

Psychology Board of Australia

# GUIDELINES: TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR OVERSEAS QUALIFIED APPLICANTS

20 March 2017

# GUIDELINES: TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS FOR OVERSEAS QUALIFIED APPLICANTS



## Introduction

In Australia all applicants for general registration as a psychologist must demonstrate a sound knowledge of, and competency in, Australian ethical, legal and professional matters, and working with people from diverse groups, as relevant to the Australian context.

Graduates of accredited postgraduate psychology degrees and Board-approved internship programs demonstrate these capabilities as mandatory requirements of their degrees and internships. However, overseas trained psychologists will not usually have addressed these specific capabilities in their psychology training. Therefore overseas trained psychologists whose qualifications and supervised practice experience otherwise meet the requirements for general registration must demonstrate these skills relevant to the Australian context, to the standard required of an entry-level general psychologist. This ensures that all individuals granted registration as a psychologist in Australia have acquired the necessary skills to practice safely, ethically and effectively with diverse groups of people in the Australian context.

Overseas trained applicants for registration in Australia will usually be required to demonstrate these skills and knowledge by completing a period of supervised practice with a Board-approved supervisor – the transitional program – and by passing the national psychology examination (the exam) unless exempt.

These guidelines set out the skills and knowledge that are required to be demonstrated and other requirements for the transitional program.

## Who needs to use these guidelines?

These guidelines are for applicants for registration as a psychologist in Australia who have overseas psychology qualifications and are required to complete a transitional program to become eligible for general registration. They

also provide guidance for employers and supervisors of overseas trained psychologists.

If you will be undertaking an accredited postgraduate degree or approved internship in Australia you will not be required to complete a transitional program and these guidelines do not apply to you.

## Registration

Overseas qualified applicants who require assessment of their overseas qualifications must apply for provisional registration and an assessment of overseas qualifications using form APOS-76. The outcome of the assessment will determine if you need to complete a transitional program or other supervised practice program.

For more details on the registration and assessment process refer to the registration information in the overseas applicants section of the website, including the application process which details the application stages and appeal options.

Psychologists who are assessed as eligible to commence a registrar program, or eligible to apply for area of practice endorsement may request to meet the requirements of the transitional program while holding general registration with conditions.

## Requirements

Successful completion of a transitional program requires the individual to demonstrate achievement of the following during the program:

1. competence in the following areas through direct observation<sup>1</sup> of practice by, and/or discussion in supervision sessions with, a Board-approved supervisor:
  - ethical, legal and professional matters as relevant to the Australian context, and
  - working with people from diverse groups as relevant to the Australian context

<sup>1</sup> Direct observation means observation (live or recorded) of the supervisee's practice with clients. The supervisor may be physically present at the session, or may observe via videoconference or web conference, or they may watch a video recording of the practice. Direct observation usually requires an image of each of the parties, including a clear view of facial expressions. However, the Board may approve audio observation (live or recorded) if special circumstances apply and Board approval is sought in advance.

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2. completion of at least 210 hours of psychological practice in an approved work role over a minimum of 12 weeks in continuous calendar months, for at least 17.5 hours per week, and
3. completion of at least six hours of individual supervision with a Board-approved supervisor, focussing on Australian ethical, legal, professional, and cultural matters, provided at a rate of at least one hour per fortnight.

At the end of the transitional period, the applicant must submit an *Assessment of capabilities - transitional program for provisional psychologists - form ACTP-76* that has been completed and signed by their supervisor. Completion of ACTP-76 by the supervisor indicates the applicant has demonstrated the required competencies and is able to provide psychology services safely, competently and appropriately in the Australian context.

## National Psychology Examination

In addition to the transitional program, overseas trained psychologists are required to pass the exam (unless exempt) before being eligible for general registration.

You must hold provisional registration in order to register for and sit the exam. You can sit the exam at any time while holding provisional registration – before, during, or after completing the transitional program.

The Board's website includes detailed information about the [exam](#).

## Board-approved supervisor

At least six hours of formal supervision with a Board-approved supervisor is required in the transitional program. More than the minimum of six hours of supervision may be necessary to develop and demonstrate the required competencies to the supervisor.

Your supervisor may be someone who is employed in the same practice or organisation as you with supervision occurring within the work role, or you may have an external/off-site supervisor.

If your supervisor will not be employed in the same location as you, your application must include detail of how the supervision requirements will be met. You will also need to confirm that provision has been made to address issues with confidentiality, privacy and any other relevant workplace or employment policies impacted by having an off-site supervisor.

Formal supervision includes both direct observation of your practice by, and one-on-one discussion with, the supervisor. Your supervisor will determine the appropriate mix of observation and discussion making up the minimum six hours of supervision that will enable them to assess your competence. At least one hour each of direct observation and one-on-one discussion with the supervisor is recommended.

In Australia supervisors are approved by the Board to provide supervision in a number of different programs including postgraduate degree placements, internship programs, and registrar programs leading to area of practice endorsement. Different skills and training are often necessary to provide different types of supervision, therefore the Board grants approval as a supervisor for specific supervision programs.

Overseas psychologists come to Australia from a variety of professional, educational, social and cultural backgrounds, with different experiences, scopes of practice, and at different career stages; therefore they have different supervision needs. For this reason, the Board does not approve supervisors specifically for a transitional program category. Instead supervisors who are Board-approved in any supervision category may be proposed as a supervisor for a transitional program. This gives overseas psychologists flexibility to propose a supervisor who best matches their individual supervision needs.

A searchable list of Board-approved supervisors is available online at [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Supervision/Search](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Supervision/Search).

More information about Board-approved supervisors, including a guideline for supervisors is available at [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Supervision](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Supervision).

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## Psychological practice

At least 210 hours of psychological practice in an approved work role must be completed in the transitional program over at least 12 weeks in continuous calendar months. An approved work role is a professional psychology position which has been approved by the Board as suitable for the transitional program.

The Board approves work roles on a case-by-case basis when assessing a proposed transitional program plan. To be considered suitable, the role must allow for at least 17.5 hours per week of psychological practice – that is, the application of psychological knowledge, methodology, principles, techniques and ethical standards to individual clients, groups or organisations. A proposed work role should generally include some direct client contact.

The Board will consider all types of psychology work roles for the transitional program, including salaried, contract, casual and volunteer, and all settings where psychological practice occurs.

## Competencies

In the transitional program the applicant must demonstrate competence in ethical, legal and professional matters as relevant to professional practice in Australia, and competence working with diverse groups of people in the Australian context, to the minimum standard required for general registration as a psychologist in Australia.

The knowledge and competencies required to be demonstrated include:

- Familiarity with the main provisions of, and understanding of when to consult, the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in the state or territory where you will be practising.

In particular you must have an understanding of what your obligations as a registered health practitioner in Australia will be with regard to:

- mandatory notifications
- continuing professional development

- professional indemnity insurance
- notifying the Board of certain events or changes of details
- advertising
- use of protected titles, and
- registration and renewal requirements.
- Familiarity with the main provisions of, and understanding of when to consult, other relevant legislation in a co-regulatory jurisdiction (e.g. Health Ombudsman Act (Qld) 2013).
- Familiarity with the main provisions of, and understanding of when to consult, the state and Commonwealth Acts and Regulations of Parliament relevant to psychologists' work in Australia.

Areas where relevant legislation exists include:

- freedom of information
- mental health
- workers compensation
- disability services
- guardianship
- privacy
- health records
- equal opportunity and antidiscrimination
- victims of crime
- children and adolescents
- mandatory reporting (child protection and aged care), and
- ethical human research.

Where legislation relates directly to your intended scope of practice you would be expected to have a more detailed knowledge.

- Knowledge of Australian legal and political systems as relevant to your intended scope of practice.
- Detailed knowledge and understanding of the Board's Code of Conduct.

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- Detailed knowledge of the requirements of the Psychology Board of Australia's mandatory registration standards for psychologists:
  - continuing professional development
  - criminal history
  - English language skills
  - professional indemnity insurance, and
  - recency of practice.
- Familiarity with and understanding of professional matters and expectations as relevant to working in the Australian context, including:
  - sexual propriety
  - boundaries
  - confidentiality and privacy
  - administration and record keeping
  - billing practices and financial arrangements
  - conflict resolution
  - ethical and professional behaviour, and
  - organisational culture, as relevant to your area of practice.
- The ability to apply knowledge and understanding of how the practice of psychology is influenced by social, historical, professional and cultural contexts to professional practice in Australia.
- Familiarity with and understanding of cultural and social diversity issues as relevant to the Australian context and your intended scope of practice, including:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
  - service needs of minority, marginalised or vulnerable groups in Australia
  - immigration and refugees, and
  - communication with diverse groups.
- Awareness of how one's own cultural and social background can influence perception, and
- Ability to work with people from diverse groups<sup>2</sup> and to manage any cultural or social barriers.

## Exemptions

Individuals who are able to demonstrate they have already achieved competence in all these ethical, legal, professional and diversity matters relevant to the Australian working environment may request an exemption from the transitional program. Such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

A request for an exemption must include evidence that you have completed relevant work experience in Australia - whether full-time, part-time, casual, contract or voluntary - sufficient to demonstrate the relevant competencies.

Relevant work experience may include work as a provisional psychologist in a previous internship or postgraduate degree (e.g. that was not completed so did not qualify you for general registration). Alternatively, relevant work experience may have been gained in a role related to the practice of psychology which gave you exposure to relevant socio-legal frameworks, and experience working with the Australian public, psychologists, and other professionals in an Australian context. This may include working as a case manager, counsellor, or in administration, management, education or research where you did not use the title 'psychologist' or directly provide psychology services to clients.

Requests for an exemption must include evidence of a combination of different activities which together demonstrate that all the content of the competencies, as listed in the previous section, has been covered. The evidence should also indicate how competence has been demonstrated, such as formal assessments, performance evaluations or discussion in supervision sessions.

The Board does not assess for partial exemption – if you cannot provide evidence that you have achieved all aspects of the competencies then these will need to be demonstrated to a Board-approved supervisor in the transitional program.

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<sup>2</sup> This may include clients who differ from the psychologist in ways including, but not limited to: age, race, colour, culture, gender, geography, language, sexual orientation, educational attainment, physical attributes, cognitive capacity and socio-economic status and religious-spiritual orientation.

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Documentation in support of the request for exemption must be provided (originals or certified copies) and must be in English, or appropriate translations must be provided.

Documentation may include:

Activity	Evidence
Relevant work experience in Australia - <b>mandatory</b> , this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>psychological practice as a provisional psychologist in placements for a partially completed degree, internship or other supervision program approved by the Board or a prior state or territory psychology board, or</li><li>work in a role related to the practice of psychology in Australia.</li></ul>	CV, position descriptions, letters from employers, supervisors or education providers, supervision plan, log book, performance plan, performance evaluation.
Professional supervision or mentoring with an Australian psychologist, this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>private supervision and mentoring arrangements</li><li>workplace supervision for a relevant role in a setting where psychology services are provided</li><li>supervision in a partially completed Board-approved internship, or other supervision program approved by the Board or a prior state or territory psychology board</li><li>supervision in a partially completed accredited Australian psychology degree, or</li><li>supervision for placements in Australia as part of an overseas psychology degree.</li></ul>	Supervision log book signed by the supervisor or mentor that summarises dates and times of meetings, the focus of discussion, outcomes etc and/or a letter from your mentor or supervisor.
Relevant formal study in Australia (secondary, tertiary or vocational studies that specifically covered some of the required knowledge and competencies)	Academics transcripts, letters from the school/college/university, course/subject content outlines
Completion of relevant professional development activities e.g. workshops, conferences, short courses etc. in the Australian context	CPD portfolio including activity log, certificates of completion/attendance, receipts etc.
Residence in Australia and immersion in the psychology community	Professional memberships, character references from registered Australian psychologists, evidence of community activities and volunteer work.

## Responsibilities

The National Board is responsible for formulating and approving this guideline. AHPRA is responsible for ensuring that the requirements are implemented and effectively managed.

## Review

This guideline will be reviewed as required; this will generally be at least every five years.