eligible to apply for registration with the HCPC.

Continuing students and new applicants will need to be aware of and understand the implications of the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics. We have produced specific information for students on meeting these standards which can be found in the publication Guidance on conduct and ethics for students at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/providers/guidance/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/providers/guidance/)

Newly qualified graduates registering with the HCPC within two years of completing their programme receive a 50 per cent reduction in the fee in their first two professional years. There is a £53 scrutiny fee to process the application. This **only** applies to those applying to join the Register for the first time. It will **not** apply to those transferring from the GSCC Register.

Students can download and complete an HCPC application form at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/socialworkers/application/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/socialworkers/application/)

More information for students including information about applying for registration, applications forms and guidance notes can be found at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/students/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/apply/students/)

**? Is the HCPC involved in distributing practice placement funding to social work education providers?**

No. The transfer of regulatory functions from the GSCC did not include this area of work. As an independent statutory regulator, we do not play a role in the funding or commissioning of programmes. From 1 August 2012 the NHS Business Services Authority (BSA) took responsibility for the administration of the social work education

grants.

### **? What is the Social work student suitability scheme in England?**

At its meeting on 19 June 2012 the HCPC Council agreed to introduce a new suitability scheme to deal with concerns about social work students in England. This is because the Council recognises that the social work community, including education providers, employers and placement providers, may face additional challenges during the transition to the new system of quality assurance by the HCPC.

This follows our decision that social work students in England should not be registered by the HCPC. The Council reached this decision after considering the responses to a consultation and the findings of the literature review we commissioned .

The Council believes that the most effective means of assuring the fitness to practise of social work students in England is through the standards of education and training (SETs) and the approval of education and training programmes. These standards will ensure that education providers have processes in place to deal effectively with concerns about the conduct of students.

The standards will also ensure that suitable arrangements are in place to manage and monitor students' learning on practice placements and that students' become aware of and understand their obligations under the HCPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics (SCPE).

This transitional scheme will be in place whilst we assess social work programmes in England against the SETs. The scheme will provide a mechanism for dealing with concerns about students where this is deemed necessary.

Specifically, it will enable us to:

- provide an opinion, in exceptional circumstances, to a social work education provider on whether an applicant is of suitable character to be admitted to a programme;
- Investigate where we consider that the education provider has failed to deal with a credible complaint about a student appropriately;
- consider the outcomes of an education provider's fitness to practise procedures to determine whether a student should be prohibited from a programme;



- maintain a record of students who are not permitted to participate in a social work programme in England; and
- manage open cases concerning individuals applying to be on the student register maintained by the GSCC and those individuals who are on the GSCC student register.

More information on the social work student suitability scheme in England can be found at: [www.hcpc-uk.org/education/studentsuitability/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/studentsuitability/)

### **? Who can raise a complaint about an education provider or approved programme?**

Anyone can make a complaint about an approved programme of study. We normally expect someone to have completed informal and formal internal complaints processes for an education provider before making a complaint to us. We cannot accept complaints from third parties.

More information can be found at:  
[www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmecomplaints/](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmecomplaints/)