

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER’S**

**REPORT (1) FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR 2018-2019**

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| **Name and Address of Educational Centre:** | Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd Dartington Space Dartington Hall Totnes TQ9 6EN |
| **Status: Further Education/Higher Education/University/Independent Centre** | Independent Centre |
| **Name of External Examiner/Verifier** | Dr Phillip A. Rees |
| **Name and Role of Centre Manager/Tutor present at the meeting with the External Examiner** | Leigh Smith Heartwood Founder, Director and Course(s) Designer Audrey Cooper – Administrator and Level 2/3 Tutor  |
| **Date of Report** | February 24th, 2019 |
| **Date of Centre Visit (if applicable)** | Tuesday February 5th, 2019 |
| **Home Institution of External Examiner:** | National Counselling Society |
| **Course(s) to be externally examined/verified:** **February 2019** | Level 3 Foundation Course in Counselling Level 4 Advanced Diploma in Counselling |
| **National Counselling Society Recognition of Courses:** | **Level 2** Introduction to Counselling – (NCS Quality Checked)**Level 3** Foundation Course in Counselling - (NCS Quality Checked Course)**Level 4** Advanced Diploma in Counselling - (NCS Accredited Course)**Level 5** Post-Qualification Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling – (NCS Advanced Specialist Status)Post-Qualification Advanced Specialist Diploma in Relationship Counselling – (NCS Advanced Specialist Status)**Level 6** Post-Qualification Diploma in Clinical Supervision (NCS Advanced Specialist Status) |
| 1. **Academic Standards**
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| **External Examiner’s Comments.**Following a visit to Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd, which included a meeting with Heartwood Director Leigh Smith, and the sampling of assessed students’ and trainees’ work from Level 3 and Level 4, the following is a Report on the status, content, delivery and quality of Heartwood’s training programmes.The Learning Environment is an important element in the learning process. Heartwood delivers counselling training programmes in an environment which is clearly conducive to the learning and training process. Moreover, Heartwood is managed by strong leadership and supportive management, and the External Examiner recognised the importance of this in maintaining and developing the reputation of Heartwood in delivering courses which are recognised by the National Counselling Society, and the wider counselling community.The Centre has high quality trainers, who are also counselling and psychotherapy practitioners, and they bring a wealth of experience and professionalism to their various teaching and assessment roles at Heartwood. The quality and professionalism of the tutorial team enable them to teach, guide, support and mentor the learners, students and trainees throughout their training programmes. The Centre has already achieved accreditation, and Quality Checked status together with Advanced Specialist status, with the National Counselling Society; this is the result of exceptional training courses which have been carefully designed to meet national training guidelines for counselling and psychotherapy, and guide the learners, students and trainees towards the successful completion of their vocationally related qualifications.Successful completion at all levels will enhance the probability of graduates becoming eligible for membership of the NCS Professional Standards Authority Register – a fundamental requirement for contemporary Counselling and Psychotherapy Practitioners. |
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| **2. Students’ Performance** |
| **In the view and experience of the External Examiner, are the academic standards and the achievements of students comparable with those of other training institutions delivering comparable counselling training courses? YES/~~NO~~**The NCS recognised training courses at the different levels comprises the following:Level 2 Introduction to Counselling. This course is delivered over 6 weeks (one day a week) or 3 weekends. The Level 2 Introduction to Counselling course is an entry point for those who would like to learn more about Counselling. This course prepares learners for the Foundation in Counselling course.  It is aimed at those who are working in the helping professions and those who want to engage in personal development. The emphasis is on experiential learning and learners develop self-awareness and reflective practice. This is not an academic course but does require Journal writing and a personal development Log.  There is some theoretical work that underpins the counselling skills learning and practise. Learners are encouraged to explore creatively in a well held, supportive and professional space.The Tutor for the Level 2 Introduction to Counselling is Trudy Jones and the Internal Verifier is Leigh Smith. Runs of the Level 2 Introduction to Counselling are planned for 2019.Level 3 Foundation Course In Counselling. This is a 16 week course, with no prior training required. This course is suitable for those interested in enrolling on the Level 4 Diploma in Counselling learning programme. The delivery of this course teaches students how to integrate Person-Centred, CBT and Gestalt approaches into a holistic and adaptable therapeutic approach. It is designed with creative exercises to enable the development of understanding of the theories which underpin the counselling profession. The Tutors for Level 3 Foundation Course in Counselling are Trudy Jones and Audrey Cooper. Currently, there are 16 students studying on the Level 3 course. The Internal Verifier to the Level 3 course is Leigh Smith.Level 4 Advanced Diploma in Counselling. This course is designed as a two year, 400 learning hours, training programme; a Level 3 qualification is a pre-requisite for entry into this learning programme. Level 3 qualification from other training providers may be accepted, or prior experience in a related field. There is a 100 hour placement unit to this course, and it also includes/requires at least 20 hours of personal therapy. The Tutors for the Level 4 Advanced Diploma in Counselling are Chris Smith, Leigh Smith ,Angie Smith and Trudy Jones. Currently, there are 41 trainees studying on Year One and 48 trainees on Year Two. The Internal Verifiers to the Level 4 course are Chris Smith and Leigh Smith.Post-Qualification Level 5 Diploma in Psychotherapeutic Counselling. This course is aimed for counsellors who have been trained to Level 4 in Therapeutic Counselling, or equivalent, and have completed at least 100 hours of counselling. Applicants for this course must present a supporting supervision record of their counselling. This 12 session course also includes 60 hours in supervised practice, and participants must complete at least 10 hours of personal therapy. The Tutor for this course is Monica Khosla and Leigh Smith. Post-Qualification Level 5 Advanced Specialist Diploma in Relationship Counselling. This graduate level Diploma course is aimed at qualified counsellors interested in developing and expanding their current practice in order to facilitate work with couples and relationships. The course is delivered over 6 weekends at the Heartwood Centre. The training delivers a range of theory and techniques designed to equip students with the skills required to work ethically and competently with issues of dysfunctional relationships, and a variety of issues related to working with couples. The course is delivered using a variety of experiential and didactic methods and is designed to both inspire and engender confidence in students to work as Relationship Counsellors. The Tutor for the Level 5 Advanced Specialist Diploma in Relationship Counselling is Dinah Mears and the Internal Verifier is Leigh Smith. Currently, there is a small cohort of 6 students.Post-Qualification Level 6 Diploma in Clinical Supervision. This training programme is designed for 12 training sessions. It is aimed at counselling professionals who have been working and practising over a number of years, and are looking to add Clinical Supervision to their professional practice and portfolio. The entry requirements for this training programme include 450 supervised counselling hours; applicants must have completed a Level 4 Diploma in Counselling, and have at least 2 years post-qualification practice experience OR have completed a Level 5 Diploma in Counselling or foundation degree in counselling or psychotherapy and will have experience of at least one year of post-qualification experience. The Tutor for this course is Leigh Smith. **External Examiner’s Comments:** The structure and content of Heartwood’s Counseling and Psychotherapy Training Programmes is comprehensive, varied, challenging and demanding – fundamental requirements in ensuring that learners, students and trainees are professionally prepared for any future role(s) within the Counselling and Psychotherapy sector. There is a clear pathway of training from the Level 2 Introduction to Counselling to the Foundation in Counselling course at Level 3, to the Level 4 Advanced Diploma in Counselling and onwards to the Post-Qualification learning programmes at Levels 5 and 6. The Heartwood paradigm of training is structured to assist the learning and development of competency and proficiency in counselling skills and to enable students and trainees to prepare for practice. Moreover, the Heartwood philosophy is to ensure graduating practitioners are safe and fit to practice. The External Examiner once again commends the Centre for its learning pathway and for its commitment to high standards and quality in the delivery of its counselling training programmes. The Centre continues to be worthy of its status and recognition by the National Counselling Society and is successfully meeting all the demands of such recognition. |
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| **3. Assessment**The assessment methods employed by Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy are to ensure that training is fit for purpose, and Heartwood’s assessment methods clearly meet this demand. All of the Heartwood courses are internally assessed by the core tutor, and the assessment process includes:* ongoing, session by session journals/learning reviews, one for each taught day, which outline both the theory the student has learnt and their personal reflections.
* assignments which address the theoretical/philosophical aspects of the training (amount changes for each course).
* Tutor observation of recorded skills practice, at least one for each course, several for the level 4.
* Several student observations of peer skills practice sessions (triad work).
* Research Projects at Level 4
* Agency report (level 4)
* Supervisors report (levels 4, 5 and 6)
* Student Self Review of own practice, at least one, several on level 4.

Courses are all externally moderated - by the External Verifier/Examiner, and internally moderated by the Heartwood Director (unless the Director is the primary tutor on the course - in which case the internal moderation of my teaching is carried out by another tutor).The courses from level 4 upwards all include an externally assessed case study.For the purpose of the verification process on this visit, the following samples of assessed work were seen by the External Examiner/Verifier:Level 3:Will Webb - (Self-Review) Caroline Burleigh - (Self-Review) Lindsey Owen – Assignment, Professional Practice Ian Swift – Journal Heather Fairbairn - Self-Review and Theory Assignment Jeff Godden – Personal Development Assignment Level 4:Caroline Healey – Professional Issues Assignment and Self-Review Anna Payne – Integrative Theory Assignment and Personal Development Log Michaela Crump – My Philosophy Assignment Erica Mansfield – Research Project Mollie James – Integrative Theory Assignment and Self-Review Stephen Smith – My Philosophy Assignment Lindsey Neale – Theory Assignment Laura Whyhra – Research Assignment |
| **External Examiner’s Comments:**The methods of assessment at each level are comprehensive and robust. Level 3 is the equivalent of 2 ‘A’ levels and Level 4 equates to the first year of an undergraduate degree. The post-qualification Levels 5 and 6 are the equivalent of a Foundation Degree, and Undergraduate Degree level, respectively. The assessment processes are modelled upon the Ofqual descriptors for each level, and the samples of assessed work scrutinised by the External Examiner/Verifier affirms that this is being achieved.From the samples of assessed work, seen by the External Examiner/Verifier, it is clearly demonstrated that teaching is compliant with the course(s) specification. The quality of student and trainees’ submissions is excellent, and they are carefully being guided towards the successful completion of their counselling and psychotherapy studies. This is due, in no small part, to the excellent feedback provided by the Tutors. Feedback, in itself, is a very important part of the ongoing learning process. Tutor feedback has been fair, constructive and robust; affirming sound work and highlighting areas for future development where necessary. There is consistency of assessment and marking at all levels.The assessment process at each level ensures that Course(s) participants are engaging in a programme of learning that is fit for purpose, and results in graduating trainees who are fit to practice. The assessment processes ensure that the qualifications are worthy of their recognition by the National Counselling Society.The quality assurance demands of the National Counselling Society are clearly being addressed in course content, teaching and assessment at each level.  |

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| **4. External Examiner’s Report on evidence of Good Practice.** |
| 1. Excellent training venue and facilities, conducive to the training and development of counselling learners, students and trainees.
2. Highly qualified trainers who are also practitioners in a range of skills and techniques.
3. Delivering exceptional training programmes to the highest standard guiding learners, students and trainees towards counselling and psychotherapy practitioner status, and providing a pathway towards recognition by the Professional Standards Authority.
4. Consistent and fair assessment of learners, students and trainees across all levels.
5. Strong and supportive management of the Centre providing affirmation and guidance to both teaching staff and all course(s) participants.
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| **5. Any Centre issues to be communicated to the National Counselling Society?** |
| None – other than to reinforce that this is an outstanding training centre and is worthy of its academic recognition and status for Levels 2, 3 and 4, and Post-Qualification Advanced Specialist Status at Levels 5 and 6 with the National Counselling Society. |
| **6. External Examiner’s Recommendations for improving the delivery of the training programmes.**Following the visit to Heartwood, the External Examiner/Verifier has not identified any areas that require immediate attention in improving the delivery of the training programmes. As an unwritten rule, it goes without saying that no course will ever be perfect, and there is always going to be room for improvement. However, the conclusion of this Report is that Heartwood’s training programmes, teaching delivery, course content, assessment and management of the courses retain a consistently high standard and meet all the demands of The Counselling Society for recognition of Quality Checked, Accredited and Advanced Specialist status. |
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| **7. Response to previous report** |
| **Did you receive a response to your previous report from the course team?** YES/~~NO~~ No actions were required from the previous Report submitted by the External Examiner/Verifier |

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| **8. Overview of the External Examiner’s visit to Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd.**As an Independent Training Centre, Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd has already achieved recognition and accreditation status, in addition to Quality Checked recognition and Advanced Specialist Recognition status, with the National Counselling Society, and the conclusion of this Report is that it remains worthy of this status. During the visit a number of samples of assessed work were scrutinised by the External Examiner/Verifier. The External Examiner/Verifier is able to record that the courses delivered by Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy are all fit for purpose, with high quality teaching and assessment and, through supportive and affirming teaching guidance, learners, students and trainees are being guided towards the successful completion of their course(s) and towards the achievement of their ambitions to become counselling and psychotherapy practitioners who will be safe and fit to practice. |

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| **9. Any further comments?**Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy is a developing training centre, even after 10 years of delivering training programmes. There is, therefore, a commitment not just to maintaining standards and quality of training but to an ongoing review of how these can be improved and developed to address the changes that are constant within the counselling and psychotherapy sector. Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd is committed to uphold and enhance the standards and quality of training required and demanded for ongoing recognition by the National Counselling Society, for both academic and practice purposes, and for wider recognition within the professional sector of Counselling and Psychotherapy. Heartwood Counselling and Psychotherapy Ltd is commended for its consolidation of exceptionally high standards and quality in the delivery of its vocationally related qualifications. The Centre has maintained its academic standards and high quality of professional training and is again rated as ‘Outstanding’.  |

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| **10. Any plans for future visits to the Centre?** |
| It has been agreed that there will be two annual External Examiner/Verifier visits to Heartwood in each academic year. Any additional visits will be arranged between the Centre and the External Examiner/Verifier, as required. |

**Signed:** 

**Dr Phillip A. Rees, BA(Hons), ThD, PhD(Psychology). DipCounselling, DipPTSC, CertSupervision, RegMBACP (Senior Accredited) , MISMA, FRSPH, FCollT, FCIEA, FRSA**

**Member of the Charterd College of Teachers**

**Licensed NLP Practitioner**

**BUPA Recognised Provider of Counselling and Psychotherapy**

**External Examiner/Verifier**

**Date: 24th February, 2019**

External Examiner’s Rating of this Centre:

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| ~~Not Satisfactory/Requires Improvement~~ | ~~Satisfactory~~ | ~~Good~~ | ~~Very Good~~ | ~~Excellent~~ | Outstanding |