**Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC)**

In July 2009, the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) became the statutory regulator for practitioner psychologists in the UK. The HCPC is an independent regulator governed by the Health Professions Order (2001). Psychologists regulated by the HCPC are those who use their psychological expertise to offer services to the public and who are entitled to use one of the seven adjectival titles.

Since 2009 the HCPC Education Department has been carrying out approval visits to education providers and programmes of professional training throughout the UK. Approval by the HCPC ensures that each programme meets the standards of education (SETs) and successful trainees are able to meet the standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists (SOPs).

The Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Southampton was granted open ended approval in June 2011. Once a programme has been granted open-ended approval, it is subject to annual monitoring processes to ensure that it continues to meet the SETs.

**Standards of Education and Training (SETs)**

The SETS are written for education providers. As part of the HCPC approval and monitoring process, programmes are assessed against the SETs to ensure that all trainees meet the SOPs.

**Standards of Proficiency (SOPs)**

SOPs are the standards produced by the HCPC which are regarded as the minimum they consider necessary for safe and effective practice of the professions they regulate. They include both generic elements (which all practitioner psychologists must meet) and subject-specific elements.

They fall under the following 15 headings:

* Safe and effective practice
* Practise within legal and ethical boundaries
* Fitness to practise
* Professional judgement
* Culture, equality and diversity
* Non discrimination
* Confidentiality
* Effective communication
* Work in partnership
* Record keeping
* Reflection on practice
* Quality of practice
* Knowledge base of key concepts
* Practice based knowledge
* Safety and service users and those involved in their care and experience

More information can be found in the booklet Standards of Proficiency: Practitioner Psychologists (2015). A copy can be obtained from

<https://www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/standards/standards-of-proficiency-practitioner-psychologists/>

**The Role of the British Psychology Society (BPS)**

Accreditation through partnership is the Society’s model of engagement with education providers which has been in place from September 2010. This has been described by the BPS as:

*“It is the process by which The Society works with education providers to ensure that quality standards in psychology education and training are met by all programmes on an ongoing basis. It aims to facilitate quality enhancement and to promote a constructive dialogue that allows space for both exploration and development. It focuses on working collaboratively with education providers and their stakeholders and includes an interactive approach to planning visit agendas”.*

[*https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologists/accreditation/education-providers*](https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologists/accreditation/education-providers)

The Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Southampton was most recently accredited through partnership in May 2017.

**Commendations:**

1. The quality of the leadership and vision provided by the Programme Director is highly commendable and is key to the effective and efficient delivery of the programme. The programme also benefits from the commitment of a collegial and cohesive core staff team.
2. The visiting team received feedback from a wide range of stakeholders over the course of the visit and heard from all that the programme and the staff team are held in extremely high regard. Stakeholders appreciate the excellent work that the programme team does, and graduates from the programme are seen to be fit for purpose and make a positive contribution to the organisations in which they work.
3. The programme aspires to train competent applied psychologists, who are agile, adaptable, and fit for purpose to work in a range of services. The year-long placement model adopted for years two and three of the programme contributes significantly to trainees’ ability to develop this broader perspective on the work of the educational psychologist.
4. Trainees, supervisors and service leads alike all commented on the benefits of the year two diversity placement, which enables trainees to broaden their experience and bring valuable learning back into their local authority team.
5. The programme incorporates a creative range of assessment tasks that reflect the broad range of activities in which educational psychologists are engaged in their practice. The visiting team particularly liked the introduction of Objective Structured Placement Assessments (OSPAs).
6. The programme team actively seeks out feedback from stakeholders, including trainees, supervisors, service managers, service users, and the wider University department, and responds to this in a measured and carefully thought through way.

**Recommendations for Further Enhancement:**

The visiting team wishes to highlight the following areas to which the programme and University are encouraged to attend as part of the ongoing development and enhancement of training in Educational Psychology at Southampton.

1. The University is encouraged to consider the potential benefits of recruiting appropriately qualified educational psychologists as members of the core Departmental establishment, with protected time to carry out their own research.
2. The programme team should review the balance of the curriculum of individual, within-child factors, and systemic thinking around the psychology of organisations and of education. Feedback from services suggested that this would further enhance the impact that trainees are able to make on placement.
3. The visiting team noted the work undertaken by year one trainees with ‘practice pupils’ and the measures that are put in place to secure informed consent from parents in relation to this.
4. The programme team should review the training and support provided to those supervising trainees in years two and three. Whilst supervisors welcome the information they are given, they would appreciate a greater emphasis upon developing their own supervisory skills.
5. The programme team should continue to consider ways of balancing the risk of dis-enfranchisement of more geographically distant local authorities and enhancing student needs and engagement of a wider constituency. Reviewing the overall structure of the year one placement may offer opportunities for such local authorities to participate more equitably. The visiting team understands that the programme team has reviewed this on numerous occasions in the past and considers the current locally-focused arrangement to be the most appropriate. Nevertheless, the team is encouraged to keep this under review.
6. The visiting team welcomed the work done to develop the research blog to enable high quality trainee research to be disseminated to a wider audience. The team is encouraged to continue to develop that resource and encourage publication in appropriate professional and academic journals to reach a yet wider readership.
7. Similarly, the visiting team notes the work that has gone into developing service user involvement on the programme and would advocate that this continues.
8. The visiting team would encourage the University to work with the Programme Director to identify ways of reducing the burden associated with participating in internal periodic review mechanisms, given their likely overlap with work already undertaken by the programme for external processes.