

Response to Consultation Paper Entitled “Guidelines for the National Psychology Exam”

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Holding general registration means that a practitioner possesses a general skill set in applied psychology that allows psychology practice across a wide range of workplaces. The Board's role is to protect the public by ensuring that any psychologist who offers services to the public possesses this skill set

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Too many times, I have witnessed Clinical Psychologists practicing outside their area of competency. I have listened to a Clinical Psychologist bragging about providing executive coaching that then became a therapy session – without seeing the need for separation of the two. Pre-employment interviews are not therapy either – regardless of what skills and training you may have in Clinical Psychology, it is not appropriate and can do more harm to the individual, as well as open up an organization to potential litigation. I have argued with Clinical Psychologists who were using a psychometric tool for recruitment that should never be used for recruitment but they justified it based on their “clinical judgment” which surpassed all of the psychometric properties of the measure (apparently).

I look at your sample questions and despair for the future of our profession.

Given the above, how would you choose who should administer a Psychometric Assessment in an organisational setting?

- a) A multiple choice exam that has been modified since being validated (from the information available on the AHPRA website)
- b) A multiple choice exam where the sample questions are so vague that the explanations have detail in them that should have been provided in the question.
- c) A multiple choice exam that has a reading list that doesn't include the information for at least one of the sample questions.
- d) A multiple choice exam that contradicts the Code of Ethics guidelines in many ways, including not having a manual that has psychometric properties that are available for scrutiny.
- e) A multiple choice exam that has not been tested for predictive validity in all endorsable areas (or any?)
- f) A multiple choice exam that does not declare how cut-offs are determined, nor whether error is taken into account.
- g) A multiple choice exam that has 150 questions in 3.5hrs and does not take exam fatigue into account. (Has anyone heard of factor analysis?)
- h) A multiple choice exam that is clinical in focus (seriously, do you even know what the rest of us actually do?)
- i) A multiple choice exam that will penalise the majority of applicants who don't know ONE psychometric test (out of thousands) and what it is

designed to measure, it's sensitivity, specificity, validity, reliability etc. Especially as that test is not on the list of required competencies, nor in the reading list. (By the way, an additional answer "I'd have to refer on because it is not in an area of my competency" would have been the correct choice for most applicants.)

- j) Some one who has successfully completed a Masters in Organisational Psychology or 2 years supervised training under someone who has a Masters in Organisational Psychology.

I know which I would choose.

Competency is more than just rote learning for an exam. I am sure that those Clinical Psychologists that I described above would pass your exam. But I would not let them anywhere near anyone that I care about.

A general skill set designed to protect the public is good in theory. Assessing them by means of a multiple choice exam like this is akin to testing for the sake of testing.

Who will protect the public from Clinical Psychologists working outside their area of competency? What about the new generation of generalist Psychologists who do their clinical/counselling/mental health training in order to pass the exam? Will you take action if one works in a community, sport, neuro or organisational setting? How will you assess if they are competent in those areas if all their training has to be clinical in order to pass the exam?

I would LOVE for all Psychologists to have a better understanding of organizational, sports, educational, developmental, social, community and forensic psychology. But apparently it is only sensible to mandate that all psychologists have an intimate knowledge of clinical psychology, regardless of their specialization or interests. The diversity in our profession is a strength that we should cherish and nurture. Competency is essential, but it should be assessed and developed appropriately (something that Organisational Psychologists actually specialize in by the way).

No system will be perfect, but we all know (or should know- is this one of the questions?) the validity of basing a recruitment decision purely on the results of a psychometric test, let alone an inappropriate test ... (which brings me back to my first paragraph).

We know better than this.