

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Southampton
Programme name	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DclinPsychol)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Clinical psychologist
Date of visit	20 – 21 March 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 '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 5 July 2012. At the Committee meeting on 5 July 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 psychologist 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 education provider and reviewed the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The education provider, 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 education provider and the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Laura Golding (Clinical psychologist) Richard Kwiatkowski (Counselling/Occupational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ben Potter
Proposed student numbers	13
First approved intake	January 1994
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Peter Smith (University of Southampton)
Secretary	Sean Withill (University of Southampton)
Members of the joint panel	Julie Hadwin (Internal panel member) Steve Tee (Internal panel member) Michael Maltby (External panel member) Eve Knight (British Psychological Society) Andrew Vidgen (British Psychological Society) France Blumenfield (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	<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 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 54 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 3 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

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 programme team must provide further evidence of how applicants to the programme are made aware there is no accreditation of prior (experiential) learning on entry to the programme.

Reason: In reviewing the documentation provided prior to the visit the visitors could not identify where potential applicants were informed about the rationale regarding accreditation of prior (experiential) learning (AP(E)L) policy for the programme. Through discussions at the visit it became clear the education provider does not accredit the prior (experiential) learning of applicants to the programme. The visitors articulated they did not have sufficient evidence to determine how this policy is communicated. Therefore the visitors require further evidence to demonstrate the programme admissions information clearly articulates this information about the AP(E)L policy. In this way the visitors can ensure potential applicants are able to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the programme.

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

Condition: The programme team must clarify the requirements for student progression through the programme and clarification of the terms of achievement.

Reason: In reviewing the programme documentation the visitors noted some variability in the terminology to describe achievement within the programme. In particular they noted some terminology differed when referring to the results of assessment. For example, in the Academic research handbook (p 93-95) there are references to the achievement of a pass; pass with minor amendments; pass with modest amendments and; a low pass. In the same handbook (p122) there are also references to the achievement of a 'fail and resubmit'. In discussion with the programme team it was clarified these different terms were used to describe the different levels of possible achievement associated with different assessments across the programme. However, in discussions with students it seemed that this variety in the terminology used could be confusing and students often focused on the words 'pass' or 'fail' to determine their relative achievement in an assessment, whereas the different terminology and descriptors suggested outcomes were different. The visitors therefore require further evidence of how the programme team ensure the information provided to students clearly specifies the criteria for achievement across different assessments. In this way the visitors can be sure that students are made aware of the requirements for progression through the programme and how this standard continues to be met.

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 include a clear statement in the programme documentation to state that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the register, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail in the external examiner recruitment policy specific to the programme. From conversations with the programme team the visitors were satisfied with the current arrangements regarding the external examiners for the programme. However, they require further evidence that HPC requirements regarding the external examiner have been included in the documentation to demonstrate 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 consolidating the information about entry requirements and include it in all relevant advertising materials.

Reason: In reviewing the programme documentation, the visitors noted the information required by applicants was included throughout the variety of advertising materials provided. The visitors also noted that there was no one complete set of information which included all criteria, evidence and checks that an applicant would need to demonstrate or undertake in order to take up a place on the programme. Instead information is provided on the relevant websites and the in e-handbooks in a more disparate format which could lead to applicants making decisions to apply when they do not have all of the facts they require. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consolidate this information and include the complete set as part of the information in all relevant advertising materials. In this way the programme team may be able to better ensure that applicants are fully informed of the criteria that need to be met in order to take up a place on the programme.

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 increasing the flexibility around the requirement for applicants to have a 2:1 undergraduate degree or to have undertaken 'suitably rigorous' postgraduate study.

Reason: In reviewing the programme documentation the visitors noted successful applicants to the programme are required to have achieved a 2:1 undergraduate degree or undertaken 'academically rigorous' postgraduate level study. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met. However, the visitors could not determine from the documentation provided why the academic criteria had been set at this level. In discussion with the programme team it was highlighted this programme requires a high level of research competence and this academic criteria for selection better ensures students can meet this requirement. The programme team also highlighted the consideration regarding academic rigour in post graduate study would be based on the research content of any programme along with the specific area in which it had been conducted. The visitors articulated these academic requirements could limit the pool of suitable candidates from which the programme could select their students and potentially have a negative effect on any widening participation activities. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consider the reasoning and evidence for these criteria and look to increase the flexibility around the requirements if possible.

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 programme team should consider the equality and diversity data that is provided to the programme team from the Clearing House and how best to utilise this in the implementation of the education providers' equality and diversity policy.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were made aware that equality and diversity policies are in place and are implemented and monitored with respect to applicants. They are therefore satisfied this standard is met. However, the visitors noted a statement in the SETs mapping document which said when applying through the Leeds clearing house 'Applicants may give or withhold their consent for data to be used for non-anonymous forwarding of data to clinical programmes the applicant has applied to'. This was followed by the assertion that this data '...may not be used for future selection and must remain anonymous to those involved with selection'. In discussions with the programme team the visitors noted a great deal of the programme team's data about equality and diversity when applied to applicants came from the clearing house. They also noted the programme team were unsure what specific set of information the statement '...non-anonymous forwarding of data to clinical programmes the applicant has applied to' was referring to, how it was anonymised or how it was used. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consider what information they are currently provided with about applicants, what information they would like to receive, and how best they can utilise it.

5.13 A range of learning and teaching methods that respect the rights and needs of service users and colleagues must be in place throughout practice placements.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider how the wording on the client information and consent forms can be amended to ensure the relative experience of students is clearly articulated to potential clients.

Reason: From a review of the documentation provided the visitors were clear students had to obtain consent of clients prior to working with them. In discussion with the programme team it was also clarified that students had to announce themselves as trainee clinical psychologists while on practice placement and in any situation involving a service user. The visitors were therefore satisfied this standard is met. The visitors noted the client information sheet had a statement which says '...trainee clinical psychologists already have a great deal of experience'. In further discussion with the programme team this was clarified as referring to academic experience that the training a student will have undertaken prior to undertaking placement experience. The visitors suggested that this statement may cause some misunderstanding in potential clients or service users if a student has not had a great deal of experience in the placement setting or in the specific, therapeutic techniques which are being used. The visitors therefore recommend the programme team consider the use of this phrase and how it may be modified to better articulate the relative experience of a student to a prospective service user or client.

Laura Golding
Richard Kwiatkowski