hpc health professions council

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	London Metropolitan University
Programme name	Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Counselling psychologist
Date of visit	18 – 19 April 2012

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 'Counselling 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 13 September 2012. At the Committee meeting on 13 September 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 psychologist profession came onto the register in 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	David Packwood (Counselling psychologist)
	Robert Stratford (Educational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Victoria Adenugba
Proposed student numbers	22 (between full and part time cohorts)
First approved intake	January 2004
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Vincent Hargy (London Metropolitan University)
Secretary	Abbey Bibi (London Metropolitan University)
	Crystal Peirera (London Metropolitan University)
Members of the joint panel	Elena Manafi (The British Psychological Society)
	Kimberley Wilson (The British Psychological Society)
	Molly Ross (The 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	☒	☐	☐
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)	☒	☐	☐

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 49 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 8 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.

Conditions

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 ensure that formal protocols are used to obtain trainees' consent when they participate as service users, and to manage situations when trainees decline from participating as service users, in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: From the documentation submitted the visitors learnt that trainees would be participating as service users during the programme. At the visit the visitors were presented with the Client consent forms, however they were unable to determine a formal process for obtaining trainees' consent and no documentary evidence of this was presented. From the discussions with the programme team, the visitors learnt that verbal consent is obtained. The programme team also discussed how they made applicants to the programme clear about what level of involvement was expected during the course of the programme.
The visitors were concerned that there was no formal protocol in place to detail how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained or how situations where trainees decline from participation were managed. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from trainees or could appropriately manage situations where trainees decline to participate. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement appropriate formal protocols for obtaining consent from trainees and for managing situations where trainees decline from participating.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme documentation to make explicit how the learning outcomes of the programme allow students to meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

2a.4 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected
   o understand the use and interpretation of tests and other assessment procedures
   o be able to critically evaluate risks and their implications

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors were unclear as to how the programme ensures that those students who successfully complete the programme can meet the above standards of proficiency. The 'Professional and Ethical Issues' module was referenced within the SOPs mapping document provided by the education provider as evidence as to how this SOP could be met by students. From a review of this evidence the visitors were clear about how students were taught the ethical implications of using tests. However, the visitors were unclear as to how students were taught to undertake appropriate tests as well as how to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected. The visitors were concerned that if a student was on a placement where tests were not used or where there were no supervisors who

had knowledge of how to undertake tests then students would not be able to meet this SOP. The visitors were also concerned that students may be prevented from going out on placement and performing tests and other assessment procedures without having first developed the skills required to safely do so. In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard is met, the visitors require further evidence of when and how students are taught how to administer and interpret tests. The visitors require this information to ensure that individuals completing the programme are fully prepared before they go out on placement and are able to meet all the standards required for safe and effective practice of the profession.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revise the programme documentation to make explicit how the learning outcomes of the programme allow students to meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

2b.1 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions
  o be able to conduct service evaluations

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors were unclear as to how the above standards of proficiency were taught within the programme. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that service evaluation was included with the third year doctoral research module and there were plans to also cover this during earlier in the programme. The visitors considered the response from the team but felt that the specific requirements of service evaluation, as distinct from research, were not explicitly documented. In order for the visitors to be assured that this standard is met, revised documentation is required which clarifies where and how the learning outcomes for the programme linked to the above standards of proficiency are delivered. The visitors require this information to ensure that individuals completing the programme will be able to meet all the standards required for safe and effective practice of the profession.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of the formal policies and processes in place for the approval and ongoing monitoring of practice placements

Reason: From the documents submitted and from discussions with the programme team the visitors did not have enough evidence to demonstrate that the education provider has a thorough and effective system in place for the approval and monitoring of placements. The visitors noted that the education provider does have mechanisms in place; they learnt that the placement co-ordinator for this programme may visit some new placement settings otherwise communication was established via email or telephone calls prior to a student going on placement. The visitors however did not see the audit tool used to

approve placements and therefore could not assess its suitability. They were also concerned that if there is no formal policy in place for the approval of placements there is a possibility for this to be overlooked if the placement co-ordinator is away or changes. There is also the possibility for inconsistencies to arise dependant on what mechanism was being used to initially contact a new placement if there is no formal procedure. The visitors also learnt that placements were not revisited or monitored again unless issues or concerns had been raised by students. They learnt that student's feedback on their placement experiences by completing a 'Placement Site Information Sheet' and that this information is stored in a 'Practice placement database' for students to refer too. They were concerned that the current monitoring mechanism in place relied solely on student feedback and there was no formal policy or procedure used by the programme team to monitor placements. As this SET requires that the programme team has policies and processes for approving placements and details of systems for ongoing monitoring of placement providers the visitors require the programme team to provide further evidence to be assured that this SET is being met.

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

Condition: The programme team must put in place a formalised mechanism to ensure that all practice placement educators are trained and have their training updated regularly.

Reason: From discussion with the programme team, and in discussion with the practice placement providers, the visitors learnt that new practice placement educators were given training if they were visited otherwise training was provided via the telephone by the placement co-ordinator however no refresher training was offered. The visitors were not provided with the training content or broad learning outcomes of the training provided to placement educators.
As a result the visitors could not identify how the programme team ensures that practice placement educators are trained to assess students in a clear and consistent way and made fully aware of the requirements for supervision on this programme. The visitors were also unable to determine how updates to the programme would be related to placement educators if no form of retraining was offered. The visitors learnt during discussion with the programme team that plans to create an online forum for placement providers were being discussed and that this could be a platform where training and refresher training could be held however the visitors could not establish any guarantee that this would take place and what training would be provided. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team will ensure that placement educators have sufficient training to be able to supervise students from this programme. Primarily the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team ensures that placement educators can assess students to the required standard and how this will be updated on a regular basis. The visitors suggest the condition for SET 6.5 be looked at alongside this condition as they are closely linked.

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 programme team must provide further evidence of how students and practice placement educators are fully prepared for before placements commence.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers the visitors noted that practice placement educators are provided with the handbook for placement providers prior to supervising a student. The visitors were unclear about what information was provided to placement educators about the assessment procedures to be used to ensure that learning outcomes are met and marked consistently across all placements. During discussions with the Placement providers and Students the visitors learnt that whilst some placements provide an induction others did not. The visitors learnt that before the programme started the placement co-ordinator delivered a general introduction to students about placements. The visitors were unable to establish if this induction was thorough enough to prepare students before they went on placement. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the information provided to students to ensure that they are well informed about what is expected of them and their responsibilities during a placement. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that students fully prepared before they go on placement. The visitors also require further evidence of the information provided to placement educators to ensure that they are aware of the learning outcomes a student must meet whilst on placement and the measurement to be used for assessment. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that practice placement educators are fully prepared to supervise students and assess their performance.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate how the assessment strategy of the programme ensures that students who successfully complete the programme meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

2a.4 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected
  - understand the use and interpretation of tests and other assessment procedures
  - be able to critically evaluate risks and their implications

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not identify how the assessment strategy ensures that students are able to meet the above standards of proficiency. In particular, they were unclear as to where students were assessed on their knowledge of how to undertake appropriate tests as well as how to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected. From a review of the 'Professional and Ethical Issues' module, referenced within the SOPs mapping document provided by the education provider as evidence as to how this SOP could be met by students, the visitors were clear about how students were assessed on the ethical implications of using tests. However, the visitors were unclear as to how students were assessed on how to undertake appropriate tests. As it was unclear in the assessment strategy where this skill would be assessed, the visitors require further evidence to ensure that this standard is met. The visitors therefore require further evidence that demonstrates where, in the assessment strategy, the students will be assessed on their knowledge of how to undertake appropriate tests as well as how to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected. In this way the visitors can be sure that the students who successfully complete the programme can meet SOP 2a.4 and that this standard is met.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate how the assessment strategy of the programme ensures that students who successfully complete the programme meet the following standard of proficiency (SOP):

2b.1   be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions
   o   be able to conduct service evaluations

Reason: From the documentation provided prior to the visit, the visitors could not identify how the assessment strategy ensures that students are able to meet the above standards of proficiency. In particular, they were unclear as to where students were assessed on their knowledge of how to conduct service evaluations. In discussions with the programme team the visitors were informed that service evaluation was included with the third year doctoral research module and there were plans to also cover this during earlier in the programme. The visitors considered the response from the team but felt that the specific requirements of service evaluation, as distinct from research, were not explicitly documented. As it was unclear in the assessment strategy where this knowledge would be assessed, the visitors require further evidence to ensure that this standard is met. The visitors therefore require further evidence that demonstrates where, in the assessment strategy, the students will be assessed on their knowledge of how to conduct service evaluations. In this way the visitors can be sure that the students who successfully complete the programme can meet SOP 2b.1 and that this standard is met.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that the measurement of student performance is assessed consistently and objectively across all placements and ensures fitness to practice.

Reason: During discussions with placement supervisors the visitors learnt that they were provided with a 'Practice placement competency evaluation form' which showed ten broad areas and a set of specific competency pointers to illustrate the kinds of skills and abilities students are being assessed on. The assessment measurement is left to each placement supervisor's discretion. As the visitors learnt that currently there was no training provided to practice placement supervisors on assessment and marking the trainees objectively they were unable to determine how marking was equal and consistent across all placement sites. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme team will ensure that the measurement of student performance is objective and ensures fitness to practice across all placements. The visitors suggest the condition for SET 5.8 be looked at alongside this condition as they are closely linked.

6.11 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for the appointment of at least one external examiner who must be appropriately experienced and qualified and, unless other arrangements are agreed, be from the relevant part of the Register.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate within the assessment regulations that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme must be HPC registered unless alternate arrangements have been agreed.

Reason: At the visit the programme team presented the visitors with the education provider's policy on the recruitment of external examiners. The visitors were unable to see where it clearly articulated the requirement for an external examiner of a programme approved by the HPC to be appropriately registered. The visitors were happy that the current external examiner meets the requirement of the HPC. However this standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme must state that at least one external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HPC requirements regarding the appointment of external examiners to the programme have been included in the programme documentation, specifically in the assessment regulations, to ensure that this standard is met.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how best to inform the HPC of any changes to the physical resources associated with the programme.

Reason: The visitors were content that this standard was met. However if the programme moves to the new campus as suggested in the programme team meeting, the visitors recommend that the education provider should notify the HPC as soon as possible through the major change process when the final arrangements of this move have been finalised and are underway. This is due to the fact that they were unable to physically check out resources at the new site therefore there is scope of some of the resources discussed to change which could impact on how the programme continues to meet this standard.

6.8 Assessment regulations, or other relevant policies, must clearly specify requirements for approved programmes being the only programmes which contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider clearly articulating against all references to the Master of Science (MSc) award that it does not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

Reason: Within the 'Postgraduate Course Handbook' (p4), the 'Programme overview and information for prospective applicants' (p5) and the 'Course Specification' (p5) the visitors discovered statements that clearly articulated that the MSc in Psychological Counselling to not lead to eligibility to apply for Registration with the HPC, as such they were content that this standard was met. To further clarify that the MSc is not approved by the HPC the visitors suggest that in any instance were the MSc is discussed as a possible exit route within the Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology documentation the programme team should reiterate that the MSc does not lead to eligibility to apply for Registration with the HPC.

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David Packwood
Robert Stratford

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