



## Consultation Paper 13

# Exposure Draft: National Psychology Examination Curriculum

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Contents	Page
1 Introduction	2
2 Why this curriculum?	3
3 Background	4
4 Overview of the curriculum of the National Psychology Examination	4
5 Changes to the curriculum since Consultation Paper 9	5

*Attachment A- Extract of relevant sections from the National Law*

*Attachment B - Exposure Draft November 2011 - National Psychology Examination Curriculum*

## Introduction

This consultation paper has been developed by the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) under s. 39 of the National Law<sup>1</sup>. The consultation paper relates to the *General registration standard* which is published on the website at [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx). The *General registration standard* has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 31 March 2010 pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory, with approval taking effect from 1 July 2010. The requirements for general registration in the standard are as follows:

### Requirements

To be eligible for general registration an applicant:

- a) must have successfully completed a Board-approved qualification
- b) must meet the eligibility requirements of the legislation, including any registration standard set by the Board and
- c) may be required to submit evidence of completion of a Board-approved examination.

This consultation paper provides further information about requirement (c) and seeks stakeholder feedback on the proposed curriculum to support the examination. The exposure draft will be available for comment for twelve weeks. The Board aims to finalise the curriculum after reviewing stakeholder responses.

This consultation paper has been issued by the Psychology Board of Australia under the authority of Professor Brin Grenyer, Chair, on 4 November 2011.

Individuals and organisations that wish to provide comments on this paper should lodge a written submission in electronic form, marked 'Attention: Chair, Examination Consultation' to [psychconsultation@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:psychconsultation@ahpra.gov.au) by close of business on Friday 27 January 2012.

Please note that submissions will be placed on the [Board's website](#) unless requested otherwise by the contributor or if the content is not appropriate for publication.

## Why this curriculum?

This curriculum has been developed to provide guidance to candidates sitting the National Psychology Examination in order to be eligible for general registration. The curriculum does not relate to scope of practice provisions.

The National Psychology Examination will support applications for general registration and ensure a consistent professional standard of psychologists nationally. The National Psychology Examination will be implemented from 1 July 2013 for applicants seeking general registration. The examination will be the final assessment before moving from provisional to general registration. The examination will also be used for:

- a) assessment of overseas-trained psychologists
- b) testing knowledge where questions of performance have been notified and/or
- c) return to work assessments after lengthy periods without practicing.

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<sup>1</sup> The National Law is contained in the schedule to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act 2009* (Qld).

In accordance with stakeholder feedback, the Board will apply an exemption from sitting the examination for graduates of accredited Masters, Doctorate or combined Masters/PhD programs who apply for general registration until 30 June 2016. This exemption is based on the Board's view that the internal examination and assessment processes within accredited degree programs currently meet the Board's standards for general registration. The Board will review this exemption after 30 June 2016.

## Summary

Under s. 12 of the National Law, the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council) has approved the Psychology General Registration Standard.

## Background

Planning for a national psychology examination began 25 years ago and has progressed through a number of planning stages, including previous consultation papers in 2008 and 2011. In 2010 the approved registration standard for general registration was established under the National Law and includes the passing of a Board-approved examination. In September 2010 the Psychology Board of Australia approved the appointment process for a national psychology examination panel, and announced the panel in February 2011. Further information about the National Psychology Examination is provided in Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination - Consultation Paper 9 - National Examination Consultation Paper (April 2011) published at: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/News/Past-Consultations.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/News/Past-Consultations.aspx).

## Overview of the Curriculum of the National Psychology Examination

The examination is designed to test the following capabilities at an entry level appropriate for a psychologist applying to move from provisional to general registration, i.e. at initial general registration standard:

- a) knowledge of the discipline
- b) ethical, legal and professional matters
- c) psychological assessment and measurement
- d) intervention strategies
- e) research and evaluation
- f) communication and interpersonal relationships
- g) working within a cross-cultural context and
- h) practice across the lifespan.

These eight capabilities are measured by four examination domains:

- Domain 1 - Ethics
- Domain 2- Assessment
- Domain 3 - Interventions
- Domain 4 - Communication.

## Changes to the curriculum since Consultation Paper 9

In response to feedback from Consultation Paper 9, the Psychology Board of Australia has made some modifications to the curriculum. Changes and their rationale are provided below. The Board is working to ensure that the curriculum represents the essential knowledge of an entry-level generally registered psychologist, and that the curriculum is specific enough to allow candidates to prepare at an achievable level of depth and within reasonable expectations of study, during the final 6th year as a provisional psychologist.

The examination is designed to test applied knowledge appropriate for the 5th and in particular the 6th year of psychology training. The curriculum is not designed to test foundational knowledge of the discipline obtained during the first four years of psychology at university. Rather, it is designed to test the application of this knowledge to practice, and is therefore based on actual case studies requiring responses.

The examination questions will be multiple choice. Most questions will include a vignette/scenario followed by a question, with five possible answers. Further information about the format and testing arrangements (as introduced in consultation paper 9) along with sample questions and further detailed instructions for candidates will be issued in further Board publications over the next 12 months.

### Changes to Domain 1

The domain name has been simplified to 'Ethics' from 'Legal, ethical and professional conduct'.

There have been no major changes to content. The examination content wording has been simplified. Repetition in wording has been identified and removed, specifically around aspects of professional practice already articulated within the Code of Ethics, and the guidelines of the Psychology Board of Australia, and sections within the Interventions and Communications domains.

### Changes to Domain 2

The domain name has been simplified to 'Assessment' from 'Assessment and Measurement'

The curriculum provides more detail about requirements, to remove the burden on candidates by specifying the level of depth for different components. The curriculum now defines six tests which will be examined in depth (i.e. to demonstrate knowledge that would indicate likely competence in the administration, scoring and interpretation), and a larger list of tests to which candidates only need to have familiarity in their use and purpose. The rationale for the choice of the six tests lies in their educational value as good examples of specific types of tests. Thus the Weschler adult and child intelligence tests are good examples of psychologist-administered assessments with subscales and full scale indices, with reference to normative samples from children through to older adults, and strict administration rules. The PAI is a good example of a self-report personality assessment with multiple-axis T-scored normative interpretation procedures. The DASS is a good example of a self-report norm referenced scale with criterion scores defining levels of severity. The K-10 is a good example of a simple screening scale for adults, and the SDQ is a good example of a brief behavioural screening questionnaire for children.

By specifying these six tests for particular attention, the Board is not suggesting that these are the only tests that form the essential knowledge of generally registered psychologists. Rather, the Board is assisting candidates preparing for the examination as to which specific tests they can expect to be examined in more depth. Their selection is based on pedagogical value, as described above. Where possible, tests that are widely available, in common use, and with Australian normative data were favoured. It is expected that all candidates preparing for general registration as a psychologist will have obtained training and competence in test administration.

The curriculum now defines a small list of common psychological problems for which candidates need to know definitions and essential features. The list prevents extensive over preparation by candidates of areas more typically covered in greater depth within specialist programs, but defines a minimum level of knowledge of common problems expected of a generally registered psychologist.

### **Changes to Domain 3**

The domain name has been simplified to 'Interventions' from 'Service Delivery'

The wording of the domain has been simplified to provide more specific guidance about areas of content to be assessed. The text revision has removed repetition and overlap with other parts of the curriculum. The curriculum no longer refers specifically to FPS (focused psychological strategies), although similar lists of interventions are required. The curriculum specifies that 'knowledge' 'understanding' and 'application' of areas of intervention are required as appropriate for an applied multiple-choice examination. Interventions are mostly generic skills based techniques that the Board considers to be foundational across many domains of psychology work and are prescribed in part to illustrate various issues in good service delivery.

### **Changes to Domain 4**

The text revision has removed repetition of content from other areas, and has narrowed the list to 5 key areas of knowledge.

The Board welcomes detailed and specific feedback and suggestions on the revised curriculum.

## Attachment A:

### Extract of relevant sections from the National Law<sup>2</sup>

#### 12 Approval of registration standards

- (1) The Ministerial Council may approve a registration standard about—
  - (a) the registration, or renewal of registration, of persons in a health profession; or
  - (b) the endorsement, or renewal of the endorsement, of the registration of registered health practitioners.

#### 39 Codes and guidelines

- A National Board may develop and approve codes and guidelines—
- (a) to provide guidance to the health practitioners it registers; and
  - (b) about other matters relevant to the exercise of its functions.

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<sup>2</sup> The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* as in force in each state and territory of Australia and as amended from time to time.



## Attachment B:

### Exposure Draft November 2011

## National Psychology Examination Curriculum

For candidates sitting the examination between 1 July 2013 and 30 December 2014

### Domain 1 ETHICS

*This domain focuses on legal, ethical and professional conduct, and its application to psychological practice. Examination candidates will demonstrate:*

- 1) Sensitivity to:
  - Cultural and indigenous values
  - Gender and sexuality issues
  - Service needs of different age groups
  - Service needs of vulnerable groups in society

#### *Legal Issues*

- 2) Knowledge and application of relevant legislation:

The *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act*, and the Standards, Codes, Guidelines and Policies of the Psychology Board of Australia

The relevant sections of State and Territory legislation and principles of best practice relating to:

- Privacy, freedom of information, and maintenance of health records
- Antidiscrimination and equal opportunity
- Mental health care (e.g. involuntary treatment, informed consent)
- Principles related to duty to protect (e.g. guardianship, firearms)
- Principles related to duty to report (e.g. child abuse, elder abuse, domestic violence, criminal acts, unsafe sexual practice, suicide risk)
- Children and adolescents
- Workers compensation and disability services
- Victims of crime

#### *Ethical Issues*

- 3) Knowledge and application of the ethical principles and standards in the ethical codes endorsed by the Psychology Board of Australia at the time, and relevant ethical guidelines.

### *Professional Issues*

- 4) Understanding of models and approaches for continuing professional development including methods for:
  - Developing, updating, and enhancing knowledge through continuing education
  - Professional self-management including self-reflection, self-assessment, and self-care
  - Supervision and peer consultation

## **Domain 2 ASSESSMENT**

*This domain focuses on skills and knowledge in conducting psychological assessment, and applying this knowledge to problem formulation. Formulation is generation and testing of hypotheses leading to a dynamic psychological understanding of a client's presentation.*

*Examination candidates will demonstrate:*

- 1) Understanding of issues in test selection, use, interpretation, acceptability and appropriateness, including:
  - Cross-cultural issues, and uses with different age and gender groups
  - The application and limitations of tests and their psychometric and normative basis, including test reliability, validity, utility and standardisation
  - The ability to identify and choose appropriate assessment instruments
  - The ability to score tests and interpret results
- 2) Knowledge and understanding of the application of forms of assessment including:
  - Interview techniques (structured and unstructured)
  - Systematic behavioural observation
  - Psychometric assessments
  - Self-monitoring (including diaries)
- 3) Ability to administer, score, interpret, and write reports using current editions of psychometric tests (using relevant Australian norms where available). Candidates will be asked detailed questions on the administration, scoring and interpretation of 6 selected tests. Candidates will be required to demonstrate familiarity with the use and purpose of a wider number of selected tests given below. Note: the versions of the tests examined are as follows and updates will be published on the Board's website well in advance of any changes to the examination curriculum.

Competence in the administration, scoring and interpretation of:

- WAIS IV (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale)
- WISC IV (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children)
- PAI, 2007 (Personality Assessment Inventory)
- DASS (Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale)
- K-10 (Kessler-10)
- SDQ (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire)

Familiarity with the use and purpose of the following tests:

#### Child tests

- WPPSI III (Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence)
- Stanford Binet V (Stanford–Binet Intelligence Scales)
- Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test
- Kaufman Assessment Battery for Children
- Differential Ability Scales
- Woodcock-Johnson Test of Cognitive Abilities – III

#### Adaptive behaviour tests

- VABS (Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales)
- ABAS (Adaptive Behavior Assessment System)

#### Memory

- WMS IV (Wechsler Memory Scale)
- WRAML 2 (Wide Range Assessment of Memory and Learning)

#### Developmental and educational assessments

- WIAT-II (Wechsler Individual Achievement Test)
- Connors Parent and Teacher Rating Scales, 3rd Ed.
- Achenbach Child Behaviour Checklist
- Parenting Stress Index

#### Vocational

- SDS (Self Directed Search)
- Strong (Strong Vocational Preference Inventory)

#### Personality

- MMPI-2 (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)
- 16PF, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition (Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire)
- NEO-PI-R (NEO Personality Inventory)

#### Screening tests for mental health

- PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire 9 Item).

#### Clinical and mental health tests

- BDI (Beck Depression Inventory)
- STAI (State Trait Anxiety Inventory)
- HADS (Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale)
- ORS (Outcome Rating Scale)

4) Knowledge and application of interview assessments

- The Mental Status Examination
- Risk assessment of suicide, self harm and harm to others (acute and chronic)
- Diagnostic classification systems (including current versions of DSM and ICD)

Knowledge of the DSM definitions and essential features of the following common psychological problems:

- Antisocial Personality Disorder
- Social Anxiety
- Panic Disorder
- Generalised Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Adjustment Disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Autism spectrum disorders
- Bipolar disorder
- Borderline personality disorder
- Conduct disorder
- Dementia
- Eating disorders
- Major depression
- Pain disorder
- Post traumatic stress disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Separation anxiety
- Substance dependence

### Domain 3 INTERVENTIONS

*This domain focuses on the provision of psychological services. Candidates must demonstrate:*

- (a) the ability to link the diagnosis, formulation and the intervention chosen; and*
- (b) an understanding of how to develop or plan evidence based preventative, developmental, remedial interventions or other services.*

*In considering implementing interventions, the candidate must also demonstrate:*

- (c) knowledge of how to evaluate the impact of professional services. This includes ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of the effectiveness of the intervention. More specifically, it includes and measuring change in behavioural, cognitive and emotional functioning and modifying the problem formulation, hypotheses and initial intervention accordingly.*

*Examination candidates will demonstrate:*

- 1) Understanding of the application of interventions that are appropriate for the client based on factors including:
- Culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients
  - Linguistic abilities
  - Gender and sexuality
  - Age
  - The need to work sensitively with preferences of clients, their carers, and families where appropriate
  - Cognitive and physical capacity

- 2) Knowledge of counselling skills and their application in service delivery, including:
- Establishing therapeutic relationships
  - Therapeutic alliance
  - Active listening
  - Empathic responding
  - Reflection
  - Questioning
  - Summarising
  - Problem resolution and change
  - Monitoring progress
  - Managing endings of therapeutic relationships

- 3) Knowledge of evidence based interventions, and their application, including:

Contemporary theories and models of treatment

- Cognitive and behavioural
- Psychodynamic and interpersonal
- Family systems and ecological
- Humanistic, narrative and solution-focused
- Rehabilitation, health promotion, relapse prevention, and recovery
- Organisational, coaching and career development

Individual, couple, family, group, organisational, or community interventions

Psychopharmacology, drug classification, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics

Knowledge of the application of specific focused therapy techniques for the common psychological problems listed in the assessment section.

Knowledge and understanding of the application of: psycho-education (including motivational interviewing); interpersonal therapy; narrative therapy (including as applied for clients of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent); cognitive-behavioural therapy including behaviour modification, exposure (in vivo and imaginal techniques), behavioural activation

(activity scheduling), cognitive interventions, self-management, relapse prevention; relaxation strategies (progressive muscle relaxation, breathing retraining); skills training (problem solving skills, anger management, social skills, communication, stress management, parenting training).

- 4) Understanding of how to use research to inform delivery of assessment and interventions, including generating evidence to evaluate practices.

#### **Domain 4 COMMUNICATION**

*This domain focuses on communicating to clients, other professionals, organisations or the wider community. Candidates are expected to be aware of the types and appropriate methods of professional communication, both oral and written. Candidates are expected to demonstrate an awareness of the importance of clarity, accuracy, coherence, organisation and succinctness in communication. Examination candidates will demonstrate:*

- 1) Understanding of the need to adapt communication sensitively based on factors including:
  - Cultural, ethnic, religious, social and political backgrounds and contexts
  - Age
  - Cognitive ability
  - Sensory acuity
  - Differing preferred modes of communication and
  - The influence of candidates' own personal motivation, biases and values.
- 2) Knowledge of record keeping procedures that meet professional, organisational, ethical and legislative requirements.
- 3) Knowledge of appropriate report writing techniques across different contexts e.g. reports for audiences including:
  - Health professionals
  - Legal professionals
  - Public servants
  - Employees of insurance companies and
  - Work related or organisational reports to employers.
- 4) Knowledge of referral procedures, including the roles of other professionals at all levels of care, and healthcare system procedures and structures.
- 5) Knowledge of methods to communicate to, and liaise with, professional groups (e.g. oral case review, conference presentations, writing for publication).