

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Staffordshire University
Programme name	Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Health psychologist
Date of visit	17 – 18 April 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 'Health 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 11 October 2012. At the Committee meeting on 11 October 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	Sabiha Azmi (Clinical psychologist) Katherine Thirlaway (Health psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	6 per cohort
First approved intake	September 2002
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Fiona Irvine (Staffordshire University)
Secretary	Jackie Campbell (Staffordshire University)
Members of the joint panel	Lynn Dunwoody (British Psychological Society) Liz Simpson (British Psychological Society) Lauren Ison (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 48 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 9 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

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence that demonstrates a process in place to ensure academic supervisors undertake continuing professional development to maintain their supervisory skills.

Reason: The visitors noted students on placement were formally supervised by their academic supervisors, who are HPC registered health psychologists. It is the academic supervisor who has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and achievement. From discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied that all academic supervisors had undertaken appropriate initial supervisor training. However, the visitors were unable to find evidence of how they maintained supervisory skills through continuing professional development programmes. The visitors therefore require the education provider to outline a process to ensure academic supervisors regularly maintain their supervisory skills.

3.15 Throughout the course of the programme, the education provider must have identified where attendance is mandatory and must have associated monitoring mechanisms in place.

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate within the programme documentation the areas of the programme where attendance is mandatory, what constitutes unacceptable attendance and highlight the consequences of poor attendance.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the Self Evaluation Document stated “it is made clear to students at induction and in the student handbook that we expect at least 80% attendance at the formal sessions”. During discussions the programme team indicated there was the expectation that students would contact the education provider if they were absent from placement and the education provider would contact a student after three weeks of successive absence from formal sessions. The visitors also noted that the programme documentation stated the ‘professional competence in health psychology’ module is mandatory.

From the evidence provided the visitors did not consider the attendance policy to be fully and clearly communicated to students. The visitors did not consider the statement within the student handbook to fully communicate the attendance policy and did not highlight the areas of the programme where attendance is mandatory, what constitutes unacceptable attendance and highlight the consequences of poor attendance in all settings. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation to clearly articulate the full attendance policy for students. The education provider must clearly articulate the areas of the programme where attendance is mandatory, what constitutes unacceptable attendance and highlight the consequences of poor attendance.

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 provide evidence to demonstrate the learning outcomes ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4.

- **1b.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers**
 - understand the dynamics present in health professional – client relationships
- **1b.4 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user**
 - Recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users
 - Be able to initiate, develop and end a client – practitioner relationship

Reason: In discussion with the programme team it was stated that standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 are covered within the ‘professional skills in health psychology’ and ‘behavioural change interventions’ modules. However, from a review of the learning outcomes associated with these modules the visitors were unable to determine that standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 are covered. The visitors noted that standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 require experience of service user interaction. The visitors reviewed the assessment related guidance document associated with the ‘behavioural change interventions’ module and noted a student could meet the learning outcomes associated with the module assessments without necessarily having the experience of service user interaction. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide evidence that demonstrates the learning outcomes ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4. The visitors noted that evidence might include details of where the programme incorporates service user interaction in teaching or where students undertake group work with service users.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of a thorough and effective system for approving placements before they are used.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the Workplace Checklist that students are required to complete prior to undertaking their practice placement. The visitors noted the checklist is used as an audit tool and covers issues such as health and safety. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted an academic supervisor visits the placement within three months of a student starting the placement and the Workplace Checklist is reviewed at this visit. The visitors were concerned the education provider does not approve the placement until the academic supervisor has visited, and approval was therefore retrospective. In order to determine the

education provider ensures placements are suitable before students commence the placement the visitors require further evidence of a thorough and effective system for approving placements before they are used.

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.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of how they ensure equality and diversity policies are in place, implemented and monitored within practice placements.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the Workplace Checklist that students are required to complete prior to undertaking their practice placement. The visitors noted the checklist is used as an audit tool and covers issues such as health and safety. However, the visitors could find no evidence of a mechanism in place to ensure that practice placements have equality and diversity policies in place and that they are implemented and monitored. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide evidence outlining how they ensure equality and diversity policies are in place, implemented and monitored within practice placements.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Condition: The education provider must ensure that workplace contacts have relevant, knowledge, skills and experience to support trainees and provide a safe environment for their learning.

Reason: The visitors noted students on placement were formally supervised by their academic supervisors, who are HPC registered health psychologists. It is the academic supervisor who has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and achievement. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors also noted the role of the workplace contact. The workplace contact is responsible for monitoring student attendance whilst they are on placement and completing a quarterly report that comments on student conduct and performance. From discussions with workplace contacts and students the visitors noted the importance of the role, with some workplace contacts providing significant advice, support and guidance. The visitors commented that support offered by the workplace contact could impact on student progression and therefore considered it imperative the education provider has in place criteria for the selection of workplace contacts. The visitors require details of the criteria in place for the selection of workplace contacts to ensure they have relevant, knowledge, skills and experience to support trainees and provide a safe environment for their learning.

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

Condition: The education provider must ensure workplace contacts undertake appropriate training to support them in their role.

Reason: The visitors noted students on placement were formally supervised by their academic supervisors, who are HPC registered health psychologists. It is the academic supervisor who has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and achievement. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors also noted the role of the workplace contact. The workplace contact is responsible for monitoring student attendance whilst they are on placement and completing a quarterly report that comments on student conduct and performance. From discussions with workplace contacts and students the visitors noted the importance of the role, with some workplace contacts providing significant advice, support and guidance. The visitors commented that the support offered by the workplace contact could impact on student progression and therefore considered it imperative the education provider ensures workplace contacts undertake training to support them in their role. The education provider must provide evidence to demonstrate how they ensure workplace contacts undertake appropriate training to support them in their role.

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 that demonstrates how the assessment strategy and design ensures those who successfully complete the programme meet standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4.

- **1b.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers**
 - understand the dynamics present in health professional – client relationships
- **1b.4 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user**
 - Recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users
 - Be able to initiate, develop and end a client – practitioner relationship

Reason: In discussion with the programme team it was stated that standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 are assessed within the ‘professional skills in health psychology’ and ‘behavioural change interventions’ modules. However, from a review of the learning outcomes associated with these modules the visitors were unable to determine that standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 are assessed within the programme. The visitors noted that standard of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4 require experience and understanding of service user interaction. The visitors also reviewed the assessment related guidance document associated with the ‘behavioural change interventions’ module and noted a student could meet the learning outcomes associated with the module assessments without necessarily having the experience or the understanding of service user interaction. The visitors therefore require the education provider to give evidence that demonstrates how the assessment strategy and design ensures those who successfully complete the programme meet standards of proficiency 1b.1 and 1b.4.

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

Condition: The education provider must provide further evidence of how the assessment of placement is objective and ensures fitness to practise.

Reason: The visitors noted students on placement were formally supervised by their academic supervisors, who are HPC registered health psychologists. It is the academic supervisor who has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and achievement. The academic supervisor meets with students three times whilst on placement. These meetings can, if necessary, include the observation of students in practise. From the programme documentation the visitors noted the main assessment tool used by academic supervisors for placements was reviewing student's reflective logs. The visitors were concerned that reviewing reflective work without any validation of the reflection (for example, through scheduled observations) could result in students that are not fully fit to practise. The visitors therefore considered the assessments were not an objective measure of student performance and would not fully ensure fitness to practise. The visitors require further evidence of how the assessment of placement ensures fitness to practise to determine this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider amending the programme website to further highlight the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) standard for entry to the programme and to highlight the currency of BPS Stage 1 qualification that is acceptable to qualify for entry onto the programme.

Reason: From a review of the Self Evaluation Document the visitors noted the IELTS standard for entry to the programme is 7. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors were satisfied this standard is communicated to students at admissions and is outlined within the Programme Specification. However, the visitors noted the IELTS standard is not included on the programme website. The visitors recommend the education provider consider including this information. The visitors also noted the admissions criteria within the Programme Specification where it was stated applicants to the programme must have “completed British Psychological Society Stage 1 training in Health Psychology. That is either a BPS accredited MSc in Health Psychology with a grade of merit (or 60% average) or above, or the BPS Stage 1 qualification in health psychology with a grade of 60% or more”. In discussion with the programme team it was stated applicants must have usually completed the Stage 1 qualification within the last five years. This information was not included on the programme website. For clarity the visitors recommend the education provider should include this information on the programme website.

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 the visitors noted the admissions procedures take into consideration equality and diversity and the programme team monitors equality and diversity data and so are satisfied this standard has been met. However, the visitors recommend 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 the work currently being undertaken around equality and diversity is conducted in a consistent, transparent and measured way.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider constructing and documenting a formal process that demonstrates how they guarantee and monitor the quality of teaching from specialist visiting lecturers.

Reason: From discussions the visitors noted mechanisms utilised by the programme team to quality assure the teaching of specialist visiting lecturers. Examples included senior management approving the use of a visiting lecturer and students providing feedback after the session. The visitors recommend the education provider may want to construct and document a formal process to demonstrate how they guarantee and monitor the quality of teaching from specialist visiting lecturers. The visitors suggest the programme team may want to identify specific learning to be delivered, review content and resources for currency, peer review sessions and provide formal evaluation.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider amending the placement audit processes to include records of further evidence, action plan areas for development and monitor progress during the academic supervisor visit.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted the Workplace Checklist students are required to complete prior to undertaking their practice placement. The visitors noted the checklist is used as an audit tool and covers issues such as health and safety. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted an academic supervisor visits the placement within three months of a student starting placement and the Workplace Checklist is reviewed at this visit. The visitors noted the Workplace Checklist contains a number of yes or no questions and does not give scope to record detailed audit information. The visitors also noted there is no guidance in place to outline what is acceptable evidence and what constitutes non-compliance. The visitors recommend the education provider should amend the placement audit processes to record further evidence, to action plan areas for development and to monitor progress against the audit criteria during the academic supervisor visit. The visitors suggest this would make the Workplace Checklist more detailed and more useful as a 'living' document. The visitors also recommend the education provider consider using the standards of education and training in SET 5 as an audit framework.

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 the collaborative arrangements in place between themselves and the practice placement providers to further enhance links.

Reason: From evidence provided the visitors noted the main collaboration for workplace contacts occurs when academic supervisors visit students on placement. The visitors noted comments from workplace contacts stating they could contact the programme team at any point if they had a question or concern. From this evidence the visitors were satisfied the education provider works with practice placement providers and communication happens in both directions.

Given the potential for geographically dispersed placements and the defined role of the workplace contact the visitors commented there is a risk that collaboration may at times be limited. The visitors therefore recommend the education provider should review the collaborative arrangements in place between themselves and the practice placement providers to try and further enhance links.

5.12 Learning, teaching and supervision must encourage safe and effective practice, independent learning and professional conduct.

Recommendation: The education provider should encourage workplace contacts to frame any comments about student profession-related conduct around the HPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Reason: The visitors noted students on placement were formally supervised by their academic supervisors, who are HPC registered health psychologists. It is the academic supervisor who has overall responsibility for monitoring student progression and achievement. From a review of the programme documentation the visitors also noted the role of the workplace contact. The workplace contact is responsible for monitoring student attendance whilst they are on placement and completing a quarterly report that comments on student conduct and performance. The visitors noted the quarterly report pro forma asks “during this period of time have you had any concerns about the student’s ability to perform his or her role”. The visitors noted the standards associated with a student undertaking their role as an employee or volunteer may differ from those expected of a student health psychologist. The visitors therefore recommend that the education provider encourage workplace contacts to frame any comments about profession-related conduct around the HPC standards of conduct, performance and ethics.

Sabiha Azmi
Katherine Thirlaway