Standards for the accreditation of Masters & Doctoral programmes in forensic psychology

January 2019
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Introduction
The British Psychological Society (‘the Society’) is the learned and professional body, incorporated by Royal Charter, for psychology in the United Kingdom. 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 purpose of the Society’s accreditation process is to further that objective.

What is accreditation?
Accreditation through Partnership is the process by which the British Psychological Society works with education providers to ensure quality standards in education and training are met by all programmes on an ongoing basis. Our approach to accreditation is based on partnership rather than policing, and we emphasise working collaboratively with programme providers through open, constructive dialogue that allows for exploration, development and quality enhancement.

Benefits of accreditation
Delivering a programme that meets the standards required for accreditation is a significant commitment, and there are many reasons why Society accreditation is worth your investment of time and money:

• It is a highly regarded marker of quality that prospective students and employers value.
• It enhances the marketability of your programmes.
• It gives your graduates a route to Society membership, an integral part of students’ development as psychologists, or as part of the wider psychological workforce.
• It is a high quality benchmarking process aimed at getting the best out of programmes.
• It provides an opportunity for you and your students to influence the society and its support for education providers and students.
• Together we have a powerful voice in raising the profile of psychology and psychological practice in the UK and internationally.

Our standards
In 2017, the Society’s Partnership and Accreditation Committee (PAC) and its constituent Education and Training Committees reviewed the overarching programme standards, with the aim of providing greater clarity and more effective signposting to other relevant guidance in a way that is helpful to programmes when they articulate their work.

Our standards are intended to be interpreted and applied flexibly, in a way that enables programmes to develop distinctive identities that make the most of particular strengths shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their department or university. During partnership visits, the questions that visiting teams will ask will be designed specifically to give education providers every opportunity to confirm their achievement of the standards.

Our standards are organised around eight overarching standards, as follows:
The standards have been derived following extensive consultation between the Society and education providers, and must be achieved by all accredited programmes. Each overarching standard is followed by a rationale for its inclusion, together with guidance and signposting of other relevant resources.

**This document**

This document sets out the accreditation standards for the accreditation of programmes in forensic psychology. The standards came into operation on 1 October 2017.

If you are submitting a new programme for accreditation, or are preparing for an accreditation visit or review, you should read these standards in conjunction with the relevant process handbook. All handbooks can be downloaded from [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

Accredited Masters programmes meet the underpinning academic knowledge requirements for full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology. Completion will provide a basis for entry to further professional training towards eligibility to practise as a forensic psychologist, and for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) and full membership of the Division.
Accredited Doctoral programmes meet the requirements for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) and full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology. Such programmes will seek to prepare trainees for professional practice as a forensic psychologist. Practitioner psychologists are statutorily regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), and it is a legal requirement that anyone who wishes to practise using a title protected by the Health Professions Order 2001 is on the HCPC’s Register. Programmes will also, therefore, need to seek approval from the HCPC.

A working model of the requirements for Stage 1 and Stage 2 training is outlined below:
Our standards for Masters programmes in forensic psychology
The core training of a forensic psychologist: Statement of intent

The Division of Forensic Psychology Training Committee (DFPTC) aims to develop forensic psychologists with a core body of knowledge and skills to ensure the highest of standards. Chartered membership (CPsychol) and full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology (DFP) reflects the highest standard of psychological knowledge and expertise which demonstrates a commitment to professional development and high ethical standards of practice, teaching and research.

Forensic psychologists work empirically and theoretically: that is, they adopt a scientist-practitioner perspective. UK forensic psychologists have contributed to the development of research and assessment tools, their implementation, and best practice guidance in legal contexts, including civil and criminal, at home and internationally. This combination of empirical base, theoretical understanding, and use of reputable guidelines ensures they deliver research, interventions and other forensic services of the highest standard. In conjunction with being equipped to teach or supervise other forensic professionals, forensic psychologists aim to create and sustain inclusivity and diversity across the domains in which they work. As with all other professional psychologists their work is subject to ethical, cultural and reflective practice in collaborative supervision with other psychologists, to achieve service user engagement and goals with particular populations, across diverse settings in dealing with particular problems.

Training in forensic psychology is typically conducted in two stages to achieve the standards for CPsychol and full membership of the DFP: Stage 1 and Stage 2. The first stage involves completion of a British Psychological Society (BPS) accredited Master’s degree in forensic psychology. For the second, trainees can follow the BPS ‘independent practice route’, leading to the Stage 2 Qualification in Forensic Psychology. This route requires supervised practice of four key forensic psychology competencies illustrated by two portfolios developed across each of the four core areas. The portfolios of evidence demonstrate the acquisition of skills in relevant working contexts and with appropriate supervision. These are formally assessed through examination of the submitted portfolios.

Alternatively, along with a substantial research dissertation, this stage can be conducted under the auspices of Higher Education Institutes. These courses lead to a doctoral qualification in forensic psychology or forensic clinical psychology (for example, as a joint qualification) and provide the equivalent of a minimum of two years full-time practice placement. Both the BPS and HEI routes lead to eligibility to apply for Chartered membership of the Society, full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology, and entry to the HCPC register of Practitioner Psychologists as a Forensic Psychologist.

The training programmes provide supervision in a range of skills and competencies that are applicable across a wide range of forensic settings. Core competencies include: planning and managing psychological interventions, research, consultancy, teaching and training, and generic professional (psychology) skills. In addition to these core competencies, trainee forensic psychologists may acquire a range of other skills such as managing and bringing about change in thinking patterns during behavioural change interventions. Skills acquired during training are theoretically based and highly transferable across a range of contexts. The same behavioural change principles, for example, are applicable in settings as wide ranging as reducing the risk to the public of offending to enhancing investigation processes, and working with individuals and groups to the benefit of self, wider communities and society.
Forensic psychologists are trained to a doctoral level in a range of applications. They can work across a range of settings and with a range of problems. They specialise in working with both people who may be imprisoned for long periods as well as those who may have difficulties in everyday family life and who either want, or need to, improve their everyday chances in employment and/or relationships. Settings can vary from large scale prison programmes to individual or small group consultations. Forensic psychologists work with a range of people, including those who have chronic difficulties, those at risk of offending as a consequence of their behaviour, family members, victims, and the public affected by crime, and so on. Interventions may be as varied as conducting anger management programmes, supporting community care interventions, assessment of violence risk to inform treatment needs and plans, helping people manage substance misuse through self-change or assisting witnesses in court processes or investigations. Forensic psychologists therefore may work directly with individuals or groups, support other forensic professionals, or in other forensic areas such as the courts, security, police and/or other law enforcement agencies or investigators. In addition to intervention skills, forensic psychologists have high level research and consultancy skills that enable them to develop appropriate and targeted research studies. These can range in scope from the analysis of outcomes of a service provision to large scale publishable research.

Forensic psychologists have made significant contribution to international research focusing on a range of issues relevant to psychological applications relevant to the criminal justice system using evidence-based practice to guide their approaches as reflective science-practitioners.
Programme standard 1: Programme design

The design of the programme must ensure that successful achievement of the required learning outcomes is marked by the conferment of an award at the appropriate academic level.

1.1 Credits and level of award: Master’s programmes seeking accreditation against stage one of the requirements for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) must comprise 180 credits, and must result in the award of a level 7 qualification (level 11 in Scotland).

1.2 Duration and location of studies:
   1.2.1 For postgraduate professional training programmes in psychology, the total period of study must be no less than three years full-time (or the equivalent part-time). Stage one Master’s programmes are typically undertaken over a period of one year full-time (or its part-time equivalent).
   1.2.2 The Society does not stipulate a maximum study period within which an accredited programme must be completed.
   1.2.3 Up to one third of the total credits of an accredited UK programme may be undertaken outside of the UK. Where a greater proportion is undertaken abroad, we consider this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation.

1.3 Award nomenclature: The education provider must ensure that the title of any award accurately reflects the level of students’ achievements, represents appropriately the nature and field(s) of study undertaken and is not misleading, either to potential employers or to the general public.

1.4 Assessment requirements:
   1.4.1 Programmes must have in place an assessment strategy that maps clearly on to programme and module learning outcomes, incorporates a wide range of formative and summative assessments, and which reflects students’ development of knowledge and skills as they progress through their studies. Each of the core content areas specified in Programme standard 2, below, must be assessed at the appropriate level, but need not be assessed separately (with the exception of the empirical research project).
   1.4.2 Accredited postgraduate programmes must stipulate a minimum pass mark of 50 per cent for all modules that contribute to the accredited award where quantified marking is employed. No compensation across modules is permissible.
   1.4.3 Assessment rules, regulations and other criteria should be published in a full and accessible form and made freely available to students, staff and external examiners.
   1.4.4 Assessment practices should be fair, valid, reliable and appropriate to the level of the award being offered. Assessment should be undertaken only by appropriately qualified staff, who have been adequately trained and briefed, and given regular opportunities to enhance their expertise as assessors.
   1.4.5 Education providers should have in place policies and procedures to deal thoroughly, fairly and expeditiously with problems which arise in the assessment of students. These should include the grounds for student appeals against assessment outcomes, and the process that students should follow if they wish to pursue an appeal.
1.4.6 Education providers should ensure that detailed and up to date records on student progress and achievement are kept. Throughout a programme of study, students should receive prompt and helpful feedback about their performance in relation to assessment criteria so that they can appropriately direct their subsequent learning activities.

1.5 Inclusive assessment:

1.5.1 Education providers should have inclusive assessment strategies in place that anticipate the diverse needs and abilities of students.

1.5.2 Where reasonable adjustments need to be made for disabled students, these should apply to the process of assessment, and not to the learning outcomes being assessed.

Rationale for inclusion
The Society has clear expectations about teaching, learning and assessment on accredited programmes, and the provisions that should be built into the design of those programmes to ensure quality. The standards outlined above will ensure that those seeking entry to specific grades of Society membership on the basis of having completed an accredited programme have met the stipulations set out in the Society's Royal Charter, Statutes and Rules.

Guidance and signposting

- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, and signposts relevant qualifications and credit frameworks, as well as guidance on the characteristics of different qualifications. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code (www.qaa.ac.uk):
  - Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval
  - Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching
  - Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints
  - Chapter B11: Research Degrees

- The Society’s standards require that all accredited stage one MSc and Doctoral programmes stipulate a minimum 50 per cent pass mark for all modules that contribute to the accredited award. Some providers operate a standard 40 per cent pass mark for their postgraduate programmes; accredited programmes will need to seek variation from the provider’s standard regulations in order to meet this requirement. Graduates who do not achieve the necessary 50 per cent pass mark for all modules contributing to the accredited degree should receive an alternative award to enable them to be distinguished from those who have achieved the expected standard.

- The Equality Challenge Unit has produced guidance on Managing Reasonable Adjustments in Higher Education, which providers may find helpful (www.ecu.ac.uk).

- The Society’s accreditation standards make provision for students to undertake some study or placement time abroad as part of their programme (up to one third of the total credits of the accredited programme). Study abroad opportunities may not be available for all students, and arrangements will vary across different providers. Where study
abroad opportunities are available, the UK provider must ensure that the study abroad being undertaken allows students to cover all of the required curriculum appropriately by the time they have completed their programme (though not necessarily in the same way as others on their cohort), and that this learning will effectively support their progression. More detailed information is available in our guide to studying abroad on an accredited programme, which can be downloaded from [www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation](http://www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation).

- Where more than one third of the total credits for the programme are undertaken outside of the UK, the Society considers this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation. Information regarding the Society’s international accreditation process can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation](http://www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation).

- The Society does not specify a maximum study period for an accredited programme. It is expected that individual education providers will have in place regulations governing the maximum permissible period of time that may elapse from initial enrolment to completion, regardless of individual circumstances, to ensure the currency of their knowledge, their skills, and the award conferred upon them.
The programme must reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

2.1 Programme content requirements

Context
The purpose of Stage 1 training is to build upon undergraduate knowledge and skills, to provide an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the discipline informed by current scholarship and research, including a critical awareness of current issues and developments in forensic psychology. This knowledge and understanding, and the associated core skills, will support students in their progression to Stage 2 training, where they can begin to develop their practice under supervision; there should not be an expectation of applied practice at Stage 1.

Core skills
Accredited programmes are expected to support their students’ development of a range of core and transferrable skills that are central to forensic psychology practice and to a range of other areas of employment. The standards for the accreditation of Stage 1 programmes are outcomes based, and encourage the development of critical thinking skills and ways of working such that students engage with the discipline by:

- Critically evaluating the current knowledge, theory and evidence base relevant to the discipline (note: this may comprise both psychological theory and knowledge from other disciplines), and understand that this is an important first step for all work and activities;
- Identifying and developing skills and capabilities relevant to progression to forensic psychology practice;
- Using a range of techniques and research methods applicable to psychological enquiry;
- Applying relevant ethical, legal and professional practice frameworks (e.g. BPS, HCPC), and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries;
- Communicating effectively (verbally and non-verbally) with colleagues, research supervisors, and a wider audience;
- Critically reflecting on and synthesising all of the above to inform their developing professional identity as a trainee forensic psychologist; and
- Disseminating their work appropriately in a range of appropriate written (e.g. professional reports, journal papers, conference posters) and oral (e.g. presentations, one-to-one feedback) formats.

It is expected that the development of the above core skills will be embedded throughout each of the following curriculum areas. Development of skills in critical self-reflection should underpin Stage 1 training. This will provide preparation for and continuity with Stage 2 training and professional practice.

Note: Ethical and professional practice frameworks are not specifically outlined separately in the curriculum requirements below as these are considered core skills; however programmes will find it useful to refer to work that has been undertaken by the Society’s Ethics Committee to support the teaching and assessment of ethical thinking and decision-making (see Programme Standard 3).
Curriculum
Accredited programmes should ensure that students develop the above core skills across the eight curriculum areas outlined below. Programmes are encouraged to develop specific emphasis and focus on some areas in more depth than others, to reflect the areas of strength of the staff team delivering the programme, or to promote a distinctive identity for the programme as a whole. However, each area should be covered as a minimum as outlined below.

Research and research methods¹
Students should demonstrate the ability to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to advanced scholarship in the discipline. Students should learn how to conduct qualitative and quantitative research of relevance to forensic psychology, and each student should conduct at least one empirical study. Students should have the appropriate skills and capabilities to collect and analyse data relevant to forensic psychology.

The legal and criminal justice context for forensic psychology
Students should demonstrate a critical understanding of the psychological theories and evidence of relevance to processes in the justice system, including: the legal framework of the civil and criminal justice systems; processes of investigation; the legal process; the process of detention; working with litigants, appellants, and individuals seeking arbitration and mediation; and interdisciplinary and multi-agency working.

Assessment and formulation
Students should demonstrate a critical understanding of different approaches to assessment and formulation in relation to assessing individuals, groups and/or organisations. Students should also demonstrate a familiarity with the processes and tools of assessment in line with the particular focus offered by their programme.

Interventions
Students should demonstrate a critical understanding of the range of interventions available for offenders, patients and at risk individuals, victims/survivors, professionals, groups and organisations. They should understand different approaches, and be able to identify strengths and weaknesses of those approaches to inform the selection of appropriate interventions. They should also be able to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

Client groups
Students should have the knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to working with a range of client groups including: different types of offenders, patients and at risk individuals; victims/survivors; individuals across the lifespan (including children and young people in conflict with the law); males and females; professionals, groups and organisations.

Forensic settings
Students should have the knowledge and skills to enable them to progress to working within a range of settings and contexts relevant to forensic psychology, including: prisons; secure units; hospitals; mental health; police; courts (including criminal, family and civil); community settings; charities and social enterprise. They should understand

¹ In order for students to be able to progress on to Stage 2 training, and for them to be active consumers of research, the project should involve collecting original empirical data from participants, or equivalent alternatives such as computational modelling of empirical data or secondary data analysis, making use of existing large quantitative or qualitative data sets. Systematic reviews are not included within the permissible equivalent alternatives.
issues of organisational culture and systems, and the ways in which these impact on the practice of forensic psychologists and other professionals. Their understanding of legal and professional practice frameworks, though relevant to the full Stage 1 curriculum, will be particularly relevant to their developing understanding of the work of forensic psychologists in different settings.

**Development and training**

Students should recognise the need to take responsibility for their own professional development, and should therefore understand the principles and utility of reflective practice for their development as trainee forensic psychologists. They should also understand the forensic psychological theories and evidence underpinning the development and training of others.

**Advice and consultancy**

Students should demonstrate a critical understanding of the forensic psychological theories and evidence relevant to working with organisations to contribute to the development of practice, guidance and/or policy. They should also understand the principles and procedures that forensic psychologists use when evaluating the practice of organisations and conducting consultancy.

### 2.2 Teaching and learning:

**2.2.1** A clear programme specification must be in place that provides a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and which helps students to understand the teaching and learning methods that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved, and the assessment methods that enable achievement to be demonstrated with adequate breadth and depth. The programme specification (and any module specifications) must include learning outcomes that reflect the specific programme content requirements outlined above.

**2.2.2** Education providers must be able to document the intended programme and module learning outcomes, and the ways in which these are mapped on to the programme content requirements outlined above.

**2.2.3** Programmes must have a statement of orientation and values that underlie their programme specification. In addition to articulating learning outcomes and an assessment strategy that reflect the Stage 1 training requirements outlined in this handbook, programmes must be able to show how their orientation and values inform their teaching and learning strategy.

**2.2.4** Students are entitled to expect a learning experience which meets their needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching, and a supportive and enabling learning environment.

### 2.3 Research:

**2.3.1** Education providers must be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the Society's *Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods* in designing, developing and delivering their research methods and project provision.
Rationale for inclusion

The Society’s standards for accredited programmes reflect contemporary theory, research and practice, enabling accredited programmes to develop psychologists who will be fit for purpose for the future. As such, these reflect the optimal academic and professional standards, promoted by the Society through the award of Graduate membership (MBPsS) and the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC), and Chartered membership (CPsychol) respectively. The Society is keen that these standards create flexibility for programmes to develop distinctive identities, by making the most of particular strengths around research and practice shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their department or university.

Guidance and signposting

- Education providers are free to map topics in any academically coherent combination, which could range from delivering core content areas within dedicated modules, or embedding coverage across a number of modules. The Society encourages programmes to deliver core content across modules within an integrated curriculum that offers a pedagogical development of students’ knowledge, understanding, and skills.

- Providers may find it helpful to refer to Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code, which addresses Learning and Teaching (www.qaa.ac.uk).

- It is important to note that Stage 1 training programmes fulfil the significant role of enabling graduates to fulfil those Standards of Proficiency set out by the Health and Care Professions Council that are deemed to represent the key concepts and bodies of knowledge that are relevant to the practice of practitioner psychologists (SOP 13; www.hcpc-uk.org/education).

- The Society has produced Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods on Society accredited postgraduate programmes (revised April 2017). A further document, Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods on Society accredited undergraduate and conversion programmes, was also published in April 2017.
Programme standard 3: Working ethically and legally

The programme must evaluate students’ understanding of working ethically and legally.

3.1 All accredited programmes must include teaching on the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and relevant supplementary ethical guidelines.

3.2 Accredited programmes must have mechanisms in place to ensure that all research undertaken by students that involves human participants is conducted in line with the Society’s *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

3.3 Programmes must ensure that students are taught and assessed on ethics beyond the submission of ethics applications for research projects.

3.4 Programmes should familiarise students with the distinct role of the Society as the professional body for psychology, and the Health and Care Professions Council as the statutory regulator for practitioner psychologists in the UK. Programmes should ensure that students are aware of the legal and statutory obligations and restrictions on the practice of psychology in the UK context.

3.5 Master’s and Doctoral programmes are also expected to make students aware of the Health and Care Professions Council’s *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*.

Rationale for inclusion

The inclusion of this standard reflects the particular importance of ethics and ethical practice to psychologists, and to the Society as the professional body for psychology and psychological practitioners. Students and trainees on accredited programmes need to be able to: identify the presence of an ethical issue (ethical sensitivity); formulate the morally ideal course of action by identifying the relevant ethical issues and using these principles to consider appropriate actions (ethical reasoning); decide what they wish and intend to do (ethical motivation); and execute and implement what they intend to do (ethical implementation). They also need to develop commitment to the ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity – as appropriate to their level of study. In addition, all prospective psychologists and psychological practitioners need to understand the legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to psychological practice in the UK. This standard therefore differentiates between working ethically and working legally to reflect the above considerations.

Guidance and signposting

- The Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, *Code of Human Research Ethics*, and supplementary ethical guidelines provide clear ethical principles, values and standards to guide and support psychologists’ decisions in the difficult and challenging situations they may face. Further information can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics).

- The Society’s Ethics Committee has produced *Guidance on teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education* (2015), available at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics), which outlines ethical competencies, and how these may be taught and assessed at different levels of study. Programmes are encouraged to make use of the guidance as appropriate to their provision.
• The Health and Care Professions Council has produced a learning resource that is designed to support the understanding of ethical issues that individuals may encounter. Whilst it is primarily intended to contextualise the HCPC’s *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*, it presents a useful resource for students and trainees at all levels of study ([www.hcpc-uk.org/education/learningresource](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education/learningresource)).

• All accredited programmes are expected to include formal teaching on ethics, and should be able to demonstrate how working ethically is integral to all aspects of their provision, including research (as outlined below), and placement activities (where applicable). The assessment strategy for the programme should consider understanding of ethical principles as appropriate to the level of study.

• Students need to understand the ethical frameworks that apply to their research, and how to engage with these, as well as understanding the ethical implications of the research that they encounter. They also need to understand ethics as applied to working with people more generally.

• Providers should have in place mechanisms for identifying and dealing with academic and (where applicable) professional misconduct. The programme should consider the ways in which these mechanisms are publicised.
Programme standard 4: Selection and admissions

The programme must apply appropriate selection and entry criteria that are consistent with promoting equality of opportunity and access to psychology to as diverse a range of applicants as possible.

4.1 Equality, diversity and inclusion: The programme must implement and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants.

4.2. Selection and entry requirements: For stage one Master’s programmes:

4.2.1 The Society normally expects entrants to accredited Master’s programmes to be eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC). Programmes may also accept applicants who are not eligible for the GBC, provided they have a clear rationale for doing so, and are able to put in place any additional support required by such applicants. This may include support a) to get up to speed on relevant aspects of psychological theory and research, and b) to build on what they have learned at undergraduate level to develop the core skills outlined by the Society for accredited Master’s programmes. Programmes may choose to retain eligibility for the GBC as a minimum entry requirement should they so wish.

4.2.2 Programmes must provide clear information to students indicating that, in order to be eligible for Chartered membership of the Society and full Division membership, they will need to have completed both a programme granting eligibility for the GBC and an accredited Master’s programme prior to commencing stage two training. Whilst students will normally complete GBC prior to their MSc, the reverse is also permissible.

4.3 Recognition of prior learning:

4.3.1 Where the education provider offers applicants the opportunity to seek exemption from undertaking a proportion of the programme, effective processes should be in place for assessing and recognising their prior learning and experience.

4.3.2 Stage one Master’s programmes may operate procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) against the learning outcomes of the accredited award. The RPL procedure should ensure that any exemptions against the taught content of the programme are granted on the basis of learning undertaken at level 7 (level 11 in Scotland).

4.4 For providers that accept students on to their postgraduate programmes who do not hold eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership of the Society (GBC), a support mechanism should be in place to identify any gaps in such applicants’ underpinning knowledge, and ways of addressing these.

4.5 Education providers must demonstrate that the process of selecting candidates for entry on to their programme is based on academic and professional decision-making. Whilst administrative and central services staff play a crucial role in supporting selection and recruitment processes, appropriate academic oversight must be in place. In particular, programme staff should have responsibility for confirming any selection criteria or other checking and validation processes to be applied, and for adjudicating over any non-standard or otherwise complex applications.
**Rationale for inclusion**

The Society is interested in the ways in which education providers implement their equality, diversity and inclusion policies. It is particularly important that those progressing to undertake professional training in psychology, and therefore those moving into employment as psychologists, reflect the demographics of the populations with whom they will be working. Similarly, the Society is keen to promote diversity in psychology students progressing towards careers as academics or researchers. Overall, it is important that psychological knowledge and expertise is reflected across a diverse range of people, and that this diversity is ultimately reflected throughout the Society's membership. Widening access to professional training, including by providing greater flexibility in relation to the order of studies that students undertake, is key to enhancing the diversity of the workforce in the longer term. The Society is also committed to ensuring that applicants whose first qualification is in a subject other than psychology, and who have gained eligibility for the GBC through completion of a conversion award, are not unfairly disadvantaged by any selection or recruitment policies operated by the education provider (in particular, in relation to their prior academic attainment).

**Guidance and signposting**

- Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code addresses Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. Chapter B6 also considers Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning. Finally, Part C of the Quality Code outlines expectations around the provision of fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy information regarding the learning opportunities offered for the benefit of a range of audiences, including applicants and the general public. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).

- The Office for Fair Access (OfFA) is the independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England. Like OfFA, the Society believes that everyone with the potential and ambition to succeed in higher education should have equal opportunity to do so, whatever their income or background ([www.offa.org.uk](http://www.offa.org.uk)). Whilst its remit covers England only, OfFA provides a series of resources on widening access that all providers will find useful.

- The Society declares its commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and actively promotes a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion 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. Providers of accredited programmes should take steps to identify under-represented groups (e.g. men, black and minority ethnic students) and encourage their participation in psychology education and training and in the wider psychological workforce. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the participation of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation ([www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)).

- Whilst it is permissible for providers to accept applicants on to their programmes who do not hold the GBC, our experience suggests that such students often require additional support to be able to engage fully in teaching and learning building on the different areas of the GBC curriculum, in particular research methods. Some providers have found it useful to ensure that such applicants have undertaken an empirical research project as
part of their undergraduate degree, and have completed a research design and analysis module; it may be more appropriate for students who do not meet this criterion to be counselled to complete a conversion programme and to re-apply at a later date.

- Providers wishing to check whether applicants have gained eligibility for the GBC may establish the accreditation status of any qualifications held by applicants by checking their inclusion on the Society’s online database of accredited courses ([www.bps.org.uk/accredited-courses](http://www.bps.org.uk/accredited-courses)). Applicants whose qualifications are not accredited by the Society may seek confirmation of their eligibility for the GBC by making an individual application to the Society for Graduate membership ([www.bps.org.uk/graduate](http://www.bps.org.uk/graduate)).
Programme standard 5: Student development and professional membership

The programme must be able to articulate a strategy for supporting students’ personal and professional development.

5.1 The programme must have in place mechanisms for the support of students’ personal development, including the provision of a personal tutor system.

5.2 Students should have access to discipline-specific professional development. Psychologists should be involved in supporting student development, and specific resources should be allocated to this aspect of the provision. For postgraduate professional training programmes, this should include the involvement of practitioner psychologist(s) in providing careers advice.

5.3 Providers must ensure that their graduates are able to articulate how their learning equips them with transferable and subject-specific skills that are of value to employers. Accredited stage one Master’s programmes are expected to support their students’ development of a range of core and transferrable skills that are central to psychological practice and to a range of other areas of employment. The standards for the accreditation of Stage 1 programmes are outcomes based, and encourage the development of critical thinking skills and ways of working such that students engage with the discipline by:

- Critically evaluating the current knowledge, theory and evidence base relevant to the discipline (note: this may comprise both psychological theory and knowledge from other disciplines), and understand that this is an important first step for all work and activities;
- Identifying and developing skills and capabilities relevant to progression to forensic psychology practice;
- Using a range of techniques and research methods applicable to psychological enquiry;
- Applying relevant ethical, legal and professional practice frameworks (e.g. BPS, HCPC), and maintaining appropriate professional boundaries;
- Communicating effectively (verbally and non-verbally) with colleagues, research supervisors, and a wider audience;
- Critically reflecting on and synthesising all of the above to inform their developing professional identity as a trainee forensic psychologist; and
- Disseminating their work appropriately in a range of appropriate written (e.g. professional reports, journal papers, conference posters) and oral (e.g. presentations, one-to-one feedback) formats.

5.4 Systems for student support should empower learners to take personal control of their own development, by providing opportunities for the exercise of choice, decision-making, and responsibility within a supportive environment, in order to promote the development of autonomous learning.

5.5 The programme must provide students with information on the benefits of completing an accredited programme, and gaining membership of the Society and its Member Networks at the appropriate level. Providers should emphasise the benefits of Society membership for students’ and graduates’ professional development.
Rationale for inclusion
This standard is included because close attention to students’ personal and professional development is key to their employability. Education providers may link with local and/or national employers in a variety of ways, and the Society is keen to develop its understanding of these approaches through partnership visits. Additionally, the Society believes it is important that education providers communicate the benefits of completing an accredited programme to their students. Belonging to the Society is an integral part of being a psychologist. It recognises graduates’ qualifications and reflects their aspiration to represent the highest possible professional standards.

Guidance and signposting
- Chapter B4 of the UK Quality Code addresses Enabling Student Development and Achievement. Chapter B3 also considers Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need to enable every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff. Finally, Part C of the UK Quality Code addresses the information that should be provided to students about their programme of study and their achievements. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources (www.qaa.ac.uk).
- The Society’s role is to develop and support the discipline of psychology, and to disseminate psychological knowledge to the public and policy makers. Joining the Society enables students to contribute to the Society’s work and benefit from the resources the Society provides as they develop professionally.
- Completion of an accredited programme offers graduates a clear route to Society membership at the appropriate level, and therefore access to the full range of membership benefits, including a variety of services, publications, conferences, training and networking opportunities. Society membership also presents graduates with opportunities for developing and influencing the profession as leaders in their field in the future. For more information on the benefits of Society membership, see www.bps.org.uk/membership.
- In demonstrating their achievement of this standard, education providers should consider the interface between any careers advice and support that might be provided by their central or School/Faculty-based employability unit, and the guidance that can be provided by practitioner psychologists and other qualified practitioners over the course of the programme.
- Postgraduate programmes should also pay particular attention to professional development where students on accredited programmes are taught alongside other student groups (for example, those that do not hold eligibility for the GBC, or other professional groups).
Programme standard 6: Academic leadership and programme delivery

The education provider must have appropriate human resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme, including appointing an appropriately qualified and experienced director or co-ordinator.

6.1 Staffing strategy:

6.1.1 Education providers must be able to outline a clear strategy in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme. The Programme Director must operate with a level of autonomy that enables them to effectively oversee the programme’s governance and delivery.

6.1.2 Providers need to demonstrate that their overall staffing strategy supports the long-term sustainability of the provision, and the capacity to continue to meet the Society’s accreditation standards on an ongoing basis. In the interests of promoting a holistic learning experience for students, the Society would normally expect the core programme delivery team to be located predominantly in one department or on one site.

6.1.3 Programmes must have in place sufficient appropriately qualified staff in order to be able to provide a learning experience that meets students’ needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching. The staff team as a whole needs to be able to deliver (i.e. teach and assess) across the required programme content (see Programme standard 2) at the appropriate level, and supervise students’ empirical research projects.

6.1.4 Education providers must be able to outline the steps they are taking structurally and culturally to advance equality, and to improve the career prospects of underrepresented groups within the discipline and profession.

6.2 Qualifications of Programme Director and staff:

6.2.1 Programme Directorship: For postgraduate professional training programmes:

- The Programme Director holds overall professional and academic responsibility for ensuring that the programme meets the Society’s standards, and for maintaining the accreditation of the programme.

- The Programme Director must be of an appropriately senior academic status within the education provider, such that the Society may be confident that they can take overall responsibility for, or make a significant contribution to, the programme’s day-to-day management and strategic direction.

- The Programme Director must have the programme as his/her major commitment, and be free to devote sufficient time to ensure effective and efficient running.

6.2.2 The Programme Director should be a Chartered psychologist holding full membership of the Division within whose domain the programme falls, or otherwise appropriately qualified (for example, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, and/or eligible for Chartered psychologist status and full membership of the relevant Division) and experienced.
6.2.3 The Programme Director must normally have appropriate academic, professional practice (for awards leading to eligibility for practitioner status), research and management skills, in addition to prior knowledge and experience of training in the relevant area of applied psychology.

6.2.4 Programme staff: For postgraduate professional training programmes:
- All staff contributing to the delivery of accredited programmes will normally hold, as a minimum, a postgraduate qualification in psychology and/or a demonstrable track record in research or other scholarly activity of relevance to applied psychology.
- Dissertation or thesis supervision should only be undertaken by psychologists or other suitably qualified individuals who hold a qualification at Doctoral level, or who hold a demonstrable track record of research in applied psychology.
- Where the programme includes placement opportunities, a Placement Co-ordinator should be identified who holds responsibility and professional accountability for the oversight (quality assurance) and safeguarding (governance) of any placement experience undertaken as part of the programme. The Placement Co-ordinator role, and any assessment of students’ placement performance, may only be undertaken by an HCPC registered practitioner psychologist. Placement organisation also includes a range of operational and logistical tasks that support placement delivery. These may be undertaken by administrative and professional services staff.
- Delivery teams for postgraduate professional training programmes must be able to demonstrate appropriate current links to practice, such that the team as a whole has the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to support trainees’ learning, and (where appropriate) development of practice competence. It is expected that the majority of staff on the core delivery team for the programme will be qualified in forensic psychology.

6.3 Staff student ratio:
6.3.1 Education providers should provide a calculation of their current staff student ratio (SSR) in the evidence they submit in support of an application for accreditation, or in advance of a partnership visit. Postgraduate professional training programmes must operate a minimum staff student ratio of 1:10, based on FTEs.

6.3.2 Given minimum staffing requirements, and the range of tasks that programme staff must undertake in order to deliver a quality student experience (see 6.4 below), programmes with small cohort sizes will require an enhanced SSR.

6.4 Staffing levels:
6.4.1 There are key roles and functions that the Society considers are essential to the effective and efficient delivery of an accredited programme. Programmes must therefore have sufficient staff with enough time allocated to carry out the range of tasks that are associated with: teaching; organising, co-ordinating and monitoring placements (if appropriate); training and supporting supervisors or other assessors; research supervision; marking; providing personal support to students; supporting their professional development; and liaising with employers, visiting speakers and other external stakeholders.
6.4.2 In the interests of providing a positive and coherent student experience, education providers must ensure that programme staff are readily accessible to students, and that students have clear guidance on arrangements for liaising with staff outside of any core contact hours.

6.4.3 All programmes must pay particular attention to ensuring that staffing levels are such that students receive research supervision at a level consistent with the programme’s aims and that research supervision loads for staff are appropriate to enable them to provide adequate supervision at the required level.

6.4.4 Where staff have other duties (e.g. other teaching or practice commitments) these must be taken into account in setting staffing levels and must be such that they do not interfere with the execution of the major responsibility of programme delivery. They must also be reflected appropriately in any SSR return.

6.5 Professional services support staff:

6.5.1 Programmes must have access to sufficient dedicated administrative, technical or other learning support staff to support their effective delivery. Postgraduate programmes require specialist administrative support to meet the specific needs of their staff and students. This should include awareness of and expertise in overseeing placement/supervised practice activities (where applicable), including an understanding of the fitness to practise procedures that apply.

6.5.2 The education provider must be able to demonstrate that the support that is provided is sufficient to meet the needs of the provision in question. Where shared or distributed arrangements for support staff are in place, the education provider must demonstrate their equivalence to the minimum standards outlined above.

6.6 Staff professional development:

6.6.1 Staff are entitled to expect an institutional culture which values and rewards professionalism and scholarship, and which provides access to development opportunities which assist them in their support for student learning. Institutions should support initial and continuing professional development for all staff.

6.6.2 All core members of programme teams are expected to undertake continuing professional development that is necessary to their role within the programme, and, where appropriate, relevant to their professional practice. It is expected that this would include undertaking relevant research, knowledge transfer and other scholarly activity, and/or attendance at relevant conferences. Opportunities for development should be available to all staff who are engaged in, or are supporting, teaching, research and scholarship.

6.6.3 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.

6.6.4 Accredited postgraduate programmes should be conducted within a demonstrable research culture, evidenced by the active current publication record of members of the programme team and other staff allied to the delivery of the programme.

6.6.5 The Programme Director of an accredited postgraduate programme must have sufficient time to conduct research, knowledge transfer, consultancy / organisational and/or clinical work; normally this will be at least one day per week.
Rationale for inclusion

This standard is included as contact with and support from sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff whose professional development is well supported will contribute significantly to the quality of the overall student experience. Additionally, the leadership and co-ordination of the programme is central to shaping students’ experience and their development as psychologists or members of the wider psychological workforce.

Guidance and signposting

- The Society’s minimum requirement is that directors of accredited postgraduate programmes are registered with the HCPC as a practitioner psychologist. Whilst it will typically be the case that the Programme Director’s qualifications and experience will be specific to the modality in question, colleagues with a broader portfolio of qualifications and experience may also hold directorship roles, provided that delivery of the overall student experience is underpinned by an adequate overall modality-specific resource.

- The Society would encourage Programme Directors to hold Chartered membership and full membership of the relevant Division as a way of demonstrating appropriate qualifications and experience for the role. Information on the requirements for becoming a Chartered Member of the Society can be found at www.bps.org.uk/chartered-membership and information about becoming a full member of the division can be found at www.bps.org.uk/divisional-membership.

- The Society had produced Supplementary guidance on staffing for Society-accredited psychology programmes, available at www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads. This provides information to help you meet the Society’s staffing standards and calculate your staff student ratio.

- Where appropriate, Programme Directors may be supported in aspects of their role by colleagues with complementary skills and experience to their own. Education providers may wish to consider the roles that other programme team members may take in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme as part of their staff development strategy, particularly in connection with longer-term succession planning or to support the development of leadership potential.

- In the interests of the longer-term sustainable delivery of the programme, providers should have contingency plans in place to ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced individual has been identified who could deputise for the Programme Director should the need arise (e.g. sickness absence, parental leave, sabbatical).

- The Society expects accredited programmes to be delivered by staff who engage in a range of research activities. A track record of academic and/or practitioner research may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including successful completion of projects supervised.

- Both the co-ordination and operational components of placement delivery need to be undertaken effectively in order to provide students with a placement experience that meets their needs, appropriate to their level of training. The professional oversight and safeguarding aspect of placement co-ordination should be undertaken by an individual who has a good understanding of the professional boundaries within which a student should be operating, and how their placement should contribute to their development within the given modality, at the appropriate level. Systems need to be in place to
support consultation across the programme team to ensure that any placements being identified, selected and undertaken have an appropriate modality-specific focus, and are appropriate to the skills the student needs to develop. Any liaison undertaken with placement providers will need to be informed by an understanding of those skills, and of the requirements of the specific programme of education concerned.

- The standards for postgraduate programmes specify certain roles that may only be undertaken by practitioner psychologists. With this in mind, and given the requirement that providers demonstrate that their overall staffing strategy supports the long-term sustainability of the provision, and the capacity to continue to meet the Society’s accreditation standards on an ongoing basis, providers should ensure appropriate security across the staff team as a whole. This will ensure that there is some flexibility for the redeployment of resources in the event of staff turnover, and also ensures that responsibility for programme and module development does not sit with a single individual.

- The Society supports the inclusive principles set out in the Equality Challenge Unit’s Athena SWAN charter, and would encourage providers of accredited programmes to pursue gaining Athena SWAN recognition and to take steps to improve the career prospects of women psychologists. At undergraduate and postgraduate levels, psychology is a subject that attracts a high proportion of women students, and yet the gender balance among senior academics and practitioners reflects a very different picture. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the career prospects of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation. ([www.ecu.ac.uk](http://www.ecu.ac.uk)).

- Programme providers are encouraged to consult the Society’s *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of psychology technical staff* (2014), and its *Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of administrative and professional services staff* (2017). ([www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads)).

- Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need for higher education providers to assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed. This includes: appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach and of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching; and the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning in the students they are interacting with, and to use approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources (Chapter B3 Indicator 4, [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
Programme standard 7: Discipline-specific resources

The education provider must have appropriate discipline-specific resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme.

7.1 The education provider must be able to outline the discipline-specific and general resources and facilities that are in place to support student learning. Education providers must offer students access to learning resources that are appropriate to the range of theoretical and practical work in which students are engaged.

7.2 Education providers should ensure that students are advised of the discipline-specific and general learning resources to which they have access, and are provided with the necessary support and/or training to enable them to make appropriate use of these.

Rationale for inclusion
This standard is included because the learning experience must be underpinned by access to resources that are appropriate to the psychology programme(s) offered by the education provider. The availability of appropriate resources is key to the delivery of psychology as a science, with associated levels of practical work culminating in students’ completion of individual research at the appropriate level.

Guidance and signposting
- Resources will normally include teaching, tutorial and laboratory space, learning resources (such as texts and journals, available in hard copy and/or electronically, computing facilities), psychological testing materials, specialist equipment supporting psychological research, software supporting data collection and analysis in psychology research, and other IT and/or audiovisual facilities (e.g. to enable the recording of practice role plays and competency assessment tasks), as appropriate to the provision in question.
- Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically sets out the expectation that education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent student, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. In particular, there is an expectation that providers maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use (Chapter B3 Indicator 6, www.qaa.ac.uk).
Programme standard 8: Quality management and governance

The education provider’s quality management systems must make regular provision for the periodic review of the validity and relevance of the programme, such that it continues to reflect our standards, and meets the needs of the programme’s stakeholders.

8.1 Assurance and enhancement of quality:

8.1.1 The quality management mechanisms that are in place should provide for periodic review of the programme’s aims and intended learning outcomes and content, the strategies associated with programme delivery, and the assessment methods that are used to evaluate students’ achievement of the learning outcomes. Overall, they should ensure that the programme continues to reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

8.1.2 Programmes will appoint appropriate External Examiners whose expertise will be of relevance to the breadth and depth of provision being offered. They will ensure that External Examiners are provided with adequate information to support their role, and that systems are in place to monitor action that is taken in response to any issues raised.

8.1.3 The External Examiner for the programme should be a Chartered psychologist holding full membership of the Division within whose domain the programme falls, or otherwise appropriately qualified (for example, registered with the Health and Care Professions Council, and/or eligible for Chartered psychologist status and full membership of the relevant Division) and experienced. Other examiners with a broader range of qualifications and experience may be recruited in addition to undertake specific tasks (e.g. individual thesis examination).

8.2 Stakeholder engagement:

8.2.1 Students should have the opportunity to provide feedback on the design and delivery of the programme via the quality management mechanisms that are in place. Programmes should identify ways in which any difficulties identified (whether as informal or formal complaints) may be satisfactorily resolved, and changes to current systems and practices made where appropriate.

8.2.2 Both formal and informal mechanisms of quality assurance should be in place, including regular staff student liaison meetings. Issues raised by stakeholders, including students, should be documented and contribute to the quality management processes of the provider.
**Rationale for inclusion**

This standard is included because Accreditation through Partnership relies upon education providers having in place robust quality management mechanisms that facilitate self-evaluation of module and programme learning outcomes against the Society's accreditation standards and other indicators of academic standards. The Society recognises education providers' quality management mechanisms as a reliable source of evidence of continued achievement of the standards.

**Guidance and signposting**

- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. Part C addresses the information that providers set out in relation to their arrangements for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement, and the records they maintain of all arrangements for delivering higher education with others. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)):
  - Chapter B5: Student Engagement, and in particular the role of students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.
  - Chapter B7: External Examining
  - Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints, and in particular ensuring that students have opportunities to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage
  - Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others, which specifically highlights that degree-awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them.

- External peer review offers a valuable perspective upon the ways in which the programme compares to others of a similar nature nationally. With this in mind, enabling the Society to have sight of internal quality review reports and External Examiners' reports, and the programme's response to these, allows our reviewers to gain insight into the extent to which the education provider's quality management mechanisms function effectively for the benefit of students, and the discipline as a whole.

- All providers are encouraged to consider the ways in which employer feedback might be harnessed as part of the quality management and programme development process.
Our standards for Doctoral programmes in forensic psychology
The core training of a forensic psychologist: Statement of intent

The Division of Forensic Psychology Training Committee (DFPTC) aims to develop forensic psychologists with a core body of knowledge and skills to ensure the highest of standards. Chartered membership (CPsychol) and full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology (DFP) reflects the highest standard of psychological knowledge and expertise which demonstrates a commitment to professional development and high ethical standards of practice, teaching and research.

Forensic psychologists work empirically and theoretically: that is, they adopt a scientist-practitioner perspective. UK forensic psychologists have contributed to the development of research and assessment tools, their implementation, and best practice guidance in legal contexts, including civil and criminal, at home and internationally. This combination of empirical base, theoretical understanding, and use of reputable guidelines ensures they deliver research, interventions and other forensic services of the highest standard. In conjunction with being equipped to teach or supervise other forensic professionals, forensic psychologists aim to create and sustain inclusivity and diversity across the domains in which they work. As with all other professional psychologists their work is subject to ethical, cultural and reflective practice in collaborative supervision with other psychologists, to achieve service user engagement and goals with particular populations, across diverse settings in dealing with particular problems.

Training in forensic psychology is typically conducted in two stages to achieve the standards for CPsychol and full membership of the DFP: Stage 1 and Stage 2. The first stage involves completion of a British Psychological Society (BPS) accredited Master’s degree in forensic psychology. For the second, trainees can follow the BPS ‘independent practice route’, leading to the Stage 2 Qualification in Forensic Psychology. This route requires supervised practice of four key forensic psychology competencies illustrated by two portfolios developed across each of the four core areas. The portfolios of evidence demonstrate the acquisition of skills in relevant working contexts and with appropriate supervision. These are formally assessed through examination of the submitted portfolios.

Alternatively, along with a substantial research dissertation, this stage can be conducted under the auspices of Higher Education Institutes. These courses lead to a doctoral qualification in forensic psychology or forensic clinical psychology (for example, as a joint qualification) and provide the equivalent of a minimum of two years full-time practice placement. Both the BPS and HEI routes lead to eligibility to apply for Chartered membership of the Society, full membership of the Division of Forensic Psychology, and entry to the HCPC register of Practitioner Psychologists as a Forensic Psychologist.

The training programmes provide supervision in a range of skills and competencies that are applicable across a wide range of forensic settings. Core competencies include: planning and managing psychological interventions, research, consultancy, teaching and training, and generic professional (psychology) skills. In addition to these core competencies, trainee forensic psychologists may acquire a range of other skills such as managing and bringing about change in thinking patterns during behavioural change interventions. Skills acquired during training are theoretically based and highly transferable across a range of contexts. The same behavioural change principles, for example, are applicable in settings as wide ranging as reducing the risk to the public of offending to enhancing investigation processes, and working with individuals and groups to the benefit of self, wider communities and society.
Forensic psychologists are trained to a doctoral level in a range of applications. They can work across a range of settings and with a range of problems. They specialise in working with both people who may be imprisoned for long periods as well as those who may have difficulties in everyday family life and who either want, or need to, improve their everyday chances in employment and/or relationships. Settings can vary from large scale prison programmes to individual or small group consultations. Forensic psychologists work with a range of people, including those who have chronic difficulties, those at risk of offending as a consequence of their behaviour, family members, victims, and the public affected by crime, and so on. Interventions may be as varied as conducting anger management programmes, supporting community care interventions, assessment of violence risk to inform treatment needs and plans, helping people manage substance misuse through self-change or assisting witnesses in court processes or investigations. Forensic psychologists therefore may work directly with individuals or groups, support other forensic professionals, or in other forensic areas such as the courts, security, police and/or other law enforcement agencies or investigators. In addition to intervention skills, forensic psychologists have high level research and consultancy skills that enable them to develop appropriate and targeted research studies. These can range in scope from the analysis of outcomes of a service provision to large scale publishable research.

Forensic psychologists have made significant contribution to international research focusing on a range of issues relevant to psychological applications relevant to the criminal justice system using evidence-based practice to guide their approaches as reflective science-practitioners.
Programme standard 1: Programme design

The design of the programme must ensure that successful achievement of the required learning outcomes is marked by the conferment of an award at the appropriate academic level.

1.1 Credits and level of award: Doctoral programmes seeking accreditation against the requirements for Chartered membership of the Society (CPsychol) must comprise 540 credits, and must result in the award of a level 8 qualification (level 12 in Scotland). A maximum of 180 credits may be delivered at level 7 (level 11 in Scotland), this is for stage one equivalence. All practice components must be delivered and assessed at level 8 (level 12 in Scotland).

1.2 Duration and location of studies:
   1.2.1 For postgraduate professional training programmes in psychology, the total period of study must be no less than three years full-time (or the equivalent part-time). For stage two Doctoral programmes, where recognition of existing competence is awarded, the minimum period of supervised professional practice to be undertaken by trainees is two years full-time (or the equivalent part-time).
   1.2.2 The Society does not stipulate a maximum study period within which an accredited programme must be completed.
   1.2.3 Up to one third of the total credits of an accredited UK programme may be undertaken outside of the UK. Where a greater proportion is undertaken abroad, we consider this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation.

1.3 Award nomenclature: The education provider must ensure that the title of any award accurately reflects the level of trainees’ achievements, represents appropriately the nature and field(s) of study undertaken and is not misleading, either to potential employers or to the general public.

1.4 Assessment requirements:
   1.4.1 Programmes must have in place an assessment strategy that maps clearly on to programme and module learning outcomes, incorporates a wide range of formative and summative assessments, and which reflects trainees’ development of knowledge and skills as they progress through their studies. Each of the competencies specified in Programme Standard 2, below, must be assessed at the appropriate level.
   1.4.2 Accredited postgraduate programmes must stipulate a minimum pass mark of 50 per cent for all modules that contribute to the accredited award where quantified marking is employed. No compensation across modules is permissible.
   1.4.3 Assessment rules, regulations and other criteria should be published in a full and accessible form and made freely available to trainees, staff and external examiners.
   1.4.4 Assessment practices should be fair, valid, reliable and appropriate to the level of the award being offered. Assessment should be undertaken only by appropriately qualified staff, who have been adequately trained and briefed, and given regular opportunities to enhance their expertise as assessors.
   1.4.5 Education providers should have in place policies and procedures to deal thoroughly, fairly and expeditiously with problems which arise in the assessment
of trainees. These should include the grounds for trainee appeals against assessment outcomes, and the process that trainees should follow if they wish to pursue an appeal.

1.4.6 Education providers should ensure that detailed and up to date records on trainee progress and achievement are kept. Throughout a programme of study, trainees should receive prompt and helpful feedback about their performance in relation to assessment criteria so that they can appropriately direct their subsequent learning activities.

1.5 Inclusive assessment:

1.5.1 Education providers should have inclusive assessment strategies in place that anticipate the diverse needs and abilities of students.

1.5.2 Where reasonable adjustments need to be made for disabled students, these should apply to the process of assessment, and not to the competencies being assessed.

Rationale for inclusion

The Society has clear expectations about teaching, learning and assessment on accredited programmes, and the provisions that should be built into the design of those programmes to ensure quality. The standards outlined above will ensure that those seeking entry to specific grades of Society membership on the basis of having completed an accredited programme have met the stipulations set out in the Society’s Royal Charter, Statutes and Rules.

Guidance and signposting

- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards, and signposts relevant qualifications and credit frameworks, as well as guidance on the characteristics of different qualifications. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code (www.qaa.ac.uk):
  - Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval
  - Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching
  - Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints
  - Chapter B11: Research Degrees
- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme design and delivery and assessment in its Standards of Education and Training (SETs 4 and 6; www.hcpc-uk.org/education). Information on the threshold level of qualification for entry to the HCPC Register is provided in SET 1.
- The Society’s standards require that all accredited stage one MSc and Doctoral programmes stipulate a minimum 50 per cent pass mark for all modules that contribute to the accredited award. Some providers operate a standard 40 per cent pass mark for their postgraduate programmes; accredited programmes will need to seek variation from the provider’s standard regulations in order to meet this requirement. Graduates who do not achieve the necessary 50 per cent pass mark for all modules contributing to the accredited degree should receive an alternative award to enable them to be distinguished from those who have achieved the expected standard.
• The Equality Challenge Unit has produced guidance on Managing Reasonable Adjustments in Higher Education, which providers may find helpful (www.ecu.ac.uk).

• The Society’s accreditation standards make provision for trainees to undertake some study or placement time abroad as part of their programme (up to one third of the total credits of the accredited programme). Study abroad opportunities may not be available for all trainees, and arrangements will vary across different providers. Where study abroad opportunities are available, the UK provider must ensure that the study abroad being undertaken allows trainees to cover all of the required curriculum and competencies appropriately by the time they have completed their programme (though not necessarily in the same way as others on their cohort), and that this learning will effectively support their progression. More detailed information is available in our guide to studying abroad on an accredited programme, which can be downloaded from www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation.

• Where more than one third of the total credits for the programme are undertaken outside of the UK, the Society considers this to be a separate programme requiring separate accreditation. Information regarding the Society’s international accreditation process can be found at www.bps.org.uk/internationalaccreditation.

• The Society does not specify a maximum study period for an accredited programme. It is expected that individual education providers will have in place regulations governing the maximum permissible period of time that may elapse from initial enrolment to completion, regardless of individual circumstances, to ensure the currency of their knowledge, their competence, and the award conferred upon them.
Programme standard 2: Programme content (learning, research and practice)

The programme must reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

2.1 Programme content requirements

2.1.1 Required competencies for accredited Doctorates in forensic psychology

CORE ROLE 1: Conducting psychological applications and interventions

Core Role 1 is concerned with the cycle of assessment and intervention aimed at producing changes in individuals, operational or organisational functioning. Typically this involves identification, exploration and formulation of relevant issues and objectives; planning; achieving necessary working relationships; implementation and evaluation of efficacy. It can also involve the consideration and direction of other personnel. It always involves drawing upon a multifaceted base of knowledge and skills in a systematic, analytical, responsive and ethical manner.

CR1.1 Establishing requirements for, and benefits of applications/interventions.
CR1.2 Planning of applications/interventions.
CR1.3 Establishing, developing and maintaining working relationships.
CR1.4 Implementing applications/interventions.
CR1.5 Directing implementation of applications/interventions carried out by others.
CR1.6 Evaluating results of applications/interventions.

CORE ROLE 2: Research

Core Role 2 is concerned with the design, conduct, analysis and evaluation of applied psychological research in forensic settings. Typically this involves the generation of ideas for specific research, the formulation of testable research questions; the definition of parameters and resources required for research; the planning, preparation and design of psychological research investigations and the identification of appropriate research tools; negotiating for access and resources to conduct research; the collection of data; appropriate analysis of research data and appropriate interpretation and evaluation of results; and the formulation of recommendations on the outcomes of research. It may involve co-operation and collaboration with other professionals at each stage of the research process.

CR2.1 Designing psychological research activities.
CR2.2 Conducting research activities.
CR2.3 Analysing and evaluating psychological research data.

The Society’s core requirement for all accredited Doctoral programmes is that trainees demonstrate the ability to conceptualise, design and conduct independent, original research of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication. This should include the ability to: identify appropriate research questions; understand and reflect on ethical issues; choose appropriate research methods and approaches to analysis; report outcomes; and identify appropriate pathways for dissemination.
CORE ROLE 3: Communicating psychological knowledge and advice to other professionals

Core Role 3 is concerned with giving information, advice, guidance and feedback to personnel, agencies and organisations to enable effective problem-solving and decision-making, formulation and implementation of policy and practice. The emphasis is upon using appropriate communication skills to exert a constructive and psychologically based influence within current systems. It is this emphasis on communication that distinguishes it from Core Role 1, although in practice these core roles are often complementary.

CR3.1 Promoting awareness of the actual and potential contribution of applied psychological services.

CR3.2 Providing psychological advice to assist and inform problem solving and decision-making.

CR3.3 Providing psychological advice to aid the formulation of policy and its implementation.

CR3.4 Preparing and presenting evidence in formal settings.

CR3.5 Responding to informal requests for psychological information.

CR3.6 Providing feedback to clients.

CR3.7 Understanding organisational and systemic issues of relevance to the practice of applied psychologists.

The Society’s core requirements for all accredited Doctoral programmes are that graduates:

- **understand organisational and systemic issues of relevance to the practice of applied psychologists, including:**
  - understanding the organisational context for their practice;
  - understanding the structures and functions of service providers applicable to the work of their profession; and
  - understanding current legislation applicable to their work.
- **recognise the role of other professionals and stakeholders of relevance to their work, including the role of service users, carers, and/or community groups;**
- **are able to adapt their practice to different organisational contexts for service delivery, as appropriate;**
- **are able to bring psychological influence to bear; for example, through consultancy, training, and working effectively in multidisciplinary and/or cross-professional teams.**

CORE ROLE 4: Training other professionals in psychological skills and knowledge

Core Role 4 is concerned with imparting to other professionals knowledge and skills where there is an important psychological component. In addition, many psychologists work in settings where improving job performance of other staff is a major part of their professional service.

CR4.1 Identifying and analysing needs to improve or prepare for job performance in specific areas.

CR4.2 Planning and design of training and development programmes.

CR4.3 Implementation of training and development programmes.
CR4.4 Planning and implementation of assessment procedures for evaluating training and development programmes.

2.2 Teaching and learning:

2.2.1 A clear programme specification must be in place that provides a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of the programme, and which helps trainees to understand the teaching and learning methods that enable the learning outcomes to be achieved, and the assessment methods that enable achievement to be demonstrated with adequate breadth and depth. The programme specification (and any module specifications) must include learning outcomes that reflect the specific programme content requirements outlined above.

2.2.2 Education providers must be able to document the intended programme and module learning outcomes, and the ways in which these are mapped on to the programme content requirements outlined above.

2.2.3 Programmes must have a statement of orientation and values that underlie their programme specification. In addition to articulating learning outcomes and an assessment strategy that reflect the competencies outlined in this handbook, programmes must be able to show how their orientation and values inform their teaching and learning strategy.

2.2.4 Trainees are entitled to expect a learning experience which meets their needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching, and a supportive and enabling learning environment.

2.3 Research:

2.3.1 Education providers must be able to demonstrate how they have taken account of the Society’s Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods in designing, developing and delivering their research methods and project provision.

2.4 Supervised practice:

2.4.1 Programmes must provide a minimum of two years’ full-time supervised practice, or its part-time equivalent, comprising a minimum of 90 days’ supervised practice towards each Core Role. Supervision is defined as a personal interaction between the trainee forensic psychologist and their supervisor for the purpose of addressing the trainee’s needs and performance in relation to the requirements of the accredited programme. It may take place by means of face-to-face meetings, telephone conversations and/or e-mail communication. Supervision may also occur between supervisors and groups of trainees.

2.4.2 Programmes must have access to an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced placement supervisors.

2.4.3 Trainees will have a co-ordinating placement tutor or supervisor with overall responsibility for the candidate throughout the programme, who is qualified in the relevant domain of psychology. The identification of a co-ordinating tutor or supervisor is intended to ensure that the trainee participates in supervision with an appropriately qualified psychologist for the majority of their training. The co-ordinating supervisor may be a member of the programme team.

2.4.4 In addition, trainees may have additional practice supervisors to whom supervision responsibilities are delegated with mutual agreement from the main
supervisor. All supervisors must be appropriately qualified, but may be registered in a different domain of psychology, or be a member of another profession:

a. Psychologists providing supervision to trainees on accredited programmes must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

b. Members of other professions who are providing supervision to trainees on accredited programmes should normally be registered with an appropriate professional or statutory body.

The nature of supervision provided will depend on the organisational context in which the placement takes place and may range from supervision of specific case work to supervision of the whole placement experience. It is for programmes to ensure that all supervisors, based on their training, experience and CPD, have the appropriate competencies to be offering the particular services in which they are supervising the trainee.

2.4.5 All supervisors are expected to have completed training in supervision as recognised by the Society or provided by the education provider.

2.4.6 A formal working contract should be in place between the trainee, the programme and the placement outlining the amount, frequency and nature of the supervision that will take place as well as any planned interaction between the three parties involved (programme-trainee, placement-trainee, placement-programme) for the purposes of placement monitoring. Supervision should normally take place on a face-to-face basis, although education providers may specify within the contract any circumstances under which alternative arrangements may be put in place.

The contract should also make explicit reference to these training standards, and the specific competencies that need to be developed must have been mutually agreed in person to ensure that expectations can be clearly set and communicated on all sides. The supervision required may differ depending on the stage of development of the trainee and any specific learning needs that may have been identified. A plan should also be in place for dealing with problems that may arise on placement.

2.4.7 Trainees on accredited programmes are expected to maintain a minimum level of contact with their supervisor(s) of two hours per fortnight. An additional one hour per month is recommended in cases where the supervisor is not supervising the trainee's work directly. Contact should also be maintained during periods when a designated supervisor is active.
### Rationale for inclusion

The Society’s standards for accredited programmes reflect contemporary theory, research and practice, enabling accredited programmes to develop psychologists who will be fit for purpose for the future. As such, these reflect the optimal academic and professional standards, promoted by the Society through the award of Graduate membership (MBPsS) and the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC), and Chartered membership (CPsychol) respectively. The Society is keen that these standards create flexibility for programmes to develop distinctive identities, by making the most of particular strengths around research and practice shared by their staff team, or those that are reflected in the strategic priorities of their department or university.

### Guidance and signposting

- Education providers are free to map topics in any academically coherent combination, which could range from delivering core content areas within dedicated modules, or embedding coverage across a number of modules. The Society encourages programmes to deliver core content across modules within an integrated curriculum that offers a pedagogical development of trainees’ knowledge, understanding, and skills.

- Providers may find it helpful to refer to Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code, which addresses Learning and Teaching ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).

- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme design and delivery (including curriculum guidance) and practice-based learning in its Standards of Education and Training (SETs 4 and 5; [www.hcpc-uk.org/education](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education)).

- The Society has produced *Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods on Society accredited postgraduate programmes* (revised April 2017). A further document, *Supplementary guidelines for research and research methods on Society accredited undergraduate and conversion programmes*, was also published in April 2017.
### Programme standard 3: Working ethically and legally

**The programme must evaluate trainees’ understanding of working ethically and legally.**

3.1 All accredited programmes must include teaching on the Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct* and relevant supplementary ethical guidelines.

3.2 Accredited programmes must have mechanisms in place to ensure that all research undertaken by trainees that involves human participants is conducted in line with the Society's *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

3.3 Programmes must ensure that trainees are taught and assessed on ethics beyond the submission of ethics applications for research projects.

3.4 Programmes should familiarise trainees with the distinct role of the Society as the professional body for psychology, and the Health and Care Professions Council as the statutory regulator for practitioner psychologists in the UK. Programmes should ensure that trainees are aware of the legal and statutory obligations and restrictions on the practice of psychology in the UK context.

3.5 Master’s and Doctoral programmes are also expected to make trainees aware of the Health and Care Professions Council’s *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*.

### Rationale for inclusion

The inclusion of this standard reflects the particular importance of ethics and ethical practice to psychologists, and to the Society as the professional body for psychology and psychological practitioners. Students and trainees on accredited programmes need to be able to: identify the presence of an ethical issue (ethical sensitivity); formulate the morally ideal course of action by identifying the relevant ethical issues and using these principles to consider appropriate actions (ethical reasoning); decide what they wish and intend to do (ethical motivation); and execute and implement what they intend to do (ethical implementation). They also need to develop commitment to the ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity – as appropriate to their level of study. In addition, all prospective psychologists and psychological practitioners need to understand the legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to psychological practice in the UK. This standard therefore differentiates between working ethically and working legally to reflect the above considerations.

### Guidance and signposting

- The Society’s *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, *Code of Human Research Ethics*, and supplementary ethical guidelines provide clear ethical principles, values and standards to guide and support psychologists’ decisions in the difficult and challenging situations they may face. Further information can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics).

- The Society’s Ethics Committee has produced *Guidance on teaching and assessment of ethical competence in psychology education* (2015), available at [www.bps.org.uk/ethics](http://www.bps.org.uk/ethics), which outlines ethical competencies, and how these may be taught and assessed at different levels of study. Programmes are encouraged to make use of the guidance as appropriate to their provision.
• The Health and Care Professions Council has produced a learning resource that is designed to support the understanding of ethical issues that individuals may encounter. Whilst it is primarily intended to contextualise the HCPC’s *Guidance on Conduct and Ethics for Students*, it presents a useful resource for students and trainees at all levels of study (www.hcpc-uk.org/education/learningresource).

• All accredited programmes are expected to include formal teaching on ethics, and should be able to demonstrate how working ethically is integral to all aspects of their provision, including research (as outlined below), and placement activities (where applicable). The assessment strategy for the programme should consider understanding of ethical principles as appropriate to the level of study.

• Students need to understand the ethical frameworks that apply to their research, and how to engage with these, as well as understanding the ethical implications of the research that they encounter. They also need to understand ethics as applied to working with people more generally.

• Providers should have in place mechanisms for identifying and dealing with academic and (where applicable) professional misconduct. The programme should consider the ways in which these mechanisms are publicised.
Programme standard 4: Selection and admissions

The programme must apply appropriate selection and entry criteria that are consistent with promoting equality of opportunity and access to psychology to as diverse a range of applicants as possible.

4.1 The programme must implement and monitor equality, diversity and inclusion policies in relation to applicants.

4.2 Selection and entry requirements:

4.2.1 The Society normally expects entrants to accredited stage two Doctoral programmes to be eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership (GBC) and have completed a Society accredited Master’s programme in the relevant domain of psychology (unless the requirements of the latter are integrated into the Doctoral award). Programmes may also accept applicants who do not hold these qualifications, provided they have a clear rationale for doing so, and are able to put in place any additional support required by such applicants. This may include support to get up to speed on relevant aspects of psychological theory and research. Programmes may choose to retain eligibility for the GBC and completion of an accredited Master’s as a minimum entry requirement should they so wish.

4.2.2 Programmes must provide clear information to trainees indicating that, in order to be eligible for Chartered membership of the Society and full Division membership, they will need to have completed both a programme granting eligibility for the GBC and an accredited Master’s programme prior to commencing stage two training. Whilst trainees will normally undertake their training in this order (GBC followed by completion of an accredited stage one Master’s programme), the reverse is also permissible (accredited stage one Master’s programme followed by an accredited conversion award); however, stage one training must be undertaken prior to commencing stage two training.

4.3 Recognition of prior learning:

4.3.1 Where the education provider offers applicants the opportunity to seek exemption from undertaking a proportion of the programme, effective processes should be in place for assessing and recognising their prior learning and experience.

4.3.2 Doctoral programmes may operate procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) or existing competence (REC) against the learning outcomes of the accredited award. The RPL procedure should ensure that any exemptions against the taught content of the programme are granted on the basis of learning undertaken at level 7 (level 11 in Scotland). However, graduates of Society-accredited stage one programmes may not use aspects of their stage one Master’s as the basis for seeking exemption from aspects of the stage two programme.

4.3.3 The REC procedure should ensure that any exemptions against practice requirements are granted on the basis of competence gained following the trainee’s achievement of eligibility for the GBC and completion of an accredited stage one Master’s programme. In addition, any work put forward for REC purposes must have been supervised by an individual who meets the requirements for supervision of professional practice outlined in Programme standard 2.
4.4 For providers that accept trainees on to their postgraduate programmes who do not hold eligibility for the Graduate Basis for Chartered membership of the Society (GBC), a support mechanism should be in place to identify any gaps in such applicants’ underpinning knowledge, and ways of addressing these.

4.5 Education providers must demonstrate that the process of selecting candidates for entry on to their programme is based on academic and professional decision-making. Whilst administrative and central services staff play a crucial role in supporting selection and recruitment processes, appropriate academic oversight must be in place. In particular, programme staff should have responsibility for confirming any selection criteria or other checking and validation processes to be applied, and for adjudicating over any non-standard or otherwise complex applications.

**Rationale for inclusion**

The Society is interested in the ways in which education providers implement their equality, diversity and inclusion policies. It is particularly important that those progressing to undertake professional training in psychology, and therefore those moving into employment as psychologists, reflect the demographics of the populations with whom they will be working. Similarly, the Society is keen to promote diversity in psychology trainees progressing towards careers as academics or researchers. Overall, it is important that psychological knowledge and expertise is reflected across a diverse range of people, and that this diversity is ultimately reflected throughout the Society's membership. Widening access to professional training, including by providing greater flexibility in relation to the order of studies that trainees undertake, is key to enhancing the diversity of the workforce in the longer term. The Society is also committed to ensuring that applicants whose first qualification is in a subject other than psychology, and who have gained eligibility for the GBC through completion of a conversion award, are not unfairly disadvantaged by any selection or recruitment policies operated by the education provider (in particular, in relation to their prior academic attainment).

**Guidance and signposting**

- Chapter B2 of the UK Quality Code addresses Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education. Chapter B6 also considers Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning. Finally, Part C of the Quality Code outlines expectations around the provision of fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy information regarding the learning opportunities offered for the benefit of a range of audiences, including applicants and the general public. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources (www.qaa.ac.uk).

- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme admissions, including the recognition of prior learning and equality and diversity, in its Standards of Education and Training (SET 2; www.hcpc-uk.org/education).

- The Office for Fair Access (OfFA) is the independent regulator of fair access to higher education in England. Like OfFA, the Society believes that everyone with the potential and ambition to succeed in higher education should have equal opportunity to do so, whatever their income or background (www.offa.org.uk). Whilst its remit covers England only, OfFA provides a series of resources on widening access that all providers will find useful.
• The Society declares its commitment to promote equality, diversity and inclusion and to challenge prejudice and discrimination, and actively promotes a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion 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. Providers of accredited programmes should take steps to identify underrepresented groups (e.g. men, black and minority ethnic students) and encourage their participation in psychology education and training and in the wider psychological workforce. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the participation of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation (www.ecu.ac.uk).

• Doctoral programmes comprise a minimum of three years’ full-time study (or the part-time equivalent). For some providers, the first year of study comprises study at level 7 (level 11 in Scotland), with the remainder at level 8 (level 12 in Scotland); for others, the entire programme of study is at level 8 (12). Where procedures for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) or existing competence (REC) are in place, these must operate against the learning outcomes of the accredited award, at whatever level these are validated. The only circumstance under which an applicant to a Doctoral programme may seek exemption on the basis of their Stage One Masters qualification is where the first year of the Doctoral programme is equivalent to an accredited Masters programme; any placement experience undertaken as part of the Masters may not be considered for REC for the purposes of seeking exemption from aspects of the Stage Two component of the Doctoral programme.

• Whilst it is permissible for providers to accept applicants on to their programmes who do not hold the GBC, our experience suggests that such trainees often require additional support to be able to engage fully in teaching and learning building on the different areas of the GBC curriculum, in particular research methods. Some providers have found it useful to ensure that such applicants have undertaken an empirical research project as part of their undergraduate degree, and have completed a research design and analysis module; it may be more appropriate for students who do not meet this criterion to be counselled to complete a conversion programme and to re-apply at a later date.

• Providers of Stage Two doctoral programmes will need to have a mechanism in place to ensure that applicants have both gained eligibility for the GBC and completed a Society-accredited Stage One award prior to commencing their Stage Two training. Education providers may establish the accreditation status of any qualifications held by applicants by checking their inclusion on the Society’s online database of accredited courses (www.bps.org.uk/accredited-courses). Applicants whose qualifications are not accredited by the Society may seek confirmation of their eligibility for the GBC by making an individual application to the Society for Graduate membership (www.bps.org.uk/graduate).
# Programme standard 5: Trainee development and professional membership

The programme must be able to articulate a strategy for supporting trainees’ personal and professional development.

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<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The programme must have in place mechanisms for the support of trainees’ personal development, including the provision of a personal tutor system.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Providers must ensure that their graduates explicitly understand how their learning equips them with transferable skills that are of value to employers. Specific consideration should be given to supporting trainees in being able to articulate the skills they are developing as they progress in their studies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Systems for trainee support should empower learners to take personal control of their own development, by providing opportunities for the exercise of choice, decision-making, and responsibility within a supportive environment, in order to promote the development of autonomous learning.</td>
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<td>5.4</td>
<td>The programme must provide trainees with information on the benefits of completing an accredited programme, and gaining membership of the Society and its Member Networks at the appropriate level. Providers should emphasise the benefits of Society membership for trainees’ and graduates’ professional development.</td>
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<td>5.5</td>
<td>Trainees should have access to discipline-specific professional development. Psychologists should be involved in supporting student development, and specific resources should be allocated to this aspect of the provision. For postgraduate professional training programmes, this should include the involvement of practitioner psychologist(s) in providing careers advice.</td>
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## Rationale for inclusion

This standard is included because close attention to trainees’ personal and professional development is key to their employability. Education providers may link with local and/or national employers in a variety of ways, and the Society is keen to develop its understanding of these approaches through partnership visits. Additionally, the Society believes it is important that education providers communicate the benefits of completing an accredited programme to their trainees. Belonging to the Society is an integral part of being a psychologist. It recognises graduates’ qualifications and reflects their aspiration to represent the highest possible professional standards.

## Guidance and signposting

- Chapter B4 of the UK Quality Code addresses Enabling Student Development and Achievement. Chapter B3 also considers Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need to enable every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff. Finally Part C of the UK Quality Code addresses the information that should be provided to students about their programme of study and their achievements. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
• The Society’s role is to develop and support the discipline of psychology, and to disseminate psychological knowledge to the public and policy makers. Joining the Society enables trainees to contribute to the Society’s work and benefit from the resources the Society provides as they develop professionally.

• Completion of an accredited programme offers graduates a clear route to Society membership at the appropriate level, and therefore access to the full range of membership benefits, including a variety of services, publications, conferences, training and networking opportunities. Society membership also presents graduates with opportunities for developing and influencing the profession as leaders in their field in the future. For more information on the benefits of Society membership, see www.bps.org.uk/membership.

• In demonstrating their achievement of this standard, education providers should consider the interface between any careers advice and support that might be provided by their central or School/Faculty-based employability unit, and the guidance that can be provided by practitioner psychologists and other qualified practitioners over the course of the programme.

• Postgraduate programmes should also pay particular attention to professional development where trainees on accredited programmes are taught alongside other trainee groups (for example, those that do not hold eligibility for the GBC, or other professional groups).
Programme standard 6: Academic leadership and programme delivery

The education provider must have appropriate human resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme, including appointing an appropriately qualified and experienced director or co-ordinator.

6.1 Staffing strategy:

6.1.1 Education providers must be able to outline a clear strategy in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme. The Programme Director must operate with a level of autonomy that enables them to effectively oversee the programme's governance and delivery.

6.1.2 Providers need to demonstrate that their overall staffing strategy supports the long-term sustainability of the provision, and the capacity to continue to meet the Society's accreditation standards on an ongoing basis. In the interests of promoting a holistic learning experience for trainees, the Society would normally expect the core programme delivery team to be located predominantly in one department or on one site.

6.1.3 Programmes must have in place sufficient appropriately qualified staff in order to be able to provide a learning experience that meets trainees' needs, and which is underpinned by competent, research-informed teaching. The staff team as a whole needs to be able to deliver (i.e. teach and assess) across the required programme content (see Programme Standard 2) at the appropriate level, and supervise trainees' research.

6.1.4 Education providers must be able to outline the steps they are taking structurally and culturally to advance equality, and to improve the career prospects of underrepresented groups within the discipline and profession.

6.2 Qualifications of Programme Director and staff:

6.2.1 Programme Directorship: For postgraduate professional training programmes:

- The Programme Director holds overall professional and academic responsibility for ensuring that the programme meets the Society's standards, and for maintaining the accreditation of the programme.

- The Programme Director must be of an appropriately senior academic status within the education provider, such that the Society may be confident that they can take overall responsibility for, or make a significant contribution to, the programme's day-to-day management and strategic direction.

- The Programme Director must have the programme as his/her major commitment, and be free to devote sufficient time to ensure effective and efficient running.

6.2.2 The Programme Director should be a Chartered psychologist (or eligible for Chartered psychologist status) holding full membership of the Division within whose domain the programme falls and must also be a practitioner psychologist registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (in the domain in which the programme falls). It is expected that the Director will have appropriate professional practice skills and experience.
6.2.3 The Programme Director must normally have appropriate academic, professional practice (for awards leading to eligibility for practitioner status), research and management skills, in addition to prior knowledge and experience of training in the relevant area of applied psychology.

6.2.4 **Programme staff:** For postgraduate professional training programmes:

- All staff contributing to the delivery of accredited programmes will normally hold, as a minimum, a postgraduate qualification in psychology and/or a demonstrable track record in research or other scholarly activity of relevance to applied psychology.
- Dissertation or thesis supervision should only be undertaken by psychologists or other suitably qualified individuals who hold a qualification at Doctoral level, or who hold a demonstrable track record of research in applied psychology.
- A Placement Co-ordinator should be identified who holds responsibility and professional accountability for the oversight (quality assurance) and safeguarding (governance) of any supervised practice undertaken as part of the programme. The Placement Co-ordinator role, and the assessment of students' attainment of professional competencies in practice, may only be undertaken by an HCPC registered practitioner psychologist. Placement organisation also includes a range of operational and logistical tasks that support placement delivery. These may be undertaken by administrative and professional services staff.
- Delivery teams for postgraduate professional training programmes must be able to demonstrate appropriate current links to practice, such that the team as a whole has the necessary knowledge, experience and skills to support trainees' learning, and (where appropriate) development of practice competence. It is expected that the majority of staff on the core delivery team for the programme will be qualified in forensic psychology.

6.3 **Staff student ratio:**

6.3.1 Education providers should provide a calculation of their current staff student ratio (SSR) in the evidence they submit in support of an application for accreditation, or in advance of a partnership visit. Postgraduate professional training programmes must operate a minimum staff student ratio of 1:10, based on FTEs.

6.3.2 Given minimum staffing requirements, and the range of tasks that programme staff must undertake in order to deliver a quality trainee experience (see 6.4 below), programmes with small cohort sizes will require an enhanced SSR.

6.4 **Staffing levels:**

6.4.1 There are key roles and functions that the Society considers are essential to the effective and efficient delivery of an accredited programme. Programmes must therefore have sufficient staff with enough time allocated to carry out the range of tasks that are associated with: teaching; organising, co-ordinating and monitoring placements (if appropriate); training and supporting supervisors or other assessors; research supervision; marking; providing personal support to trainees; supporting their professional development; and liaising with employers, visiting speakers and other external stakeholders.
In the interests of providing a positive and coherent student experience, education providers must ensure that programme staff are readily accessible to students, and that students have clear guidance on arrangements for liaising with staff outside of any core contact hours.

All programmes must pay particular attention to ensuring that staffing levels are such that trainees receive research supervision at a level consistent with the programme’s aims and that research supervision loads for staff are appropriate to enable them to provide adequate supervision at the required level.

Where staff have other duties (e.g. other teaching or practice commitments) these must be taken into account in setting staffing levels and must be such that they do not interfere with the execution of the major responsibility of programme delivery. They must also be reflected appropriately in any SSR return.

Programmes must have access to sufficient dedicated administrative, technical or other learning support staff to support their effective delivery. Postgraduate programmes require specialist administrative support to meet the specific needs of their staff and trainees. This should include awareness of and expertise in overseeing placement/supervised practice activities (where applicable), including an understanding of the fitness to practise procedures that apply.

The education provider must be able to demonstrate that the support that is provided is sufficient to meet the needs of the provision in question. Where shared or distributed arrangements for support staff are in place, the education provider must demonstrate their equivalence to the minimum standards outlined above.

Staff are entitled to expect an institutional culture which values and rewards professionalism and scholarship, and which provides access to development opportunities which assist them in their support for trainee learning. Institutions should support initial and continuing professional development for all staff.

All core members of programme teams are expected to undertake continuing professional development that is necessary to their role within the programme, and, where appropriate, relevant to their professional practice. It is expected that this would include undertaking relevant research, knowledge transfer and other scholarly activity, and/or attendance at relevant conferences. Opportunities for development should be available to all staff who are engaged in, or are supporting, teaching, research and scholarship.

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.

Accredited postgraduate programmes should be conducted within a demonstrable research culture, evidenced by the active current publication record of members of the programme team and other staff allied to the delivery of the programme.

The Programme Director of an accredited postgraduate programme must have sufficient time to conduct research, knowledge transfer, consultancy/organisational and/or clinical work; normally this will be at least one day per week.
**Rationale for inclusion**

This standard is included as contact with and support from sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified and experienced staff whose professional development is well supported will contribute significantly to the quality of the overall trainee experience. Additionally, the leadership and co-ordination of the programme is central to shaping trainees’ experience and their development as psychologists or members of the wider psychological workforce.

**Guidance and signposting**

- The Society’s minimum requirement is that directors of accredited postgraduate programmes are registered with the HCPC as a practitioner psychologist. Whilst it will typically be the case that the Programme Director’s qualifications and experience will be specific to the modality in question, colleagues with a broader portfolio of qualifications and experience may also hold directorship roles, provided that delivery of the overall student experience is underpinned by an adequate overall modality-specific resource.

- The Society would encourage Programme Directors to hold Chartered membership and full membership of the relevant Division as a way of demonstrating appropriate qualifications and experience for the role. Information on the requirements for becoming a Chartered Member of the Society can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/chartered-membership](http://www.bps.org.uk/chartered-membership) and information about becoming a full member of the division can be found at [www.bps.org.uk/divisional-membership](http://www.bps.org.uk/divisional-membership).

- The Society had produced *Supplementary guidance on staffing for Society-accredited psychology programmes*, available at [www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads](http://www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads). This provides information to help you meet the Society’s staffing standards and calculate your staff student ratio.

- Where appropriate, Programme Directors may be supported in aspects of their role by colleagues with complementary skills and experience to their own. Education providers may wish to consider the roles that other programme team members may take in relation to the leadership and co-ordination of the programme as part of their staff development strategy, particularly in connection with longer-term succession planning or to support the development of leadership potential.

- In the interests of the longer-term sustainable delivery of the programme, providers should have contingency plans in place to ensure that an appropriately qualified and experienced individual has been identified who could deputise for the Programme Director should the need arise (e.g. sickness absence, parental leave, sabbatical).

- The Society expects accredited programmes to be delivered by staff who engage in a range of research activities. A track record of academic and/or practitioner research may be demonstrated in a variety of ways, including successful completion of projects supervised.

- Both the co-ordination and operational components of placement delivery need to be undertaken effectively in order to provide trainees with a supervised practice experience that meets their needs, appropriate to their level of training. The professional oversight and safeguarding aspect of placement co-ordination should be undertaken by an individual who has a good understanding of the professional boundaries within which a trainee should be operating, and how their supervised practice should contribute to their development within the given modality, at the appropriate level. Systems need to be in place to support consultation across the programme team to ensure that any placements or supervised
practice opportunities being identified, selected and undertaken have an appropriate modality-specific focus, and are appropriate to the skills the trainee needs to develop. Any liaison undertaken with placement providers will need to be informed by an understanding of those skills, and of the requirements of the specific programme of training concerned.

- The standards for postgraduate programmes specify certain roles that may only be undertaken by practitioner psychologists. With this in mind, and given the requirement that providers demonstrate that their overall staffing strategy supports the long-term sustainability of the provision, and the capacity to continue to meet the Society’s accreditation standards on an ongoing basis, providers should ensure appropriate security across the staff team as a whole. This will ensure that there is some flexibility for the redeployment of resources in the event of staff turnover, and also ensures that responsibility for programme and module development does not sit with a single individual.

- The Society supports the inclusive principles set out in the Equality Challenge Unit’s Athena SWAN charter, and would encourage providers of accredited programmes to pursue gaining Athena SWAN recognition and to take steps to improve the career prospects of women psychologists. At undergraduate and postgraduate levels, psychology is a subject that attracts a high proportion of women trainees, and yet the gender balance among senior academics and practitioners reflects a very different picture. Individuals’ identities are shaped by a range of factors that intersect in different ways, and providers should consider the steps they are able to take to promote and improve the career prospects of other underrepresented groups and to encourage greater representation. (www.ecu.ac.uk).

- Programme providers are encouraged to consult the Society’s Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of psychology technical staff (2014), and its Supplementary guidance on the roles and contributions of administrative and professional services staff (2017). (www.bps.org.uk/accreditationdownloads).

- Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically emphasises the need for higher education providers to assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting trainee learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed. This includes: appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach and of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching; and the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning in the students they are interacting with, and to use approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice. Providers may find it helpful to review their provision against these resources (Chapter B3 Indicator 4, www.qaa.ac.uk).

- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme governance, management and leadership, including staffing, in its Standards of Education and Training (SET 3; www.hcpc-uk.org/education).
Programme standard 7: Discipline-specific resources

The education provider must have appropriate discipline-specific resources in place to support the effective delivery of the programme.

7.1 The education provider must be able to outline the discipline-specific and general resources and facilities that are in place to support trainee learning. Education providers must offer trainees access to learning resources that are appropriate to the range of theoretical and practical work in which trainees are engaged.

7.2 Education providers should ensure that trainees are advised of the discipline-specific and general learning resources to which they have access, and are provided with the necessary support and/or training to enable them to make appropriate use of these.

Rationale for inclusion

This standard is included because the learning experience must be underpinned by access to resources that are appropriate to the psychology programme(s) offered by the education provider. The availability of appropriate resources is key to the delivery of psychology as a science, with associated levels of practical work culminating in trainees’ completion of individual research at the appropriate level.

Guidance and signposting

- Resources will normally include teaching, tutorial and laboratory space, learning resources (such as texts and journals, available in hard copy and/or electronically, computing facilities), psychological testing materials, specialist equipment supporting psychological research, software supporting data collection and analysis in psychology research, and other IT and/or audiovisual facilities (e.g. to enable the recording of practice role plays and competency assessment tasks), as appropriate to the provision in question.

- Chapter B3 of the UK Quality Code addresses Learning and Teaching, and specifically sets out the expectation that education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent student, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking. In particular, there is an expectation that providers maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use (Chapter B3 Indicator 6, www.qaa.ac.uk).

- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme governance, management and leadership, including the resources available to support learning in all settings, in its Standards of Education and Training (SET 3; www.hcpc-uk.org/education).
Programme standard 8: Quality management and governance

The education provider’s quality management systems must make regular provision for the periodic review of the validity and relevance of the programme, such that it continues to reflect our standards, and meets the needs of the programme’s stakeholders.

8.1 Assurance and enhancement of quality:

8.1.1 The quality management mechanisms that are in place should provide for periodic review of the programme’s aims and intended learning outcomes and content, the strategies associated with programme delivery, and the assessment methods that are used to evaluate trainees’ achievement of the learning outcomes. Overall, they should ensure that the programme continues to reflect contemporary learning, research and practice in psychology.

8.1.2 In order for the Society to be able to accredit a Doctoral programme, the programme must gain and successfully maintain ongoing approval from the Health and Care Professions Council.

8.1.3 Programmes will appoint appropriate External Examiners whose expertise will be of relevance to the breadth and depth of provision being offered. They will ensure that External Examiners are provided with adequate information to support their role, and that systems are in place to monitor action that is taken in response to any issues raised.

8.1.4 The External Examiner for the programme should be a Chartered psychologist (or eligible for Chartered psychologist status) holding full membership of the Division within whose domain the programme falls and must also be a practitioner psychologist registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (in the domain in which the programme falls). Other examiners with a broader range of qualifications and experience may be recruited in addition to undertake specific tasks (e.g. individual thesis examination).

8.1.5 Policies and procedures for the nomination and appointment of External Examiners must be explicit, and, where the programme makes use of additional individuals who are not qualified in the relevant modality (for example, for the individual external examination of trainees’ research theses) clear and transparent criteria for their appointment must be in place.

8.2 Stakeholder engagement:

8.2.1 Trainees should have the opportunity to provide feedback on the design and delivery of the programme via the quality management mechanisms that are in place. Programmes should identify ways in which any difficulties identified (whether as informal or formal complaints) may be satisfactorily resolved, and changes to current systems and practices made where appropriate.

8.2.2 Both formal and informal mechanisms of quality assurance should be in place, including regular staff trainee liaison meetings. Issues raised by stakeholders, including trainees, should be documented and contribute to the quality management processes of the provider.
### Rationale for inclusion

This standard is included because Accreditation through Partnership relies upon education providers having in place robust quality management mechanisms that facilitate self-evaluation of module and programme learning outcomes against the Society’s accreditation standards and other indicators of academic standards. The Society recognises education providers’ quality management mechanisms as a reliable source of evidence of continued achievement of the standards.

### Guidance and signposting

- Part A of the UK Quality Code addresses Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards. Part C addresses the information that providers set out in relation to their arrangements for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement, and the records they maintain of all arrangements for delivering higher education with others. Providers may also find it helpful to refer to a further five chapters from Part B of the Quality Code ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)):
  - Chapter B5: Student Engagement, and in particular the role of students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.
  - Chapter B7: External Examining
  - Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review
  - Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints, and in particular ensuring that students have opportunities to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage
  - Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others, which specifically highlights that degree-awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them.

- External peer review offers a valuable perspective upon the ways in which the programme compares to others of a similar nature nationally. With this in mind, enabling the Society to have sight of internal quality review reports and External Examiners’ reports, and the programme’s response to these, allows our reviewers to gain insight into the extent to which the education provider’s quality management mechanisms function effectively for the benefit of trainees, and the discipline as a whole.

- The Health and Care Professions Council sets out its requirements around programme governance, management and leadership in its Standards of Education and Training (SET 3) together with information about its programme approval and monitoring processes ([www.hcpc-uk.org/education](http://www.hcpc-uk.org/education)).

- All providers are encouraged to consider the ways in which employer feedback might be harnessed as part of the quality management and programme development process.