

Quality Assurance and Audit Service



Middlesex
University

Confirmed Report

1. Programme detail

Validation of BSc Homeopathy (validated programme with the Centre for Homeopathic Education)

2. Date of Event

14 May 2004 – half day event

3. Objectives of Validation

Validation approval is the process by which the School and the University ensures that any new Programme or Subject, or any significant change to an existing Programme or Subject is academically sound i.e. the academic standards are appropriate, the curriculum can deliver to the required standards, learning and teaching methods allow achievement of standards and the assessment appropriately measures achievement of learning outcomes and of standards. In addition, the validation ensures adequate subject-specific resources are available to support the proposal.

4. Conduct of Validation

Panel: James Fitzgerald (External Assessor), Brian Hipkin (Chair), Nicola Johnson (Officer), Nicky Torrance (School Representative), William Masterson (University Representative), Linda Wicks (External Assessor)

Programme Team: Celia Bell, Tricia Darnell, Catherine Eccles (CHE Link Tutor), Paul Lowe (MU Link Tutor), Marcus Fernandez, Gordon Sambidge, Jan Williams

The panel reviewed the documentation provided both in advance of the event and on the day. The panel had a number of private meetings and meetings with senior staff and the programme team. These meetings explored matters relating to the quality and standards of the Programme and the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

5. Evidence base

The following documents were presented to the Panel prior to the meeting:

- Officer Paper on the Context of the Event
- APPG form
- Centre for Homeopathic Education Prospectus
- Confirmed Validation Report (9 December 2003)
- Overview Document
- Student Handbook
- Draft Memorandum of Co-operation
- Staff CVs
- Evaluation of Event form

The following documents were tabled on the day:

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- Document showing Assessment vs National Occupational Standards in Homeopathy
- Unit HM1
- Unit HM2
- Supervisors Information Pack
- Clinic Code

The Panel reviewed the documents listed above to inform their discussion with the team.

6. External Assessors

The panel included two External Assessors who are experienced to an appropriate level in a relevant academic field. The choice of External Assessors was approved by the Dean of School in accordance with the criteria set out in the Procedures Handbook Guidance 3(vi).

The specific role of External Assessors as subject experts, is to examine the proposal's aims, outcomes, content and assessment in the context of the QAA Subject benchmarks or PSB national standards and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (Procedures Handbook Appendix 3j) to ensure that proposal has taken account of these and focuses on academic standards; should be able to bring a national perspective to the proposal and judge the quality of provision; should have a knowledge of the market and/or comparable Programmes in other institutions; should assess both the academic content and the relevance of the Programme to subsequent employment; should judge the adequacy of the equipment and specialist facilities and the qualifications and expertise of the staff team; and should scrutinise each module's outcomes, syllabus and reading list in detail.

7. Overview of the main characteristics of the Programme covered

The Panel stated the programme had clearly progressed since the last validation event in December 2003 and they suggested that all the points raised at that event had been dealt with. They commended the following: the positive response the Team has shown to staff development opportunities provided by Middlesex University; the positive response shown in the development of research methods following the previous validation event and the clear commitment to both their students and to the practice of homeopathy. However, they wished to explore in further details issues relating to teaching and learning and how this linked to assessment, and the graduate nature of the programme.

8. Proposal Design and Standards

The Team began by providing a short presentation outlining the current position of the College and the programme. The College is the largest Homeopathic College in the UK, fully recognised by the Society of Homeopaths, which provides a truly eclectic homeopathic training. They aim to provide practitioner status but with an academic base to a diverse range of students. Most of their students are female and come with Higher Education qualifications and as many are using this programme to initiate a career change, the student population ranges from ages 21-60 with a wide range of life experiences. The overall aim of the programme is to produce professional homeopath practitioners with an understanding of a complex body of knowledge.

Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy

On the evidence provided, the Panel were assured that the Team are clearly producing practitioners but wanted to explore what makes these students graduates? The Team stated that the training reflects the professional standards that govern the programme and the gradueness is achieved through developing knowledge by being able to access sources and critically analyse these sources, and looking at judgements made, and being able to apply this knowledge and demonstrate and impart this knowledge to others.

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The Panel went on to explore how awareness and evaluation were integrated into the programme to ensure students were considering different approaches and evaluating them. The Team stated that this is integrated throughout the programme and highlighted 2 modules where this would occur. The Advanced Casework & Treatment Management module (page 61 of the handbook) was used as an example of this, and how students design an advanced prescription for a complex case (which assessed learning outcomes 1, 2 and 5) to ensure students do consider different methodologies and decide when it is appropriate to use them. Another example that was highlighted was in the Advanced Materia Medica and Therapeutics module where in order to meet learning outcomes 3 and 5, students would have to audit material medica so they would be discerning which methodology would be used for which treatment.

Students are supported in participating for example in class discussions by the introduction of 3-way role playing where students have an active case study which the tutor observes and feedback is provided at the end of the session both from the tutor and their peers. This ensures that students cannot go through the programme without having engaged in debate with their peers.

The Panel progressed to investigate the relationship between the teaching and learning, and assessment. The Team explained that the purpose of assessment was to ensure the learning outcomes had been met. The purpose of formative assessment was to test the knowledge base but also to use it as a way forward to gauge student interest, which was achieved through formative feedback. The Panel suggested students need to understand why a particular form of assessment had been chosen and that this information should be included within the handbook.

The viva constituted a set of questions being asked of the student who were aware of the marking criteria and the score sheet. Two internal examiners are present who moderate after the viva and all score sheets are sent to the External Examiner. The role of the External Examiner which had caused confusion at the previous event has been removed from the handbook. All coursework is marked by staff, moderated by an internal and then a sample of work is sent to, and moderated by, the External Examiner.

It was confirmed that Assessment Boards will be held in June and September, with final marks being given in June alongside formative feedback, and resit marks would be given in September. Students cannot resit work until after the results are ratified by the Assessment Board so resubmissions would be at the end of June. The Panel suggested this be made explicit in the handbook.

The Team confirmed that classified awards would be given and that the Middlesex University grading scale would be used.

Clinical work

The Panel queried the role of the Clinical Supervisor. 150 clinical hours are undertaken in clinical training. Supervision (which is mandatory) takes place from the third year and is part of the support network to enable students to have cases outside the College. Supervisors are given a Supervisor's pack which includes relevant information governing their role and responsibilities, including outlining the assessment criteria. Training days also outline the requirements and details the different levels that students should be working at.

Exit Awards

The Panel were concerned that students who either chose to leave the programme or who failed prior to obtaining the BSc could misrepresent themselves to the public if they were awarded a Cert HE or Dip HE Homeopathy. However the Team clarified that they would just receive a University, unnamed Cert HE or Dip HE.

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Student Handbook

Page 25 of the handbook mentions additional activities e.g. work experience outside the mandatory clinical placement and the Panel queried its place. The Team responded that many students do undertake additional work to gain further experience although they had not included this as part of the programme so as not to disadvantage those that could not access this type of work. The Panel suggested that this extra work could be awarded credit points or some form of recognition that students may find useful elsewhere.

Admissions criteria

If a student applied to the programme who had a particular disability, then they would be considered for entry using the normal entry criteria, but the Team would then assess at an individual level whether it would be appropriate for them to enrol. The Panel noted that the College has access to both Regent's College and the Society of Homeopath's resources in this area.

Attendance requirements

The teaching pattern involves one weekend per month (10 weekends per year) which delivers the lectures; plus 1 extra clinic day per month plus tutorial time, approximately 2 hours per month. Tutorials are run both in London and regionally, the regional ones being run by supervisors. Tutorial team meetings are held throughout the year to discuss content, structure and issues in general.

Student support

Student support for Home study is provided through the Level 1 study skills where students are introduced to the concept of home study, how to manage it and how to direct it. Students also have a mentor from day one who is a student from Year 3 for Year 1 students and Year 4 for Year 2 students, which has proved particularly valuable to Year 3 and 4 students in promoting confidence in their abilities and knowledge.

Other support mechanisms exist through the tutorial system (although the Panel noted this was not compulsory given the geographically diverse student population), peer support and a forum on the College intranet where a member of staff goes on-line once a month to answer queries. The Team are considering specific times for Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 students to go on-line to promote peer support and confidence in taking part in live discussion at the appropriate level. The Panel suggested including more information in the handbook on the website.

9. Resources

Staff development plays an important role in ensuring all staff are kept up to date with knowledge, skills and regulations governing running the programme. Over the past six months, the Team have worked closely with colleagues from Middlesex University and have attended workshops on assessment and curriculum issues and one Assessment Board. Everything is fed back to the rest of the Team via either face to face meetings or the College's intranet. The Team are also due to attend research seminars at the University in the near future and one member of the Team is due to undertake their City and Guilds 7407 this September.

The Panel asked for a definition of the word 'core' staff which the Team confirmed as being mainly module leaders but also included those that regularly teach on the modules, plus the clinical supervisors, which totals approximately 16-18 staff. Regular core staff meetings are held to ensure information and issues are shared. Staff development days are also held, and feedback forms are completed by the students at the end of each day so issues are picked up early. The Team are also considering implementing staff CPD portfolios, again so any training needs can be identified early.

10. Conclusion

The Panel were pleased to validate the BSc Homeopathy, and all its modules, as a validated programme, subject to the Team meetings conditions and recommendations.

10a Conclusions on quality, standards, currency and validity

Approved Subject to conditions and with recommendations

The panel concluded that subject to the conditions and/or recommendations below:

- the intended learning outcomes will be obtained by students, quality and standards will be achieved and the programme specification will be delivered; and
- the Programme is current and valid in the light of developing knowledge in the discipline, practice in its application, and developments in teaching and learning.

11. Conditions and Recommendations

Conditions

1. The purpose of assessment in relation to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy must be clarified and in such a way as to reflect both the diverse nature of students' individual needs and the approaches to learning employed in the programme.
2. Clarify the resit and feedback opportunities for semester 1 assessments.
3. Insert a section in the handbook outlining a schematic explanation of the Middlesex 20 point scale.

Recommendations

1. Give consideration as to ways in which extra curricular work/study can be credited.
2. In the absence of compulsory tutorials, to make clear in the handbook not only the role of tutorials but the range of other modes of student support available to students.
3. Indicate clearly further developments within the programme via Annual Monitoring Reports.

Deadline for conditions and recommendations: 30 June

Date first enrolment scheduled for: September 2004

12. Response to the Conditions and Recommendations

To be inserted when supplied to QAAS

Centre of Homeopathic Education: Response to Conditions and Recommendations

Conditions

1. Additional material has been added on page 16 of the programme handbook under **Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy** and **Assessment** sections, which clarifies purpose of assessment in relation to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy and reflects CHE's approach to the diverse nature of students' individual needs and approaches to learning.
2. Resit and feedback opportunities have been clarified in the **Assessment** section on page 17 of the programme handbook.
3. A section outlining a schematic explanation of the Middlesex 20 point scale has been inserted into the **Assessment** section on page 17 of the programme handbook.

Recommendations

1. We are working towards formulating ways in which extra curricular work/study can be credited by considering at what level points would be credited and how many. This is an ongoing discussion within the programme team.
2. Details of other forms of student support, in the absence of compulsory tutorials, have been inserted into the **Tutorial** section on page 26 of the programme handbook.
3. Developments within the programme will be indicated via Annual Monitoring Reports.

CHE

22 June 2004