

## **BRITISH ACCREDITATION COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT**

### **INTERIM INSPECTION (Independent Higher Education)**

<b>INSTITUTION:</b>	New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	61–63 Fortune Green Road London NW6 1DR
<b>HEAD OF INSTITUTION:</b>	Dr Claire Arnold-Baker
<b>ACCREDITATION STATUS:</b>	Accredited
<b>DATE OF INSPECTION:</b>	8 January 2024
<b>ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE DECISION AND DATE:</b>	Continued accreditation, 28 March 2024

## **PART A – INTRODUCTION**

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### **1. Background to the institution**

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The New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling (NSPC/the Institution) is a private limited company, established in 1996. The Institution is committed to training in the professions of psychology, psychotherapy, counselling, coaching, autism studies, diversity and pastoral care.

NSPC moved to its purpose-built premises in West Hampstead, London in the United Kingdom (UK) in 2014. NSPC's aim is to enable professionals to explore human problems in a reflective and receptive manner.

The Institution's two Directors act as Principal and Vice-Principal and serve on the Governing Board, which was established in July 2023. They, together with the Executive Group, provide oversight and lead the Institution strategically.

NSPC works closely with its three sister companies in the Septimus Group, which is the overall holding company. The sister companies are the Existential Academy, the Dilemma Consultancy and Ask the Therapist. British Accreditation Council (BAC) accreditation relates only to NSPC and the Existential Academy.

NSPC has a long-term partnership with Middlesex University, which began in 2007 and was successfully renewed in 2018. The Institution's courses are also accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), the Universities Psychotherapy and Counselling Association (UPCA), the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP) and Humanists United Kingdom.

Since the previous inspection, courses have been subject to successful reaccreditation by Middlesex University, BPS, HCPC and UPCA.

### **2. Brief description of the current provision**

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NSPC provides programmes at postgraduate level validated by Middlesex University. Two Doctoral programmes, one in Existential Counselling, Psychology and Psychotherapy, and one in Existential Psychotherapy and Counselling, are run jointly with Middlesex University and offered on a blended-learning basis.

Five Master's programmes are offered, including a Master of Arts (MA) in Existential Coaching, an MA in Pastoral Care: Existential and Humanist Practice, a Master of Science (MSc) in Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Conditions, an MSc in Diversity Studies, and an MSc in Psychotherapy Studies. The latter three programmes are delivered online, with the other two being offered on a blended-learning basis.

The Doctoral programmes include three years of supervised placements. The Institution also offers a one-year Foundation Certificate course, via the Existential Academy, and various other online workshops and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses.

At the time of the inspection, there were 558 students enrolled, all aged over 18 years, with approximately equal numbers of males and females. Most students are aged over 30. The majority of students are from the UK, with a minority from Europe, Asia and North America.

There are two intakes a year for the Doctoral programmes, in September and January, and three intakes for Master's programmes. Some Master's programmes with prerequisite units may only be available for a September start. Students must meet the published entry criteria, for example for prior levels of achievement and English language competency, as applicable.

### **3. Inspection process**

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The inspection was undertaken on site at the London premises over one day by one inspector. Meetings were held with the Principal, Vice-Principal, a Course Leader (CL) and a group of postgraduate students. A number of

in-person lessons were observed, and a tour of the premises was undertaken. A wide range of documentation was provided for scrutiny. The Institution co-operated fully with the inspector before and during the inspection.

#### **4. Inspection history**

<b>Inspection type</b>	<b>Date</b>
Full Accreditation	15–16 January 2013
Interim	17 December 2014
Re-accreditation	14–15 March 2017
Interim	5 March 2019
Re-accreditation	26, 27 & 29 October 2021

## **PART B – JUDGEMENTS AND EVIDENCE**

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

### **1. Significant changes since the last inspection**

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The previous Principal and Vice-Principal have retired but remain as company Directors and Governors. The previous Academic Director and the Institution's Registrar have taken on these two roles respectively.

With regard to the provision, the Institution has developed and introduced a new Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Adult Autism Assessment.

### **2. Response to action points in last report**

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*14.8 The Institution must ensure that an appropriate risk assessment is put in place to address the risks of radicalisation and extremism.*

The action point has been met. The Deputy Principal has undertaken and completed a comprehensive risk assessment in relation to the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism. As a result, effective arrangements are now in place to protect students from such risks.

*15.7 The Institution must advise its students of the BAC complaints procedures.*

The action point has been met. Students are appropriately advised of BAC's complaints procedure during induction and in the student handbook. Consequently, students report that they are aware of the policy and how to make a complaint if necessary.

### **3. Response to recommended areas for improvement in last report**

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*The Institution is recommended to devise and implement a strategy for encouraging more staff to undertake research and engage in research.*

The recommendation has been addressed. The Principal runs a workshop for faculty and permanent staff members who are interested in research, detailing how the Institution can support them in their research and identifying areas of interest for potential collaboration. In addition, the Institution has focused on research more widely by having termly research presentation days for both staff and students, where they can present to colleagues. As a result, there is greater awareness of research within the Institution, with three members of the academic team currently conducting research with a view to publication.

*The Institution should ensure that programme descriptions on the website contain an overview of all summative assessment required by each module.*

The recommendation has been addressed. Programme descriptors on the Institution's website have been reviewed and now contain an appropriate overview of all the summative assessment requirements for each module. Details on the webpages are appropriately monitored and amended when the assessment requirements for each programme are revised. Students report that they are fully aware of all the summative assessments required to complete each module successfully.

### **4. Compliance with BAC accreditation requirements**

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#### **4.1 Governance, Strategy and Financial Management (spot check)**

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**The standards are judged to be:**

Met     Partially Met     Not Met

**Comments**

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The Institution has a clear management structure set out in its organisational chart and available to staff and students on the website and in the staff and student handbooks. The structure effectively supports the Institution's development and its ability to ensure that high standards of academic achievement and student care are maintained.

The role and extent of authority of the Principal and Vice-Principal have recently been reviewed to ensure that the Institution meets its own changing needs and future aims. This is clearly defined, documented and effectively communicated to all relevant stakeholders. As a result, the Principal, Vice-Principal, and other senior managers have clear oversight of, and delegated decision-making authority for, all financial and academic matters.

The link between governance and management is clear, well articulated and documented. The Board of Governors has recently been established and meets regularly to monitor performance and address any issues that might present future risks to the Institution if unresolved. The new Board structure is effective in ensuring that its members have appropriate input to the Institution's future development, as well as the implementation of its policies and procedures.

The Board has decision-making authority on all financial and academic matters and is supported effectively by a number of subcommittees, including the Finance Committee and the Senior Staff Committee. Consequently, the Institution is highly effective in managing and mitigating risks to the business.

Partnership agreements are clearly defined. The partnership agreement with Middlesex University allows for the validation and joint delivery of postgraduate provision, details of which are clearly set out on the NSPC website. In addition, the agreement ensures that Middlesex University is actively involved in programme development through regular meetings with the NSPC's senior leaders and managers. Students have direct input into the Institution's day-to-day activities through their class representatives.

Communication between staff, students and managers is highly effective. A comprehensive committee structure facilitates meetings and communications between staff, students and managers. Regular meetings are scheduled and effectively recorded. Students are represented on committees to ensure that students' views effectively inform new developments and the management of the provision.

The Institution has a well-developed strategy for its future development. A detailed annual strategic implementation plan is produced and disseminated. Stakeholder views are central to the plan and effectively inform the strategic direction of the Institution.

Priorities are clearly identified, including those to improve the student experience, and are well communicated to all stakeholders on the website and in promotional materials. This has resulted in a wide range of actions that have enhanced the student experience, such as the development of courses and changes to procedures and policies within the administration and welfare team. Consequently, NSPC records high levels of student satisfaction.

The Institution conducts its financial matters in accordance with national law, with its accounts and finances subject to regular, independent external audit. This ensures appropriate scrutiny, transparency and probity.

#### 4.2 General and Academic Management and Administration (spot check)

**The standards are judged to be:**

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

**Comments**

A comprehensive management and committee structure is in place and is well defined and documented. Responsibilities within the Institution, and terms of reference for the committees, are clearly set out, appropriate and disseminated effectively to NSPC stakeholders.

The records of the Institution's regular meetings include actions resulting from the meeting and are disseminated to relevant stakeholders and departments. As a result, the management and committee structure is fully understood by all stakeholders and is highly effective in supporting managers in their roles and ensuring effective oversight of programmes and the Institution as a whole.

The administration team is appropriate for the size of the Institution. Administrators are experienced and provide highly effective support to managers to meet the day-to-day needs of the Institution. Available administrative support and policies and procedures are clearly documented in staff and student handbooks and are well understood.

Classes are clearly scheduled and take full account of the requirements of each course. All timetables are available online, so that students have the most up-to-date and accurate information. For classes that are delivered on NSPC premises, appropriate rooms are allocated.

Comprehensive systems are in place to record and monitor initial enquiries, applications, enrolments and student progression. As a result, detailed student records are kept, including of appropriate checks on identification, prior achievement and progression through the course. Records are accurate, well documented and securely stored. Records are easily accessed and used very effectively by relevant staff to support students and monitor progress.

Appropriate data protection and privacy policies and procedures are in place to ensure the security of personal information.

The policy and process for refunds is clearly set out in the student handbook. In addition, students are able to access advice and guidance on refunds and fees through the administration team.

A comprehensive staff recruitment process is in place and ensures that all academic and administrative staff are appropriately and fairly recruited to their roles. All staff appointments strictly follow legislative requirements and are in accordance with the NSPC recruitment policy.

A well-developed range of policies and procedures for the recruitment and continuing employment of suitably qualified and experienced staff ensures the safety of the students, and that appropriate staff are available for the delivery of the Institution's courses. As a result, NSPC employs and retains highly qualified and experienced staff in all roles.

Appropriate policies for the design and validation of the Institution's programmes ensure that these are aligned with NSPC's vision and mission and fulfil its partnership contractual arrangements. The Institution successfully delivers a wide range of postgraduate awards in partnership with Middlesex University.

Learning outcomes, an overview of teaching methods and the assessment requirements are clear, appropriate and readily available to stakeholders. As a result, students report that they have a clear understanding of the content, outcomes and assessment of each module.

Academic teams meet regularly to review and monitor the Institution's academic programmes to ensure high-quality course delivery at an appropriate level. Consequently, the curriculum is well developed, fit for purpose and highly effective in meeting the academic needs of the students and the expectations of all stakeholders.

Students provide specific feedback to inform the development of their courses through their course representatives and other feedback opportunities, with a student representative position being included at Board level. Feedback is systematically considered by academic and senior managers, and changes are made where required.

Comprehensive entry criteria are included in course documentation for each programme and are freely available to prospective students. Any language or prior academic requirements for a course are clearly set

out and ensure that students understand the level of competency required in order to be accepted onto each programme.

A well-developed application process ensures that students meet the published entry requirements and that any claimed qualifications are appropriately verified by NSPC. Application queries are responded to quickly. Prospective students receive comprehensive information and guidance about the requirements of each programme, ensuring that they can make fully informed decisions about their study options.

NSPC actively encourages academic staff to undertake research and publish their findings as appropriate. Research presentation days for staff and students and workshops for faculty and permanent staff have raised research awareness effectively within the Institution. As a result, three members of the academic team are currently conducting research, the results of which will be submitted to an academic journal for publication.

Publicity materials are of excellent quality and accurately reflect the Institution's premises and facilities. As a result, students report that they are clear about the location and the range of resources available. NSPC has clear and effective procedures for the management of the accuracy and currency of the information it publishes, which is systematically reviewed, updated and informed by student feedback.

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#### 4.3 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (spot check)

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**The standards are judged to be:**

Met

Partially Met

Not Met

**Comments**

NSPC recruits very well-qualified academic staff, all of whom hold postgraduate qualifications and have relevant practical experience and well-developed pedagogic and communication skills.

Staff are regularly observed to monitor and confirm that they are allocated to teach on courses and at levels that are appropriate to their area of expertise, qualifications and previous teaching experience. Course delivery is carefully monitored by the academic management team to ensure a consistent learning experience for students and to identify and resolve any issues.

Lessons meet the requirements of the module descriptors and fully cover the stated learning outcomes. Programme and module design is highly effective in supporting and enabling students to develop their knowledge and skills so that they are successful in their final examinations and assessments. As a result, student success rates are very high.

Teaching is well supported by clear schemes of work and detailed lesson plans, which are linked effectively to each module's assessment strategies. As a result, lessons meet the needs of the students and ensure that very good progress is made. A mixture of group and individual activities engages students and supports their learning effectively. Staff encourage and develop students' independent learning skills using set activities and pre-class tasks.

Assessment schedules for each course are detailed on the Institution's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Schedules provide detailed information regarding assignment submission dates, examination dates and revision periods. Students confirm that they are aware of the nature and timing of the assessment of their course.

Comprehensive online plagiarism detection software is used effectively to confirm the authenticity of students' work. The student handbook includes a policy on cheating and plagiarism and the penalties for academic misconduct. The handbook also includes a clear policy and procedure for mitigating circumstances and the Institution's appeals procedure.

Course materials are of a very high quality and are designed for a specific and clearly stated level of study. A wide range of resources is available on the Institution's VLE, which supports learning effectively and

enables students to achieve the stated aims of their chosen programme of study. Course materials on validated provision are supported by Middlesex University. Internal and external module reviews of course materials are undertaken regularly to assure the quality, scope and level of information provided to students.

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

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

**Comments**

Student welfare is well supported by an appropriate number of highly qualified staff who are readily accessible for advice and guidance, and support students on a wide range of pastoral and welfare issues. As a result, students report a high level of satisfaction with the support provided by the Institution.

NSPC provides a formal induction programme for all new students that includes a tour of the premises, details of the pastoral support available, Information Technology (IT) services and an introduction to the academic programmes. Induction also provides information on services available for students studying on NSPC courses jointly with Middlesex University.

There is a suitable documented policy and procedure for dealing with discrimination and abusive behaviour. Students confirmed that they feel well prepared for their time at the Institution.

A suitable policy, risk assessment and staff training are in place to protect students from the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

Students have excellent access to academic staff outside the scheduled teaching and learning sessions. They report that staff regularly make themselves available to provide further assistance and also to advise on curriculum requirements, modules, credits, assessments and re-sit opportunities.

Comprehensive records of student attendance, participation and achievement are kept by staff to monitor student performance and identify when additional support and guidance may be required. In cases where students are judged not to be making sufficient progress, or wish to change their current study patterns, appropriate information, advice and guidance on alternative programmes are provided.

Students are well supported in preparing for future careers, further study and their next steps.

An appropriate and fair complaints procedure is in place that provides clear details of how to submit a complaint. Students are appropriately advised of BAC's complaints procedure during induction and in the student handbook.

The Institution has an appropriate, clear and published policy on student attendance, and students report that they understand the attendance and punctuality requirements of the Institution.

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#### 4.5 Premises, Facilities and Learning Resources (spot check)

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

**Comments**

NSPC has a secure lease on its premises, and appropriate authority has been obtained to deliver education programmes.

The Institution's premises are well maintained, resourced and decorated and are clean. Access is secure and appropriately restricted. As a result, the premises provide a safe and comfortable learning and working environment that also allows staff and students to socialise and to receive visitors.



The premises are well resourced. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning are all appropriate, and toilets are adequate in number and are clean and well maintained.

Classrooms and other learning areas on the premises are very well appointed and resourced, adequate in number and size, and highly effective in supporting learning. As a result, classrooms meet the requirements of the courses.

The Institution has a number of suitable areas in which to conduct examinations.

A wide range of learning materials and other resources are available to students. Resources are accessible from the VLE and include a wide range of online books, journals and periodicals. Students enrolled on Middlesex University courses have access to the university's online resources.

Appropriate IT technical support is in place and ensures that the systems are operational at all times. Training in IT systems is provided if required. Access to conventional and online resources for staff and students is very good.

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#### 4.6 Quality Management, Assurance and Enhancement (spot check)

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

**Comments**

Stakeholders' views are regularly and systematically canvassed by the Institution, and their responses are appropriately recorded. For example, feedback on lecturer performance is completed by students each semester and analysed and reviewed by senior academic managers.

There are formal committees and regular meetings at which staff and students, through their representatives, are able to share their views, raise any concerns and receive feedback on actions taken as a result of their comments.

A wide range of management policies and standard operating procedures are clearly documented and shared effectively via the Institution's VLE and the staff and student handbooks. As a result, all stakeholders have easy access to, and are aware of, the Institution's key policies.

An appropriate range of performance indicators and metrics are in place. Performance is regularly reviewed against these benchmarks to identify areas for improvement.

A broad range of quality mechanisms are in place and used effectively to review the performance of the academic programmes. These include consideration of programme reports against performance criteria. This leads to the identification and review of action plans to enhance the quality of provision over time.

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#### 4.7 Online, Distance and Blended Learning (spot check)

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

**Comments**

The Institution's academic and support staff have a detailed understanding of the requirements and challenges of online, distance and blended learning delivery.

The staff are appropriately trained and skilled, as required by the Institution's policies, to meet students' needs effectively. As a result, learning is appropriately supported by lecturers' use of the Institution's chosen delivery platform and its VLE.

Clear requirements for students to have a specified level of digital literacy are stated in the programme descriptors.

Appropriate guidance on how to study and use the online tutorial materials is made available to assist students to learn effectively and efficiently.

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#### 4.8 Compliance Declaration

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**Declaration of compliance has been signed and dated.**

Yes     No

**PART C – SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND ACTION POINTS**

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**STRENGTHS**

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A highly effective and comprehensive structure of committees provides detailed oversight of the Institution's activities.

A clear and well-documented management structure ensures that senior leaders and managers have a clear understanding of their roles and perform these to a very high standard.

Efficient channels of communication support the Institution's day-to-day activities and further developments effectively.

Highly effective teaching results in excellent levels of student satisfaction, engagement and progress.

High-quality premises support learning effectively and enhance the student experience.

**ACTIONS REQUIRED**

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None

High Medium Low

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

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None

**COMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS – FURTHER COMMENTS, IF APPLICABLE**

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**THE INSPECTION WAS CARRIED OUT BY:**

Nigel Chambers

Lead Inspector