

**Policy for overseas qualified applicants  
for registration**

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## Summary

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) provides for the protection of the public by ensuring that only psychologists who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered. The Board fulfils its role through the powers defined in the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The Board sets the registration standards that define the requirements applicants or registrants need to meet to obtain or maintain registration. Registration standards must be approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) before they can take effect.<sup>1</sup>

The Board must be certain that applicants meet the required registration standards before granting general registration. As such, overseas qualified applicants must demonstrate that their qualifications and supervised experience are substantially equivalent to the qualifications required by the *General registration standard*.

Individuals who are required to undertake a period of supervised practice in order to become eligible for general registration may apply for provisional registration. Applicants for provisional registration must demonstrate that their qualifications are substantially equivalent to the qualifications required by the *Provisional registration standard* and that they meet the other required registration standards published on the Board's website: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au).

## Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to psychologists who hold overseas qualifications and who are applying for registration in Australia.

This policy does not apply to psychologists with registration and a current practising certificate from New Zealand who apply for registration under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement.

## Legislation

Section 53(b) of the National Law states that an individual is qualified for general registration in a health profession if the individual holds a qualification the National Board established for the health profession considers to be substantially equivalent, or based on similar competencies, to an approved qualification.

## Requirements

### Assessment of qualifications

The Board has determined that the qualifications that lead to general registration are:

- a) a six-year accredited sequence of study
- b) a five-year accredited sequence of study followed by a one-year Board-approved internship (5+1)
- c) a four-year accredited sequence of study followed by a two-year Board-approved internship (4+2), or
- d) a qualification that in the Board's opinion is substantially equivalent to either (a), (b) or (c).

In addition to the completion of an approved qualification, the Board requires all overseas qualified applicants to pass the National Psychology Examination before accepting an application for general registration.

When any of an applicant's psychology qualifications for any class of registration are not accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC), the qualifications must be assessed as part of an application for registration to determine their equivalency to an APAC-accredited sequence of study.

The outcome of this assessment will determine the requirements for general registration. There are four possible outcomes.

1. **Qualifications are equivalent to three years of study or less in psychology:** applicants are not eligible for any class of registration. Further study must be completed to become eligible. Courses that lead to eligibility for registration are available from [www.psychologycouncil.org.au](http://www.psychologycouncil.org.au).
2. **Qualifications are equivalent to a four-year accredited sequence of study in psychology or five years of study in psychology:** applicants must complete at least two years (3,080 hours) of a Board-approved internship as a provisional psychologist, and sit and pass the National Psychology Examination.
3. **Qualifications are equivalent to a six-year accredited sequence of study in psychology:** applicants who are unable to demonstrate that their qualifications and supervised practice are 'substantially equivalent' must complete a three-month transitional program while registered as a provisional psychologist under section 62 of the National Law, and sit and pass the National Psychology Examination.
4. **Qualifications are equivalent to five years or six years of study in psychology by research:** applicants must complete a minimum of two years (3,080 hours) of a Board-approved internship as a provisional psychologist, and sit and pass the National Psychology Examination.

<sup>1</sup> Under the National Law

### Reduction in internship requirements

The length and requirements of the internship may be reduced if the applicant has completed an internship or other formal supervised practice that led to one or more of the following:

- a. registration as a psychologist
- b. endorsement in an area of practice as a psychologist
- c. membership of a professional psychological body, and/or
- d. a qualification assessed as equivalent to five years of study in psychology.

The Board may also consider other supervised practice, overseen by a regulatory body, that led to the granting of the right to practise as a psychologist.

A reduction in requirements will not be automatically granted. The internship or supervised practice must, in the Board's opinion, be substantially equivalent to the Psychology Board of Australia internship program set out in the *Guidelines for 4+2 internship programs*. Applicants need to provide substantial evidence of their supervised practice and details of the regulatory framework under which this practice occurred for the Board's consideration (e.g. registration standards, guidelines for membership, governance of supervised practice, etc.).

Where the applicant holds a qualification assessed as equivalent to five years of study in psychology, a reduction in requirements may be granted when the applicant can demonstrate that the fifth year of study was substantially equivalent to an APAC-accredited Graduate Diploma of Professional Psychology. At a minimum, the fifth year of study must consist of the following:

1. coursework weighted at between 60% and 75% of the credit point value that provides foundational education and training in the core capabilities and attributes required for safe and competent psychological practice, and
2. skills training weighted at between 25% and 40% of the credit point value that provides education and training in practical professional skills and knowledge, complemented by a minimum of 300 hours of logged supervised practice.

Applicants seeking a reduction on these grounds should refer to Section 5 of the APAC Accreditation Standards, which sets out the full requirements for the fifth year of study (see [www.psychologycouncil.org.au](http://www.psychologycouncil.org.au)). Certified copies of course handbooks and supervision logs should be submitted with the application.

Applicants will typically need to complete either a Board-approved internship, course of study, or a transitional

program to develop these capabilities, regardless of the outcome of any application for a reduction in the internship requirements. When a reduction is granted, all the core capabilities must be satisfactorily demonstrated during the internship.

### Transitional program

APAC Standard 5.1.12 (b) requires all graduates of accredited postgraduate degrees to have demonstrated capabilities in Australian ethical, legal and professional matters and cross-cultural studies relevant to an Australian context. Even when the Board considers that an applicant's qualifications and supervised practice meet all other requirements for general registration, the applicant must still demonstrate that their overseas supervised practice included training in legal, ethical and professional issues, and cross-cultural issues relevant in an Australian context that is 'substantially equivalent' to that required by APAC Standard 5.1.12 (b).

Those applicants who are unable to demonstrate substantially equivalent training and supervised practice in legal, ethical and professional and cross-cultural issues relevant in an Australian context must complete a minimum three-month transitional program while registered as a provisional psychologist, in order to develop these capabilities.

The transitional program requires the applicant to:

- receive individual supervision with a Board-approved supervisor at least of one hour per fortnight, with a focus on Australian ethical, legal and professional matters
- work in a Board-approved psychology setting/work role for at least 17.5 hours per week (note, provisional psychologists are not permitted to work independently or establish an independent private practice)
- sit and pass the National Psychology Examination, and
- at the end of the transitional period, the supervisor must submit a report to the Board indicating that the applicant has demonstrated capabilities in ethical, legal and professional matters and cross-cultural studies relevant to an Australian context, as set out in the *Guidelines for 4+2 internship program*. This must be assessed through direct observation by the supervisor of at least two assessment sessions and at least two intervention sessions completed by the applicant.

On successful completion of these requirements, the applicant can apply for general registration. The Board has determined that the requirement to undertake a transitional program will be effective from 1 July 2013.

### Definitions

This policy takes the position that the term 'qualification' in the general registration standard refers to a university qualification and any subsequent internship or supervised practice completed under a relevant authority or professional body.

**Accredited sequence of study** means a sequence of tertiary study in psychology comprising one or more qualifications accredited by APAC.

**AHPRA** means the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

**APAC** means the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council.

**Board** means the Psychology Board of Australia established under section 31 of the National Law.

**Internship** refers to the pathway to general registration undertaken by provisional psychologists that is based on Board approval of the supervision plan, supervisor/s and work roles/placements for the internship program.

**National Law** means the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory of Australia.

**Practice** refers to the practice of psychology as defined under the *Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program: provisional psychologists and supervisors*.

**Provisional psychologist** means a person registered as a provisional psychologist under Part 7 of the National Law.

**Psychologist** means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist under Part 7 of the National Law.

**Study in psychology by research** means a research-only higher degree qualification. APAC does not accredit research-only higher degrees, so an overseas qualification that does not match APAC requirements for the level of coursework, practica and skills training is not considered equivalent to a six-year accredited sequence of study.

**Supervisor, or Board-approved supervisor or principal supervisor**, means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist and who has been approved by the Board to supervise provisional psychologists.

### Authorisation

Psychology Board of Australia

Date of issue: 6 April 2011

### Review

This policy will be in effect from 6 April 2011. The Board will review this policy at least every three years.

Last reviewed: 28 June 2013