



Policy for recency of practice requirements

Summary

The Psychology Board of Australia's revised registration standard for recency of practice was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 27 August 2015 under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory. The standard took effect from 1 December 2016.

Consistent with the registration standard, an applicant who has not practised as a registered psychologist for at least 250 hours within the last five years before the date of application for registration or renewal of registration is not automatically eligible for registration or renewal of registration. They may be required to undertake remedial action to become eligible for registration or renewal of registration.

The registration standard sets out the remedial actions applicants may be required to complete, if they are not able to comply with the registration standard. This policy sets out the level of remedial action required, depending on the length of practice lapse.

To practise as a psychologist in Australia, an individual must be registered by the Board. On this basis, the Board will not accept as evidence of practice:

- a) unregistered practice involving activities of a psychological nature, or
- b) practice involving activities of a non-psychological nature despite these being performed by a registered psychologist.

However the Board may take into account unregistered practice in countries where registration is not available, or practice in a related field when determining remedial requirements to meet the registration standard. The level of remedial action required will depend on the amount of time the applicant has not practised as a registered psychologist.

Definitions

AHPRA means the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

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

National Psychology Examination refers to the exam as outlined in the Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination.

Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a registered psychologist in the profession. Practice in this context is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct, non-clinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.

Provisional psychologist means a person who holds provisional registration as a psychologist under section 62 of the National Law.

Psychologist means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist under section 52 of the National Law

Recency of practice means that a practitioner has maintained an adequate connection with, and recent practice in, the profession since qualifying or obtaining registration, in accordance with the requirements of the *Recency of practice registration standard*.

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

Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for formulating, approving and overseeing this policy. AHPRA is responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and effectively managed.

Scope

This policy applies to individuals who do not meet the requirements of the Board's registration standard for recency of practice who:

- 1) were previously registered with the Psychology Board of Australia, or a prior state or territory board of Australia, whose registration has lapsed and who are applying for general registration, or
- 2) currently hold general registration with the Psychology Board of Australia and who are applying to renew their registration, or
- 3) are applying to change registration status from non-practising registration to general registration, or
- 4) are applying for registration in Australia for the first time.

Registration decision

When the Board considers an application for general registration or renewal of general registration and the applicant does not meet the requirements of the *Recency of practice registration standard* it may decide:

- 1) To refuse the application for general registration or renewal of general registration, and
 - a) require the applicant to successfully complete the National Psychology Examination before a new application for general registration will be accepted, and/or
 - b) advise the applicant to make an application for provisional registration in order to undertake a period of supervised practice approved by the Board in order to meet the recency of practice requirements and become eligible for general registrationor
- 2) To grant provisional registration instead of general registration if the application is made under section 77 of the National Law (i.e. does not include application for renewal), and
 - a) require the applicant to successfully complete the National Psychology Examination before a new application for general registration will be accepted, and/or
 - b) require the individual to undertake a period of supervised practice approved by the Board in order to meet the recency of practice requirements and become eligible for general registrationor
- 3) To grant or renew the application for general registration but impose a condition that the applicant must:
 - a) successfully complete the National Psychology Examination, and/or
 - b) successfully complete a period of supervised practice approved by the Board in order to become eligible for general registration.

Supervised practice requirements

A period of supervised practice as determined by the Board should be grounded in a return to practice plan. The purpose of the plan for professional development and re-entry to practice is to ensure that the practitioner is returning to safe practice with appropriate supports in place. This is for the safety of client and the practitioner. The plan for professional development and re-entry to practice will be different for each practitioner. It should be tailored to the practitioner's particular circumstances and their individual learning needs. It is therefore not appropriate for the Board to issue a standard re-entry plan with set tasks or supervision levels.

However the Board does provide a re-entry program plan template which requires you to undertake an objective self-assessment of learning needs taking into account previous experience and the position you propose to return to practice in. You are required to identify any gaps in your knowledge and skills and areas for improvement, set your learning goals and then develop a plan for meeting those goals. Your plan must also include how you will demonstrate achievement of your aims and your current competence to practice to your supervisor and/or the Board.

Additionally, the following broad guidelines are provided to assist practitioners in designing their re-entry program:

Psychological practice

All re-entry programs must include psychological practice in a work role that has been approved by the Board. Your re-entry plan must include a proposed number of psychological practice hours you will complete. The Board will review the plan and make the final decision on how many practice hours are required.

You should base your proposed re-entry plan on the following ranges which the Board uses as a guide when determining the minimum psychological practice hours for a re-entry program:

If an applicant has not practised as a registered psychologist for:

1. More than five years but less than ten years: the standard range is **500 to 1000 hours**, this may be varied taking into account the factors listed below and in exceptional circumstances may be varied outside the standard range, but will be no less than 250 hours and no more than 2000 hours
2. More than ten years but less than fifteen years: the standard range is **1000 to 2000 hours**, this may be varied taking into account the factors listed below and in exceptional circumstances may be varied outside the standard range, but will be no less than 800 hours and no more than 2800 hours
3. More than fifteen years: the standard range is **1500 to 2500 hours**, this may be varied taking into account the factors listed below and in exceptional circumstances may be varied outside the standard range, but will be no less than 1200 hours and no more than 2800 hours.

The factors the Board will consider when deciding the number of supervised practice hours that will be initially required:

- Specific length of absence (e.g. five years vs nine years)
- Reason for absence (e.g. maternity leave, overseas practice, suspended following disciplinary action)
- Registration status during absence (e.g. general, non-practising, lapsed, suspended, cancelled)
- Amount of prior practice experience
- Whether prior practice was full-time or part-time and whether continuous or broken periods of practice
- Whether the applicant is returning to the same scope of practice or a different scope of practice
- Further education, CPD and peer consultation undertaken during absence
- Work in a related field during absence
- Overseas practice during absence (but that does not meet the registration standard e.g. because it was in a country with no registration)
- Contents of the proposed re-entry plan (e.g. it may be acceptable if the plan proposes more supervision and CPD but less practice hours)
- Whether the applicant will be required to sit the national psychology exam

The required practice hours may be varied from the initially required hours after the re-entry plan has commenced in the following special circumstances:

- Application for review of conditions – if conditions have been placed on registration, the Board sets a minimum review period and after that time the registrant can apply to the Board for the conditions to be changed or reviewed. For example a registrant who by the end of the review period has successfully completed all the output elements of the re-entry program (see below) but has not completed the required number of practice hours, may apply for the review or removal of the relevant condition, or
- Unsatisfactory progress in the re-entry program. For example if a registrant has completed 2800 hours of practice but has not successfully completed all the output elements of the re-entry program (see below) the Board may decide it is necessary to change the relevant condition of registration to require more hours of practice to be completed.

Re-entry plan requirements

All re-entry plans must include the following minimum inputs:

1. Psychological practice – hours as specified in approved work role/s
2. Supervision with a Board-approved supervisor – the usual requirement is 2 hours per week or 1 hour per 17 hours of practice, which may be varied as appropriate but should be no less than 1 hour per week or 1 hour per 38 hours of practice
3. Direct observation of practice by a Board-approved supervisor – at least two observation sessions every six months and minimum of two observation sessions for supervision programs of less than six months, and
4. CPD – the standard requirement is between 40 – 60 hours per year which may be undertaken pro-rata if working part-time provided the minimum requirements of the CPD standard are still met.

All re-entry plans must include the following minimum outputs:

1. Progress report/s – one every six months and at least one for programs that are shorter than six months
2. Satisfactory final assessment of competence report
3. Pass the national psychology exam
4. Case report – at least one and usually one for every six months of FTE practice.

Depending on your individual skills development foci, other assessment tasks may be appropriate and you may choose to propose other tasks in your re-entry plan such as written report/s on ethical dilemmas/professional limitations/cross-cultural practice issues/practice across the lifespan issues/or other as appropriate; or you may propose a research project in a specific area of practice identified in the re-entry plan as a skills development focus area.

When proposing additional tasks in your plan you should assume they will be self directed and assessment will be undertaken by your supervisor/s. However the Board reserves the rights to require submission of any tasks you have proposed and also to require amendment of the plan to include other tasks it believes are necessary.

On completion of remedial action

For individuals who have been granted provisional registration to undertake the remedial action, on successful completion of the remedial action to the satisfaction of the Board, the applicant may apply for general registration.

For individuals who have been granted general registration with conditions to undertake the remedial action, the applicant may apply to have the conditions changed or removed at any time after the minimum review period that has been set by the Board, using the form *Application for review of conditions or undertakings by a psychologist - ARCD-76* which is available on the 'Forms' page of the Board's website.

The Board reserves the right to vary the conditions in this policy in accordance with individual circumstances.

Authorisation

Psychology Board of Australia

Date of issue 1 August 2011

Review

This policy will be in effect from 1 August 2011. The Board will review this policy at least every five years.

Last reviewed: 30 October 2015

This version of the policy is effective from 1 December 2016.