Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Coventry University and University of Warwick
Programme name	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (D.Clin.Psy)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Clinical psychologist
Date of visit	29 – 30 March 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 9 June 2011. At the Committee meeting on 25 August 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 also 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	Sabiha Azmi (Clinical psychologist) Robert Stratford (Educational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	17
First approved intake	1 January 1998
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2011
Chair	Ann Green (Coventry University)
Secretary	Maureen Hunter (Coventry University)
Members of the joint panel	Susan Llewelyn (British Psychological Society) Carol Martin (British Psychological Society) Rosemary Jenkins (British Psychological Society) Victoria Green (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 programme can be approved.

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.

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 the programme admissions documentation to include information regarding their accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanism 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 accredit (experiential) learning or use other inclusion mechanisms for potential applicants to the programme. This information should be clearly communicated to potential applicants. The visitors require the programme admissions documentation to be revised to clearly include this information, to ensure that potential applicants have all of the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up or make an offer of a place on the programme.

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

Condition: The education provider must outline the mechanisms in place to ensure that specialist visiting lecturers have relevant specialist expertise and up to date knowledge and to guarantee the quality of their teaching.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team the visitors noted that specialist visiting lecturers are integral to the delivery of the curriculum. The visitors noted in discussions with the programme team that the role of the module coordinator is a key safeguard in monitoring the quality of specialist visiting lecturers. The visitors also noted that evaluation forms were completed by students at the end of a visiting lecturer's teaching. The visitors however, could not clearly determine what formal mechanisms were in place to ensure that the specialist visiting lecturers have the specialist expertise and up to date knowledge to ensure that the students could meet the relevant learning outcomes. The visitors could also not determine how the programme team guaranteed the quality of the specialist visiting lecturers' teaching. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the education provider guarantees and safeguards the quality of the teaching of the specialist visiting lecturers.

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 the policies and processes that are used for approving new placements.

Reason: From the documents submitted and discussions with the programme team the visitors were not able to clearly define the formal policies and processes

that the education provider uses to approve new placements. The visitors noted that the education provider has a thorough and effective system in place for the monitoring of existing placements via the audit tool. The visitors also noted discussions with the programme team outlining how they would approve a new placement. However, the visitors require further information about the protocols in place to approve placements before they are used. This is to ensure that new placements are not approved retrospectively and that students will not go to a new placement setting before it has been audited.

5.11 Students, practice placement providers and practice placement educators must be fully prepared for placement which will include information about an understanding of:
- **the learning outcomes to be achieved;**
- **the timings and the duration of any placement experience and associated records to be maintained;**
- **expectations of professional conduct;**
- **the assessment procedures including the implications of, and any action to be taken in the case of, failure to progress; and**
- **communication and lines of responsibility.**

Condition: The education provider must review 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 which outlined the process that a student goes through when drawing up a learning contract when they start a new placement. The visitors also noted in discussions with the programme team the role and importance of the mid-placement review in ensuring that any gaps in students' required practical experience from previous placement are addressed. However, the visitors articulated that if there were any gaps in students' clinical experience or professional conduct, from a previous placement, not addressed within the learning contract, the mid-placement review could happen too late in the placement to address these gaps. The visitors therefore noted the importance of the learning contract in ensuring that students meet all of the learning outcomes associated with practice placements and that students are currently responsible for transferring information from one placement to the next.
The visitors therefore require the education provider to review the process by which learning contracts are drawn up and agreed. This should ensure that students, practice placement providers and the education provider work collaboratively and are aware of what a student needs to achieve while on practice placement. This will then ensure that any gaps in students' clinical experience and professional conduct will always be included when the learning contract is negotiated, before a placement begins. The visitors will then have sufficient evidence to be sure that all parties know what a student has to achieve prior to starting their placement.

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 advertising material, including the Clearing House website, to ensure that applicants to the programme are aware of the reasonable adjustments that can be made to aid students with specific 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. However, the visitors noted in discussion with the programme team a number of examples were given where reasonable adjustments had been made to support students on the programme. The visitors also noted on page 23 of the programme handbook a clear statement that reasonable adjustments can be made to the teaching, learning, assessment and support of the programme. The visitors felt however, that information about the reasonable adjustments and the support mechanisms that the programme team were operating could be made more explicit in the advertising materials, including the Clearing House website. This would then ensure that the options and services available to individuals with specific health requirements are clearly and consistently highlighted to potential applicants and students.

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 proactive and strategic approach in the 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 and analyses the admissions data that it receives from the Clearing House as well as data from its own admissions processes. The visitors also noted that the education provider gave an example of some engagement work with undergraduate psychologists in an attempt to raise the profile of clinical psychology to currently under-represented groups. The visitors would like the programme team to consider taking a more strategic approach to the way it 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.

4.4 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 consultancy and leadership skills throughout the course of the programme and prepares students for working within the context of the modern NHS.

Reason: The visitors noted discussions with the students, the programme team and the practice placement educators that outlined the importance of students developing consultancy and leadership skills throughout the course of the programme. The visitors noted a number of examples given by the students that demonstrated that they were able to gain good experiences of consultancy and leadership development within a placement setting. The visitors were satisfied that students were able to develop consultancy and leadership skills whilst on placements. However, from the discussions the visitors were unable to see a clear strategy outlining how the programme team were developing consultancy and leadership skills throughout the duration of the programme. The visitors would like the education provider to consider developing a holistic strategy that would enhance the current arrangement by which students develop consultancy and leadership skills on placements. The visitors recommend that the programme team develops strategies that allow students to develop consultancy and leadership skills throughout the duration of the programme.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider taking a more strategic and proactive approach when encouraging experienced supervisors to take up practice placement educator refresher training.

Reason: The visitors noted discussions with the programme team which outlined the difficulties the programme team have in ensuring that some more experienced practice placement educators undertake practice placement educator refresher training. The visitors noted that the education provider does offer practice placement educator refresher training to practice placement educators and are satisfied that this standard is met. The visitors would however, encourage the programme team to continue to offer regular practice placement educator refresher training to all practice placement educators. The visitors would like the education provider to consider taking a more strategic and proactive approach when encouraging experienced supervisors to take up practice placement educator refresher training.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to ensure that the minimum length of weekly formal supervision expected between a practice placement educator and a student is consistently stated.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors noted inconsistencies concerning the minimum length of weekly formal supervision

expected between a practice placement educator and a student. The visitors recommend the education provider amends the programme documentation to mitigate against any confusion between practice placement educators and students.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider including a clear statement outlining that the exit award of MSc in Therapeutic Psychology does not confer eligibility to apply to the HPC Register as a Clinical psychologist.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. The visitors recognise that the programme title is clear and does not contain any reference to a HPC protected title however they would like the education provider to consider including a clear statement outlining that the exit award of MSc in Therapeutic Psychology does not confer eligibility to apply to the HPC Register as a Clinical psychologist.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the programme documentation to clearly articulate that aegrotat awards do not provide eligibility for admission to the HPC Register.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit the visitors were happy that the requirements of the HPC relating to this standard are being met. The visitors did however feel that the aegrotat policy could be more clearly communicated within the documentation.

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Sabiha Azmi
Robert Stratford

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