![hpc health professions council]

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of the West of England, Bristol
Programme name	Professional Doctorate in Counselling Psychology
Mode of delivery	Full time Part time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Counselling psychologist
Date of visit	15 – 16 March 2012

Contents

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 23 August 2012. At the Committee meeting on 23 August 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 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 as 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	David Packwood (Counselling psychologist)
	Robert Stratford (Educational psychologist)
HPC executive officer (in attendance)	Ben Potter
Proposed student numbers	14 (between full and part time cohorts)
First approved intake	January 2006
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Dianne Rees (University of the West of England, Bristol)
Secretary	Sallianne Donnelly (University of the West of England, Bristol)
Members of the joint panel	Elena Manafi (British Psychological Society)
	Victoria Galbraith (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	☒	☐	☐
Descriptions of the modules	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SETs	☒	☐	☐
Mapping document providing evidence of how the education provider has met the SOPs	☒	☐	☐
Practice placement handbook	☒	☐	☐
Student handbook	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum vitae for relevant staff	☒	☐	☐
External examiners' reports from the last two years	☒	☐	☐

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	☒	☐	☐
Programme team	☒	☐	☐
Placements providers and educators/mentors	☒	☐	☐
Students	☒	☐	☐
Learning resources	☒	☐	☐
Specialist teaching accommodation (eg specialist laboratories and teaching rooms)	☒	☐	☐

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 46 of the SETs have been met and that conditions should be set on the remaining 11 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

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

Condition: The programme team must revisit the programme documentation to ensure the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: The visitors noted the programme documentation submitted by the education provider did not fully comply with the advertising guidance issued by HPC. In particular, there were instances of out-of-date terminology in reference to HPC 'accrediting' the programme (e.g. p1 Programme Specification or p10 Placement Handbook for Providers), and that HPC requires students to undertake 450 clinical hours of placement experience (e.g. p19 Programme handbook). The HPC does not 'accredit' education programmes, as a statutory regulator we 'approve' education programmes. It is also the case that HPC does not set a minimum number of hours that a student must complete. The visitors considered the terminology potentially misleading and therefore required the documentation to be reviewed to remove any instances of incorrect or out-of-date terminology throughout.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of the formal processes in place for the ongoing monitoring of practice placements

Reason: From the documentation provided and from discussions with the programme team the visitors were aware of the current processes in place for approving and monitoring all placements. The visitors noted that if a new placement, not on the database of current placement opportunities for students, was approached, the placement co-ordinator would undertake a placement visit to ensure that it meets the criteria of the programme. The visitors also noted that students gave feedback to the programme team after a placement as part of the ongoing monitoring of practice placements. Further discussions with the programme team and the practice placement providers highlighted that due to some of the distances involved the placement co-ordinator would not always be able to visit placement sites. In instances such as these a telephone conversation would be undertaken to determine the likely resources and experiences that would be available to students at these placement sites. However, the visitors could not determine the criteria that were being utilised by the programme team to assess the suitability of placement sites and what formal processes were implemented to ensure that these criteria were being met. In particular the visitors could not determine how, if the number of placement sites were to increase, the programme team would ensure that all placements were meeting the criteria they require. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the formal processes that are in place to ensure that the placements utilised by students have met, and are continuing to meet, the requirements of the programme. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme continues to meet this standard.

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

Condition: The programme team need to provide further evidence of how they ensure that practice placement educators are trained to understand how the programme specific requirements for students practice placement experience are applied consistently.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, and in discussion with the practice placement providers, the visitors noted that practice placement educators are not required to attend training prior to supervising students. The visitors were made aware, in discussion with the programme team, that the criteria for selection meant practice placement educators would have the skills and experience necessary to supervise students. It was also highlighted that the practice placement educators also received the handbook for placement providers. However, the visitors could not identify from the evidence provided how the programme team ensures that practice placement educators were fully aware of the requirements for supervision from this programme. In particular the visitors could not identify how the placement educators were given sufficient information about how to contact the programme and in what instance they should consider raising any issues with the programme team. The visitors also could not determine how placement educators were trained to assess students in a clear and consistent way. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensures that placement educators have sufficient information or training to be able to supervise students from this programme. Primarily the visitors require further evidence of how the programme team ensures that placement educators can assess students to the required standard and that they understand the requirements of the professional suitability policy.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of the formal procedures in place for regular and effective communication with practice placement educators.

Reason: In discussion with the programme team, and the practice placement providers, the visitors noted that the placement co-ordinator for the programme was the primary contact on the programme team for placement providers. It was highlighted in these conversations that as this position had been created and filled only relatively recently not all placement providers had yet had contact with the placement co-ordinator. However, it was emphasised that there are strong informal links between the more local placement providers and the current programme team. The visitors also noted in further conversations with the placement providers that they would welcome the chance for closer contact with the programme. The programme team also articulated that they had considered setting up a suitable forum to facilitate this communication in the future. However, the visitors did not have sufficient evidence of how the programme ensures that there is regular and effective communication between the education provider and all placement providers, particularly those further afield. Therefore the visitors require further evidence of how the team stays in regular communication with

placement providers and what, if any, formal procedures are in place to communicate with providers particularly those outside of the local area.

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 further evidence of how practice placement educators are prepared for placement through an understanding of the learning outcomes a student needs to meet while on placement.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers the visitors noted that practice placement educators are provided with the handbook for placement providers prior to supervising a student. The visitors were made aware in further discussions that this handbook was the source for a great deal of information about the course. In particular it provides significant information about the timings and duration of placement, what the communication channels are with the programme and what the lines of responsibility for the students are. It was also highlighted that students were expected to discuss the aims and experience they required throughout a placement with their placement educator prior to starting their placement. However, the visitors were unclear about what information was provided to placement educators about the learning outcomes to be achieved on placement and the assessment procedures to be used to ensure they are met. In particular the visitors could not determine how the information provided to placement educators ensured that all of the learning outcomes associated with a placement experience had been met by a successful student. The visitors therefore require further evidence of the information provided to placement educators to ensure that they are aware of the learning outcomes a student must meet while on placement and how this is to be assessed. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that practice placement educators are fully prepared to supervise a student and assess their performance.

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 provide further evidence about how the assessment strategy ensures that students who successfully complete all required placements experience have met the relevant learning outcomes.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers, and students, the visitors noted that students were expected to discuss the aims and experience they required throughout a

placement with their placement educator prior to starting their placement. From this discussion an agreement is reached about what the student will experience and how this will be achieved. In discussion with the programme team the visitors were made aware of the expectation that students would also provide placement educators with a summary of their previous placement experience to inform this discussion. However, it was pointed out in both discussions with the students and the placement providers that this summary was not always available and sometimes was not provided at this meeting. The visitors articulated that from a review of the documentation it was unclear how the progress of a student in achieving the learning outcomes associated with practice placements was charted from one placement to another. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure that the completion of practice placement experience means that students have met the learning outcomes associated with that experience. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that a student who successfully completes the programme has met all of the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

6.2 All assessments must provide a rigorous and effective process by which compliance with external-reference frameworks can be measured.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how the assessment of a students' placement experience is rigorous and effective.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers, and students, the visitors noted that students were expected to discuss the aims and experience they required throughout a placement with their placement educator prior to starting their placement. From this discussion an agreement is reached about what the student will experience and how this will be achieved. In discussion with the programme team the visitors were made aware of the expectation that students would also provide placement educators with a summary of their previous placement experience to inform this discussion. However, it was pointed out in both discussions with the students and the placement providers that this summary was not always available and sometimes was not provided at this meeting. The visitors articulated that from a review of the documentation it was unclear how the progress of a student in achieving the learning outcomes associated with practice placements was charted from one placement to another. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure that the completion of practice placement experience means that students have met the learning outcomes associated with that experience. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that a student who successfully completes the programme has met all of the standards of proficiency for their part of the Register.

6.4 Assessment methods must be employed that measure the learning outcomes.

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of the assessment undertaken by students on placement and how this measures the relevant learning outcomes.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers, and students, the visitors noted that students were expected to discuss the aims and experience they required throughout a placement with their placement educator prior to starting their placement. From this discussion an agreement is reached about what the student will experience and how this will be achieved. In discussion with the programme team the visitors were made aware of the expectation that students would also provide placement educators with a summary of their previous placement experience to inform this discussion. However, it was pointed out in both discussions with the students and the placement providers that this summary was not always available and sometimes was not provided at this meeting. The visitors articulated that from a review of the documentation it was unclear how the progress of a student in achieving the learning outcomes associated with practice placements was charted from one placement to another. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure that the completion of practice placement experience means that students have met the learning outcomes associated with that experience. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that the assessment of students while they are on placement ensures that they are meeting the required learning outcomes.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how they ensure that the assessments on placement are applied consistently and objectively.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and in discussion with the practice placement providers, and students, the visitors noted that students were expected to discuss the aims and experience they required throughout a placement with their placement educator prior to starting their placement. From this discussion an agreement is reached about what the student will experience and how this will be achieved. In discussion with the programme team the visitors were made aware of the expectation that students would also provide placement educators with a summary of their previous placement experience to inform this discussion. However, it was pointed out in both discussions with the students and the placement providers that this summary was not always available and sometimes was not provided at this meeting. The visitors articulated that from a review of the documentation it was unclear how the progress of a student in achieving the learning outcomes associated with practice placements was charted from one placement to another. The visitors therefore require further evidence to demonstrate how the programme team ensure that the completion of practice placement experience means that students have met the learning outcomes associated with that experience. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team ensures that the assessment of students while they are on placement is objective and ensures fitness to practice.

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

Condition: The programme team must clarify in the programme documentation the progression routes and related timings for students from the point of thesis submission.

Reason: In reviewing the programme documentation, and in discussion with the programme team, the visitors noted that was some variance in the information provided to students regarding progression through the programme after thesis submission. In particular the visitors noted that the information around the decisions made by the examiners for a thesis at the viva voce stage of examination was different in the research handbook to that in the academic regulations. They noted that some terminology differed, with the terms 'corrections' and 'minor or major amendments' used differently or omitted. The visitors also articulated that the academic regulations links re-submission periods with these decisions and terminology and therefore the variance in the terms used could be confusing to students. The visitors therefore require the programme team to clarify the differences between the use of these terms and what impact the different decisions which can be made by the viva voce examiners will have on a student's progression through the programme. In this way the visitors can determine how the programme team clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.

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 revise the exit awards from the programme to ensure that there is no mention of an HPC protected title or part of the Register in these awards.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were clear that there are two exit awards form this programme a Certificate in Counselling Psychology Studies and a Diploma in Counselling Psychology Studies. The visitors articulated that this standard requires exit awards to be named in such a way that makes it clear that they do not lead to a person receiving them being eligible to apply for registration. The visitors therefore require the education provider to revise the titles of these awards to ensure that 'counselling psychology' or 'Counselling psychologist' is not included. In this way the visitors can determine how the education provider ensures that applicants, students and the public understand who is eligible to apply with us, and who is not, and that this standard continues to be 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 programme team may consider including more detailed criteria for successful application to the programme outside of the website

Reason: From a review of the documentation the visitors noted that the requirements for entry to the programme were clearly stated in several places in the documentation and the website. They were therefore satisfied that this standard has been met. However, in reviewing the documentation the visitors noted that the criteria for successful a successful application to the programme were only comprehensively described on the websites associated with the programme. The visitors recommend that the programme team considers including this comprehensive list, including the requirement for relevant criminal records and health checks, in other information sources about the programme such as the education providers' prospectus. In this way the programme team may be able to better ensure that applicants to the programme have all of the information they require in order to make an informed decision about applying.

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

Recommendation: The programme team should consider updating the programme handbook to better reflect the requirements of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from a tour of the learning resources the visitors noted the resources that were available to support student learning in all settings. In discussion with the students it was also made clear that these resources were utilised well to support student learning. The visitors were therefore satisfied that this standard is met. However, the visitors articulated that in several meetings throughout the visit there had been changes to the information that was provided in the current iteration of the programme handbook, such as the minimum required client hours in first year. They also noted that there were also some proposed changes which were yet to be included in the information provided to students. The visitors therefore recommend that the programme team update the information provided to students, in particular the programme handbook, to more accurately reflect the current status of the programme. In this way the programme team may be able to better ensure that this resource is utilised as effectively as possible to support student learning.

David Packwood
Robert Stratford