



the british
psychological society
partnership and accreditation

University of Buckingham

School of Psychology

BSc Psychology

BSc Psychology with X

BSc Psychology with Integrated Foundation

Date of Visit: 23rd November 2023

The British Psychological Society (“the society”) is the learned and professional body, incorporated by Royal Charter, for psychologists in the United Kingdom. The society has a total membership and subscribership of approximately 70,000, and is a registered charity’. Under its Royal Charter, the key objective of the society is “to promote the advancement and diffusion of the knowledge of psychology pure and applied and especially to promote the efficiency and usefulness of members by setting up a high standard of professional education and knowledge”.

The society has been involved in the accreditation of programmes of education and training in psychology since the early 1970s. The society currently accredits programmes at both undergraduate (and equivalent) and postgraduate levels.

Undergraduate and conversion programmes are accredited against the requirements for the society’s Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership, the curriculum requirements for which are derived from the Quality Assurance Agency’s subject benchmark statement for psychology.

Postgraduate programmes are accredited against the knowledge, practice and research requirements for Chartered Psychologist status (CPsychol) in a range of domains of practice, which are defined in accordance with the Occupational Standards for psychologists. A number of the postgraduate programmes that are accredited by The society are also approved by the Health and Care Professions Council, the statutory regulator of practitioner psychologists in the UK.

Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner training programmes are accredited against the knowledge and professional skills outlined by the national adult Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) programme team to provide assessment and low-intensity interventions for people with common mental health problems as part of an IAPT service delivery model.

The standards that the society uses to reach decisions on the accreditation of individual programmes can be downloaded from www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads.

The society is licensed by the Science Council to award the title Chartered Scientist (CSci) to Members who are eligible. Completion of a society-accredited postgraduate programme that confers Chartered Psychologist status will count towards the Science Council’s requirements for the award of Chartered Scientist.

For further information about Membership of the society, please visit, <http://www.bps.org.uk/membership>. Information about becoming a Chartered Scientist is available at <http://www.bps.org.uk/csci>.

Any queries relating to this report should be directed to pact@bps.org.uk.

Key Outcomes

Following a visit to University of Buckingham, the society is pleased to confirm the ongoing accreditation of the programmes as listed on the [cover sheet](#).

Therefore, graduates from the programmes are deemed to have met the requirements for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership of the society (GBC), provided they pass the empirical psychology project and achieve a minimum of a Lower Second Class Honours degree, or its equivalent overall.

Commendations

1. The programmes are commended for their distinct small group teaching style in the form of tutorials, resulting in a supportive environment and a sense of community between students and the programme team. (Programme standards: 1 & 5)
2. The visiting team would like to commend how employability and transferable skills are embedded throughout the curriculum for students. It was evident that the provision offers opportunities for students to gain a range of employability skills and experiences throughout the programme, allowing students to develop and reflect on professional and transferable skills. (Programme standard: 5.3)

Conditions of Ongoing Accreditation

Ongoing accreditation is subject to successful fulfilment of the condition outlined below:

1. The provider must provide an account of how recognition of prior learning (RPL) is recognised to allow advanced entry to the programmes (Programme standard: 4.3.2)
2. The senior management team must provide a plan of investment for dedicated research/teaching resources for psychology students. (Programme standards: 7.1 & 7.1.1)
3. The provider must ensure that the information about staffing in the self-evaluation question (SEQ), including CVs, matches the information provided in the SSR data capture tool. All staffing information must then be resubmitted to the Society. (Programme standard: 6.3.1)

Recommendations for Further Enhancement

The visiting team highlight the following areas which the programme team is encouraged to address as part of its ongoing development and enhancement.

1. It is recommended that the senior management team review how they are able to apply for Equality Charter Marks (e.g., Athena Swan) to promote Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives. (Programme standard: 4)
2. It is recommended that the programme staff continue to examine how to overcome potential educational barriers for their students. (e.g., timetabling issues, exam scheduling, and Saturday exams) (Programme standards: 1 & 4)
3. It is advised that the senior management team continue to monitor staff progression and academic promotions for the programme team, and ensure transparency of the process to staff. (Programme standard: 6.6)
4. It is recommended that all newly appointed staff be given an opportunity to apply for a PGCert to aid in their professional development. (Programme standard: 6.6)

5. It is advised that the provider continues to monitor and improve clarity around EDI in terms of destination data, awarding and attainment gaps, as well as develop a plan in terms of the new revised accreditation standards proposed in 2024. (Programme standard: 4.1)

Important Dates

The education provider is asked to submit the following by **8th April 2024**:

- A response to the conditions of ongoing accreditation identified above; and
- An action plan outlining its strategies for responding to the recommendations for further enhancement.

The next partnership visit will take place in **2029/30**.

1. Introduction

This report outlines the key outcomes of the society's visit to University of Buckingham. Broadly, these relate to:

- aspects of general good practice on the maintenance of the provision;
- aspects of the provision that go above and beyond the standards listed as commendations;
- aspects of the provision that will need to be reviewed and revised in order to ensure ongoing fulfilment of The society's standards, and therefore the ongoing accreditation of the programme; and
- aspects of the provision that will benefit from further consideration as part of the programme's ongoing development and enhancement.

The society's approach to accreditation is collaborative in that we work in partnership with the universities whose programmes we accredit. To that end, this report also includes an overview of any discussions during the course of the visit that may contribute to the improvement of the accreditation process itself, or the services and support that the society is able to offer its members. In the spirit of working in partnership it also incorporates the university's feedback to the society.

2. Good practice

From this accreditation visit, areas of good practice include:

- The programme team is recognised for the quantity of practical work that is embedded across the curriculum, preparing students for undertaking their own research.
- The programme team is praised for embedding innovative assessments within the programme, allowing students opportunities to demonstrate a variety of skills and knowledge.
- The team is recognised for the programme's structure, which ensures that it meets the core GBC curriculum standard, as well as the inclusion of conceptual and historical issues in psychology (CHiP) as a standalone module.
- The programme team is praised for providing students with high-quality assessment feedback to support academic progression, including detailed formative feedback and being able to obtain tailored feedback.
- The programme team is praised for providing students with additional support mechanisms such as a careers team, ASK team, wellbeing team, and personal tutors. Students expressed their appreciation for the additional support mechanisms, and emphasised how well departments collaborated.
- The team is recognised for embedding research ethics across the whole programme in order to provide students with a strong grounding in understanding and applying ethical thinking.

3. Commendations

3.1 The programme team is commended for their distinct small group teaching style in the form of tutorials, in which students are taught in groups of seven or fewer every week, on every module. This

high-quality contact time creates a high sense of community and builds relationships in a supportive environment between students and the programme team. During the student meeting, it was evident how much they valued the small tutorials since this allows for group discussions that helps develops students' knowledge, understanding and skills as they progress through the degree. The programme team is also commended for providing outstanding support to their cohorts. During the discussion with the students, it became clear how accommodating, accessible and approachable all the staff are, which resulted in the fostering of a sense of community among staff and students, with the student experience at the centre of the provision. This is essential for student development since having a working connection with staff will help to establish a positive learning environment and engagement. (Programme standards: 1 & 5)

3.2 The visiting team commends the School of Psychology for embedding employability and transferable skills throughout the curriculum for their students. Throughout the discussion with students, it became clear how much they valued the experience of developing applied skills and knowledge, as well as receiving a range of employability skills. Several students emphasised how the Professional Development Portfolio (PDP) enabled them to reflect on their development, as well as build and document their skills in view of their career aspirations and planned future steps. During the student meeting, it was clear how much they valued the reflective approach that they take in completing their PDP, which aligns with embedded careers and employability content, meaning that students are able recognise the value of transferable skills in direct relation to their future. The programme is also recognised for a wide range of optional modules across the provision, allowing students to further develop their autonomy and tailor their degree to their interests or career aspirations. Furthermore, it was evident that students valued the skills for psychologist modules, particularly guest lecturers who informed students about the range of career options in psychology. Several students also commended the psychology mentoring programme, emphasising how much they enjoyed the opportunity to gain valuable experience of networking with a professional psychologist. The visiting team was impressed with the way in which the students were able to confidently articulate the skills they have developed throughout their programme and how these are valuable to them and from the perspective of an employer. During the discussion with the programme team and senior management team, it was evident that a great deal of thought and work had gone into the programme to ensure that students have a variety of opportunities to complete tasks and activities which will assist students in developing a range of transferable, applied, and reflective skills, which will assist students in preparing for future training or jobs. The embedding of transferable and employability skills in the programme will allow the programme team to develop psychologists who are fit for purpose for the future and will aid in providing a learning experience that meets students' needs in the future, particularly for students who progress to accredited postgraduate programmes. (Programme standard: 5.3)

4. Developmental work

4.1 The visiting team observed that the policies governing recognition of prior learning (RPL) were unclear and inconsistent in the documentation. The SEQ documentation stated that the programme does not currently offer RPL; however, after discussions with the programme team, it was confirmed that there is a procedure in place to allow RPL to students. As a result, the provider must provide an account of how RPL is recognised in order to allow advanced entry to the programmes, as well as ensure that they are in-line with the BPS standards, and they must be made explicit within the programme documentation. (Programme standard: 4.3.2)

4.2 During a tour of the facilities, the visiting team observed that the dedicated facilities are light in terms of dedicated resources and equipment, particularly in terms of supporting students' empirical projects. The availability of appropriate resources is key to the delivery of psychology as a science. Facilities must be accessible to enable students to carry out experimental and other appropriate practical work, as well as supporting individual students' empirical projects. As a result, the senior management team must provide a plan of investment for dedicated research/teaching resources. The plan should include how the university will invest in dedicated resources for psychology. (Programme standards: 7.1 & 7.1.1)

4.3 Whilst reviewing the documentation, the visiting team observed discrepancies in staffing information in terms of staffing CV's and contracted academic staff who teach on the accredited undergraduate degrees being submitted on the SSR Data Capture Tool. As a result, the provider must ensure that the

information about staffing in the SEQ, including CVs, matches the information provided in the SSR data capture tool. All staffing information must then be resubmitted to the Society. (Programme standard: 6.3.1)

4.4 The society is committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and actively promotes a culture of EDI within our discipline. In demonstrating achievement of this standard, education providers are encouraged to hold or be in the process of seeking an Athena SWAN award, along with other relevant equality charter marks. As a result, it is recommended that the senior management team review how they are able to apply for Equality Charter Marks (e.g., Athena Swan) to promote EDI initiatives. The British Psychological Society supports the advancement of Athena SWAN accreditation at institutional level. (Programme standard: 4)

4.5 During the meeting with students, several students raised concerns around potential barriers to their education. It was noted that students have provided feedback about timetabling and rooms, and the programme team are currently working to ensure that students have teaching in similar locations. Furthermore, students expressed concerns about receiving their exam schedule only one month in advance, as well as avoiding exams on a Saturday due to the requirement for arranging child care for some students. Ensuring that students are located in close proximity for their tutorials, and being provided exam scheduling in advance, as well as non-Saturday exams would help reduce potential barriers to education while also improving student experiences. As a result, the programme team is recommended to continue to review how to resolve potential barriers to education for their students. (Programme standards: 1 & 4)

4.6 Although the programme team has access to a variety of continuing professional development opportunities, the process for staff progression and academic promotions could be reviewed, as it was noted during the meeting with the programme team that progression within the institution was unclear and that further clarification is required. It is essential that the senior management team continue to develop the needs to support for upskilling staff who contribute to the programme in order to support staff progression and academic promotions, as this would aid the programme team in career development and progression, as well as safeguard the ongoing quality of the teaching provision. Furthermore, this will also enable enhancement of a culture of valuing and rewarding professionalism and scholarship; help attract and retain programme team members; and assist in their support for student learning and research-informed teaching. As a result, the senior management team is recommended to continue to monitor staff progression and academic promotions for the programme team. It should be noted that a new progression policy has been implemented regarding pay bands similar to other universities and spiral points since January 2023. (Programme standard: 6.6)

4.7 During the accreditation visit, the visiting team observed that the provider offers few support mechanisms to assist newly appointed programme team members. During the discussion with the programme team, it was observed that there is peer observation and mentorship within the team, and that the senior management team is currently reviewing the new workload allocation model to help assist in training to upskill staff. However, the visiting team highlighted that these processes should be enhanced. It is essential that education providers must have a training and mentoring strategy in place to support early-career staff to undertake core roles, including teaching, supervision and assessment of students' work. As a result, it is recommended that all newly appointed staff to be given the opportunity to apply for a PGCert to help with staff development. (Programme standard: 6.6.3)

4.8 During the accreditation visit, the next destination of the provider's graduates was discussed in detail. The visiting team was unsure about how the programme monitors graduate destinations, particularly those who enrol onto further studies. Continuing to track the employability after undergraduate study would be beneficial to continue to support the real-world learning and understanding of career development opportunities of current students, as well as to provide statistical data for the potential development of additional Stage One programmes. Therefore, it is recommended that the provider continue to monitor their graduate destination data. Furthermore, the visiting team was unsure of the provider's strategies for reviewing attainment and awarding gaps. By highlighting different attainment gaps amongst students, the team would be able to consider possible interventions and tailor support appropriately to help reduce the margin. The provider should continue to monitor the recruitment of students from underrepresented groups and widening participation. The society is continually revising their accreditation standards across all domains, with an emphasis on EDI initiatives in the future. As a result, it is advised that the provider continues to monitor and improve clarity around EDI in terms of

destination data, awarding and attainment gaps, and develop a plan in terms of the new revised accreditation standards proposed in 2024. (Programme standard: 4.1)

5. Feedback to the society

5.1 The report above reflects a fair assessment of the provision at the University of Buckingham. The developmental work outlined above reflects some clarifications required by the management of the school (4.1 and 4.3), work to be done within the school (4.2 and 4.8), within the faculty team (4.5) and the university more broadly (4.4, 4.6 and 4.7). We look forward to working with the Society to achieve these goals and future developments.

5.2 Could we continue to work with colleagues at the Society to find ways to enable our students to become BPS members as efficiently as possible, considering that we have multiple entries onto our programmes (September and January).

5.3 Could we also request that a modified version of the SEQ is provided reflecting the fact that our programmes are designed to deliver 180 units per year over two years rather than 120 units per year over three years.

6. Programme Management

Dr Gillian Hill	Programme Director
Dr Alan Martin	Associate Dean

7. Acknowledgements

The society would like to thank all participants at the visit for their important contribution to our work and commitment to collaborative partnership working. The visiting team would also like to thank the programme team for their kind hospitality and good timekeeping throughout the duration of the visit.

8. Membership of the Visiting team

Dr Jonathan Catling CPsychol	Convenor; Member, Undergraduate Education Committee, University of Birmingham
Dr Steven Lyttle CPsychol	Member, Undergraduate Education Committee, De Montfort University
Lianne Spiby	Partnership and Accreditation Operations Manager, The British Psychological Society
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9. Report Author

Michael Edwards

04/01/2024