

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Birmingham
Programme name	Doctorate in Forensic Psychology Practice (ForenPsyD)
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Forensic psychologist
Date of visit	10 – 11 May 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 'Forensic 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 approval approval of the programme at the education provider. This recommended outcome was accepted by the Education and Training Committee (Committee) on 5 July 2012. At this meeting, the Committee confirmed the ongoing approval of the programme. This means 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

Name of HPC visitors and profession	George Delafield (Forensic and Occupational psychologist) David Packwood (Counselling psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	10 per cohort
First approved intake	January 2002
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	John Raine (University of Birmingham)
Secretary	Rupy Kahlon (University of Birmingham)
Members of the joint panel	Jo Clarke (British Psychological Society) Roisin Hall (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"/>
Other documentation - Teaching materials; Admissions process information and supporting evidence; Placement information and supporting evidence; Various programme committee and meeting minutes; Quality review documentation; Resource information; and information regarding support for students.	<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 the ongoing approval of the programme is reconfirmed.

The visitors did not set any conditions for the programme.

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 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.

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 visitors recommend the education provider review the advertising materials for the programme to ensure they provide potential applicants with as much relevant information as possible.

Reason: The documentation submitted prior to the visit included information about admissions and advertising materials for the programme. The visitors were satisfied potential applicants would have all the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to apply or to take up an offer of a place on the programme. The visitors noted an email sent to anyone making enquires about the programme included the statement that the programme team would be looking for “experience [of] working with clients in a forensic setting such as prisons, young offender institutions, secure mental health hospitals (post degree for a minimum of 6 months ideally as a psychology assistant)”. The course prospectus leaflet only stated the requirement for “experience working in an appropriate setting”. The visitors felt the statement in the email gave an enhanced explanation of the types of settings the education provider considered appropriate experience and should therefore be stated in the course prospectus and on the programme website too. The visitors additionally felt the programme team could consider publicising example interview questions to further prepare applicants as to what the interview would be evaluating. The visitors felt clarifying the experience required and giving an indication as to the interview questions would better prepare applicants as to the nature of the programme.

3.14 Where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider consider implementing a more formal process to obtain consent from students when they participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit included information about the consent protocols in place. Discussions with the students indicated they were aware of giving verbal consent when required and the options to discuss with the programme team if they needed to ‘opt out’ of particular sensitive or personal aspects of the programme. The nature of the programme’s requirement for students to participate in role play exercises and personal development group is described to students in the programme handbooks. Discussion with the programme team indicated they had never found a problem with the way in which they informed students about consent, the visitors were therefore satisfied the standard is met. The visitors suggest the programme team consider formalising the consent arrangements to make them more auditable (such as a consent form detailing protocol and ‘opt-out’ procedures for the student to sign prior to commencing the programme). The visitors feel it would be useful for the education provider to hold records of the consent forms in case they are later needed.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the education provider further enhance the placement approval and monitoring processes in place for this programme.

Reason: Documentation and discussion at the visit included information about the processes in place for the approval and monitoring of practice placements. The programme team have close working relationships with the placement providers. There are regular meetings which are used to assess the trainee's performance at placement and also the appraisal of the placement setting. There are meetings at the beginning, middle and end of placements. These appraisals consider the placement's responsibility to "provide an appropriate, safe learning environment for the trainee" to have the opportunity to be able to "undertake roles and responsibilities commensurate with the HPC's standards of proficiency... appropriate to the level of development and with appropriate supervision" (SETs mapping document). The visitors saw documented evidence that the programme team collated appropriate Information on the placements and were satisfied this standard was met. The visitors felt the programme team could, however, further formalise the process by documenting or operationalising the process currently used. The visitors felt this would provide a framework for all the placement appraisal meetings to follow and to assist when introducing new people to the process.

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

Recommendation: The visitors recommend the programme team clearly articulate in the programme documentation that there are no aegrotat awards available for this programme.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit the visitors were clear that the programme does not confer aegrotat awards. The visitors were therefore satisfied this standard is met. The visitors did however feel that by articulating there is no aegrotat available for this programme the programme team would be ensuring trainees are fully aware of the options available for exiting this programme.

George Delafield
David Packwood