

BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT

INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)

INSTITUTION: New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling

ADDRESS: 61–63 Fortune Green Road
London
NW6 1DB

HEAD OF INSTITUTION: Professor Emmy van Deurzen

ACCREDITATION STATUS: Accredited

DATE OF INSPECTION: 5 March 2019

ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE: Continued accreditation, 23 May 2019

PART A – INTRODUCTION

1. Background to the institution

The New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC/the Institution) is a private limited company, established in 1996. The Institution is committed to training in the professions of psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, coaching, autism studies, diversity and pastoral care. Its aim is to enable professionals to explore human problems in a reflective and receptive manner. The two directors hold positions as Principal and Deputy Principal and it is they, together with the Executive Group, who lead the Institution strategically. The Institution works closely with its three sister companies in the Septimus Group, which is the overall holding company. The sister companies are the Existential Academy, Dilemma Consultancy and Ask the Therapist.

NSPC moved to its modern premises on two floors in West Hampstead, London in 2014. The building was purpose built to meet the specific needs of the courses, the staff and students. It includes small rooms suitable for therapy, counselling and coaching, as well as a large teaching room, an open-plan office and a library. Two lifts make it wheelchair accessible, as do the disabled toilet facilities.

In 2007, NSPC developed a partnership with Middlesex University (MU), which is now its sole partner. In 2018, the partnership with MU was successfully renewed. Its courses are accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association (UPCA), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and Humanists United Kingdom. Last year, courses were subject to a successful reaccreditation by BPS, HCPC and UPCA.

2. Brief description of the current provision

NSPC is a Centre of Excellence for training and research in existential psychotherapy, counselling psychology and coaching. NSPC offers joint Psychotherapy and Counselling Psychology Doctoral programmes with MU with the option of Post-Graduate Diploma and Masters exits. The Doctoral programmes include three years of supervised placements. It has a unique online programme, which is integrated with the Doctoral programme, or can be taken as stand-alone modules. There are two intakes a year for the Doctoral programmes, in September and January.

It also offers a master's course in Existential Coaching, two online master's programmes in Psychotherapy Studies and in Autism and related neuro developmental conditions, also validated by MU. Two master's programmes, one in Existential and Humanist Pastoral Care and another in Diversity Studies, are offered with the British Humanist Association. Students can enrol for the master's programmes in September, January and April.

A foundation course, short courses, one day workshops and numerous introductory courses are also offered.

At the time of the inspection, 157 full-time and 148 part-time students were enrolled. Of these, 35 are following courses online. Pre-requisites for enrolment are as standard for this type of institution. There are more female than male students. Ages vary from mid-twenties to 60 years old, with the majority of students being in their thirties. The vast majority are from the United Kingdom, with a small minority from countries overseas. Two students with learning needs were identified.

3. Inspection process

The interim inspection was conducted by one inspector over one day. Meetings were held with the Principal, Deputy Principal, two Course Leaders, the Bursar, the Deputy Registrar and administrative staff. A tour of the premises was carried out. Documentation was scrutinised. All documentation requested was supplied in a timely manner and was easily accessible. All staff co-operated fully with the inspector throughout the inspection.

4. Inspection History

Inspection Type	Date
Full Accreditation	15–16 January 2013
Interim	17 December 2014
Re-accreditation	14-15 March 2017

PART B – JUDGMENTS AND EVIDENCE

The following judgments and comments are based upon evidence seen by the inspector during the inspection and from documentation provided by the institution.

1. Significant changes since the last inspection

The partnership between NSPC and MU was renewed in 2018 and lasts until 31 August 2024.

All relevant courses were re-accredited by BPS, HCPC and UPCA in 2018 and this lasts until 31 August 2024.

A new master's course, in Existential and Humanist Pastoral Care, is now offered.

Accommodation in a nearby private language school has been used once when student numbers were high and insufficient accommodation was available on the premises.

A new management information system (MIS) has been introduced to better suit business needs.

2. Response to actions points in last report

There were no action points in the last report.

3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report

The School should explore ways of differentiating between statements of intent, policies and descriptions of operational tasks and procedures.

Policies have been separated from other documents and are available on the document download part of the online system. They were all updated in 2018, ensuring compatibility with those of MU. Procedures are only available to staff, and can be found on a separate part of the system. As a result, the operational activity can be more easily facilitated due to the streamlining of the system which has been appropriately implemented.

Although the School is aware of the potential risks to its business and how to manage them, a more formal risk assessment and review process should be considered.

A procedure for risk assessment is in place and a risk management document has been produced. The risk register is populated with input from members of the Executive, which includes the Principal, Deputy Principal and other senior managers. However, the risk register is not complete to identify all risks and to allow for action to be taken when necessary. As a result, the effectiveness is reduced. As a consequence of reviewing finances from the perspective of risk, a substantial loan has been paid off, to reduce financial risk. A procedure has been put in place to review finances annually to reduce risks to the business.

Key issues emerging from Executive Group meetings should be systematically recorded and disseminated in the form of simple notes.

Executive Group meetings focus on all aspects of the Institution, both strategically and operationally. Notes from these meetings are produced and the key issues emerging are then included in a Task List, which is monitored on an on-going basis. As a result, all relevant staff are kept effectively informed.

The social media policy is monitored appropriately at a practical level, but more coherent and strategic management of the potential risks of engagement with a diverse range of social media would be desirable.

The social media policy, based on MU's policy, has been redrafted to include action to be taken in the case of inappropriate interaction with social media. This supports appropriate use of social media. However, the policy

does not yet include levels of disciplinary action to be taken for those transgressing the policy to ensure that everyone is clear about ensuing actions.

The process of new staff induction and orientation might be improved by the use of a standard checklist and by providing an opportunity for new employees to evaluate the arrangements.

A detailed and suitable checklist has been developed for use in the induction of new staff. There has not yet been an opportunity for new employees to evaluate the arrangements.

The quality of assessment annotation on scripts should be more detailed and constructive in order to enhance its value to students.

Guidance has been provided on assessment annotation at the Boards of Studies and in online termly meetings. The marking process has been reviewed following feedback from external examiners. The quality of annotation has been positively commented on by the external examiners. Marked assignments were scrutinised during the inspection. Comments provided were sufficiently detailed and helpful to support students to improve, to know what they had done well and consequently to help them progress more effectively.

The School should further develop opportunities for joint staff and student research collaboration.

Different opportunities have arisen for joint student and staff research collaboration. Since the last inspection, the number of students publishing their research has increased significantly. It is NSPC's policy that students who do publish, should approach their supervisors to collaborate with them in undertaking joint research and in co-publishing. A member of staff is due to publish an edited book, to which students and graduates are contributing, based on their research. In these ways, a rich environment of student and staff collaboration has been developed.

It is recommended that students be asked for feedback on the content appearance and perceived value of the School's website.

The website has been completely rebuilt, taking account of student feedback. It is now easier to navigate and information is uploaded on an ongoing basis, so all interested parties are kept up to date with activity at NSPC.

Annual programme monitoring reports, linked to specific performance data, could provide a further mechanism to support the enhancement of the provision.

The new MIS system has enabled a high level of detailed information to be accessed. The annual monitoring report template is used to compile the Task List of actions for the ongoing development of the Institution and the provision. This enables efficient tracking of progress and effective development of programmes, so supporting the enhancement of the provision.

The School should check that responses are always made to external examiner reports.

A system is in place to ensure that responses are always made to external examiner reports. As a result of improved responses to external examiner reports and implementation put into effect as appropriate, the Institution has enhanced the quality of its delivery.

Action plans linked to external examiner reports and including identified good practice elements would improve transparency and encourage enhancement.

External examiners' reports are now discussed in the bi-annual Boards of Studies. Recommendations from the Boards are taken back to the Executive for actioning. These are included in the Task List and good practice elements are disseminated online. This encourages improvement in the programme provision.

External examiner reports should be published on the VLE to enable student access.

External examiner reports are published online in preparation for the Boards of Studies, to which all students of the relevant courses are invited.

4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements

4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The organisational structure is clearly defined and well understood by stakeholders. Management are well qualified, highly experienced and knowledgeable, and are effective in carrying out their responsibilities to the highest standards to support excellence in provision. Internal stakeholders develop and implement policy involving external stakeholders to ensure relevance.

Relationships with other educational institutions are defined formally in signed contracts. Clear channels of communication throughout the organisation allow staff, students and stakeholders to be fully briefed, as necessary.

NSPC is compliant with MU's requirements, so supporting a positive relationship. Feedback from MU and the professional bodies is valuable in informing development of the provision.

NSPC is subject to a regular independent external audit to ensure financial compliance.

4.2 Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The management structure is clearly defined and understood by all. Responsibilities and reporting arrangements are known and provide clarity to all. The Executive Committee is effective in developing strategy and making decisions to promote development. Meetings are accurately recorded, with action planning in the form of a Task List. This is regularly reviewed and so supports continuous improvement.

The size of the administration team is sufficient to ensure the effective running of the Institution. When necessary, staff help one another to support continuity of activity. A comprehensive set of policies is in place. However, they are not all included in the handbook, for example, policies regarding areas such as social media. Consequently, reducing accessibility. Classes are timetabled and roomed effectively to support their smooth running.

The qualifications and experience of the staff enable them to carry out their duties effectively. The induction system in place for new staff allows them to settle quickly into their new place of work. There has not yet been an opportunity for new staff to evaluate the arrangements.

Staff performance is effectively monitored through an annual appraisal system. Development goals are set to benefit the Institution and the individual member of staff. Regular peer observation of lessons has a positive impact in the classroom.

NSPC is highly supportive of the continuous professional development of its staff, be it in terms of presenting at, or participating in, seminars and workshops, publishing research or taking further qualifications. They also provide staff training online, for example, for new supervisors or on peer assessment. Membership of the professional bodies, which staff belong to, requires a given number of

hours of professional development each year, and staff ensure these requirements are met. In these ways, staff remain up to date with research and new ideas in their profession and students benefit from their expertise and knowledge.

Entry requirements for programmes are clearly noted in programme descriptions on the website. The necessary English language requirements for a course are indicated. These allow students to make informed choices. Students go through a formal interview process and qualifications are verified: original educational certificates are required for doctoral students and copies of qualifications for master's students. Prospective students are appropriately briefed on the programme in which they are interested and are given advice to ensure the appropriacy of choice.

Students are informed of the policy on the accreditation of prior learning, which supports a minority of students onto suitable programmes.

Academic staff all undertake research, which they draw on in their teaching. They are actively encouraged to publish. These measures promote excellence in programme delivery.

Information provided on the website about the Institution's location, premises and services offered is informative. All information provided on courses is up to date and accurate, so supporting decision making.

4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met
Comments

Academic staff are knowledgeable and experienced. This enhances teaching and learning. The Programme Handbook clearly identifies module descriptors and learning outcomes, so keeps students well informed.

The well-stocked library is available to support student use. Additional learning materials are not supplied consistently by all teachers, so diminishing the learning experience of their students.

Students are provided with a detailed assessment schedule for the duration of each course in the Programme Handbook. They are therefore fully informed of the related requirements and dates well in advance.

4.4 Student Recruitment, Support, Guidance and Progression (spot check)

The standards are judged to be: Met Partially Met Not Met
Comments

Staff are available to students outside of teaching and learning sessions, either by telephone or e-mail. Consequently, students are well supported during their time at NSPC.

Students with special needs are identified and high levels of appropriate support are provided to promote success. Diversity as a topic has now been included in all courses to raise awareness.

Students are regularly provided with information on possibilities for participation at events, many of which are held at NSPC or are delivered by staff. A Newsflash occurs on the landing page of the website to alert everyone to a particularly important event. In this way, further opportunities for advancement are offered. Students are encouraged to make use of social media.

4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

The Institution has ten years left on its premises lease. It recently rented accommodation from a language school nearby on one occasion. This was effective in accommodating the high numbers of students at the time.

Access to NSPC is appropriately secured through a security system which reads identity cards. The modern premises are in an excellent state of repair and decoration. Noticeboards display information relevant to staff and students. There is an appropriate number of clean washrooms. Standards of heating are appropriate. Consequently, the premises provide an extremely comfortable working and learning environment.

Classrooms and the small rooms for therapy and counselling are appropriate for the Institution. The large room accommodating staff is adequate in size and appreciated by staff, who are able to work collaboratively when necessary.

A librarian is in charge of the library, which provides sufficient space where students and staff can relax or study individually. It is extremely well stocked with specialist books, journals and professional magazines. A suitable lending policy allows for materials to be taken home. A number of the journals and magazines are also available online. Consequently, students are well supported in their learning.

4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

The standards are judged to be:

Met Partially Met Not Met

Comments

All programmes are subject to an annual review and to full validation or accreditation every five years and involve external assessors. These processes are beneficial to NSPC as findings and comments are incorporated into their quality improvement planning.

Feedback is gained regularly from students. However, rates of return are low so reducing the quality of the data. Any issues that arise are dealt with promptly.

The review and validation of programmes takes place regularly and involves external assessors, as was the case in 2018 when MU revalidated NSPC. In this way, ongoing good practice and meeting professional and educational requirements and standards are ensured.

4.7 Compliance Declaration

Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.

Yes No

PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS

STRENGTHS

Knowledgeable, highly qualified and experienced staff lead and support the quality provision.

Knowledge about and procedures to cater for students with a variety of learning experiences and needs underpin a highly successful diverse environment.

The high standard of the Programme Handbooks effectively encourages students to gain a deep understanding of all aspects of the programmes.

The premises provide an excellent working and learning environment.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

None

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT *(to be reviewed at the next inspection)*

It is recommended that the risk register is completed to identify all risks and to allow for action to be taken when necessary.

The Institution should include in the social media policy levels of disciplinary action to be taken for those transgressing the policy so everyone is clear about ensuing actions.

The Institution should include all policies in the Policies Handbook, to support easy accessibility.

It is recommended that new staff evaluate arrangements for induction.

It is recommended that ways are explored to increase the amount of online supplementary material provided by teachers in order to offer a wider selection of materials available to students.

It is suggested that ways in which feedback from students is gained is reviewed to increase returns so as to enhance the relevance of the data.

COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS - FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE