hpc
health professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	British Psychological Society
Programme name	Qualification in Occupational Psychology
Mode of delivery	Flexible
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Occupational psychologist
Date of visit	7 – 8 June 2011

Contents

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 'Occupational 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 22 February 2012. At the Committee meeting on 22 February 2012 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 psychology 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 and secretary for the visit.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Peter Branston (Educational psychologist) Richard Kwiatkowski (Occupational psychologist) Jacqueline Campbell (Lay visitor)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	350 candidates to be enrolled at any one time (on a continuous rolling cohort)
First approved intake	1 January 2007
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Ian Maynard (British Psychological Society)
Secretary	Lucy Kerry

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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☐	☐	☒
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☐	☐	☒

The HPC did not see the learning resources or 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 52 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 5 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

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of business planning that demonstrates a commitment to providing enough resources to deliver the programme for the proposed total enrolment of 350 students.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted there had been a rapid growth in the number of students enrolled on the programme since its formation in 2007. The visitors noted the programme currently has 220 students enrolled and has requested approval for a total cohort of 350 students. The visitors were satisfied that the current resource provision is appropriate for the current enrolment, given the particular model of provision employed, however they require further evidence that demonstrates that the education provider is committed to providing enough resources to deliver the programme for a proposed total enrolment of up to 350 students. In particular the visitors require evidence of business planning that demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the programme has enough practice placement educators, assessors, office support and infrastructure in place.

3.5 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to deliver an effective programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate that there is an adequate number of staff in place to deliver an effective programme for the proposed total enrolment of 350 students.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted a rapid growth in the number of students enrolled on the programme since its formation in 2007. The visitors noted the programme currently has 220 student enrolled and has requested approval for a total cohort of up to 350 students. The visitors were satisfied the current staffing provision, as conceptualised within this model of provision, is appropriate for the current enrolment, however they require further evidence that demonstrates that the education provider is committed to providing enough staff to deliver an effective programme. In particular the visitors require evidence that demonstrates a commitment to ensuring the programme has enough practice placement educators, assessors, and office support to deliver an effective programme for the proposed total enrolment of 350 students.

3.7 A programme for staff development must be in place to ensure continuing professional and research development.

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of a programme of staff development and information outlining any proposed staff development mechanisms, for practice placement educators, assessors and members of the programme board.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted the education provider is proposing to implement a number of mechanisms to ensure practice placement educators, assessors and members of the programme board can continue their professional and research development to support the delivery of the programme. The visitors in particular noted the plans to introduce an appraisal system and refresher training for practice placement educators. The visitors were not presented with evidence of a clear programme of staff development that ensures continuing professional and research development for practice placement educators, assessors and the programme board and note the particular importance of this provision because of the distance and distributed nature of provision. The visitors therefore require further evidence that a programme of staff development is in place and further details outlining any proposed staff development and evaluation mechanisms such as the planned appraisal system. Evidence may also include details of any links between appraisal systems and evaluation systems that demonstrates that a practice placement educators or assessor might have approval removed, or training needs identified.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must demonstrate how they will ensure resources are available to support student learning in all settings to effectively support the required learning and teaching activities throughout the duration of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team and students the visitors noted the current provision of journal articles is appropriate to support the required learning and teaching activities on the programme.

However, the visitors noted the current provision of journal articles is supported significantly by the 'EBSCO' electronic journal resource; the education provider was running the resource as a six month trial, and students on the programme gave very positive feedback regarding this resource. The visitors also noted the Chief Executive's observation that there had been a positive response amongst BPS members to the trial.

The visitors finally noted students are required to evidence the use of journal articles in order to undertake the required learning and assessment on the programme and that an end of the trial period for the 'EBSCO' electronic journal resource could therefore impact students ability to achieve the required learning outcomes. The visitors noted that *ad* hoc arrangements with some University libraries were possible but were not satisfied that this gave sufficient access to resources to all students. The visitors require the education provider to provide evidence to demonstrate this provision or an equivalent level of electronic access to full current articles will be maintained for students throughout the duration of the programme.

5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that the number, duration and range of practice placements are appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted recent changes had been made to the 'Plan of Training' document that was presented prior to the visit. The 'Plan of Training' document was a pro forma that students were required to complete before they were able to take up a place on the programme. The visitors noted that this document only required applicants to briefly outline their planned provision of training and supervisory arrangements. Through further discussions with the programme team it was noted that the programme team have recently amended the 'Plan of Training' document to require applicants to incorporate a more extensive plan of training. The visitors note that the planning of the provision of placements for the student is dependent on the 'Plan of Training' being appropriately robust. The visitors require information that outlines the changes that have been made to the 'Plan of Training' document to demonstrate that students gain access to an appropriate number, duration and range of practice placements to support the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Recommendations

3.6 Subject areas must be taught by staff with relevant specialist expertise and knowledge.

Recommendation: The education provider may wish to consider further emphasising to students the advantages of selecting a range of supervisory experiences throughout the course of the programme.

Reason: From discussions with students, the programme team and practice placement educators the visitors noted discussions around the range of supervisory experiences on the programme. The visitors recommend that the education provider may want to consider further emphasising to students the advantages of selecting a range of supervisory experiences throughout the programme, to encourage and further facilitate a greater depth and breadth of study and encourage further behavioural and role development for themselves. This may mean that the primary supervisor will need to consider acting more often as a training coordinator.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the information contained within the 'Register of Applied Psychology Practice Supervisors (RAPPS)' to ensure it is accurate and current.

Reason: From discussions with the students it was noted that the education provider's 'Register of Applied Psychology Practice Supervisors (RAPPS)' contained some incorrect or out of date information. The visitors noted that several students, on a number of occasions had attempted to use this resource to arrange supervision but found that the contact details were out of date or that supervision was no longer being offered by the practice placement educator. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider considers reviewing the information contained within the 'Register of Applied Psychology Practice Supervisors (RAPPS)' on a regular basis to ensure it is accurate, current and effectively used.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the mechanisms in place to further emphasise and highlight to students any additional sources of information in cognate areas of study that are available to them.

Reason: From discussions with the students the visitors noted that they were not all consistent in their response, or aware of the way they can access additional sources of information in cognate areas of study. Not all students have access to University Libraries or live within easy reach of the BPS Library in London. The visitors note the importance of students accessing a broad range of information to support the required learning on the programme. For example, other adjacent

areas of research such as management, human resources and physiology may be important for students to be able to access if they are working in, for example, organizational development, selection or ergonomics, respectively. The visitors therefore would like the education provider to consider reviewing the mechanisms in place to further emphasise and highlight to students the additional sources of information in cognate areas of study that are available to them.

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

Recommendation: The education provider may wish to consider reviewing the pastoral support mechanisms in place for students.

Reason: From discussions with the practice placement supervisors and students the visitors noted that practice placement educators have a multi-faceted role including both academic and pastoral support to students. The visitors recommend the education provider may want to consider reviewing the mechanisms in place for student welfare and wellbeing to offer additional and separate sources of pastoral support for students.

4.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Recommendation: The education provider may wish to consider increasing the range of learning and teaching approaches used for the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the students the visitors were satisfied that this standard has been met. From discussions the visitors noted the existence of student administered Yahoo group and that the students who were aware of this resource were positive about this development. In light of this positive feedback the visitors would like the education provider to consider formulating a formal strategic approach to the implementation of virtual learning environments to assist with increasing the range of learning and teaching approaches used.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education providers plan to implement mandatory refresher training for practice placement educators is taken forward.

Reason: From evidence gathered at the visit, the visitors noted initial training for practice placement educators is mandatory. The education provider additionally holds refresher training sessions. The visitors were satisfied with this information and considered this standard to be met. The visitors noted in discussion with the programme team they outlined plans to implement mandatory refresher training for practice placement educators. The visitors would like to recommend that these plans should be taken forward and implemented.

Jacqueline Campbell
Richard Kwiatkowski

Peter Branston