

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Nottingham
Programme name	Doctorate in Applied Educational Psychology (D.App.Ed.Psy)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Educational psychologist
Date of visit	16 – 17 May 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 'Educational 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 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 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	Judith Bamford (Educational psychologist) Robert Stratford (Educational psychologist)
HPC executive officer(s) (in attendance)	David Christopher
Proposed student numbers	12 per cohort once a year
First approved intake	January 2005
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Alan Sunderland – 16 May 2012 (University of Nottingham) Eamon Ferguson – 17 May 2012 (University of Nottingham)
Secretary	Viv Kirk (University of Nottingham)
Members of the joint panel	Tara Midgen (British Psychological Society) Rupal Nathwani (British Psychological Society) Richard Parker (British Psychological Society) Graham Pratt (British Psychological Society) Anna Price (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"/>
Joint HPC approval and British Psychological Society accreditation event appendices	<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 55 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 2 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 education provider must review the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to ensure that the terminology used is accurate and reflective of the language associated with statutory regulation and the HPC.

Reason: The documentation submitted by the education provider and information contained on its website included references to the programme which do not comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. The education provider's website stated that the programme 'leads to eligibility for registration with the HPC'. The programme specification stated that the course aims 'to enable' registration with the HPC. Such statements imply an automatic link between completing the programme successfully and registration with the HPC which is misleading. Successful completion of an approved programme confers eligibility to apply for registration with the HPC. The visitors require the education provider to review the programme documentation, including advertising materials and its website, to ensure that the terminology used is accurate, reflects the language associated with statutory regulation and avoids any potential confusion for applicants and students.

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

Condition: The education provider must include a clear statement in the programme documentation that the postgraduate diploma and certificate exit awards do not confer eligibility to apply for HPC registration.

Reason: The visitors noted that the documentation provided prior to the visit made no explicit reference to an aegrotat award. However, the documentation indicated that students who failed the doctorate could be eligible to be awarded a postgraduate diploma or a certificate, depending on the number of credits achieved. In discussions, the programme team stated students were informed that these awards did not confer eligibility to apply for HPC registration. However, the programme documentation did not contain a clear statement to this effect, which could lead to a misunderstanding about the status of these exit awards. The visitors therefore require the education provider to include a clear statement in the programme documentation that the postgraduate diploma and certificate exit awards do not confer eligibility to apply for HPC registration to ensure that this standard continues to be met.

Recommendations

2.6 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including accreditation of prior (experiential) learning and other inclusion mechanisms.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revising the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to make clear to potential applicants that the programme does not accredit prior (experiential) learning.

Reason: The visitors noted that programme documentation submitted prior to the visit made no reference to a scheme for accrediting prior (experiential) learning, although the education provider's institution-wide procedures allow programmes to operate such mechanisms. However, discussions with the programme team revealed that there was no such scheme in place for this programme. The visitors noted that it would be helpful to potential applicants if the absence of such a scheme was made clear. The visitors suggest that the education provider give consideration to revising the programme documentation, including advertising materials, to make clear to potential applicants that the programme does not accredit prior (experiential) learning.

3.10 The learning resources, including IT facilities, must be appropriate to the curriculum and must be readily available to students and staff.

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to develop the on-line learning resources that are available to students.

Reason: The visitors noted that students were generally content with their access to learning resources such as lecture notes and presentations. The education provider had provided students with email access and there were a number of email distribution lists to facilitate the flow of information. The visitors noted that the education provider has decided to introduce a virtual learning environment called Moodle as a means of facilitating access to learning resources. The visitors saw a demonstration of this system for an undergraduate programme and noted that the programme would use this system from the next academic year. The visitors welcomed the intention to enhance the online learning resources available to students and wish to encourage the education provider in the development and introduction of this facility for the programme.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should continue to develop the procedures for monitoring attendance at practice placement educator training.

Reason: The visitors were content that this standard continues to be met. They noted the training that was made available to practice placement educators and the close links that the education provider had forged with practice placement educators. The visitors also noted that attendance at training events was monitored and efforts made to ensure that those who were absent received

relevant information in another form, for example via email. The visitors welcomed the steps that have been taken to monitor attendance at training events and suggested that the education provider continue to develop its monitoring processes in order to facilitate the training of practice placement educators

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to ensure that information provided about the number of credits awarded is clear and consistent.

Reason: The visitors noted the education provider's regulations for the programme indicated that a total of 540 credits would be required for the award of a doctoral level qualification. However, the information setting out the number of credits awarded in the programme specification referred to 240 credits. The visitors noted that this lack of consistency was unhelpful and could confuse students about what was expected of them for progression and successful completion of the programme. The visitors therefore suggested that the education provider should consider reviewing the programme documentation to ensure that the information about credits is clear and consistent.

Judith Bamford
Robert Stratford