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## Performance review process report

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and Middlesex  
University, 2018-2021

### **Executive summary**

This report covers our performance review of the programmes offered by New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and Middlesex University. During this review one referral was made with regarding to the education provider increasing their number of service users and carers involved with their programme. This has been highlighted for review in their next performance review. This referral constitutes a low risk to how the approved programmes continue to be delivered. However, there is a lack of comparable data points to inform us of progress, therefore our recommendation for the performance review period is two years.

This report will now be considered by our Education and Training Panel who will make the final decision on the on the review period.

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## Section 1: About this assessment

### **About us**

We are the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), a regulator set up to protect the public. We set standards for education and training, professional knowledge and skills, conduct, performance and ethics; keep a register of professionals who meet those standards; approve programmes which professionals must complete before they can register with us; and take action when professionals on our Register do not meet our standards.

This is a report on the performance review process undertaken by the HCPC to ensure that the institution and practice areas(s) detailed in this report continue to meet our education standards. The report details the process itself, evidence considered, outcomes and recommendations made regarding the institution and programme(s) ongoing approval.

### **Our standards**

We approve education providers and programmes that meet our education standards. Individuals who complete approved programmes will meet proficiency standards, which set out what a registrant should know, understand and be able to do when they complete their education and training. The education standards are outcome focused, enabling education providers to deliver programmes in different ways, as long as individuals who complete the programme meet the relevant proficiency standards.

### **Our regulatory approach**

We are flexible, intelligent and data-led in our quality assurance of programme clusters and programmes. Through our processes, we:

- enable bespoke, proportionate and effective regulatory engagement with education providers;
- use data and intelligence to enable effective risk-based decision making; and
- engage at the organisation, profession and programme levels to enhance our ability to assess the impact of risks and issues on HCPC standards.

Providers and programmes are [approved on an open-ended basis](#), subject to ongoing monitoring. Programmes we have approved are listed [on our website](#).

### **The performance review process**

Once a programme institution is approved, we will take assurance it continues to meet standards through:

- regular assessment of key data points, supplied by the education provider and external organisations; and
- assessment of a self-reflective portfolio and evidence, supplied on a cyclical basis

Through monitoring, we take assurance in a bespoke and flexible way, meaning that we will assess how an education provider is performing based on what we see, rather than by a one size fits all approach. We take this assurance at the provider level wherever possible, and will delve into programme / profession level detail where we need to.

This report focuses on the assessment of the self-reflective portfolio and evidence.

### **Thematic areas reviewed**

We normally focus on the following areas:

- Institution self-reflection, including resourcing, partnerships, quality, the input of others, and equality and diversity
- Thematic reflection, focusing on timely developments within the education sector
- Provider reflection on the assessment of other sector bodies, including professional bodies and systems regulators
- Provider reflection on developments linked to specific professions
- Stakeholder feedback and actions

### **How we make our decisions**

We make independent evidence based decisions about programme approval. For all assessments, we ensure that we have profession specific input in our decision making. In order to do this, we appoint [partner visitors](#) to design quality assurance assessments, and assess evidence and information relevant to the assessment. Visitors make recommendations to the Education and Training Committee (ETC). Education providers have the right of reply to the recommendation. If an education provider wishes to, they can supply 'observations' as part of the process.

The ETC make the decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of programmes. In order to do this, they consider recommendations detailed in process reports, and any observations from education providers (if submitted). The Committee takes decisions through different levels depending on the routines and impact of the decision, and where appropriate meets in public. Their decisions are available to view [on our website](#).

### **The assessment panel for this review**

We appointed the following panel members to support a review of this education provider:

Garett Kennedy	Lead visitor, Counselling Psychologist
Caroline Sykes	Lead visitor, Speech and language therapist
Jenny McKibben	Service User Expert Advisor
Alistair Ward-Boughton-Leigh	Education Quality Officer
Sophie Bray	Education Quality Officer

## Section 2: About the education provider

### The education provider context

The education provider currently delivers one HCPC approved program within the profession of Practitioner Psychologist, namely Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by Professional Studies (DCPsych) since 2011.

New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC) are part of the wider Middlesex group of providers and Middlesex is their validating body. NSPC offers joint psychotherapy and counselling psychology doctoral programmes with Middlesex University with the option of post-graduate diploma and masters exits. It also offers a masters' programme in existential coaching, two online MSc programmes, a foundation course, short courses, one day workshops and numerous introductory courses. NSPC's HCPC approved programme is a Middlesex University programme and qualification, jointly developed, delivered and assessed by Middlesex and New School of Psychotherapy & Counselling, and quality assured by Middlesex University.

This relationship has affected the context setting document as many of HCPC's commonly used data sources (outlined in this [table](#)) are not available for the NSPC as an individual provider and similar data would only be available as part of the overall Middlesex set. Therefore, these data points have not been considered as part of this review.

### Practice areas delivered by the education provider

The provider is approved to deliver training in the following professional areas. A detailed list of approved programme awards can be found in [Appendix 1](#) of this report.

	Practice area	Delivery level		Approved since
Pre-Registration	Practitioner psychologist	<input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Postgraduate	2011

### Institution performance data

Data is embedded into how we understand performance and risk. We capture data points in relation to provider performance, from a range of sources. We compare provider data points to benchmarks, and use this information to inform our risk based decisions about the approval and ongoing approval of institutions and programmes.

Data Point	Benchmark	Value	Date	Commentary
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Total intended learner numbers compared to total enrolment numbers	32	32	2022	The provider has indicated that they can recruit two cohorts of 16 learners per year so the value number is the total of all learners across all years. In their portfolio the provider outlines they plan to increase learner numbers in line with their resource capacity.
Learners – Aggregation of percentage not continuing	3%	15.8%	2019-20	The provider has used internal data to provide us with this value. The percentage of learners not continuing is significantly higher than the benchmark. They have reflected upon this in relation to the structure and delivery of their programme, and this is explored further in the <a href="#">data and reflections</a> section.
Graduates – Aggregation of percentage in employment / further study	94%	N/A	2019-20	The provider currently doesn't have a system in place to formally track the destination of their students, however, are working on processes to collate this data. They state that many students gain paid positions through placements or within NSPC.
Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) award	N/A	N/A	N/A	As provider is within the larger Middlesex group of providers and Middlesex is the validating body, NSPC is not included in this data point. TEF does not hold an award for them.
National Student Survey (NSS) overall satisfaction score (Q27)	N/A	N/A	N/A	As provider is within the larger Middlesex group of providers and Middlesex is the validating body, NSPC is not included in this data point. OFS does not hold this data on the them.
HPCP performance review cycle length	N/A	TBC	2018-21	We have recommended a review period of two years after reviewing the providers portfolio and being satisfied with their performance but

				limited by the number of data points available. This will be confirmed once the report has gone to the Education and Training Panel who will make the final decision
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## Section 3: Performance analysis and quality themes

### Portfolio submission

The education provider was asked to provide a self-reflective portfolio submission covering the broad topics referenced in the [thematic areas reviewed](#) section of this report.

The provider has delivered its current program since 2011 and the provider is within the greater Middlesex University family. The provider was selected alongside their other Middlesex partners to complete the performance review process this year. This is their first Performance Review however we previously engaged with them via the old Annual monitoring process.

The education provider's self-reflection was focused on challenges, developments, and successes related to each thematic area. They also supplied data, supporting evidence and information.

### Quality themes identified for further exploration

We reviewed the information provided, and worked with the education provider on our understanding of their portfolio. Based on our understanding, we defined and undertook the following quality assurance activities linked to the quality themes referenced below. This allowed us to consider whether the education provider was performing well against our standards.

We sought out clarification on each quality theme via email communication to allow the provider to elaborate on previous information they had sent or send further evidence documents to answer the queries.

#### Quality theme 1 – Managing growth with appropriate staffing numbers

**Area for further exploration:** The education provider's learner numbers, number of programmes and staff employed have continued to grow. They have accommodated this by outsourcing some of the administrative provisions (such as human resources (HR), accounts and web development) to maintain capacity. We explored how this growth and further need for staff resourcing is being managed in practice. The implications of suitable staff numbers are relevant for considering sustainability and programme management.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The provider created and provided a new organisational diagram to outline the number of new staff who have been employed and the management structure. We found this useful for understanding capacity across their

programmes. They also have teaching consultants on the programmes. The provider has indicated that they accept a maximum of 32 learners a year onto the programme and outlined the different staff they have in place to support learners and programme delivery. We were satisfied that the provider has considered the impacts of growth and planned sufficiently to manage this in terms of staff.

### Quality theme 2 – Monitoring feedback from practice placements

**Area for further exploration:** The provider explains in helpful detail how placements are monitored, managed, and reviewed. We noted that provision of supervision modules is an area of good practice. In their reflection, the provider outlines they 'rely on learner feedback and only become aware of problems as they emerge'. We explored how the provider could improve this mechanism and develop potential solutions through more proactive monitoring. This is important for ensuring that suitable monitoring is in place to support learners on placements.

**Outcomes of exploration:** Learners are asked to feed back on their placement and supervisor's comments on a termly placement report form. Placements are also able to feedback on learners through this report form and during the annual meeting of placement supervisors. The provider intends to instigate an annual satisfaction survey for learners to complete covering all aspects of the programme. The provider is looking at an annual placement feedback experience feedback form, to gain feedback about each placement. Learners and clinical supervisors have a Clinical Coordinator available to assist with concerns. They are intending to put suitable mechanisms in place to support learners through more feedback surveys to ensure they are receiving constructive and useful feedback to monitor placements. Based on this further detail about feedback mechanisms, we were assured that the provider is performing adequately.

### Quality theme 3 – Breadth of interprofessional education

**Area for further exploration:** There is good evidence of interprofessional education within NSPC using a wide pool of professionals to teach on the programmes. The provider appears to be performing well in involving other professional groups during training. We explored if there are opportunities for learners to experience working with other professional groups outside of the faculty. This is important to ensure they get a range of experiences and environments in which they can understand the roles of other professionals and learn how they may work together in practice.

**Outcomes of exploration:** As well as the opportunities that learners get to work with a range of professionals within the programme teaching, learners are invited to take part in the annual Research Students' Summer Conference. Here they can present their research to learners/faculties in other disciplines within Middlesex University, outside of their own programme. Furthermore, learners work with other professionals in their placement or work settings, where they are required to present their pilot study findings, acting as another opportunity for interprofessional education. We were satisfied that the provider has included a range of opportunities for interprofessional education both with and outside of institution.

### Quality theme 4 – Data relating to equality and diversity

**Area for further exploration:** The provider outlined data points they collect with regards to age, gender and ethnic balances across their learners, highlighting their 'culture of equality and acceptance'. We explored further if the provider has access to more detailed data points on the diversity of learners' backgrounds, and if there are demographics for learners at both admission and completion stages. This information is useful to be able to understand the distribution over different programmes and ensure accessibility.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The provider currently collect voluntary data on different aspects of diversity, however, plans to make this compulsory to enable them to track trends. The provider has identified the challenges they face in extracting data by programme and by intake. They are working with their web developers to address this so they can make more definitive statements about accessibility of their programmes in the future. We were satisfied that the provider is actioning plans to improve their equality and diversity data and has reflected well on their performance here.

#### Quality theme 5 – Managing placement capacity and variety

**Area for further exploration:** From the submission, the visitors understood that learners secure their own practice learning opportunities, which are mostly in the National Health Service (NHS), and monitored and assessed by external bodies. The provider has a Clinical Coordinator who creates more informal relationships with placement managers and supervisors as part of this collaborative arrangement. Although information is provided explaining how placements are monitored, managed and reviewed, it is unclear how placement capacity is being secured for the future.

We explored in more detail the clinical coordinator to ensure the role's suitability and relevance in obtaining suitable placements for learners. This is important to understand how the provider ensures safe, relevant and supportive placements for learners.

With the growth of learner number (which we explored through [quality theme 1](#)), we further explored how the increased capacity demands of placements is managed and facilitated to ensure that all learners have access to the variety of placements. It is important that the provider can reflect on current and future placement capacity in relation to their predicted growth, to ensure learners continue to meet learning objectives.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The clinical coordinator is responsible for guiding learners on planning and obtaining their clinical placements. They monitor learner progress in placements, and the provider has supplied a description of the role of the clinical coordinator. The provider supports learners in finding placements through training days and using the clinical coordinator. This outlines how they monitor, plan and coordinate with learners and placements.

The provider puts the onus on learners to secure their own placements. Learners are required to ensure their placements are varied and meet the approval requirements.

They have contract agreements with several placement providers, over a range of professions and diverse learning environments. They have developed contacts with services in the NHS to provide potential placements. They have not had any difficulties with learners securing clinical placements so far, but plan to focus on this area in the future.

We were satisfied that the role of the clinical coordinator is relevant and appropriate for supporting learners with placements, and that the provider has reflected well on this. We are satisfied that the provider is reflecting upon placement capacity and variety and has good support in place for learners.

#### Quality theme 6 – The role of ‘touch point staff’ in curriculum development

**Area for further exploration:** We are satisfied that the provider is performing well through their reflections on curriculum development and their responses to public events during the review period. They employ ‘touch point staff’ for protected characteristics, to support specific learning needs and to instigate changes in how teaching is delivered. They also offer training to their faculty on inclusivity and cultural sensitivity. We explored how this new and positive development is integrated into practice and how feedback is actioned with regards to developing the curriculum. This is an area of good practice we were interested to know more about.

**Outcomes of exploration:** The touch point staff are core team members and directly involved in curriculum development. Each ‘touch point’ brings a particular focus with regards to changes to the curriculum, policy, issues in society or brought up by learners. This is done in weekly academic meetings and then decisions are made about changing existing curriculum or policies, which may be taken to the teaching committee. The information provided gave clarity on the role of touch point staff and their involvement in developing the curriculum. We are satisfied that the provider is appropriately reflecting upon and then addressing issues where necessary, and their use of touch point staff is good practice.

#### Quality theme 7 – Involvement of service user in the programme

**Area for further exploration:** The provider has outlined that they find including service users in their programme a challenge. They invite service users to the

induction module and talks, however the provider identified that organisation of this has been challenging as they do not have their own pool of service users to draw from. Instead, they connect with service users outside of the organisation as they are not directly linked to a clinical setting. Learners are required to reflect upon their own service user experience when embarking on their own personal therapy. We explored how stronger connections can be made with service users to involve them in the programme. The visitors wanted to ensure how service users and carers are able to contribute to the programme in a range of ways, including through learning.

**Outcomes of exploration:** Learners meet a service-user in their first year on the induction module where there is a whole session devoted to the topic. Due to the nature of the types of service users that are relevant to learners involving experiences of therapy, and the provider not having links with a clinical setting

outside of the organisation, it has been challenging to increase service user involvement. The provider does not request feedback from learners on their own roles as service users, rather required learners to be self-reflective of experiences and the impact of both the service user and professional role.

The provider has discussed how they plan to increase the inclusion of service users into the programme. They are using their clinical coordinator to make stronger links with service users through their most used placement settings, to ensure service users have more involvement with the programme. Through the approval process, they evidenced that they meet the threshold for the standard of service user involvement into the programme. We are satisfied that the provider has reflected upon service user involvement and is having discussions regarding further involvement. We recommend that the provider implements an action plan to increase service user involvement into the programme and addresses the difficulty in accessing service users.

### Quality theme 8 – Learner satisfaction

**Area for further exploration:** There are numerous references to the involvement of learners included in the providers portfolio reflection. The provider appears to be doing well, and has improved communication issues arising out of covid pandemic. We explored how learner satisfaction is audited and how the provider has reflected upon the effectiveness of their processes in place if a learner raises a concern. As we cannot gauge learner satisfaction through the externally supplied data points we currently use, it is important to see how the provider is reflecting on their performance to ensure and maintain learner satisfaction.

**Outcomes of exploration:** Learners take part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey from which the provider gains insight into their experience of research. The feedback received is used for internal development and enables the provider to compare against sector benchmarks. They also intend to conduct their own annual satisfaction survey. Learners can raise concerns to the team or the complaints officer. If the complaint is formal, the provider follows the complaints procedure, and the nature of the concern will determine how it is managed. If bigger changes to policy or curriculum are required, the concern will be taken to the leadership team for discussion and approval.

Through approval of the programme, we have established we are satisfied with the policies and procedures the provider has in place. We are satisfied that the provider has reflected on the methods of learner feedback and are planning to develop and improve this appropriately.

## Section 4: Summary of findings

This section provides information summarising the visitors' findings for each portfolio area, focusing on the approach or approaches taken, developments, what this means for performance, and why. The section also includes a summary of risks, further areas to be followed up, and areas of good practice.

## Overall findings on performance

### Quality theme: Institution self-reflection

#### Findings of the assessment panel:

- **Resourcing, including financial stability –**
  - The provider is well established and has provided online programmes for 20 years. Learner and staff numbers have grown gradually and sustainably, whilst considerate of the resources available. The education provider has identified a plan to ensure sustainability by increasing online provision within programmes, which will also increase accessibility for learners.
  - To cater for the incremental growth, the provider has outsourced certain provisions (HR, pension scheme, accounts, office equipment etc) to specialist agencies. They have a well-structured internal staff hierarchy to manage decision making, with regular collaboration to allow flexibility and continuous improvement.
  - The provider has developed a learner and staff management system to improve record keeping and has acknowledge the potential challenges they will face if they continue to grow, but have outlined actions they intend to complete to accommodate for further growth such as automated systems and better electronic record keeping.
  - They have recognised through blended learning they can provide learners more online resources to enhance their learning experience and increase accessibility. The education provider has reflected suitably on growth and stability addressed expectations for the future, explored in [quality activity 1](#). We were satisfied that the provider is performing well.
  
- **Partnerships with other organisations –**
  - The provider has a close working relationship with Middlesex University, and the Memorandum of Cooperation sets out the roles and responsibilities of each institution.
  - All of their programmes are subject to quinquennial review from Middlesex University, assisted by external approvers, and by relevant professional bodies (Humanists UK, British Psychological Society, United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy).
  - The provider has a close working relationship with affiliated organisations such as the Existential Academy, through which there is an arrangement for staff to present at a monthly meeting of the Society of Psychotherapy, leading to staff development.
  - We noted there was a limited supply of placement opportunities through the providers partnerships with other organisations. This area was explored through [quality theme 7](#). We considered that the provider reflected upon their partnerships and how that has impacted upon staff capacity and performance.
  - They have reflected upon the value of, and outlined the potential need for, further partnerships, demonstrating good performance in relation to this.

- **Academic and placement quality –**
  - The provider has monitoring in place at a module level and is also involved in a continual monitoring process that is organised as part of Middlesex University.
  - All programme materials are scrutinised by their partner university as part of their validation process, and by the external examiner to ensure that they are designed for the appropriate level of study.
  - The provider works closely with learners to find suitable placements, which need to be approved by the clinical coordinator.
  - There is a combination of placement supervision and learning based clinical supervision which provides a thorough and effective system for approving and ensuring the quality of practice-based training.
  - The provider is addressing the challenges they have faced relating to getting low return rates to module feedback surveys. We addressed feedback mechanisms in place in [quality theme 2](#), and the provider has outlined their plan to improve feedback methods. They intend to redesign the questions to make them easier to complete to increase the completion rate.
  - The provider has reflected upon placement capacity and addressed the need to ensure sustainability and capacity of placements in the future in [quality activity 5](#). We are satisfied that the provider is ensuring academic and placement quality through their programme management and monitoring.
  
- **Interprofessional education –**
  - The provider has a range of self-employed faculty staff from different professional backgrounds that interact with learners throughout the programme.
  - Learners have many opportunities to learn from other learners on different programmes in modules, workshops and lectures. Learners are also invited to a conference to share their research and learning with other professionals, as explored in quality activity [quality theme 3](#).
  - We were satisfied that the provider is performing adequately and reflecting on the interprofessional education available to learners through their programme.
  
- **Service users and carers –**
  - The provider recognises the importance of including service users in the programme and includes service user involvement in the induction module.
  - The provider has no direct links with clinical placements, therefore no direct relationships with their own pool of service users. They currently invite service users to be involved from external, indirectly linked settings. They intend to strengthen their connections with service users in their most commonly used placements.
  - Learners work with service users during their clinical placements. The provider also indicated that learners act as service users whilst they embark on their own compulsory personal therapy and reflect on their experiences, however we questioned the dual-role issue here and this was reflected upon in [quality activity 7](#).

- We consider the provider to be adequately involving service users and suitably reflecting on ways to improve the use of service users and carers in their programme.
  - The provider has discussed increasing the involvement of service users into their programme, and we recommend they further action this to increase the pool of service users and ensure sustainability of their involvement in the future.
- **Equality and diversity –**
    - The provider aligns to the Middlesex University’s Equality and Diversity policy as published in September 2020. In addition to this they operate their own Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy.
    - They provide a ‘touch point’ for each of the protected characteristics as per the equality act 2010, contained within the Programme Handbook. Tutors and faculty staff are offered training and workshops with regards to these touch points.
    - Programmes are designed to be inclusive and allow equality and encourage diversity. The provider collects data on their learners, however, is striving to improve the data collected to be able to make more informed improvements to programmes, as explored in [quality theme 4](#).
    - The provider has a diversity committee to ensure policies on equality and diversity are followed. Actions have been taken in response to learner feedback to include a more diverse range of authors and thinkers in the programme. They have responded appropriately to current matters such as Black Lives Matters movements.
    - The visitors noted good practice by the provider with regards to inclusion of named team members as ‘touch points’ for specific protected diversity characteristics, and we were satisfied that the provider is taking actions to continuously improve their approach to equality and diversity.
- **Horizon scanning –**
    - The provider has been running programmes for a substantial number of years and have continued to only grow in a sustainable and thoughtful way to ensure that any increase in learner numbers can be managed appropriately. This was explored in [quality activity 1](#).
    - They have established that by increasing online provision for theory modules as a way to deliver programmes in a blended way they will ensure sustainability and increase accessibility for learners, initiated as a result of the pandemic. This will overcome other challenges they will potentially face in the future with regards to limited physical resources.
    - The provider has considered challenges of staff absences and losses due in the future but have already implemented succession planning to ensure programme delivery remains unaffected.
    - We noted the provider is performing well, highlighted by the constant monitoring and future-proofing in place. They have reflected on succession planning and responded to the changes in the educational landscape because of COVID.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** We noted that there is limited involvement of service users in the provider's programme. The visitors recommended the provider expands the use of service users in future teaching and assessment activities. This area has met the threshold standards for the programme, however, limits the provider's use of service users and carers and should be considered.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None. In the provider's next performance review we will ask for specific reflections to understand any impacts on service user involvement and if they have impacted upon the approved programmes. We will be able to refer back to previous performance review reports to review performance changes.

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:** The visitors noted good practice by the provider with regards to inclusion of named team members as 'touch points' for specific protected diversity characteristics

Quality theme: Thematic reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Impact of COVID-19 –**
  - The provider stated the impacts of the pandemic were managed well due to all programmes already being readily available for online teaching. Staff were already accustomed to working online and remotely, resulting in a smooth transition to align to the restrictions imposed.
  - They are continually improving and updating their online learning and teaching platforms and have been delivering online for 20 years.
  - The provider has continued to support staff with flexible working policies and support mechanisms, and ensured resources are available to learners. They have introduced safety measures for learners and staff, implemented on return site buildings and rooms.
  - We considered the provider is performing well in this area. The reflective section in their portfolio suggests the provider has considered learning and relational needs as well as practical health needs.
  
- **Use of technology: Changing learning, teaching and assessment methods –**
  - As discussed in the 'Impact of COVID-19' section, the provider has found the transition to online teaching relatively smooth as they have been using an online platform for teaching for many years.
  - They provider has reflected on the experiences, recognising they need to move away from traditional classroom-based teaching, particularly where they are teaching theoretical modules and that more interactive methods are better for learners, particularly in terms of inclusivity.
  - The blended learning has been received well by learners and enabled the provider to monitor engagement with content. They are currently reviewing modules to examine structure of module narrative, methods of delivery and assessment.

- We are satisfied that the provider is responding well to changes in circumstances and learners have good access to resources.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:**

- The provider has considered learning and relational needs as well as practical health needs in response to the COVID pandemic
- The provider has responded well to the changes in provision during the pandemic and incorporated technology throughout the programme, taking learning points forward for future use.

Quality theme: Sector body assessment reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Assessments against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education –**
  - The provider's HCPC-approved programme meets the QAA subject benchmarks for psychotherapy and counselling in higher education at masters level.
  - The programme is designed to meet the standards as set out by the British Psychological Society (BPS), HCPC, UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association (UPCA).
  - The programme is a Middlesex University programme and therefore underpinned by the Middlesex quality assurance policies.
  - We are satisfied that the provider is performing well here. Learner assessment criteria are managed according to Middlesex University requirements.
- **Assessment of practice education providers by external bodies –**
  - Most placement settings are part of the NHS, either primary or secondary care, or are charities which are assessed by external bodies separate to the providers processes.
  - The clinical placement handbook outlines the contractual agreement required with all placement providers. This includes all necessary standards which must be covered by placements, and outlines how placements must maintain good standing with their regulatory bodies and communicate any problems encountered during their external regulatory processes.
  - The provider has a clinical coordinator role who is responsible for guiding learners on planning and obtaining their clinical placements. They will monitor placements and learners to ensure quality and standards are being met. This was explored in [quality activity 5](#).
  - We are satisfied that the provider is performing well here and have the appropriate staff in place to support learners.
- **Other professional regulators / professional bodies –**

- The provider has a 'review and revise strategy' for programmes to prepare for revalidation with Middlesex University and reaccreditation with the professional bodies. There are regular reviews of programmes to ensure that they meet the standards of the relevant professional bodies and regulators they are associated with.
- Learners on professional pathway trainings are guided through application to professional statutory bodies.
- The provider has responded to recommendations made through the revalidation of programmes with Middlesex University, either actioning them appropriately during the review period or currently working on improving process in response to feedback.
- We were satisfied with the report from the British Psychological Society (BPS) and that the provider has reflected and addressed feedback appropriately over the review period.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:** The provider demonstrates good practice by ensuring that programme and module content aligns to the standards set by the relevant professional bodies, and reviews this regularly.

Quality theme: Profession specific reflection

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Curriculum development –**
  - As outlined previously, the provider designs their programme curriculums to aligns with the standards from professional bodies, developments within the field and current affairs.
  - The provider has shown good reflection on how they have implemented changes relating to learner feedback and current affairs. They have responded to changes in society, decolonising the curriculum, and appointing 'touch point staff' for protected characteristics.
  - They have been proactive in their actions, and we are satisfied they are performing well.
  
- **Development to reflect changes in professional body guidance –**
  - Many of the providers core staff are involved with committee work for the relevant professional bodies. This enables them to remain at the forefront of developments regarding practice, ethics and conduct.
  - They have followed guidance and information from professional bodies with regards to teaching and placements during the pandemic.
  - We were satisfied that the provider is reflecting changes in professional body guidance appropriately and performing well.
  
- **Capacity of practice-based learning –**
  - Learners secure their own placements. They are required to ensure their placements are varied and meet the approval requirements. The

provider works closely with learners to help them find appropriate clinical placements. An agreement is reached and recorded with the placement provider. Each placement setting and arrangement needs to be approved by the Clinical Coordinator. We explored this further in [quality activity 7](#).

- The provider has contract agreements with a range of placement providers to ensure a diverse range of learning environments for learners.
- Learners receive supervision for their work both at the placement as well as at NSPC. This double supervision ensures that the provider is able to monitor the learners practical work and ensure that they are meeting the learning outcomes and competencies.
- We explored the capacity of placements in [quality activity 7](#) and were satisfied that the provider is working to ensure the sustainability of practice placements for all learners.
- The provider has identified challenges they have experienced with gaining feedback regarding learner placements, however are in progress of improving this.
- We viewed there was very helpful detail provided in the reflective portfolio, explaining how placements are monitored, managed, and reviewed. Provision of supervision modules is a good practice point, and we are satisfied that the provider is performing adequately.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:**

- The provider has demonstrated good practice with how they respond well to changes and feedback and are able to reflect this into reviewing their curriculum.
- The provider shows good practice in their dual supervision of learners to ensure learners are able to achieve the learning objectives.

Quality theme: Stakeholder feedback and actions

**Findings of the assessment panel:**

- **Learners –**
  - The provider gains feedback from learners through the module evaluations, boards of studies, Town Hall meetings or informal feedback to core staff. We further explored this in [quality theme 9](#).
  - They have identified the main areas of feedback have related to essays and response times. The provider has responded to this by working with tutors to enable them to give more feedback and improve where possible. This is an ongoing process. They are also providing more support to staff members and recruited more staff to ease burdens on current staff.
  - The provider received feedback from the last board of studies that learners had seen a difference in communication and were grateful.

- The provider has reflected on the efficiency of their complaints process over the review period and have a dedicated Complaints Officer who collates information and manages the timeline to ensure that complaints are heard and responded to in a timely manner.
  - We are satisfied that the provider has the correct policies and procedures in place through their programme approval. We were satisfied that the provider is reflecting appropriately and performing well and has improved communication issues arising out of the COVID pandemic.
- **Practice placement educators –**
    - The provider gains feedback from placement supervisors each term.
    - The provider offers an annual meeting with placement supervisors to discuss programme criteria and requirements and can offer training if required.
    - We have further explored the management of practice placements in [quality activity 5](#) and [7](#), where we discuss the clinical coordinator's role in building relationships with placements and learners.
    - We are satisfied that the provider is performing adequately in relation to practice placements and their educators.
- **External examiners –**
    - External examiners are involved in the scrutiny of programme materials as part of the validation process. They help to ensure materials are designed for the appropriate level of study.
    - The provider has external examiners appointed by Middlesex University for all its programmes.
    - As well as boards of studies meetings there are twice yearly progression and exit boards which are attended by an external examiner who is also an existential counselling psychologist. At this board the external examiner reviews a sample of learners' work to ensure quality is maintained at an appropriate standard.
    - Feedback received from the external examiner has been excellent. They acknowledged the provider has addressed previous issues with marking transparency and feedback around moderation.
    - We are satisfied that a good relationship with the external examiner is evident. There are no concerns, and this is emphasised by the excellent report from the external examiner.

**Risks identified which may impact on performance:** None

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:**

- The provider has shown good practice in their response to learner feedback and addressing the issues.
- The provider has maintained a very good relationship with their external examiner.

Data and reflections

## **Findings of the assessment panel:**

### **Aggregation of percentage of learners not continuing:**

- The provider identified that 15.8% of learners either permanently withdrew or exited the programme early, which is significantly higher than the 3% benchmark. They have reasoned this down to the design of the programme allowing for flexibility for learners. Learners can study over a longer period of time, sometimes disenrolling then coming back. Other learners have encountered financial struggles and up until recently the programme was not eligible for learner loans.
- The programme has three exit points so that learners who are unable to complete their training will gain a qualification for the part of the training they had successfully completed. Sometimes, learners decide that they do not want to complete the doctoral research and continue with the full doctorate and exit early with an MSc.
- The provider has addressed this low retention value by re-evaluating entry criteria and ensuring learner eligibility for learner loans

### **Aggregation of percentage of those who complete programmes in employment / further study:**

- The provider lacks this data point. They do not have a systematic formal way of tracking first destination statistics but are currently working on a process for collating this data
- Due to the nature of the vocational programme, many learners will gain paid positions upon graduation. Some graduates remain with the provider to teach and supervise.

### **Internal monitoring:**

- The provider uses internal monitoring such as the module evaluation form and peer review process to monitor teaching quality. They are considering formalising assessment of teaching quality via a survey produced internally to collect further data.
- Learners are asked at several points in their education about their satisfaction with their programme. In addition to those measures already mentioned, learners take part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) survey organised by Middlesex University as well as other surveys which focus on their research experience or their overall experience in the leaving questionnaire.
- The staff to learner ratio was 7.44. This figure was based on the calculation NSPC completed as part of the re-accreditation with the BPS in 2018.
- The provider can provide data points through the annual monitoring process they undertake with Middlesex University each year

### **Risks identified which may impact on performance:**

- The provider has outlined the potential reasons for the higher than benchmark percentage of learners not continuing.

- Many of the performance data normally available for a university-provided programme are not available for this programme. We are relying on the qualitative comments provided in the portfolio. The provider has acknowledged this and has identified areas where they can obtain more feedback in the future.

**Outstanding issues for follow up:** None

**Areas of good and best practice identified through this review:** The provider has identified several areas where they can improve data points and collect further feedback, which will hopefully be evident in their next performance review.

## Section 5: Issues identified for further review

This section summarises any areas which require further follow-up through a separate quality assurance process (the approval of focused review process).

There were no outstanding issues to be referred to another process

## Section 6: Decision on performance review outcomes

### Assessment panel recommendation

Based on the findings detailed in section 4, the visitors recommend to the Education and Training Committee that:

- The education provider's next engagement with the performance review process should be in the 2023-24 academic year
- The issues identified for referral through this review should be carried out in accordance with the details contained in section 5 of this report

**Reason for this recommendation:** Overall, the portfolio was completed well and showed good reflections from the provider. It clearly showed their progress and performance during the review period. Due to the lack of comparable data points available for this provider, we recommend the maximum review period of two years.

Appendix 1 – list of open programmes at this institution

<b>Name</b>	<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>Annotation</b>	<b>First intake date</b>
Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by Professional Studies (DCPsych)	FT (Full time)	Practitioner psychologist	Counselling psychologist		01/09/2011