

Policy for exemption from continuing professional development requirements



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Summary

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) has a registration standard on continuing professional development (CPD) approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

The registration standard states that the Board may grant partial exemption from the CPD requirements in special circumstances.

The Board's *CPD registration standard* states:

An applicant for renewal of registration who wishes the Board to consider an application for partial exemption from this standard, due to ill health, maternity/paternity leave or other special circumstances, must submit a request in writing to the Board prior to the expiry of registration for the Board's consideration. The submission must include the nature of the special circumstance and the period of time during the previous registration period for which an exemption is being requested.

The registration standard on CPD allows for partial exemption to be granted. The Board cannot grant a full exemption from the CPD requirements. If special circumstances do not allow a psychologist to complete any CPD in a registration cycle, the psychologist should consider applying for non-practising registration.

The Psychology Board of Australia has delegated responsibility for individual registrant matters to regional boards which are supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) offices in each state and territory. Therefore, individual applications for partial exemptions from CPD requirements will be assessed by the state and territory offices of AHPRA and the relevant regional board within the policy framework determined by the National Board.

Scope

This policy applies to psychologists who hold general registration.

Psychologists who have provisional registration are not required to undertake CPD in accordance with the registration standard on CPD so this exemption policy does not apply to provisional registrants. Provisional psychologists should refer to the requirements of their supervised practice plans or higher degree program to determine CPD requirements.

Psychologists who hold non-practising registration are not required to undertake CPD while they hold this type of registration.

Psychologists who change their type of registration in a registration cycle (such as moving from provisional to general registration) will only be required to complete CPD for the period that they hold general registration (that is, on a pro rata basis). This also applies to psychologists who obtain general registration part-way through a registration cycle (noting psychologists renew registration by 30 November each year) without first being registered as provisional or non-practising.

Psychologists applying for general registration will be advised by the regional board of their CPD requirements at the time their application is approved and do not need to apply for an exemption. The advice from the regional board will specify the number of CPD hours required to be completed within the registration period and any other CPD requirements determined by the regional board.

Pro rata

Pro rata CPD applies for psychologists who hold general registration for part of the year only. Pro rata CPD is calculated according to the number of months, or part thereof, that the psychologist holds general registration during the registration cycle.

The CPD requirement must be met over a 12 month period from 1 December to 30 November and comprises 30 hours over 12 months, equating to 2.5 hours per month or part thereof.

The maximum CPD partial exemption that a Board may grant in any given registration cycle is 29 hours.

General principles

The types of special circumstances that may justify the granting of an exemption to the CPD requirements are limited and would only be considered where there is compelling evidence that the circumstances have created a significant obstacle to the practitioner's ability to complete the Board's CPD requirements. Each case would be considered on its merits and, depending on the particular circumstances, the Board may allow a partial exemption.

The Board would not grant pro rata exemptions due to reduced work hours, casual work or part-time work.

The Board would not consider a decision to pursue employment other than psychological practice (while still maintaining general registration) to constitute special circumstances. In this situation, the practitioner would be encouraged to consider non-practising registration.

Psychologists should only request CPD exemption where the duration of the special circumstances will impede significantly the practitioner's ability to meet CPD

Policy for exemption from continuing professional development requirements

requirements for the registration period. Short periods of time where a practitioner is unable to undertake CPD can generally be 'caught up' across the remainder of the registration period. The exception to this is a psychologist who has held general registration for less than 12 months at the time of application for renewal who must complete pro rata CPD for each month of general registration.

An exemption or reduction in the CPD requirements would only be granted where the psychologist's practice has been disrupted significantly due to special circumstances.

As a general principle, financial hardship or remote location are not adequate grounds for a partial exemption as there are sufficient CPD opportunities available that are free of charge or low cost and/or available online or by correspondence.

Examples of 'special circumstances'

Consideration of partial exemptions from the Board's CPD requirements may include, but are not limited to, the following circumstances:

a. Significant ill health of the practitioner

It is likely that most applications for an exemption due to significant ill health would occur in the context of a practitioner returning to practice after an absence.

An example of this particular special circumstance might be when a practitioner stopped practice due to a serious illness and was unable to undertake any professional development during the period of absence due to his or her illness.

b. Absence from practice due to parental (maternity/paternity/partner/adoption) leave

A partial exemption may be granted for a practitioner who takes parental leave.

For example a practitioner who works (full-time or part-time) for six months of the year and takes parental leave for six months of the year may apply for a CPD exemption for the part of the year the practitioner was not working. If the exemption was granted in this case, the psychologist would only have to complete six months worth of CPD. The same principle would apply for a psychologist applying for paternity or partner leave or adoption leave.

c. Providing care or support to a member of the immediate family or household, because of a significant personal illness or injury affecting the member of the immediate family or household

A partial exemption may be granted in circumstances where a practitioner's psychological practice has been disrupted significantly due to having to provide care or support to a member of his or her immediate family or household, because of a significant personal illness of or injury to that person.

d. Bereavement

A partial exemption may be granted in circumstances where a practitioner's psychological practice has been disrupted significantly due to the death of a member of his or her immediate family or household and the practitioner is absent from psychological practice for an extended period of time.

Applying for CPD exemption

Psychologists seeking a CPD exemption due to special circumstances must submit a request, in writing, to the AHPRA office in their capital city.

A written request for exemption due to special circumstances must explain the nature of the special circumstances; an explanation as to how those circumstances prevent the psychologist from undertaking the required CPD; and the dates for which the CPD exemption is being sought. Supporting evidence should be included where applicable.

Requests are to be made as soon as possible but not more than 12 months in advance of the start date for which the CPD exemption is being sought

Requests for CPD exemption will be assessed on an individual basis. Where necessary, the psychologist may be requested to provide additional information to support his or her request.

If a request for CPD exemption is approved due to special circumstances, the psychologist will be required to complete pro rata CPD for each month in the registration cycle that the psychologist is not exempt from the requirement.

Should the psychologist hold an area of practice endorsement, at least half of the required CPD should be within that endorsed area of practice. Should the psychologist hold more than one area of practice endorsement, the required CPD should be split equally between the different areas of practice. At least one-third of the required amount of CPD must be peer consultation. However the regional boards reserve the right to vary this requirement if deemed appropriate.

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Further information

Further information on CPD requirements for psychologists is available in the following publications by the Psychology Board of Australia:

- the registration standard on continuing professional development published at www.psychologyboard.gov.au > Standards and guidelines > Registration standards
- the guidelines on continuing professional development published at www.psychologyboard.gov.au > Standards and guidelines > Codes, guidelines and policies
- the fact sheet on continuing professional development published at www.psychologyboard.gov.au > Standards and guidelines > Fact sheets and FAQs.

Contact details

Send your written request for a CPD exemption to the AHPRA office in your capital city:

GPO Box 9958

Canberra ACT 2601

Sydney NSW 2001

Darwin NT 0801

Brisbane QLD 4001

Adelaide SA 5001

Hobart TAS 7001

Melbourne VIC 3001

Perth WA 6001

Authorisation

Psychology Board of Australia

Meeting date: August 2011

Review

This policy will be in effect from 15 December 2011. The Board will review this policy at least every three years.