

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	Queen Margaret University
Programme name	Professional Doctorate in Health Psychology
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Health psychologist
Date of visit	22- 23 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 'Health 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 13 September 2012. At the Committee meeting on 13 September 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 reviewed the programme. The education provider 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, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Mark Forshaw (Health psychologist) Gareth Roderique-Davies (Health psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ruth Wood
Proposed student numbers	Maximum of 5 per cohort once per year
First approved intake	January 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Judith Lane (Queen Margaret University)
Secretary	Sheila Adamson (Queen Margaret University)
Members of the joint panel	Vassilki Karkou (Internal Panel Member) Ian Elliott (Internal Panel Member) Jessica Moyer (Internal Panel Member)

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"/>
Programme monitoring materials	<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 44 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 13 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.

Conditions

3.1 The programme must have a secure place in the education provider's business plan.

Condition: The education provider must submit evidence to demonstrate the last graduation date for the programme and demonstrates commitment to the resourcing of the programme until the programme ceases.

Reason: Information provided prior to the visit indicated the last cohort intake for the programme was in September 2009. The programme is now closed to new intakes. As such students on the programme have all transferred to the part time route and are in the process of completing. The information submitted indicated July 2014 was to be the last graduation date for this programme. However, at the visit, further information was presented that indicated students on the programme were at different stages of completion and the last graduation date was projected to be in 2016. To determine the programme will continue to be resourced and delivered at its current level until the programme ceases, the visitors require evidence to demonstrate the last graduation date for the programme and shows the education provider's commitment to the provision of resourcing the programme. In this way the visitors can be sure the programme will continue to meet the standards of education and training throughout the remaining time period.

3.3 The programme must have regular monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Condition: The programme team must submit further evidence to demonstrate there are formal mechanisms in place to deal with informal feedback from students.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the programme's monitoring and evaluation systems. Documentation indicated Student/Staff Consultative Committees (SSCC) were used to formally manage student feedback, to "provide a forum for constructive discussion between students and staff about issues affecting the programme" (Validation document, p21). The visitors were aware students on the programme had completed the taught elements and were all working on assessment assignments away from the education provider with no requirement for scheduled contact. At the visit it was highlighted there had been some difficulties in running SSCC meetings due to the difficulties with students being unavailable to attend meetings. The programme team indicated students could informally feedback at any point to their director of studies or the module leaders. Because the students are on different placements and do not have any required contact time with the education provider or with each other, the visitors did not have sufficient evidence to determine how the students could feedback to the programme team on any issues they experienced with the programme and how this feedback was formally recorded and dealt with. This would also ensure there is an audit trail for all feedback. The visitors therefore require further evidence demonstrating formal mechanisms for dealing with informal feedback from students.

3.12 There must be a system of academic and pastoral student support in place.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence that demonstrates how they ensure there is an effective system of academic and pastoral support in place for students.

Reason: Documentation provided at the visit indicated students were allocated a director of studies and a second supervisor to provide academic and pastoral student support. The visitors were aware students on the programme had completed the taught elements of the programme and were all now working on assessment assignments away from the education provider setting. The visitors noted there was the expectation that students met with their director of studies a minimum of 6 times per year whilst the taught elements of the programme were being held. There was no minimum number of meetings required for the students once the taught elements of the programme were complete. Discussion with the students indicated it was the students who initiated meetings with their director of studies when they felt it was necessary. The students were satisfied with the level of independent learning within the programme. The visitors noted that these meetings were initiated by the students and as such issues may arise only after students were experiencing problems as they may not realise they needed assistance until then. The visitors suggest regular meetings with students initiated by the programme team may prevent problems arising in this way. The visitors therefore require evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure an effective system of student support is in place to ensure that students are receiving appropriate and timely academic and pastoral support.

3.16 There must be a process in place throughout the programme for dealing with concerns about students' profession-related conduct.

Condition: The programme team must provide revised documentation that explains the education provider fitness to practise policy for students and the workplace mentors.

Reason: Documentation at the visit provided the education provider's fitness to practise policy. There was a website link in the programme handbook to the education providers' regulations which included all regulations and the fitness to practise policy. However, the workplace mentor's handbook did not include information about the fitness to practise policy. The visitors considered the process could be used in relation to any concerns about students' profession-related conduct and as such, students and workplace mentors should be made aware of the process in case they need to interact with it. The visitors therefore require the programme team to revise programme documentation to include information about how the education provider's fitness to practise policy operates for the students and the workplace mentors.

4.1 The learning outcomes must ensure that those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must submit any revised learning outcomes for the programme, or confirmation the previously submitted learning outcomes are not subject to change, prior to final programme approval by HPC.

Reason: Discussion at the visit indicated the programme team may amend learning outcomes as part of the post-visit process for the education provider. If any changes are to be made to learning outcomes, the visitors will need to review them to ensure changes will not affect how the learning outcomes ensure students can meet the SOPs upon completion of the programme. The visitors require the programme team to resubmit learning outcomes if any changes are made, or to confirm the previously submitted learning outcomes are not subject to change, to ensure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

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

Condition: The programme team must ensure a thorough and effective system for the initial approval of all placements is in place.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the processes in place for initially approving placements for the programme. It is the students' responsibility to find placements and to initially discuss their needs with the placement provider. The placement provider fills out a 'Workplace Checklist Form' which is based on health and safety. The student completes a placement form identifying the learning goals for themselves at that placement. The programme team receive both forms and then an 'Initial placement visit' is carried out "within a few weeks of the start of placement learning" (Workplace Mentor Handbook, p7). The nature of the programme means often more than one placement is needed to fulfil the learning outcomes of the programme; the student could therefore be experiencing multiple placement sites.

Discussions with the students indicated the initial approval process was not always carried out. In one example a student described how they had initiated several placements without notifying the programme team because after a few weeks it had become evident the placement was not suitable for their purpose of the student meeting their learning outcomes and so had left. The students also indicated the initial meetings held between the programme team and the placement provider did not always occur. There were examples of students who had undertaken several different placements but had only experienced the initial placement meeting on one or two of their placements.

From the evidence provided the visitors could not identify how the programme team ensured the placement settings were appropriate; provided the student with a suitable environment to support the achievement of their competencies; were safe; or had appropriately qualified and experienced staff in place to act as their workplace mentor. The visitors could not identify how the programme team

managed placement situations where a student has more than one placement through the duration of the programme and ensured the initial approval process always took place.

The education provider has overall responsibility for placement learning and ensuring that suitable systems are in place to support it. To ensure that this SET is met, the visitors would like to receive documentation which illustrates a thorough and effective system for approving and monitoring all work place settings.

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

Condition: The programme team must ensure a thorough and effective system for the ongoing monitoring of placements is in place.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the processes in place for the ongoing monitoring of placements for the programme. The programme team has an initial placement meeting to review the goals set at the beginning of the placement; provide support and information about this programme to the workplace mentor; and ensure that students are able to access relevant learning opportunities within the placement. Discussion at the visit indicated this meeting also ensures the placement is a safe environment for the student to work in. Going forward, the programme team is available for further visits, telephone calls or emails when the placement provider or student requests this. The visitors are aware for a programme of this nature the duration of any placement is dependent on how much time the student needs to complete the learning objectives set for that placement. The visitors were concerned a student could be on a placement for an undetermined length of time and the programme team have no formal mechanisms for monitoring the placement to ensure it maintains its suitability for working with students. The visitors suggest a structured approach for the education provider to contact the placement provider regularly whilst the student is at the placement could be considered here. The visitors require evidence to demonstrate effective mechanisms for the ongoing monitoring of placements are in place.

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 programme team must provide evidence of how they ensure equality and diversity policies are in place, implemented and monitored within practice placements.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the processes in place for initially approving placements for the programme. It is the students' responsibility to find placements and to initially discuss their needs with the placement provider. The placement provider fills out a 'Workplace Checklist Form' (Appendix 1 Workplace Mentor Handbook). The workplace checklist form is based on health and safety, risk assessments and accidents and incident

policies. The programme team receive this form and an 'Initial placement visit' is carried out "within a few weeks of the start of placement learning" (Workplace Mentor Handbook, p7). Discussion indicated the workplace checklist form is corroborated at this visit and the placement setting is discussed. From the evidence provided the visitors were unable to determine how the programme team ensures practice placements have equality and diversity policies in place and that they are implemented and monitored. This could be documented as part of the placement approval and monitoring processes. The visitors require further evidence that demonstrates the programme team ensures equality and diversity policies are in place, implemented and monitored within practice placements.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of how they ensure there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the processes in place for initially approving placements for the programme. It is the students' responsibility to find placements and to initially discuss their needs with the placement provider. The placement provider fills out a 'Workplace Checklist Form' (Appendix 1 Workplace Mentor Handbook). The workplace checklist form is based on health and safety, risk assessments and accidents and incident policies. The programme team receive this form and an 'Initial placement visit' is carried out "within a few weeks of the start of placement learning" (Workplace Mentor Handbook, p7). Discussion indicated the workplace checklist form is corroborated at this visit and the placement setting is discussed. From the evidence provided the visitors were unable to determine how the programme team ensures there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting. This could be documented as part of the placement approval and monitoring processes. The visitors require further evidence that demonstrates how the programme team ensures there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff at the practice placement setting.

5.7 Practice placement educators must have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of how they ensure the workplace mentors have relevant knowledge, skills and experience needed to work with students from this programme.

Reason: Documentation provided prior to the visit described the processes in place for initially approving placements for the programme. It is the students' responsibility to find placements and to initially discuss their needs with the placement provider. The placement provider fills out a 'Workplace Checklist Form' (Appendix 1 Workplace Mentor Handbook). The workplace checklist form is based on health and safety, risk assessments and accidents and incident policies. The programme team receive this form and an 'Initial placement visit' is

carried out “within a few weeks of the start of placement learning” (Workplace Mentor Handbook, p7). Discussion indicated the workplace checklist form is corroborated at this visit and the placement setting is discussed. From the evidence provided the visitors were unable to determine how the programme team ensures workplace mentors at the placement have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience needed to work directly with the students. This could be documented as part of the placement approval and monitoring processes. The visitors require further evidence that demonstrates how the programme team ensures the workplace mentors have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience needed to work with students from this programme.

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 programme team must provide evidence to demonstrate how they maintain a placement provider’s understanding of the student’s placement.

Reason: Discussions at the visit indicated it was the student who primarily acted to liaise between the programme team and placement provider. The visitors noted the placement providers could contact the programme team at any point for support, however students and the placement providers indicated they expected that this would be done through the student. The visitors were satisfied the initial approval meetings would be used to prepare the placement provider for the placement. However, they considered the nature of this programme meant a placement could continue for an undetermined amount of time and therefore aspects of the placement could change. The visitors considered the programme team is required to ensure the placement providers continually understand and are prepared for; the learning goals being, or not being, achieved; the timings and duration of the placement; the assessment procedures and implications of failure to progress; and communication and lines of responsibility. The visitors suggest a structured approach for the programme team to contact the placement provider regularly whilst the student is at the placement could be considered here. The visitors therefore require further evidence that demonstrates how the programme team maintains placement providers’ understanding of the students’ placement.

6.1 The assessment strategy and design must ensure that the student who successfully completes the programme has met the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

Condition: The programme team must submit any revised learning outcomes for the programme, or confirmation the previously submitted learning outcomes are not subject to change, prior to final programme approval by HPC.

Reason: Discussion at the visit indicated the programme team may amend learning outcomes as part of the post-visit process for the education provider. If any changes are to be made to learning outcomes the visitors will need to review them to ensure changes will not affect the learning outcomes or the assessment of the learning outcomes. The visitors require the programme team to resubmit the programme learning outcomes if any changes are made, or to confirm the previously submitted learning outcomes are not subject to change. In this way the visitors can be sure those who successfully complete the programme meet the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

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

Condition: The programme team must clearly articulate within the programme documentation that no aegrotat award can be conferred on students from this programme.

Reason: In the documentation submitted there was insufficient detail regarding aegrotat awards. Discussion at the visit indicated the education provider does not confer aegrotat awards. The visitors were satisfied with this arrangement. However, to demonstrate this standard is met, the visitors require the programme team to include a statement explaining that no aegrotat awards can be conferred on students from this programme, in the programme documentation.

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 programme team must clearly articulate in the programme documentation that at least one external examiner for the programme will be from the relevant part of the register or that other arrangements will be agreed.

Reason: In the documentation submitted there was insufficient detail regarding external examiner policies for the programme. The visitors were satisfied with the arrangements currently in place for the programme. However, to demonstrate this standard is met, the visitors require documentary evidence to show recognition of HPC requirements for the external examiners.

Recommendations

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

Recommendation: The visitors suggest the education provider have one nominated person to oversee the placement organisation for all students on the programme.

Reason: Discussion at the visit indicated each student had a member of the programme team allocated as their 'director of studies' and one allocated as their 'second supervisor' who were available for them whilst they were on placement. The visitors heard that occasionally there were instances when the people in these roles needed to change suddenly. This had led to students being out on placement with no designated contact on the programme team. The visitors felt if someone was nominated to have oversight of where all the students were on their placements and when they had last been visited or contacted, it would be easier for the programme team to manage any changes in staff roles. The visitors also felt this arrangement would help with the concerns identified in conditions under 3.12, 5.4 and 5.11 in this report.

Mark Forshaw
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