

Visitors' report

<b>Name of education provider</b>	University of Wolverhampton
<b>Programme name</b>	Practitioner Doctorate in Counselling Psychology (DcounsPsy)
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	Full time
<b>Relevant part of HPC Register</b>	Practitioner psychologist
<b>Relevant modality / domain</b>	Counselling psychologist
<b>Date of visit</b>	20 – 21 June 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 '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 4 December 2012. At the Committee meeting on 4 December 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 an HPC only visit. The education provider did not validate or review the programme at the visit and the professional body did not consider their accreditation of the programme. The education provider supplied an independent chair for the visit.

## Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Tony Ward (Counselling and Health psychologist) George Delafield (Forensic and Occupational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	18 per cohort
First approved intake	January 2004
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Cathy Shaw (University of Wolverhampton)
Secretary	N/A

## 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"/>
Additional documents: Policy documents, advertising materials, placement documentation and programme committee minutes.	<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 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

### **3.2 The programme must be effectively managed.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how practice placements are effectively managed

**Reason:** Documentation provided and discussion at the visit detailed the management of practice placements. Practice placements are organised through liaison with the placement supervisor. Students' have employee status with the practice placement provider through an honorary contract. Whilst at the practice placement the student will have a line manager and a placement supervisor who provides supervision, signs the client logs and placement reports. Discussion with the placement supervisors indicated they were responsible for the students' placement however the line manager oversaw the placement and ensured the placement arrangements continued to be appropriate for both the student and the practice placement. The visitors were concerned the students' line managers were not directly involved in arranging the placement in the first instance. As the student is under an honorary contract the visitors judged it to be important they be part of the arrangements and be aware of the duties and responsibilities of all parties in order that the management of placements is effective. The visitors noted there was a contractual agreement signed by the supervisor, student and the programme team (Placement Supervisor's Handbook 2011-12, p21) which sets out the duties and responsibilities of the supervisor, the student and the programme team. The visitors suggest the programme team consider whether this can be extended to incorporate the students' line managers, or use a similar document, to ensure effective management of placement. The conditions in this report for SETs 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 could be considered alongside this condition to ensure effective placement management. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how practice placements are effectively managed.

### **3.8 The resources to support student learning in all settings must be effectively used.**

**Condition:** The education provider must revisit programme documentation to ensure terminology in use is accurate, reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation and includes references to the HPC, relevant standards and publications where appropriate.

**Reason:** Upon reviewing the programme documentation received before the visit, the visitors noted areas that had not been updated and were not reflective of the current landscape of regulation. In discussion the programme team highlighted the information available online through the virtual learning environment (WOLF) was continually updated and that the hardcopy documentation we had received had not been updated fully because it was not used often. In the documentation the visitors noted there was little mention of HPC in several areas where they expected to see it. Three modules in particular, PS4002, PS4044 and PS5001 contained direct reference to the BPS code of conduct in the module guides and descriptors however made no reference to the HPC's standards of conduct, performance and ethics or the HPC's Guidance on

conduct and ethics for students. The visitors also noted the documentation contained references to 'chartered counselling and clinical psychologists', this terminology is no longer in use, the terminology to be used is 'Registered'. Discussion at the visit indicated the programme is due to undergo revalidation within the next six months which will include amendments to programme documentation. The validation event will be reviewing this programme with an amended credit structure and amended modules. The programme in its current form will not be transferring to the new structures. As a resource to support student learning, the visitors will therefore require both the current and the amended programme to use revised programme documentation. The visitors require the programme team to update programme documentation to ensure it is accurate, reflective of the current landscape of statutory regulation and includes references to the HPC, relevant standards and publications where appropriate.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment.

**Reason:** Documentation provided prior to the visit included a form to collect placement details for the programme team. The form is completed by the student and asks for details of the placement location and contact, the named supervisor and their contact details. Discussion with the programme team indicated they used the form to initiate contact to assess the practice placement setting's suitability. It was highlighted that previously one member of the programme team had the role of being the main contact with responsibility for the approval and monitoring of the placements. Unfortunately the individual who had this role is currently on sick leave and as a result the programme team do not have full access to how this process was managed. The programme team are now working to formally document the processes used for the approval and monitoring of placements. The visitors judged there to be not enough evidence to show how the programme team ensures the placement settings are safe and supportive environments for students. There was no evidence of any risk assessments undertaken or how health and safety policies and procedures are checked at placement settings. The visitors were concerned there was no formal method for the programme team to maintain overall responsibility for the placements including ensuring the placement environments are safe and supportive for the students. The visitors suggest a method be incorporated into the initial placement arrangements and then ongoing monitoring systems. The conditions for SETs 3.2, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 can be looked at alongside this condition as they are closely linked. The visitors require the programme team to provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement settings provide a safe and supportive environment.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

**Reason:** Documentation provided prior to the visit included how the programme team approves placements. A form is used to record placement details. The form is completed by the student and records details of the placement location and contact, the named supervisor and their contact details. Discussion with the programme team indicated they used the form to initiate contact to assess the practice placement setting's suitability. It was highlighted that previously one member of the programme team had the role of being the main contact with responsibility for the approval and monitoring of the placements. Unfortunately the individual who had this role is currently on sick leave and as a result the programme team do not have full access to how this process was managed. The programme team are now working to formally document the processes used for the approval and monitoring of placements. The visitors did not have enough evidence to determine the approval and monitoring of placements is thorough and effective. The visitors commented that the programme team have a number of resources currently in place (initial placement details form, contractual agreement, placement reports and supervisor database) which could be improved to be of further use when approving and monitoring placements and satisfying the HPC SETs. The visitors suggest the programme team consider the conditions under SETs 3.2, 5.3, 5.5 and 5.6 to ensure effective placement approval and monitoring. The visitors require the programme team to provide further evidence to demonstrate how they maintain a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all placements.

#### **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 further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement providers have equality and diversity policies in place.

**Reason:** Documentation provided prior to the visit included a form to collect placement details for the programme team. The form is completed by the student and asks for details of the placement location and contact, the named supervisor and their contact details. Discussion with the programme team indicated they used the form to initiate contact to assess the practice placement settings' suitability. It was highlighted that previously one member of the programme team had the role of being the main contact with responsibility for the approval and monitoring of the placements. Unfortunately the individual who had this role is currently on sick leave and as a result the programme team do not have full access to how this process was managed. The visitors judged there to be not enough evidence to show how the programme team ensures the placement providers will have equality and diversity policies in place. The programme team are now working to formally document the processes used for the approval and



monitoring of placements. The visitors suggest a method be incorporated into the initial placement arrangements and then ongoing monitoring systems. The conditions for SETs 3.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.6 can be looked at alongside this condition as they are closely linked. The visitors require the programme team to provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement providers have equality and diversity policies in place.

#### **5.6 There must be an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.**

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure practice placement settings have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place.

**Reason:** Documentation provided prior to the visit included a form to collect placement details for the programme team. The form is completed by the student and asks for details of the placement location and contacts, the named supervisor and their contact details. Discussion with the programme team indicated they used the form to initiate contact and to assess the practice placement settings' suitability. It was highlighted that previously one member of the programme team had the role of being the main contact with responsibility for the approval and monitoring of the placements. Unfortunately the individual who had this role is currently on sick leave and as a result the programme team do not have full access to how this process was managed. The visitors judged there to be not enough evidence to show how the programme team ensures practice placement settings have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place. The programme team are now working to formally document the processes used for the approval and monitoring of placements. The visitors suggest a method be incorporated into the initial placement arrangements and then ongoing monitoring systems. The conditions for SETs 3.2, 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 can be looked at alongside this condition as they are closely linked. The visitors require the programme team to provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure all practice placement settings have an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place.

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

**Condition:** The education provider must provide further evidence to demonstrate how they ensure supervisors are appropriately trained prior to working with students and receive refresher training as appropriate.

**Reason:** Documentation provided prior to the visit indicated placement supervisors should have training in supervision (Placement Supervisor's Handbook, p17) and would have access to relevant programme information through the handbook, the virtual learning environment (WOLF) and had been recently invited to a placement supervisor workshop day. Discussion at the visit indicated these were new initiatives and the programme team are working to implement this as a more formal structure to placement supervisors training. It was indicated the programme team expected supervisory training to be

undertaken. It was discussed whether training could be mandatory however the programme team made it clear they considered this to be too difficult to enforce. The visitors considered training prior to working with students to be essential to ensure the student placement experience is appropriately managed by the placement supervisor and so they are trained appropriately for the role expected of them. They also considered ongoing refresher training to be necessary in order to keep the placement supervisor informed of updates and changes to the programme and to refresh their skills at working with students. The visitors are supportive of the new initiatives the programme team are implementing and suggest that training can be undertaken in a variety of ways if the placement supervisor is unable to attend a training day at the education provider. The Standards of education and training guidance document (SET 5.8) gives further information around how this can be done. In order to determine this standard is met the visitors require the programme team to demonstrate how they ensure placement supervisors are appropriately trained prior to working with students and receive refresher training as appropriate.

**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 provide further evidence to demonstrate how placement supervisors are fully prepared for placement which includes understanding the learning outcomes to be achieved.

**Reason:** Discussion at the visit with the placement supervisors indicated it was the students who informed them of the learning outcomes for the programme, through the module guides which they took and discussed if necessary with the supervisor. The visitors were concerned that without the programme team disseminating this information, confusions could arise as to what the learning outcomes require. The education provider should maintain responsibility for ensuring placement supervisors are fully prepared for placements including understanding the learning outcomes to be achieved. Discussion at the visit indicated the programme team are currently implementing some new initiatives that will enable easier dissemination of programme information through training day workshops and through the virtual learning environment (WOLF). The visitors consider the condition under SET 5.8 to link with this condition as both of these conditions deal with the preparation of placement supervisors working with students from the programme. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how placement supervisors are fully prepared for placement which includes understanding the learning outcomes to be achieved.

**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.**

**Condition:** The education provider must ensure that exit awards for this programme do not contain any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

**Reason:** Documentation provided indicated there are two interim awards available for students who leave the programme before completion. The interim awards were MSc Counselling Psychology and Post-MSc Counselling Psychology. These two interim awards clearly make reference to the Counselling Psychology part of the Register and therefore the visitors are unable to consider this standard as being met. The visitors require the programme team to rename these two awards to ensure they do not make any reference to an HPC protected title or part of the Register in their named award.

## 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 consider expanding the information provided initially in the advertising materials for the programme.

**Reason:** The visitors have reviewed the advertising materials (website page and course leaflet) and are satisfied an applicant to the programme would have enough information in order to make an informed choice. The visitors did however feel further information could be included to have greater transparency of the admissions procedures. Firstly, the visitors noted the current information requests applicants to have had 'normally' "at least six months in relevant paid or voluntary work, using appropriate skills with clients on a one-to-one basis" (programme website). The visitors queried what 'non-normal' experience would be and how applicants would know what this meant. The students indicated that upon asking the programme team for further information about this they received what they needed. The visitors feel if further clarifications of this were provided in the first instance it could reduce the amount of queries the programme team would receive. Secondly, the visitors noted the programme is subject to the education provider accreditation of prior learning (APL) policies. Discussion indicated that although applications for APL are allowed it is very difficult to apply APL due to the nature of the programme. The visitors felt this information could be communicated for applicants so they have a better knowledge and understanding of the admissions processes.

### **5.2 The number, duration and range of practice placements must be appropriate to support the delivery of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes.**

**Recommendation:** The visitors recommend the programme team ensure they consult thoroughly with students who decide to narrow the range of client groups they work with at their placement.

**Reason:** Documentation and discussion at the visit indicated students arranged their own placements in the second and third years with guidance from the programme team if required. The visitors were satisfied that the programme team could assure themselves the placements would support the achievement of the learning outcomes and so were confident students could choose an appropriate range of placements themselves. The visitors noted through discussion examples of students who had narrowed the range of client groups they worked with in their placements because they had decided on defined career paths to follow once in practice. The visitors were satisfied the programme would ensure these students would be able to meet all the standards of proficiency and practise in a safe and effective way. However they were aware that by narrowing the range of client groups, students could be restricting their scope of practice in the future. The visitors recommend the programme team ensure they discuss thoroughly the implications of this with any student wishing to do so and consider taking further

responsibility of arranging suitable placements to ensure students will be able to meet all the learning outcomes for the programme.

**5.10 There must be regular and effective collaboration between the education provider and the practice placement provider.**

**Recommendation:** The visitors recommend the programme team continue to strengthen regular and effective collaboration between themselves, the placement providers and the placement supervisors.

**Reason:** Discussion at the visit indicated the programme team are in the process of implementing new initiatives to strengthen collaboration between the practice placement providers, practice supervisors and themselves. These initiatives include granting honorary membership of the education provider for library access, access to training courses and continuing professional development programmes, access to the virtual learning resources (WOLF) and more formal structured regular meetings with the practice placement providers and practice supervisors. In discussion with the placement supervisors it was made clear that they appreciated these new initiatives and all would welcome further collaboration and more formal links to the programme. The visitors were pleased to hear this and wish to encourage the programme team to continue with implementing initiatives such as these. The visitors also wished to highlight to the programme team that the placement supervisors voiced how they would welcome more formal links with the programme and noted that this could be conducive to meeting several conditions in this report.

Tony Ward  
George Delafield