# hpc health professions council

## Visitors' report

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| **Name of education provider** | University of Liverpool |
| **Programme name** | Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (D.Clin.Psychol) |
| **Mode of delivery** | Full time |
| **Relevant part of HPC Register** | Practitioner psychologist |
| **Relevant modality / domain** | Clinical psychologist |
| **Date of visit** | 23 – 24 February 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 '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 12 May 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. 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

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| Name of HPC visitors and profession | Harry Brick (Clinical psychologist) Sabiha Azmi (Clinical psychologist) |
| HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance) | Lewis Roberts |
| HPC observer | Paula Lescott |
| Proposed student numbers | 24 per year |
| Initial approval | 1 January 1993 |
| Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from | September 2011 |
| Chair | Julie Walton (University of Liverpool) |
| Secretary | Janis Paine (University of Liverpool) |
| Members of the joint panel | Malcolm Adams (British Psychological Society) Margie Callanan (British Psychological Society) Dora Bernardes (British Psychological Society) Lucy Kerry (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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 51 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 6 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

**2.6 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 their accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms policies.

**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 discussions at the visit it became clear that 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.

**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 review the current provision of teaching space to ensure that they support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

**Reason:** From the tour of resources the visitors expressed concern that the teaching space currently being utilised by the programme team does not fully support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme. The visitors noted comments from the students where they highlighted the inadequacy of the teaching space currently being utilised by the programme team, commenting that they were poorly lit, cold and noisy. The visitors' observations of the teaching space currently being utilised by the programme team support the comments made by the students. The visitors require evidence that the programme team is addressing the issues raised about the quality of the current teaching space and that they are effectively supporting the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that the process by which work is marked contains appropriate feedback mechanisms to ensure that students can understand what is expected of them at each stage of the programme.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that in discussions with the students it was stated that the assessment feedback mechanisms currently adopted by the programme team can be confusing. The visitors noted that on some pieces of written work the students receive separate feedback from two markers. The students commented that if a piece of work was failed and needed to be resubmitted, it was sometimes difficult to know the exact areas that needed to be addressed and as a result they did not always know what was expected of them at each

stage of the programme. The visitors discussed the issues raised by the students with the programme team. The programme team acknowledged that work was independently marked and variance could occur in feedback. The visitors therefore require evidence that the education provider is reviewing the process by which work is marked to ensure that it is appropriate, as well as the mechanisms it uses to provide students with feedback.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that the process by which work is marked allows staff to apply assessment criteria consistently.

**Reason:** The visitors noted that in discussions with the students it was stated that significant variance sometimes occurred between the marks given from different markers when assessing the same piece of students' written work. The visitors discussed the issues raised by the students with the programme team. The programme team acknowledged that work was independently marked and variance could occur in the marks given by different markers. The education provider must make sure that staff can apply assessment criteria consistently. The visitors require further evidence outlining the mechanisms in place that ensure that assessment criteria are applied consistently by all markers.

**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.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to include information that outlines the exit award policy that is in place.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation the visitors noted that no mention was made to any exit or step-off awards on the programme. Upon further discussions at the visit it became clear that the education provider does not offer exit awards for this programme. The visitors require the programme documentation to be revised to clearly include this information to ensure that information is clear and accessible to students.

**6.9 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for an aegrotat award not to provide eligibility for admission to the Register.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to include information that outlines the aegrotat award policy that is in place.

**Reason:** From a review of the documentation the visitors noted that no mention was made of aegrotat awards on the programme. Upon further discussions at the visit it became clear that the education provider does not offer aegrotat awards for this programme. The visitors require the programme documentation to be revised to clearly include this information to ensure that information is clear and accessible to students.

**6.10 Assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for a procedure for the right of appeal for students.**

**Condition:** The education provider must clarify the procedure for the right of appeal for students.

**Reason:** From a review of the assessment regulations and from discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that the education provider has a separate right of appeal procedures for students' studying on taught programmes and students studying on research programmes. Through discussions with the senior management team the visitors noted the changes that had taken place in terms of the programme's position within the education providers' organisational structure. The visitors noted the potential impact this change could have on the right of appeals policies. The visitors require the programme documentation to be revised to clearly specify which right of appeals procedure applies to students on this programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

## Recommendations

**2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.**

**Recommendation**: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to further enhance the information that is made available to applicants and students about reasonable adjustments and the support services available to individuals with certain health requirements.

**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 noted that in the discussions with the programme team that they gave a number of examples where reasonable adjustments had been made to support students on the programme. The visitors also noted comments from students where they fed back on the exceptional levels of support available for students with specific health needs. The visitors did, however, note an apparent discrepancy between the discussions with the programme team and students and the information made available within the programme documentation. The visitors felt that information on reasonable adjustments and support mechanisms that the programme team were operating could be made more explicit in the programme documentation to ensure that the options and services available to individuals with health requirements are more clearly and consistently highlighted.

**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 noted that the programme team monitors the admissions data that it receives from the Clearing House. The visitors also noted that the education provider gave an example of some engagement work with local schools by which they were attempting to raise the profile of Clinical psychology to currently under-represented groups. The visitors recommend 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.

**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.**

**Recommendation**: The visitors wished to support the education providers' use of multidisciplinary delivery of the taught components of the programme.

**Reason**: The visitors are satisfied that the learning outcomes of the programme ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency (1b) around working with other professions and that multiprofessional working is an important component of the programme. The visitors noted from discussions with the students that the delivery of sessions by staff from other professions is highly valued. The visitors therefore wished to recommend that the programme team continue with the practise of multiprofessional delivery throughout the taught components of the programme where appropriate.

**4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.**

**Recommendation**: The education provider should consider formulating a comprehensive strategy that incorporates service user involvement throughout the duration of the programme.

**Reason**: The visitors noted a number of good examples of service user involvement in the programme, particularly the role of service users in the recruitment and selection of students.  The visitors noted discussions with the programme team and service users outlining all the different ways service users were involved in the programme. From the discussions the visitors couldn't see a clear strategy of how the programme team were implementing service users in the curriculum over the course of the programme. The visitors therefore note that the programme team may want to consider integrating service user involvement throughout the duration of the programme and building it into the curriculum to ensure that service users are involved is a joined up and strategic way.

**4.4 The curriculum must remain relevant to current practice.**

**Recommendation**: The education provider should consider developing a more explicit strategy that outlines how the programme develops the leadership skills of students throughout the programme.

**Reason**: The visitors noted discussions with the students, the programme team and the practice placement educators that outlined the importance of students developing leadership skills throughout the programme. The visitors noted a number of examples given by the students that highlighted where they were able to gain good experience of leadership development within a placement setting. The visitors were satisfied that students were able to develop leadership skills whilst on placements. From the discussions the visitors couldn't see a clear strategy of how the programme team were implementing leadership skills throughout the programme and note that the education provider may want to consider developing a strategy that would enhance the current provision offered within placements by developing leadership skills throughout the course of the programme.

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

**Recommendation**: The education provider should consider reviewing 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 taken forward when students transfer to a new practice placement setting.

**Reason**: The visitors noted discussions with the students, the programme team and the practice placement educators that outlined the process that a student goes through when drawing up a learning contract when they start a new placement. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team around the role of the mid-placement review and the importance of this mechanism in ensuring that any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct, highlighted in a previous placement are taken forward. The visitors noted that if any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct, highlighted in a previous placement were not addressed within the learning contract the mid-placement review could be too late in the placement to address these gaps. The visitors therefore note the importance of the learning contract. The education provider should consider reviewing the process by which learning contracts are drawn up and agreed to ensure that students, practice placements and the education provider work collaboratively to ensure that any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct will always be included when the learning contract in negotiated before a placement begins.

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Sabiha Azmi
Harry Brick

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