

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Keele University & Staffordshire University
Programme name	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DClinPsy)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Clinical psychologist
Date of visit	8 – 9 March 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 'Clinical 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 9 June 2011. At the Committee meeting on 7 July 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 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 part of a joint event as the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The professional body and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair and secretary, supplied by the education provider. Whilst the joint panel participated in collaborative scrutiny of the programme and dialogue throughout the visit; this report covers the HPC's recommendations on the programme only. As an independent regulatory body, the HPC's recommended outcome is independent and impartial and based solely on the HPC's standards. A separate report, produced by the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Sabiha Azmi (Clinical Psychologist) Annie Mitchell (Clinical psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	15
Initial approval	1 January 2004
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Steve Wyn Williams (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Jackie Campbell (Staffordshire University)
Members of the joint panel	Elena Alexandrou (British Psychological Society) Myra Cooper (British Psychological Society) Isabel Hargreaves (British Psychological Society) Robert Knight (British Psychological Society) Lucy Kerry (British Psychological Society) Stephen Morley (British Psychological Society)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 3 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.

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 revisit all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the terminology in use is reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider prior to the visit did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. The visitors noted a number of instances where out-of-date terminology was evident or terminology was not consistently applied throughout the documentation and advertising materials. The documentation on occasion referenced the HPC as 'accrediting' the programme. The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes instead we 'approve' education programmes. The visitors also noted that the documentation stated, on occasion, that completion of the programme will enable graduates to register with the HPC. All students need to apply to Register after they have successfully completed the programme and as such the language the education provider uses needs to reflect this. The education provider needs to make it clear to applicants and students that completion of the programme means they are eligible to apply for registration with the HPC. The visitors require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation; including advertising materials to ensure that it fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC and are consistent throughout.

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 amend the programme documentation to ensure that any applicant is able to clearly access information about the protocols, resources and support in place to make reasonable adjustments for students who may require it.

Reason: Through the review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider has protocols in place to make reasonable adjustments for applicants and students with certain health requirements. However, the visitors also noted that the programme documentation did not clearly highlight information about the education providers' reasonable adjustment protocols. The documentation also lacked information about the potential resources and support available to support the welfare and wellbeing of these students. The visitors require the programme documentation to be amended to ensure that any applicant or student with specific health requirements would be able to clearly access information about the education provider's reasonable adjustment protocols and information about the potential resources and support available. This is to ensure that applicants have the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to

take up a place on the programme and that the programme continues to meet this standard.

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 implement formal written protocols to obtain consent when students participate as service users.

Reason: The visitors noted in the programme documentation and in discussion with the programme team that consent was obtained verbally from students when they participated as service users in clinical and practical teaching. As a consequence the visitors noted that there was no formal mechanism in place to gain students consent. It is also the case that as no formal mechanism was in place to gain students' consent there was no evidence of how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained or how situations where students declined from participation were managed. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme has appropriate protocols in place to gain informed consent from students. This could lead to academic appeals and students successfully completing the programme despite the programme team having concerns about their fitness to practice. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement formal protocols for obtaining consent from students and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching (such as alternative learning arrangements).

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

Condition: The education provider must review the assessment regulations and pastoral support offered to ensure that flexibility is given to individual students who are required to take a leave of absence and that they are dealt with on a case by case basis.

Reason: From a review of the assessment regulations and from discussions with the students the visitors noted that if any student was required to take more than four weeks leave of absence due to extenuating circumstances they would be expected to intermit for twelve months without salary. The visitors noted the anxiety that this assessment regulation was causing a number of students and require the education provider to review this policy to ensure a more flexible approach is adopted, students are reviewed on a case by case basis and pastoral support is offered to students if they have to take an extended period of leave.

Recommendations

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider taking a more strategic approach in the monitoring and implementation of its equality and diversity policies.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. The visitors did however feel that that the programme team should consider taking a more strategic approach to the way it monitors and implements its equality and diversity policies. The visitors would like the education provider to consider formulating an equality and diversity strategy at a programme level to ensure that the work that is currently being undertaken around equality and diversity is conducted in a consistent, transparent and measured way.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider maintains effective dialogue and communication with the employing trusts and strategic health authority to ensure that the programme continues to have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Reason: The visitors noted in discussions with the senior management team, representatives from local employing trusts and strategic health authority that the programme is secure for the near future. Therefore the visitors are satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors noted that the discussions identified certain funding pressures within the programme. The visitors recommend that the education provider maintains effective dialogue and communication with the employing trusts and strategic health authority to ensure that the programme continues to have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing and enhancing the monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure that the views of key stakeholders influence the strategic direction and development of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from dialogue with the programme team the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. From discussions with the placement providers the visitors noted that the programme team are responsive to the views of stakeholders. However, the visitors feel that the programme team could develop this work and should consider reviewing and enhancing the monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure

that the views of key stakeholders influence the strategic direction and development of the programme.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to monitor the number of staff in place to ensure an effective programme is delivered.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. However, the visitors did note in discussions with students that during periods of staff annual leave it can be difficult for the students to get to speak with a member of the programme team. The visitors also noted in discussions with the programme team that it was acknowledged that the programme team had previously been stretched in terms of staffing, however they were now in a more sustainable position. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider should continue to monitor the number of staff in place to ensure that the problems identified can be dealt with and that an effective programme continues to be delivered.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the student experience of pastoral support.

Reason: In discussion with the students the visitors noted that some students raised concerns around the perceived variance in terms of the quality of pastoral support offered by different members of the programme team. The visitors were satisfied that this standard is met. However, they recommend that the programme team consider reviewing the systems of pastoral support in place to ensure that students are assured that a consistent provision is offered throughout.

4.3 Integration of theory and practice must be central to the curriculum.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider continues to review the teaching and learning approaches utilised within the programme to ensure students are sufficiently prepared in terms of theory and specialist client group knowledge when integrating into the full range of practice placement settings.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. However the visitors noted comments from students and practice placement educators that sometimes students did not have the theory and specialist client group knowledge required for each practice placement setting. The visitors would like the programme team to consider reflecting on this feedback and continue to review the teaching and learning curriculum in order to improve the integration of theory and practice.

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 amending module descriptors to clearly highlight HPC publications and standards.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were satisfied that this standard was met. Though this is the case the visitors articulated that that the module descriptors do not make clear reference to the available HPC publications and standards such as the Guidance on conduct and ethics for students. The visitors recommend that the education provider considers including HPC publications and standards in relevant reading lists to ensure that students are aware of the implications of the HPC standards of conduct performance and ethics.

6.3 Professional aspects of practice must be integral to the assessment procedures in both the education setting and practice placement setting.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the modular structure of the programme and the associated assessment processes.

Reason: The visitors were happy that sufficient evidence was provided in the documentation and at the visit to ensure that the programme continues to meet this standard. However, in discussions with the programme team and the students the visitors noted that the current modular structure and associated assessment processes can place a high level of burden on the programme team and students. The visitors recommend that the programme team consider simplifying the current modular structure and associated assessment processes. In this way the programme team may be able to reduce the burden on students and staff without impacting on the attainment level and quality of students.

Annie Mitchell
Sabiha Azmi