

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Queen's University of Belfast
Programme name	Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (DclinPsych)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Clinical psychologist
Date of visit	10 – 11 February 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 '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 12 May 2011. At the Committee meeting on 12 May 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. 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	Ruth Baker (Clinical psychologist) Stephen Davies (Clinical psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	13
Initial approval	1 January 1994
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	
Chair	Anne Fenton (Queen's University of Belfast)
Secretary	Caroline Sinclair (Queen's University of Belfast)
Members of the joint panel	Molly Ross (British Psychological Society) Isabel Hargeaves (British Psychological Society) Mary O'Reilly (British Psychological Society) Andrew Thompson (British Psychological Society) Mahbub Khan (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 programme can be approved.

The visitors agreed that 50 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 7 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 recommendation 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 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 the visitors noted that students are required to have professional liability insurance. The visitors note that this is clearly stated within the programme documentation however the visitors were unable to determine how potential applicants are informed about the associated costs of this requirement. The visitors therefore require the education provider to clearly highlight the potential additional costs associated with professional liability insurance to ensure that applicants can make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of 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 re-visit all programme documentation including advertising materials to clearly state the potential distances required to travel when attending placements.

Reason: During discussions with the programme team the visitors clarified when and where students' practice placements would take place. However, when reviewing the documentation the visitors articulated that there was not a great deal of detail regarding the location of the practice placement elements of the programme. This lack of information about likely placement locations and subsequent travel costs may mean that students can not make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revisit the programme documentation, including advertising material, to clearly highlight to potential applicants the geographical area in which placements will be based to make sure that this standard can be met.

2.3 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including criminal convictions checks.

Condition: The education provider must clarify the arrangements that are in place for criminal conviction checks and highlight any associated costs.

Reason: The visitors noted that the programme documentation states that students are responsible for funding an initial criminal conviction check when they take up an offer of a place on the programme. After discussion with the senior management team and the programme team however, the visitors were given contradictory accounts of the process and the funding arrangements for criminal

conviction checks. The visitors therefore require clarification of the arrangements that are in place for criminal conviction checks and clarification of how long the initial criminal conviction check lasts once it has been processed. The visitors finally seek clarification of the process and funding arrangements in place for criminal conviction checks for non-NHS practice placements. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must clarify the system that is in place for obtaining students' informed consent before they participate as service users in practical teaching.

Reason: The visitors noted in the documentation and through meetings with the programme team that students are asked to sign a consent form before they participate as service users in practical teaching. The visitors also noted that students sign this form before they start the programme as part of the contract of employment. From discussion with the students, however, some of them had little or no awareness of the system the education provider uses for gaining their informed consent. Some students highlighted the fact that it was not until they progressed later into the programme that they had the confidence to discuss with the programme team any issues that they might have participating as a service user in practical teaching. The visitors note that the student consent form was part of the contract of employment. The visitors articulated that opting out of this consent form would mean that a student would not be able to take up a place on the programme. The visitors therefore require the education provider to clarify the arrangements that are in place for gaining students' informed consent. They also require clarification of how students are informed of their right to confidentiality and informed of their right to withdraw from any such activities which require them to participate as service users. This is to ensure that appropriate protocols are used to obtain students' consent and that this standard continues to be met.

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 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 placements via the audit tool and tutor meetings. However, the visitors require further information about how the education provider approves placements before they are used. The visitors need further evidence to be confident that new placements are not approved retrospectively and that students will not go to a new placement setting before it has been audited. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation to clearly demonstrate that all practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training before they supervise students.

Reason: The visitors note that the education provider offers practice placement educator training to practice placement educators. The visitors also noted that the practice placement educators that are currently being utilised by the education provider are experienced and have received practice placement educator training. However, through discussions with the programme team and practice placement educators it is evident that the training is not mandatory. The visitors therefore require clarification of the arrangements that are in place to ensure that new practice placement educators are appropriately trained. This is to ensure that students will be supervised by practice placement educators that have received appropriate training and that this standard continues to be met.

5.9 Practice placement educators must be appropriately registered, unless other arrangements are agreed.

Condition: The education provider must revisit programme documentation to provide evidence of the mechanism in place to ensure that practice placement educators are appropriately registered.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to evidence a mechanism that the education provider uses to ensure that practice placement educators are appropriately registered. The visitors note that this would normally be evidenced within the placement audit. The visitors also noted from discussions with the programme team that some practice placement educators may not be HPC registered. If the education provider chooses to use practice placement educators who are not registered with HPC, then the visitors require evidence outlining the mechanisms the education provider uses to ensure these practice placement educators are appropriately experienced, qualified and have training relevant to the practice placement. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate that this standard is met.

6.5 The measurement of student performance must be objective and ensure fitness to practise.

Condition: The education provider must provide evidence of a mechanism that ensures both consistency and equity for student academic progression.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and discussions with students and the programme team the visitors noted a disparity between the times different students had to wait to receive feedback from the programme team for an assessed piece of work. The visitors noted that students received feedback in batches and not consistently as a cohort. The visitors noted that this did not offer students' equity in terms of their academic progression as some students would be able to act on feedback earlier than others when tackling the next piece of assessment. The visitors require further evidence of a mechanism

that ensures consistency and equity in the time it takes for students to receive feedback from an assessed piece of work.

Recommendation

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 should consider clearly specifying that the MPhil exit award does not lead to eligibility to apply to the Register.

Reason: From the documentation and discussions at the visit the visitors were happy that the requirements of the HPC relating to the title of the step-off or exit awards were being met. The visitors did however feel that students would benefit from a statement that clearly outlines that the alternative MPhil award does not confer eligibility to apply to the HPC Register.

Ruth Baker
Stephen Davies