

## **SECTION 36: THE HEALTH AND CARE PROFESSIONS COUNCIL (HCPC) AND CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY TRAINING**

The Health AND Care Professions Council (HCPC) regulates the use of the title 'Clinical Psychologist'. This means that the use of this title is legally restricted to individuals who are on the HCPC register of practitioner psychologists.

This Section outlines the role of HCPC in regulating and accrediting courses, and the process of registration.

Trainees should familiarise themselves with the various documents produced by the HCPC. These specify the standards which entrants to the register are expected to meet (and are included as appendices to this handbook).

### **Registration: The role of the HCPC and the BPS**

From 2009 Clinical Psychology became a regulated profession under the Health and Care Professions Council. The HCPC maintains a register of individuals entitled to use the title of 'Clinical Psychologist'; entrants to the register need to have undertaken a training that enables them to meet the 'standards of proficiency' adopted by HCPC. On completion of training trainees will be able to apply for registration as a Clinical Psychologist with the HCPC on the basis of having undertaken and completed a recognised course.

The HCPC has granted the UCL Doctorate in Clinical Psychology open-ended approval, which means that graduates from the programme are deemed to have met the relevant standards.

Although all functions related to registration have passed from the BPS to the HCPC, the BPS will still play an important role in defining course content. This is because HCPC does not specify the content of professional trainings; it will continue to seek advice from the BPS on this. For this reason, the BPS will continue to be involved in accreditation visits through its training committee (the Committee on Training in Clinical Psychology: CTCPC).

### **Course Accreditation**

The HCPC visits all new UK courses in order to verify that they meet the appropriate 'standards of education and training' and enable trainees to achieve the 'standards of proficiency'. Wherever possible the HCPC and the BPS coordinate their accreditation visits, with each body producing a separate report. The visiting teams meet with course staff and trainees, representatives of the University and Regional Psychologists, and meet supervisors. The reports comment on all aspects of course organisation, and make recommendations about any areas requiring improvement. If there are areas over which HCPC has concerns they will follow these up by asking courses to submit annual follow-up reports. The BPS will organise a follow-up visit if there are major concerns, but usually they operate on a 6-year visiting cycle.

## **The process of registration with HCPC**

The HCPC website gives a good overview of the process of registration. The basic procedure is as follows:

### **Stage 1**

The Course needs to notify the HCPC that a trainee has successfully passed all elements of the programme – specifically, the academic, clinical and research components of the course. Notification only takes place on successful completion of all course requirements, so this includes meeting any concerns raised in the thesis viva and (if required) submitting a revised thesis which has been passed by the relevant examiners and the Examination Board.

### **Stage 2**

The Course will let new qualifiers know when it has notified HCPC, after which they can make their application for registration.

The HCPC application form is very straightforward, and has three main elements:

- a) Information about yourself, the title for which you are applying and the educational pathways relevant to this title.
  
- b) A character reference. This can be completed by anyone of appropriate standing (for example, HCPC suggestions include a Justice of the Peace or other judicial official, a minister of the Church, Rabbi, Imam or other religious official acceptable to the Council, or a registered health professional). This is not an exhaustive list and in most cases it is likely that trainees will find it easiest to ask the Course (in the form of their Course Tutor) to complete the character reference.
  
- c) A health reference. This is a statement to the effect that your health does not affect your ability to practice your profession. This must be completed by a doctor who is registered with the General Medical Council (GMC). It also needs to be a doctor who has known you for at least three years or has access to your medical records for the past three years. If this is not possible the doctor may need to carry out a medical examination in order to complete the health reference.

Both the character and health reference need to be dated within 6 months of the application itself, so while it is a good idea to obtain these in advance they would need to be repeated if there was significant delay in submitting the application itself.

### **Fees**

These are detailed on the HCPC website, but it is worth noting that new graduates from approved courses currently receive a 50% discount on the cost of registration for the first two full professional years. It is possible that a GP (or equivalent) might charge a fee for completing the health reference.

### **Title to be used while awaiting registration**

Anyone who wishes to be employed as a Clinical Psychologist and to use this title needs to be registered with the HCPC. Clearly this has implications if (as is likely) there is a time lag

between completing the course, starting employment and gaining registration. During this time new qualifiers and those still completing specified elements of the course (for example, revising the thesis) can use the title 'psychologist', as this is not a protected title.

### **HCPC on the web**

It is critical that all trainees look at the website of the Health Professions Council, which contains clear and up-to-date information about registration:

[www.HCPC-uk.org/apply/psychologists](http://www.HCPC-uk.org/apply/psychologists)

### **Documents to download**

Aside from the application form itself, it is important to read the following documents, which are available on the HCPC website:

[www.HCPC-uk.org/apply/uk/forms](http://www.HCPC-uk.org/apply/uk/forms)

They are also included as appendices to the Training Handbook.

- **Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics**  
These are the standards that applicants need to agree to keep to in order to be registered.
- **Standards of Proficiency**  
These are the professional standards which applicants must meet in order to be registered.
- **Standards of Continuing Professional Development**  
These are the professional standards which applicants must meet in order to stay registered.