

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Teesside University
Programme name	Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DCounsPsy)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Counselling psychologist
Date of visit	23 – 24 June 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 '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 6 December 2011. At the Committee meeting on 6 December 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	George Delafield (Occupational and Forensic psychologist) Dave Packwood (Counselling psychologist) Dugald MacInnes (Lay visitor)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	22
First approved intake	1 January 2002
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	1 September 2011
Chair	Judith Poch (Teesside University)
Secretary	Colin Straker (Teesside University)
Members of the joint panel	Kimberley Smith (British Psychological Society) Naomi Miller (British Psychological Society) Robert Night (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 ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors agreed that 53 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 4 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. Commendations are observations of innovative best practice by a programme or education provider.

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 potential applicants are made aware of any likely additional costs associated with the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with students and programme team the visitors noted that students may be expected to self-fund a number of additional elements associated with taking up a place on the programme. In particular the visitors noted that there were additional costs incurred by students when they covered their own personal therapy and supervisor fees. The visitors noted in discussions with students that the costs associated with personal therapy and supervisor fees were not set and as such could be variable. The visitors also noted, in discussions with the programme team, that only some students would be required to pay for supervision and that the programme team offers support and guidance to students seeking personal therapy. However, in reviewing the programme documentation the visitors found no reference to any potential additional costs associated with the programme or any mention of the support and guidance available from the education provider. The visitors therefore require the education provider to clearly state the potential additional costs associated with the programme within the programme documentation. In this way the visitors can be sure that applicants to the programme have all the information they need to make an informed decision about taking up a place on the programme.

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 the programme documentation, including advertising material to ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted a number of examples of out of date terminology or factually inaccurate statements. Within the 'Placement Agency Guidelines' (p16), it states that 'the HPC and BPS recommend that individual Psychologists have their own personal [liability insurance] cover in order to protect their own interests'. The HPC makes no such stipulation. The visitors also noted on the same page within the same document, with reference to criminal record checks, '...if information is revealed which may cast doubt on the honesty, integrity or safety of the Trainee and/or their clients this should be referred to the Programme Director (Allan Winthrop) and the advice of the HPC and BPS will be sought as required / if appropriate'. The visitors note that the HPC does not register students and ultimately it is the education provider who is responsible for managing any admissions and/or professional related conduct issues related to the programme. The visitors

therefore require the education provider to remove this reference to the HPC and highlight to students that the Programme Director can escalate criminal record disclosures through the appropriate internal protocols.

The visitors also noted a number of inconsistencies within the programme documentation. In particular the visitors noted differing criteria throughout the documentation for becoming a practice placement educator. The visitors therefore require the documentation to be thoroughly reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect or out-of-date terminology to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

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 clearly state that aegrotat awards do not confer eligibility to apply to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation provided the visitors could not determine where in the assessment regulations there was a clear statement regarding aegrotat awards. The visitors noted discussions with the programme team that outlined that changes were being made to the assessment regulations in line with HPC requirements. However, from the evidence presented at the visit the visitors could not determine how the programme team ensured that students understood that aegrotat awards would not enable them to be eligible to apply to the Register. The visitors therefore require further evidence to ensure that there is a clear statement included in the programme documentation regarding aegrotat awards and that this is clearly accessible to students.

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 that at least one of the external examiners appointed to the programme must be HPC registered unless alternate arrangements have been agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. 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 documentation, specifically in the programme regulations, to ensure that this standard is 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 reviewing the programme documentation to ensure that the information that is made available to applicants, students and practice placement educators is clear and consistent and fully reflects the policies and protocols that the programme team adhere to.

Reason: As a result of discussions at the visit visitors were satisfied that the programme and the education provider have robust policies and protocols in place. However, from a review of the programme documentation designed specifically for students and practice placement educators, such as the 'Student Handbook', 'Placement Agency Guidelines' and 'Supervised Practice Handbook' the visitors felt that the robust nature of the education provider's policies and practice was not always well reflected. The visitors noted that policies, such as that in regard of student disclosure of a criminal record, were dealt with through the utilisation of education provider wide procedures. However, this was not reflected in the 'Placement Agency Guidelines' where it was stated that the Programme Director reviewed information in relation to student criminal records and contacted the HPC if required. The visitors also noted strong verbal responses to questions around monitoring of equality and diversity and reasonable adjustments. Therefore the visitors recommend that the documentation available to applicants, students and practice placement educator is further enhanced by ensuring that all the information they receive is reflective of the way the programme is delivered and consistent in line with the education providers overarching policies and procedures. In this way the programme team can ensure that the policies and procedures utilised by the programme are clearly understood by those who may use them.

2.5 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including appropriate academic and/or professional entry standards.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the professional entry standards for the programme.

Reason: The visitors were satisfied that this standard is met. However, from a review of the programme documentation the visitors note that one of the entry requirements is stated as 'relevant therapeutic/counselling experience is also desirable, e.g. NHS Psychology Assistant, paid or voluntary counselling work'. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team where the programme team further clarified the interpretation of this entry criterion and offered further detail on how it was applied at admissions. In light of the discussions with the programme team the visitors recommend that the education provider may want to review this entry standard to further enhance its clarity to applicants to the programme as well as ensure consistency in the selection process.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the mechanisms in place for gaining student feedback.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were satisfied that there were regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place for the programme and therefore that this standard is met. However the visitors did note that the percentage of student who feedback and evaluate teaching was variable across the programme. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team where it was stated that the education provider has adopted an online system for gaining student feedback and since this system was implemented student participation has decreased. The visitors recommend the education provider reviews the mechanisms in place for gaining student feedback, and further highlight the importance of this process to students.

4.8 The range of learning and teaching approaches used must be appropriate to the effective delivery of the curriculum.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider formulating strategic approach to the integration of service users into the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were satisfied that the range of learning and teaching approaches used are appropriate to the effective delivery of the programme. Through discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that service users are involved in some teaching sessions within the programme. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team about plans to further integrate service users into the programme. The visitors recommend that the programme team may want to formulate a strategic approach to the integration of service users to further enhance the range of learning and teaching approaches used in the programme by integrating service users into areas such as admissions, assessment, curriculum design and teaching.

5.3 The practice placement settings must provide a safe and supportive environment.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider formulating additional protocols to further support the process of auditing, approving and monitoring practice placements.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors are satisfied that this standard is met. The visitors noted evidence of a clear placement audit and monitoring mechanisms. However, the visitors recommend that the education provider may want to consider developing additional protocols to further support the process of auditing, approving and monitoring practice placements. The visitors feel that the introduction of additional protocols and guidelines will enhance the transparency and consistency of the placement audit process and allow the programme team to clearly define and document what they consider to be a placement setting that does not offer a safe and supportive environment.

George Delafield
Dave Packwood
Dugald MacInnes