

Education and Training Committee – 11 June 2009

Practitioner psychologist – approval and monitoring processes

Executive summary and recommendations

This paper follows on from the paper entitled 'Practitioner psychologist – lists of approved programmes'. It seeks to agree the means by which those programmes granted open ended approval will have their ongoing approval reconfirmed by the HPC. The Education and Training Committee is asked to agree a mechanism to manage those currently midway through the BPS re-accreditation process as well as a more long-term schedule of approval visits and annual monitoring submissions for all currently approved programmes.

Introduction

Paragraph A of Article 15(1) of the Health Professions Order provides that:

- “(1) The Council shall from time to time establish –
(a) the standards of education and training necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency it has established under article 5(2);”

In turn, Paragraph B of Article 15(4) of the Health Professions Order provides that:

- “(4)The Education and Training Committee shall –
(b) take appropriate steps to satisfy itself that those standards and requirements are met.”

The standards of proficiency are our threshold standards for safe and effective practice that all registrants must meet. They play a central role in how to gain admission to and remain on the Register and thereby gain the right to use protected title(s). The standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists were approved by Council on 20 May 2009 and become effective on the day that the register opens (1 July 2009).

The standards of education and training (SETs) are the standards that an education programme must meet in order to be approved by us. These generic standards ensure that anybody who completes an approved programme meets the standards of proficiency and is therefore eligible for admission to the Register.

Our approval and monitoring processes ensure that programmes and education providers meet the standards of education and training. A programme is normally approved on an open-ended basis, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

Once a practitioner psychologist programme has been granted open ended approval, there should be a mechanism for the HPC to ensure that the

programmes meet our standards of education and training and that those students who successfully complete it meet the standards of proficiency for the relevant part of the practitioner psychologist register.

Therefore, it is necessary for the Committee to consider how those programmes which are granted open ended approval should have their ongoing approval reconfirmed.

Current accreditation arrangements with the British Psychological Society

The BPS currently operates a system of accreditation for programmes delivered by Higher Education Institutions. Each BPS division has its own accreditation criteria which are used to make a judgment on whether a programme is accredited and for how long. These criteria are linked directly to eligibility to gain a practising certificate and become a full member of one of their divisions. All BPS accreditation visits lead to one of four potential outcomes - (1) full accreditation (2) conditional accreditation (3) accreditation withheld or (4) accreditation withdrawn. Accreditation is granted for anywhere between one and five cohorts. This is normally limited to three cohorts for programmes being accredited for the first time.

There are also a number of qualifications which are offered directly by the BPS. These qualifications are not 'courses of study'; in the sense that students are not provided with access to lectures, reading materials, lecturers or personal tutors. The qualifications are based around a collection of evidence requirements and assessments. Nearly all of these qualifications consist of two stages, with stage 1 providing the necessary underpinning knowledge and stage 2 consisting of supervised practice. Stage 1 is deemed equivalent to a BPS accredited masters programme, and therefore does not lead to eligibility to gain a practising certificate and become a full member of one of their divisions, upon completion. The BPS began an internal review of their qualifications in April 2009.

Proposed reconfirmation of approval arrangements with the HPC

On the day that the register opens (1 July 2009), it is anticipated that 71 practitioner psychologists' programmes will be granted open ended approval. The decision to grant open ended approval will be based entirely on the status of each programmes' accreditation with the BPS. It is proposed that after this initial decision, the Committee uses the approval process to reconfirm the ongoing approval of each programme.

An approval visit offers the most rigorous and effective means of assuring that each practitioner psychologist programme meets our standards of education and training. It also gives education providers the opportunity to interact, in person, with representatives from the HPC. The approval process supplementary information publication states that one of the circumstances in which the HPC might require an approval visit is when a new profession comes onto the register. When operating department practitioners joined the HPC Register in 2004, a decision was made to put all approved programmes through our approval process. There were 28 approved programmes and it took two academic years.

It is proposed that the 71 practitioner psychologist programmes are visited over a three academic year period. The three academic years would be 2009-2010,

2010-2011 and 2011-2012. It is intended that all visits would be held by July 2012, with ongoing approval of all programmes reconfirmed by the 2012-2013 academic year at the latest.

A period of three academic years is recommended for a number of reasons. Primarily, it is recognised that the current BPS accreditation process is robust and thorough and that these programmes have been producing students who are fit to practice for a number of years. Therefore, there is no evidence to suggest that the visit schedule should be completed within a shorter time frame. Secondly, it is a reasonable and feasible timescale for education providers without being overly-burdensome. Thirdly, it is realistic and achievable given our current resources and commitments to the existing thirteen professions.

The proposed three year approval visit schedule is based on the existing BPS accreditation and internal review cycle, albeit a more condensed version. The table below outlines the specifics;

Table 1 – Proposed approval visit schedule

Year of BPS re-accreditation or internal review	Year of HPC approval visit
2009-2010	2009-2010
2010-2011	2010-2011
2011-2012	
2012-2013	2011-2012
2013-2014	

One consequence of the proposed approval visit schedule is that a number of programmes will not be subject to an approval visit for at least two academic years. To mitigate against any risks this they may cause, it is recommended that an amended version of the annual monitoring process is used in the interim. The table below outlines the specifics;

Table 2 – Proposed annual monitoring schedule

Year of HPC approval visit	Annual monitoring requirement
2009-2010	No requirement for annual monitoring as approval visit planned in 2009-2010
2010-2011	No requirement for annual monitoring in 2009-2010 as outcome can only be followed up in 2010-2011, when an approval visit is already planned. Requirement for annual monitoring would be burdensome and disproportionate.
2011-2012	Requirement to submit annual monitoring audit documentation in 2009-2010. Visitors' recommendation is based on the risk related in not visiting for another academic year. (i.e. they can make the recommendation to either visit in 2011-2012 as planned or bring forward the visit to 2010-2011 because of concerns) Requirement to submit annual monitoring declaration in 2010-2011.

It is recommended that the above schedules are used as a framework by the Executive to confirm the specific approval and monitoring requirements for each programme. This would give the Executive a degree of flexibility so that they can

respond to any additional information that comes to their attention (e.g. unanticipated major changes, move of an education provider's internal review/revalidation event). The Executive will update the Education and Training Committee on the progress of the overall approval visit schedule, via the Director of Education report. All approval visits will be held by 30 June 2012, unless the Committee agrees otherwise.

Appendix 1 provides a proposed schedule for ensuring that all currently approved practitioner psychologist programmes have their open ended approval reconfirmed within a three academic year period. The proposed three year schedule aims to balance our needs as a statutory regulator with those of the education provider. Approval visits will be made confirmed on an individual basis and be cognisant of the demands on the education providers.

British Psychological Society accreditation visits in 2008-09 academic year

On the day that the register opens (1 July 2009), it is anticipated there will be a number of programmes which are midway through the accreditation process of the BPS. It is expected that these programmes will be at different stages in the process.

According to data provided by the BPS on 13 & 28 May 2009, it is likely that this will affect 15 (out of the 71) programmes and that they will be at the following stages;

- Visit complete and conditional accreditation agreed. Education provider in the process of meeting conditions, with a deadline after 1 July 2009 (9);
- Visit complete and decision on accreditation due for consideration by BPS Committee and Board in June 2009 (4); and
- Visit due to take place in June 2009 and decision on accreditation due for consideration by BPS Committee and Board after 1 July 2009 (2).

It is proposed that all of these programmes are granted open ended approval on the day that the register opens and that priority is given to determine the affect of the outcome of the BPS re-accreditation visit on the programme's ongoing approval with the HPC. This proposal is an additional piece of work and does not replace the scheduled approval visits recommended in the above section.

Appendix 2 provides a proposed mechanism for ensuring that the outcome of these current re-accreditation visits is considered by the HPC. The mechanism is based on visitors assessing the BPS accreditation report and making recommendations to Committee on relevant future action. Decisions will be made on a case by case basis and be cognisant of our standards of education and training and standards of proficiency.

Communication to education providers

It is proposed that both the short-term mechanism (for those programmes currently midway through the BPS re-accreditation process) and the long-term schedule of approval visits and annual monitoring submissions (for all approved practitioner psychologist programmes) are published, with the relevant caveats, ahead of the register opening on 1 July 2009. This would allow education providers to access clear and effective information about what is expected of them after the register opening on 1 July 2009.

Decision

The Committee is asked to agree the following:

- To approve the mechanism for considering the outcome of currently uncompleted BPS accreditation visits in appendix 1 (subject to receiving the final data from the BPS and any subsequent editing);
- To approve the approval visit schedule outlined in appendix 2 (subject to receiving the final data from the BPS and any subsequent editing);
- To approve the annual monitoring requirements outlined in appendix 2 (subject to receiving the final data from the BPS and any subsequent editing);
- To agree that the above decisions become effective from the date of the register opening (1 July 2009);
- To agree that the above decisions should be communicated to education providers;
- To ask the Executive to implement the approval visit schedule with a degree of flexibility, ensuring that each visit is confirmed on a case by case basis; and
- To ask the Executive to periodically update the Committee on the progress of work in this area.

Background information

None

Resource implications

Accounted for in five year plan, 2009-2010 Education work plan and budget.

Financial implications

Accounted for in five year plan, 2009-2010 Education work plan and budget.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Schedule for reconfirming the open ended approval of all practitioner psychologist programmes currently accredited by the BPS
- Appendix 2 – Mechanism for considering the outcome of currently uncompleted BPS re-accreditation visits

Date of paper

2 June 2009

Appendix 1 – Schedule for reconfirming the open ended approval of all practitioner psychologist programmes currently accredited by the BPS

Current category	Academic year		
	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-12
Programmes due for a BPS re-accreditation in 2009-2010 (13)	Approval visit* No AM** MC if necessary	No approval visit No AM MC if necessary	No approval visit AM (as normal) MC if necessary
Programmes due for a BPS re-accreditation in 2010-2011 & 2011-2012 (22)	No approval visit No AM** MC if necessary	Approval visit No AM MC if necessary	No approval visit No AM MC if necessary
Programmes due for a BPS re-accreditation in 2012-2013 & 2013-2014 (30)	No approval visit AM (Audit)*** MC if necessary	Approval visit only if required by last year's AM AM (Declaration) MC if necessary	Approval visit No AM MC if necessary
Qualification in Counselling Psychology Diploma in Forensic Psychology	Approval visit No AM** MC if necessary	No approval visit No AM MC if necessary	No approval visit AM (as normal) MC if necessary
Qualification in Occupational Psychology Qualification in Health Psychology Award in Educational Psychology (Scotland) Qualification in Sport and Exercise Psychology	No approval visit No AM** MC if necessary	Approval visit No AM MC if necessary	No approval visit No AM MC if necessary

Key

AM Annual monitoring

MC Major change

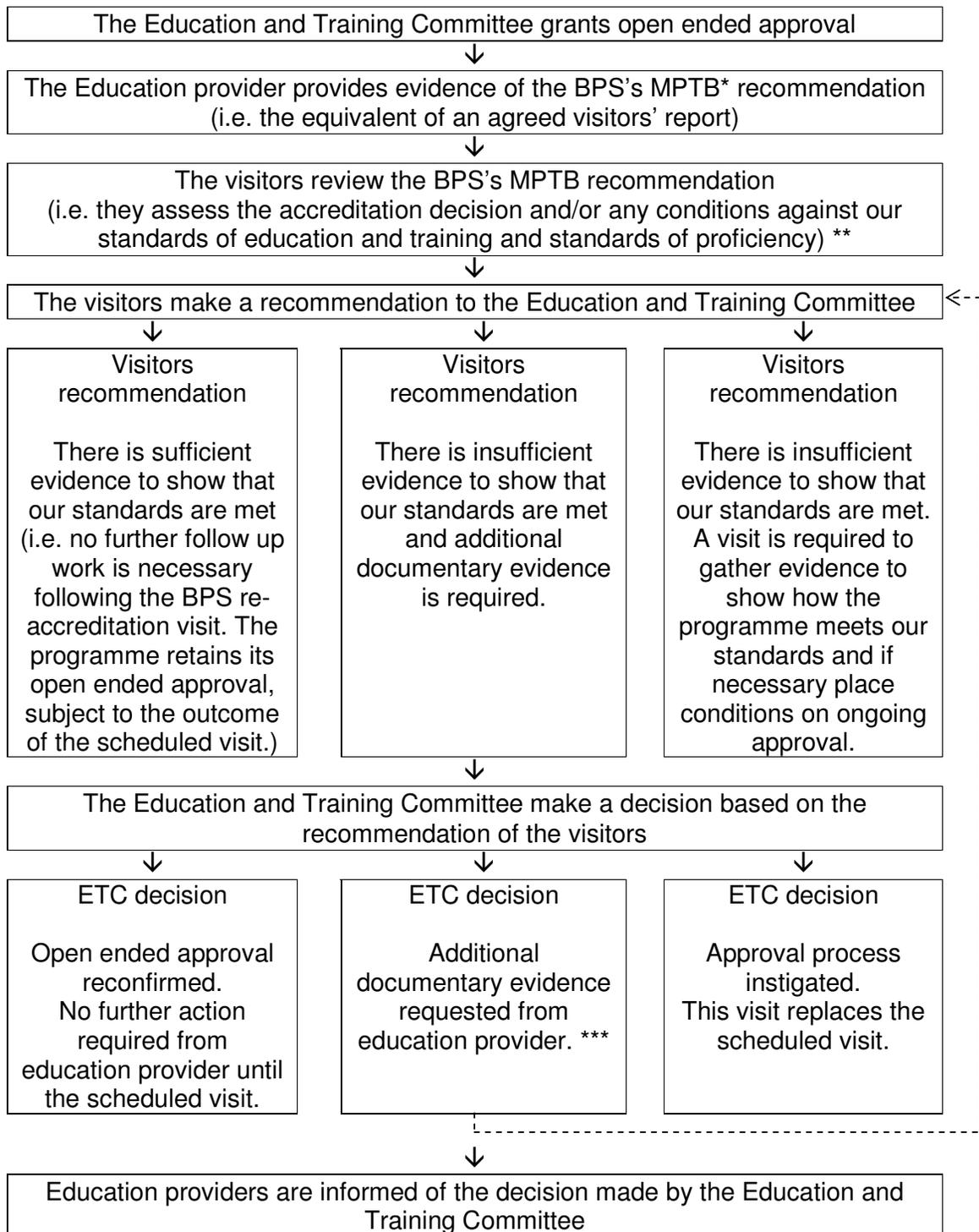
* If the BPS has already arranged a visit date with education provider, then the HPC will use its best endeavours to attend this visit.

If a visit date is already arranged between September – December 2009, the HPC will not be able to attend. We will treat these visits, on a case by case basis, but essentially the education provider will be given the choice of when the HPC visits, with 2011-12 as the last available date.

** No requirements for annual monitoring because approval visit will assess meeting of the SETs either this academic year or the next.

*** Requirement to complete audit for annual monitoring. If concerns arise from audit, the scheduled visit will be brought forward a year

Appendix 2 – Mechanism for considering the outcome of currently uncompleted BPS re-accreditation visits



* Membership and Professional Training Board

** If appropriate, the visitors can request clarification from the education provider at this stage.

*** This documentary evidence would be in a similar format to conditions on approval and would include the necessary timescales. Education providers would have two attempts to present sufficient evidence to meet our standards.