

Visitors' report

Name of education provider	University of Surrey
Programme name	Practitioner Doctorate in Psychotherapeutic and Counselling Psychology (PsychD)
Mode of delivery	Full time
Relevant part of HPC Register	Practitioner psychologist
Relevant modality / domain	Counselling psychologist
Date of visit	21 – 22 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 '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 11 October 2012. At the Committee meeting on 11 October 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 part of a joint event. The education provider and validating body validated the programme and the professional body considered their accreditation of the programme. The education provider, 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 education provider and the professional body, outlines their decisions on the programme's status.

Visit details

Name of HPC visitors and profession	Dave Packwood (Counselling psychologist) Lynn Dunwoody (Health psychologist)
HPC executive officers (in attendance)	Lewis Roberts
Proposed student numbers	15 per cohort
First approved intake	January 1994
Effective date that programme approval reconfirmed from	September 2012
Chair	Andrew Lockwood (University of Surrey)
Secretary	Simon Appleton (University of Surrey)
Members of the joint panel	Chris Amodio (Internal panel member) 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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Descriptions of the modules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" 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"/>

The HPC did not review the programme specification prior to the visit as a programme specification has not been created for this award type.

The HPC did not review descriptions of modules prior to the visit as the programme is not based around a modular structure.

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 44 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 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 revise all programme documentation including website and advertising materials, to clearly highlight any additional personal costs associated with taking up a place on the programme. The education provider must also ensure that the terminology in use is accurate and reflective of the current terminology used in relation to statutory regulation.

Reason: Through discussions with students the visitors noted students are required to self-fund a number of additional personal costs associated with taking up a place on the programme. From a review of the programme documentation the visitors were unable to determine where applicants and students would find out about costs associated with personal therapy, indemnity insurance and supervision costs. In discussions with the programme team it was stated that applicants can contact the programme team for further guidance about additional costs and information is also given at the open day and at interview. However, the visitors considered that the lack of information about costs associated with taking up a place on the programme may mean applicants cannot make an informed decision about whether to take up a place on the programme.

The visitors also noted reference to incorrect terminology within the Placement Handbook (page 10 and 16) where it states that “In accordance with HPC and BPS Guidelines, group supervision can only be counted towards the supervision log when the time allocated to the group is divided by the number of people in it” and “Placements will provide in-house therapy supervision as specified by the HPC and BPS”. HPC make no such stipulation and the visitors considered the statements to be misleading to both students and practice placement educators. The visitors therefore require the programme documentation, including advertising materials to be reviewed to remove any instance of incorrect terminology and clearly highlight (including guidance on level of cost) any additional personal costs associated with taking up a place on the programme.

2.4 The admissions procedures must apply selection and entry criteria, including compliance with any health requirements.

Condition: The programme team must provide evidence of health requirement checks applied through the admissions procedures.

Reason: Documentation submitted prior to the visit indicated the programme would not require applicants or students on this programme to undergo health requirement checks. However the visitors noted discussions with students where it was stated that some practice placements require students to undertake occupational health assessments. The visitors were concerned that a student could enrol on the programme and subsequently find out that they are unable to gain access to an appropriate range of learning experiences because practice placement providers judge that an individual’s health prevents them from practising safely and effectively. The visitors therefore require the programme

team to revise the admissions procedures to provide evidence of health requirement checks.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and outline the process for approving and monitoring practice placements to ensure that the resources available to students on all practice placements are effectively used.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of practice placements. The visitors noted the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form, as well as discussions with the programme team outlining the informal mechanisms in place to approve and monitor practice placements. The visitors did not consider the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form to offer a robust framework for auditing practice placements. The visitors were therefore concerned that no formal mechanisms were in place to ensure that practice placement are approved and monitored consistently. The visitors could not determine how the programme team identified what resources the education provider expected to be in place for students on placement or how the programme team then determined whether the resources were effectively used. The visitors therefore require further information outlining how the education provider ensures that the resources to support student learning are effectively used in practice placements.

3.9 The resources to support student learning in all settings must effectively support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and outline the process for approving and monitoring practice placements to ensure that the resources available to trainees on all practice placements support the required learning and teaching activities of the programme.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of practice placements. The visitors noted the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form, as well as discussions with the programme team outlining the informal mechanisms in place to approve and monitor practice placements. The visitors did not consider the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form to offer a robust framework for auditing practice placements. The visitors were therefore concerned that no formal mechanisms were in place to ensure that practice placement are approved and monitored consistently. The visitors could not determine how the programme team identified what resources the programme team expected to be in place for students on practice placement or how the programme team then determined whether the resources effectively supported the required learning and teaching activities of the programme. The visitors therefore require further information outlining how the education provider ensures the resources to support student learning are effectively used in all practice placements.

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: From the discussions with the students and the programme team, the visitors learnt that verbal consent is obtained before practical teaching and that participation is not mandatory. The programme team also discussed how they made applicants to the programme clear about what level of involvement was expected during the course of the programme. However the visitors also noted comments from the programme team where it was stated that visiting lecturers may not be as familiar with this policy as the programme team. The visitors were concerned that there was no formal protocol in place to detail how records were maintained to indicate consent had been obtained or how situations where students declined from participation were managed. In light of this, the visitors were not satisfied the programme gained informed consent from trainees or could appropriately manage situations where students declined to participate. The visitors therefore require the education provider to implement appropriate formal protocols for obtaining consent from students and for managing situations where students decline from participating in practical and clinical teaching.

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

Condition: The education provider must revisit the programme documentation and outline the process for approving and monitoring practice placements to ensure they are safe and supportive.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of practice placements. The visitors noted that the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form address some of the health and safety issues related to practice placements. However, the visitors did not consider the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form to offer a robust framework for auditing practice placements to ensure they are safe and supportive. The visitors require further evidence of the auditing process and the guidelines in place to ensure that the education provider can make a judgement on whether practice placements provide safe and supportive environments. The education provider must also produce guidelines that articulate what they constitute as a safe and supportive practice placement 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 of the formal processes in place which ensure that practice placements are thoroughly and effectively approved and monitored.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of practice placements. The visitors noted the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form, as well as discussions with the programme team outlining the informal mechanisms in place to approve and monitor practice placements. The visitors did not consider the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form to offer a robust framework for auditing practice placements. The visitors were therefore concerned that no formal mechanisms were in place to ensure that practice placement are approved and monitored consistently. The visitors require clear written protocols that outline the systems in place to ensure that practice placements are approved and monitored in a thorough and effective way, including clear criteria that outline the minimum threshold standards for placement approval.

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

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the quality of practice placements. The visitors noted the Health and Safety Checklist and the Supervisor Details Form, as well as discussions with the programme team outlining the informal mechanisms in place to approve and monitor practice placements. The visitors could find no evidence of a mechanism in place to ensure that practice placements have equality and diversity policies in place and that they are implemented and monitored. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide evidence outlining how they ensure equality and diversity policies are in place, implemented and monitored within practice placements.

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

Condition: The programme team must provide further evidence of how they ensure the practice placement educators have relevant knowledge, skills and experience.

Reason: From a review of the documentation and discussions with the programme team the visitors could not find evidence of formal mechanisms in place to check the knowledge, skills and experience of practice placement educators. The visitors noted the criteria for placement supervisors outlined within the Placement Handbook (page 34) as well as the Supervisor Details Form (page 37) but highlighted that the education provider recorded limited information about the practice placement educators knowledge, skills and experience. The visitors therefore require a clear outline of the systems and audit arrangements in place to ensure that practice placement educators have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience to undertake supervision.

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

Condition: The education provider must clearly articulate the mechanism they use to ensure that practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training in advance of receiving students and how they decide when practice placement educators require refresher training.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team it was highlighted that new practice placement educators are given an induction to the programme, the programme has an experienced cohort of practice placement educators and an annual workshop is offered to all practice placement educators. However, it was also stated that the initial induction was often done on a case by case basis when the placement is being considered for its suitability to host a student. The visitors also noted comments from practice placement educators where they stated that practice placement educators should have a more formal introduction to the programme and new practice placement educators may not be as familiar with the programme as experienced practice placement educators.

The visitors did not consider the current informal arrangements demonstrate all practice placement educators undertake appropriate practice placement educator training in advance of receiving students. It was noted that all practice placement educators are involved in assessing student performance and it is therefore imperative that all new practice placement educators are orientated towards the programme and its requirements. The visitors therefore require the education provider to provide further evidence that demonstrates a more formalised approach to the initial and on-going training of practice placement educators. In addition clarification is sort on how the education provider records and monitors the training of new practice placement educators and information on how it is determined if a practice placement educator needs refresher training and how this is articulated to the relevant parties.

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 education provider must revisit the programme regulations to clearly specify the requirement 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.

Reason: In the documentation submitted by the education provider there was insufficient detail concerning the recruitment of external examiners to the programme. The visitors were satisfied with the current external examiner arrangements. However this standard requires that the assessment regulations of the programme must state that any external examiner appointed to the programme needs to be appropriately registered or that suitable alternative arrangements should be agreed. Therefore the visitors require evidence that HPC requirements regarding external examiner appointments to the programme have been included in the documentation, specifically in the programme regulations, to ensure that this standard can be met.

Recommendations

2.7 The admissions procedures must ensure that the education provider has equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and students, together with an indication of how these will be implemented and monitored.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider taking a more strategic approach in the monitoring and implementation of its equality and diversity policies.

Reason: From a review of the programme documentation and from discussions with the programme team the visitors are satisfied that this standard has been met. The visitors noted that the education provider monitors admissions data at a programme level. However, the visitors recommend that the programme team should consider taking a more strategic approach to the way it monitors and implements its equality and diversity policies. The visitors would like the education provider to consider formulating an equality and diversity strategy at a programme level to ensure that any work that is being undertaken around equality and diversity is conducted in a consistent, transparent and measured way.

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

Recommendation: The programme team may wish to consider how they communicate the processes for feedback to the students.

Reason: Programme documentation provided prior to the visit detailed the programme committees and representatives on these committees. During discussion with the students the visitors heard about the range of ways in which to feedback to the programme team and heard examples of how they had fed back into the programme team. The visitors heard from the students that changes had occurred as a result of this feedback; however it was clear that not all students were aware of the changes having been made as a result of the feedback they had given. The visitors also noted examples where students had communicated issues to the programme team but the programme team had decided not to implement changes as a result of the feedback. The visitors were satisfied that feedback from students is considered in a fair way but heard from students that the rationale for not acting on feedback was not always effectively communicated. The visitors recommend that the education provider may want to review the way they communicate the processes for feedback to the students. The education provider may want to consider giving a written response on the student feedback so they would be aware of how changes were related to anything they had put forward to the programme team. The visitors suggest this could be an effective way of closing the feedback loops.

4.9 When there is interprofessional learning the profession-specific skills and knowledge of each professional group must be adequately addressed.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing and monitoring the qualitative research methods teaching to ensure that the profession-specific skills and knowledge of counselling psychologists continues to be adequately addressed.

Reason: The visitors noted comments from students where it was stated that qualitative methodology is delivered at a relatively basic level and that the needs of counselling psychologists were not always fully addresses as the teaching was also delivered to clinical psychologists. However from discussions with the programme team the visitors were reassured and satisfied that the needs of counselling psychologists are addressed within the teaching of qualitative methodology and therefore that this standard is met. Given student comments the visitors would like the education provider to consider reviewing and monitoring the qualitative research methods teaching to ensure that the profession-specific skills and knowledge of counselling psychologists continues to be adequately addressed.

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

Recommendation: The education provider should consider reviewing the collaborative arrangements between themselves and the practice placement providers to ensure that the collaboration continues to be effective.

Reason: From discussions with the programme team and practice placement educators the visitors noted strong informal links. The visitors noted that a number of the practice placement educators had studied on the programme and were able to approach the programme team should they need to. The visitors also noted that practice placement educators are represented on the programme board. However, the visitors noted comments from the practice placement educators where it was stated that changes to the programme were often cascaded through informal links and they would welcome further formal collaborative engagement such as a forum or newsletter. The visitors recommend that the education provider should consider reviewing the collaborative arrangements between themselves and the practice placement providers to ensure that the collaboration continues to be effective.

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.

Recommendation: The education provider should consider revisiting the assessment strategy to further highlight where the HPC's standards of proficiency are being covered within the programme.

Reason: From discussions with the students and practice placement educators the visitors noted comments where it was stated that they were not always clear about where the HPC's standards of proficiency are covered and assessed within the programme. The visitors also noted the assessment framework for practice placements was not overtly linked to the HPC's standards of proficiency. The visitors recommend that the education provider may want to consider revisiting the assessment strategy to further highlight where the HPC's standards of

proficiency are being covered within the programme and further highlight the standards to students and practice placement educators.

Lynn Dunwoody
Dave Packwood