

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Queen's University of Belfast
Programme name	Doctorate in Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology (DECAP)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Educational psychologist
Date of visit	6 – 7 March 2012

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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 'Educational 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 5 July 2012. At the Committee meeting on 5 July 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 part of a joint event. The professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The professional body and the HPC formed a joint panel, with an independent chair 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	Andrew Richards (Educational psychologist) Judith Bamford (Educational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	6 per cohort
First approved intake	January 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Gerry Mulhern (Queens University of Belfast)
Secretary	Gail Crawford Queens University of Belfast)
Members of the joint panel	Pat Bernett (British Psychological Society) Frances Lee (British Psychological Society) Garry Squires (British Psychological Society) Tony Tarrant (British Psychological Society) Lauren Ison (British Psychological Society) Molly Ross (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 condition is set on the programme, which must be met before the programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 2 SET.

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

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 and the HPC.

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 the education provider's website states the "course is approved by the British Psychological Society for the training of educational psychologists". The programme is approved by the HPC as the statutory regulator for educational psychologists and accredited by the British Psychological society as the professional body. The visitors also noted the 'Course Handbook' (p21) stated "the programme is subject to HPC Accreditation". The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes instead we 'approve' education programmes. The visitors require all programme documentation, including advertising materials, to be amended to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology to ensure consistency and avoid any potential confusion.

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme admissions documentation to include information regarding the programme policies for accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Reason: The admissions documentation provided prior to the visit made no mention of the procedures for accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms. Upon further discussion at the visit it became clear the education provider did not accept accreditation of (experiential) learning or use other inclusion mechanisms for potential applicants to the programme. For clarity for potential applicants the visitors require the programme admissions documentation to be revised to clearly include this information.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend that the education provider should continue to monitor the breadth and experience of the programme team.

Reason: From discussions with the senior management team the visitors noted the planned reduction of student numbers on the programme. The visitors also noted it is likely the programme team will reduce in number to reflect the change in student numbers. The visitors considered the planned reduction of the programme team and were satisfied the staffing level would still allow an effective programme to be delivered. However, the visitors noted the breadth and experience within the current programme team and in particular noted the contribution of the academic and professional tutors. The visitors recommend the education provider should monitor the breadth and experience of the programme team and endeavour to maintain the current level of provision.

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 reviewing the programme documentation to further emphasise the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted several instances where reference is made to the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team where it was stated students received specific teaching on the professional standards, which included the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, from a review of the documentation the visitors also noted several instances where the education provider only made reference to the British Psychological Society's (BPS) ethical standards, in particular within the 'Placement Handbook'. The visitors recommend the education provider should review the programme documentation and further emphasise the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics. The visitors suggest this would strengthen the students' understanding of the implications of the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics which they must abide by if they choose to Register with HPC and practise as an educational psychologist.

5.5 The placement providers must have equality and diversity policies in relation to students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider incorporating an equality and diversity policy check into the placement audit documentation.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team the visitors noted the majority of practice placements are based within the five Education and Library

Boards in Northern Ireland. The education provider holds copies of the equality and diversity policies of the individual Education and Library Boards and the visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors also noted discussions where it was evident that some elective placements may not be within the Education and Library Board system and could, for example take place in the charity or independent sector. The visitors recommend the education provider consider incorporating an equality and diversity policy check into the placement audit documentation.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider continue to develop practice placement educator training and work towards ensuring all practice placement educators, including those from elective placements, have undertaken the training.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the education provider facilitates three day supervision training for practice placement educators. The EP has also put in place positive measures to develop the supervisory skills of practice placement educators.

However, from discussion the visitors noted not all practice placement educators, in particular those from elective placements, had undertaken the training.

The visitors recognise the challenges the education provider faces when ensuring practice placement educators are available for training and therefore recommend the education provider continue to develop practice placement educator training and work towards ensuring all practice placement educators, including those from elective placements, have undertaken the training.

6.7 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing and further enhancing its collaborative role with practice placement providers to ensure that any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct highlighted in a previous placement are consistently taken forward when students transfer to a new practice placement setting.

Reason: From discussion with the students, the programme team and the practice placement educators the visitors noted the process a student goes through when deciding upon areas for development when starting a new placement. The students stated that an updated CV is presented to the new practice placement educator to help identify areas for development and the education provider is available throughout to review the CV and speak with the practice placement educator if needed.

The visitors noted the education provider's role in the process but recognised that the current process puts the onus on the student to ensure that the CV is updated and any gaps in clinical experience and professional conduct highlighted in a previous placement are consistently taken forward. If any gaps in students'

clinical experience and professional conduct, highlighted in a previous placement were not addressed at the beginning of a placement the mid-placement review could be too late in the placement to address these gaps. The education provider should therefore consider reviewing and further enhancing its collaborative role with practice placement providers to ensure that any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct highlighted in a previous placement are consistently taken forward when students transfer to a new practice placement setting.

Andrew Richards
Judith Bamford