

## Visitors' report

<b>Name of education provider</b>	British Psychological Society
<b>Programme name</b>	Qualification in Health Psychology (Stage 2)
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	Flexible
<b>Relevant part of HPC Register</b>	Practitioner psychologist
<b>Relevant modality / domain</b>	Health psychologist
<b>Date of visit</b>	25 – 26 May 2011

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## Executive summary

The Health Professions Council (HPC) approve educational programmes in the UK which health professionals must complete before they can apply to be registered with us. The HPC is a health regulator and our main aim is to protect the public. The HPC currently regulates 15 professions. All of these professions have at least one professional title which is protected by law. This means that anyone using the title 'Practitioner psychologist' or 'Health psychologist' must be registered with us. The HPC keep a register of health professionals who meet our standards for their training, professional skills, behaviour and health

The visitors' report which follows outlines the recommended outcome made by the visitors on the ongoing approval of the programme. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 25 August 2011. At the Committee meeting on 6 December 2011, the ongoing approval of the programme was re-confirmed. This means that the education provider has met the condition(s) outlined in this report and that the programme meets our standards of education and training (SETs) and ensures that those who complete it meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register. The programme is now granted open ended approval, subject to satisfactory monitoring.

## Introduction

The HPC visited the programme at the education provider as the Practitioner psychologist profession came onto the register in July 2009 and a decision was made by the Education and Training Committee to visit all existing programmes from this profession. This visit assessed the programme against the standards of education and training (SETs) and considered whether those who complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

This visit was an HPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit. The education provider supplied an independent chair for the visit.

## Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Katie Thirlway (Health psychologist) Harry Brick (Clinical psychologist) Mary Ann Elston (Lay visitor)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Mandy Hargood
Proposed student numbers	50 (rolling cohort)
First approved intake	January 2001
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Susan Van Scoyoc
Secretary	N/A meetings were recorded

## Sources of evidence

Prior to the visit the HPC reviewed the documentation detailed below, sent by the education provider:

	Yes	No	N/A
Programme specification	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Practice placement handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Student handbook	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
External examiners' reports from the last two years	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

During the visit the HPC saw the following groups or facilities:

	Yes	No	N/A
Senior managers of the education provider with responsibility for resources for the programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programme team	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Placements providers and educators/mentors	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Students	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The HPC did not see specialist teaching accommodation as the nature of the qualification does not require any specialist laboratories or teaching rooms.

## Recommended outcome

To recommend a programme for ongoing approval, the visitors must be assured that the programme meets all of the standards of education and training (SETs) and that those who complete the programme meet our standards of proficiency (SOPs) for their part of the Register.

The visitors agreed to recommend to the Education and Training Committee that a number of conditions are set on the programme, all of which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 43 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 14 SETs.

Conditions are requirements that the education provider must meet before the programme can be recommended for ongoing approval. Conditions are set when certain standards of education and training have not been met or there is insufficient evidence of the standard being met.

The visitors have also made a number of recommendations for the programme.

Recommendations are observations on the programme or education provider which do not need to be met before the programme is recommended for ongoing approval. Recommendations are normally set to encourage further enhancements to the programme and are normally set when it is felt that the particular standard of education and training has been met at, or just above the threshold level.

The visitors did not make any commendations on the programme. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

## Conditions

### **2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revise all admissions documentation to clearly articulate all student fees and when these fees apply to give the applicant the information they require to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

**Reason:** The visitors noted in discussion with the trainees that the information regarding the fees for the programme was unclear as there were several variations in the fees trainees had to pay over the period of the programme. As a result the visitors were unclear as to how and when students' fees had to be paid which was echoed by the trainees' comments regarding payments. When this issue was raised in the programme team meeting it was accepted that the structure was not clear and that work could be done on the fee structure to make it clearer for existing trainees and applicants to the programme. In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard continues to be met they require documentation that clearly outlines the fee schedule for the programme. In this way the visitors can be sure that applicants to the programme have the information they require to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

### **2.1 The admissions procedures must give both the applicant and the education provider the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on a programme.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revise the website and admissions information to articulate the different routes to registration as a health psychologist so that an applicant can make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the programme.

**Reason:** From the documentation received prior to the visit the visitors noted that the frequently asked questions that appear on the education provider's website did not reflect the different routes available to individuals who wish to be eligible to register with the HPC. The documentation submitted indicated that there was only one route to registration. In the meeting with the programme team, the visitors were made aware that the frequently asked questions had been revised as part of a website update since reviewing the documentation. The visitors did not receive the update of the website at the visit. The visitors therefore need to receive the updated website and admissions information, which reflects the different routes available to applicants who wish to be eligible to register with the HPC. The visitors can then be assured that applicants can view the correct information to make an informed choice as to whether to take up the offer of a place on the programme.

### **3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate how the programme is effectively managed.

**Reason:** From the documentation and meetings it was evident to the visitors that the programme leader fulfilled many roles within the programme and that the programme team itself was not large. In the meeting with the programme team the visitors were informed that the issue of the programme leader's multi-faceted role in the management of the programme was an area that had come up for discussion and that there was a succession plan in place. The visitors were also told that the organisation as a whole had processes in place to ensure that the programme continued to be managed seamlessly if the programme leader was unavailable at any time. The visitors felt that due to the multi-faceted nature of the programme leader's role, there was a risk that if the programme leader was absent for any reason the management of the programme could be affected. To ensure that this standard continues to be met the visitors require further information which clearly articulates the organisational processes in place to make sure that the programme will continue to be managed effectively in the absence of the programme leader.

### **3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide evidence of how the regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place utilise feedback about the programme from trainees, placement supervisors and placement audits.

**Reason:** Whilst it was clear from the programme documentation that the education provider monitored and evaluated the programme, the visitors could not determine how these processes included formal feedback from trainees, placement supervisors and placement audit forms. In discussion with the programme team the visitors noted that informal trainee feedback was gathered at various events such as training days, via email and other contact mechanisms. It was also clear that the programme leader is in constant contact with trainees and that any feedback provided was input into the programme monitoring and development processes. The visitors also noted that there was a close relationship between the programme and the placement supervisors and any feedback generated through email, telephone calls and meetings also fed into the monitoring and development processes for the programme. However the visitors could not see clearly how the informal feedback was consistently used in the monitoring and evaluation of the programme to evaluate the programme's effectiveness. The visitors therefore require further evidence to determine how the feedback formerly feeds into the regular monitoring and evaluation processes of the programme.

### **3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure the resources to support trainee learning while on placement are effectively used.

**Reason:** At the start of the visit the visitors received a presentation on the resources available to the trainees from the education provider. However the visitors were not clear from the presentation if trainees could access appropriate resources in their placement areas. Resources in this context may include

information technology, virtual learning environments and other specialist programmes and access to support staff.

In the meeting with the trainees it was clear that the resources available to an individual were dependent on the practice placement area. If, for example, a trainee was working in a higher education environment then they generally felt the resources were sufficient. If a trainee was on a placement in a non-education sector then the trainees generally felt that access to resources could be limited. While the trainees said that they used resources from the education provider if there was limited access whilst on placement, they were not aware of what resources should be available to them while on placement. The programme team reported in the meeting with visitors that there are quarterly meetings with the trainees where they are questioned about the adequacy of resources on placement and any issues are acted upon to ensure the trainee receives the required support to complete the programme.

However, the visitors were unable to determine the minimum requirement in terms of resources which the education provider expected to be in place for all placements. The visitors were also unable to determine how the education provider ensured that the resources were effectively used. They were therefore concerned that trainees may not be able to access appropriate resources to support their learning in placement. In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard continues to be met the visitors need to receive further documentation.

### **3.11 There must be adequate and accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of students in all settings.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly document how they ensure that there are adequate and accessible facilities for the welfare and wellbeing of trainees in all settings.

**Reason:** From their reading of the documentation prior to the visit the visitors were unclear as to how the welfare and wellbeing of the trainees was assured. The programme team in the meeting with the visitors reported that supervisors receive training on how the welfare and wellbeing of trainees should be taken into account. The team also pointed out that most of the trainees were within an education setting and therefore had access to the student service system in place there. However it was possible for a trainee to be based in a non-education setting and therefore the facilities for the welfare and wellbeing of trainees might be different. In the trainees meeting it was clear that if there were any welfare or wellbeing issues then the trainees would know who to approach both at their placement area and at the education provider. The trainees reported that they knew of the various procedures within the education provider if there was a complaint to be made and if a trainee had mitigation to report. The trainees considered that they were well supported.

However, the visitors could not identify what resources or facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing the education provider expected to be in place for trainees on work placement or how the education provider then determined whether they were accessible. The visitors would therefore like to receive further information about how the education provider ensures that there are adequate and



accessible facilities to support the welfare and wellbeing of trainees in all settings.

### **3.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly document how they ensure that there is a system of academic and pastoral support in place for trainees on the programme.

**Reason:** From their reading of the documentation prior to the visit the visitors were unclear as to how the academic and pastoral support of the trainees was assured.

The programme team in the meeting with the visitors reported that supervisors receive training on pastoral and academic support of trainees. The team also pointed out that most of the trainees were within an education setting and therefore had access to the student support systems in place. However it was possible for a trainee to be based in a non-education setting and therefore the system of academic and pastoral support might be different. In the trainees meeting it was clear that if there were academic and pastoral issues then the trainees would know who to approach both at their placement area and at the education provider. The trainees also reported that they knew of the various procedures within the education provider if there was a complaint to be made and if a trainee had mitigation to report. The trainees considered that they were well supported. However, the visitors could not identify what resources or facilities to support academic and pastoral support the education provider expected to be in place for trainees on work placement irrespective of where they were based or how the education provider then determined whether they were accessible. The visitors would therefore like to receive further information about how the education provider ensures that there is a system in place to support the academic and pastoral support of trainees in all settings.

### **3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate the protocol that is in place to deal with the situation where a trainee does not provide consent to act as a service user in practical or clinical teaching.

**Reason:** The visitors noted in the documentation and through meetings with the programme team that trainees are asked to sign a consent form before they participate as service users in practical teaching. The trainees in the meeting with the visitors did not appear to have any issues regarding giving consent for any service user participation, however, they did not know what would happen if they should refuse to give consent in such situations. The consensus seemed to be that it had not happened, but the trainees assumed the programme team would seek other opportunities for them to meet the required competencies for the programme to achieve the learning outcomes. In the meeting with the programme team the visitors questioned the team on what would happen if a trainee did not provide consent. The team confirmed that if a trainee refused to provide consent to act as a service user in a practical and clinical session then

the programme team would consider alternative ways in which that trainee could meet the standards of proficiency and this would be added into the training contract.

The visitors were concerned that there were no formal protocols in place to deal with situations where trainees declined from participation. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from trainees. Therefore the visitors require clarification of how trainees are informed of their right to withdraw from any activities which require them to participate as service users and of the processes in place to ensure trainees are able to meet the standards of proficiency. This is to ensure that appropriate protocols are used to obtain students' consent and that this standard continues to be met.

### **3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate the process for dealing with concerns about trainee's profession-related conduct for trainees, the co-ordinating supervisor and the practice placement supervisor.

**Reason:** From their reading prior to the visit, the visitors noted the processes for dealing with profession-related conduct issues but they were not clear when and how the processes would be instigated and how they inter-linked with any processes on placement.

It was clear that the trainees and practice placement supervisors were aware that if the profession-related conduct could not be easily resolved or the issue was significant then it would go to a full hearing with the education provider and a trainee could be suspended from the programme. The programme team emphasised that the processes mapped in the documentation were there to support trainees and practice placement supervisors. If such instances did arise then the formal education provider process would be instigated. The visitors were satisfied that processes for dealing with profession-related conduct were in place. However the visitors considered that it was not clearly communicated within the documentation how and when the processes would be instigated and how they inter-linked with the processes applicable to placements. Due to the dispersed nature of the placements the visitors felt that this must be clearly articulated within the documentation to ensure all involved are fully aware of the processes for dealing with concerns about a trainee's profession-related conduct.

### **5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that the trainee is fully supported on placement.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that trainees had a contract with their practice placement providers which had to be agreed and signed off by the education provider. As outlined in the condition against SET 3.8 these placements could be in an education setting or non-education setting.

In the programme team meeting the programme leader said that the contracts, when used in conjunction with the placement handbook, should ensure that the roles, relationships and responsibilities of the trainee, co-ordinating practice placement supervisor and any work place supervisor were clear to all. However, the visitors felt that the contract and placement handbook did not provide trainees with the minimum expectations they could receive on placement in terms of support. For example, the visitors could not identify how many times the trainee and co-ordinating supervisor/workplace supervisor should meet; the role the education provider played in monitoring the contract; or the guidance given to the co-ordinating supervisor/workplace supervisor on how to support the trainee in terms of emotional stress or aggression from service users. Therefore to be assured that trainees are fully supported, wherever they are on placement, the visitors need to receive further documentation.

#### **5.4 The education provider must maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that the approval and monitoring of all placements is thorough and effective.

**Reason:** During the meeting with the programme team the visitors discussed with the team how the auditing worked and how the information gathered was used to ensure that placements were managed effectively. The programme team said that all the data and feedback gathered was used to inform the approval and monitoring process. The team received feedback via various means including emails from trainees and the practice placement supervisors. However the team informed the visitors that a new placement audit form is being rolled out from September and placements would be approved and monitored on the completion of the forms. The revised form would be used to determine the nature of the placement and there would be various sections to be completed to allow the programme team to assess if the placement was appropriate. The visitors did not receive a copy of the new placement audit form at the visit. In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard continues to be met they require further documentation, such as a copy of the new placement audit form, to show how the approval and monitoring of all placements is thorough and effective.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must provide revised documentation to clearly show the adequacy and experience of staff working with the trainees on practice placement.

**Reason:** From the programme documentation the visitors could not determine how the programme team monitored the qualifications and experience of staff in the practice placement setting within the current documentation. The programme team reported that practice placement supervisors involved in training must be HPC registered and have completed any relevant training as required by the education provider. The programme team reported that the revised form being rolled out to approve and monitor placements would require details of all staff involved in the trainee's placement and the qualifications and experience held by the staff. The visitors did not receive a copy of the new placement audit form at

the visit. The visitors therefore require the revised documentation to clearly show how the programme team ensures the adequacy and experience of staff work supervising the trainees on practice placement.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must provide training for work place supervisors to ensure they understand the training requirements of the trainee on placement.

**Reason:** The visitors read in the documentation provided for the visit that there was practice placement educator training for the practice placement supervisors who lead in the training of the trainees. However they were unsure as to how the work place supervisors were trained to understand the programme specific training requirements that a trainee on this programme would need to meet.

The visitors were clear that a practice placement supervisor may delegate some of the training of a trainee to a work place supervisor. The programme team also reported that the responsibility for the delegating to a work place supervisor was the practice placement supervisors. Advice regarding the delegating of training was given during the training sessions for the practice placement supervisor. The work place supervisor does sign off competencies that the trainee may gain in the placement and the programme team said that this was detailed in the programme training handbook. It was not clear to the visitors from the information and discussions at the visit how the training of the work place supervisors ensured that they understood the requirements that students had to meet for this programme or ensured consistency in assessment. The visitors felt written support alone could be open to interpretation and therefore was not sufficient to ensure consistency of support and approach among the different work place supervisors. Therefore in order for the visitors to be assured that this standard continues to be met they need to see documentation that clearly identifies the how training received by the work place supervisors is appropriate to the programme.

### **5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate how regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the work place supervisor occurs.

**Reason:** From the meetings with the programme team and with the practice placement supervisors it was clear that there was regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and practice placement supervisors. However it was not clear if the work place supervisor had the same kind of collaborative relationship with the education provider. As the work place supervisor had an important role in the training of the trainees the visitors considered that these supervisors should have a role in the collaboration involved in the programme and the visitors could not clearly identify this. The visitors require further information to articulate how the education provider

includes regular and effective collaboration with all placement educators, including the work place supervisors used in trainee's training.

**5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:**

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clearly articulate how trainees and practice placement supervisors understand what support is available for trainees failing to progress from placement and the communication that is available between the education provider and the practice placement supervisors.

**Reason:** From their reading of the documentation prior to the visit, the visitors could not determine what support was available to the not yet competent or failing trainee, or how this was communicated between the education provider and the practice placement supervisor. The visitors were informed by the programme team that the contract signed by the trainee and the practice placement supervisor and the placement handbook provided detail regarding failure. Should there be any issue regarding a trainee not meeting the competencies then the placement supervisors would email the programme leader. If there is a significant issue then it was considered at the Board for the programme award. There was a paper trail of evidence kept, such as emails, so that if a decision to fail was contested then evidence could be easily retrieved. The programme leader reported that where there had been issues with trainees struggling on the programme then support and communication was made available and that this was known to both the trainees and the practice placement supervisors.

The visitors did not consider that the contract clearly specifies the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of failure to progress throughout the programme. They also considered that the handbook was not sufficiently clear to ensure that the trainee would receive the relevant support if they should be failing on the programme. Whilst the practice placement supervisors and the trainees could contact the programme leader by email, the support measures that could be put in place were not clearly detailed in the contract or the handbook.

In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard is met they require further information which clearly articulates what support is available to the not yet competent or failing trainee, and how this is communicated between the education provider and the practice placement supervisors.

## Recommendations

### **4.5 The curriculum must make sure that students understand the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider including references to HPC's guidance on conduct and ethics for students in relevant reading lists.

**Reason:** The visitors considered that reference was made to the implications of HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics in the documentation received by the trainees on the programme and were satisfied the standard was met. However, the visitors felt that HPC's guidance on conduct and ethics for students was a useful additional piece of information which the education provider could utilise. They felt that inclusion of this document in relevant reading lists would enhance the trainees experience throughout the course of the programme and the trainees understanding of the implications of HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

### **5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:**

- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should review the supervisor's handbook so that it targets the responsibility of the practice placement supervisor rather than the trainee.

**Reason:** The visitors in their reviewing of the documentation noted in the supervisor's handbook that in places, the handbook referred to practice placement supervisors rather than trainees. The visitors felt this could lead to possible confusion in the roles and to ensure that this did not happen, the education provider should consider reassessing the supervisors' handbook to clearly separate the roles. The visitors felt that revision of supervisors' handbook would ensure that trainees and practice placement supervisors were fully prepared for placement.

### **5.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.**

**Recommendation:** The education provider should consider enhancing the stakeholder group which is involved in implementing a range of teaching and learning methods throughout the placement planning.

**Reason:** The visitors were content that this standard was met. At the visit the visitors heard from the programme team that they were further developing their stakeholders group. The visitors observed this to be an enhancement to the programme and encouraged the education provider to continue with the implementation of the stakeholder group to maintain the learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues throughout the practice placements.

Katie Thirlaway  
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