

14/06/2010

Chair, Psychology Board of Australia

Dear Professor Grenyer,

On behalf of the Australian Clinical Psychology Association (ACPA) and its associated Australian Clinical Psychologists Listserve I would like to provide the following response to the Board's consultation paper, Guidelines for Approved Training Programs in Psychology Supervision. ACPA represents those psychologists with the level of training and post-graduate qualifications required by the Board for endorsement in the area of clinical psychology. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on these guidelines and are grateful for the Board's ongoing efforts to raise standards within the profession of psychology.

Given the responsibilities of supervisors of all trainees, it is without doubt advantageous to have them trained in evidence based supervision practice. This will increase protection for the public if it translates into improved standards of practice for the profession.

Supervisor training and provisional registration

Strengths of the proposal: Supervisors of those undertaking the 4 + 2 route to registration assume an enormous responsibility in which they may be individually required to provide training in ethical and professional clinical practice and make decisions regarding the suitability of a supervisee to practise psychology. It is therefore essential that these supervisors receive training to undertake this task. Given that many supervisors of those undertaking the 4 + 2 route to registration have themselves learned of supervision methods and styles through psychologists without post-graduate training, their experience of supervision may be extremely narrow and not evidence based. Therefore supervision training for this group is essential.

Concerns: We have no concerns about this requirement. This route to registration is inadequate, as we have previously stated in responses to the Board's consultation papers, and requires standardisation, improved standards, broader, deeper, better evaluated training for all parties, and would be best converted to a Masters degree in which proper oversight and experience can be ensured. Any limitations imposed on the number of registrants choosing this route to registration by supervisors not being prepared to undertake training ensures a greater proportion of adequately trained psychologists via other routes with higher standards.

Recommendations: If this route is to continue, we would like to recommend that supervisors for those undertaking the 4 + 2 route to registration be limited to those who hold registration and have endorsement in at least one area of practice. This is to ensure that the standard of clinical training, as well as training in supervision, is to an appropriate professional and clinical level. We understand this is currently the requirement in South Australia.

Supervisor training and areas of endorsement

Strengths of the proposal: While universities have long been required to provide training in supervision to those undertaking supervision of post-graduate students in professional psychology programs, this has been a non-standardised and irregular process that was not necessarily based on evidence of best practice in supervision, and has not been compulsory. The proposal of the Board would remedy this situation and ensure the highest quality of supervision for trainees, while protecting the public through more standardised training and oversight of the profession.

Concerns:

1. The cost of both providing and participating in 15 hours of direct training may dissuade universities and supervisors from engaging in this venture, reducing the number of supervision training programs available and supervisors participating in supervision for post-graduate students and registrars.
2. Supervisors may find it difficult to take time out to undertake this training from workplaces where managers perceive post-graduate students as unnecessary to their organisations. Private practitioners also lose income in taking time out for training, making them less likely to participate.
3. While consortiums may be formed to offer this training, those in rural or more regional areas may not have access to the expertise to provide training. We note programs may be developed for online training, but are concerned this does not give opportunities for interaction and learning within a group context where issues raised by one member may not have been considered by another.
4. Current university training for supervisors is free, but does not generally contain an assessment component. Assessments of the type outlined by the paper are time-consuming and therefore costly, particularly the assessment of video-taped sessions. To move this training to private companies places an unmanageable cost burden onto supervisors and dissuades them from undertaking training and thereby preventing them from supervising , reducing the number of possible graduates and registrars.

Recommendations:

1. Training is permitted over a two year period, with a basic one-day equivalent workshop being made available in the first year and an advanced workshop in the second year. This would allow components to be developed and offered on a rotating basis.
2. That a grandparenting period of at least 3 years allow supervisors to continue supervising while training programs are being developed.

Thank you for this proposal that reflects the need for the profession to raise standards of training and to thereby provide greater protection for the public.



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