

College of Counselling Psychologists
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Professor Brin Grenyer, Chair
Psychology Board of Australia
G.P.O. Box 9958
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Brin,

RE: Consultation Paper 5 on Proposed Revisions to the Guidelines on Area of Practice Endorsements

The College of Counselling Psychology is responding to the PBA invitation for suggestions for specific core capabilities associated with areas of practice that align to the Board's 8 competency areas for endorsement. We have already commented in a previous submission in August on the definition of Counselling Psychology and requested that the Board urgently change the definition in order that it accurately represent the specialist field of counselling psychology as defined in our course accreditation guidelines, our brochure, and the Psychologist's Board of WA List of Competencies for counselling psychology specialist title.

It is unclear how much detail the PBA would like in terms of core capabilities. However, please find attached the 2008 version of core competencies for counselling psychologists in the APS, which is the most succinct and relevant document. In essence, it outlines the core capabilities in each broad area specified by the PBA. The definition of counselling psychology from the APS Brochure captures these capabilities in a more colloquial form:

*Counselling psychologists are specialists in the provision of psychological therapy. **They provide psychological assessment and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, families and groups, and treat a wide range of psychological problems and mental health disorders.** Counselling psychologists use a variety of evidence-based therapeutic strategies and have particular expertise in tailoring these to meet the specific and varying needs of clients. They pay particular attention to the meanings, beliefs, contexts and processes that affect psychological health. This enables them to create collaborative, therapist-client relationships where the focus is on building psychological strengths and wellbeing as well as resolution of difficulties and disorders.*

In particular, core capabilities in the following areas should be highlighted as core in any definition of the endorsed area:

- Provision of psychological therapy for clients with psychological difficulties or affected by adverse life events, such as bereavement, grief and loss, unemployment and career planning, relationship difficulties, domestic violence, sexual abuse and other forms of trauma;
- Assessment, diagnosis, case formulation and treatment of mental health disorders including high prevalence disorders such as anxiety and depression as well as chronic and enduring disorders such as personality disorders, eating disorders, substance disorders and PTSD ;
- Couple, family, and group therapy as specific modes of intervention, as well as individual therapy;
- Expertise in establishing collaborative relationships with clients including a focus on establishing, maintaining and repairing the therapeutic alliance.

We have also attached our most current course accreditation guidelines as further evidence of areas of expertise. In addition, we also direct the PBA to the Psychologist's Board of WA list of competencies for counselling psychology specialist title registration: [checklist of specialist skills and knowledge for counselling psychologist registrars](#)

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jan Grant". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Associate Professor Jan Grant
Acting Chair, College of Counselling Psychologists

Attachment 1: College of Counselling Psychologists, Domains of Knowledge
Attachment 2: Course Accreditation Guidelines – College of Counselling Psychologists

Attachment 1

College of Counselling Psychology Domains of Knowledge December 2008

AREAS	INCLUSION CRITERIA
1. Theories and knowledge relevant to psychological specialities	<p>Demonstrated advanced knowledge in :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirically Supported Treatments (ESTs) in psychotherapies • Group processes and family functioning • Normal and abnormal development across the lifespan <p>Demonstrated advanced knowledge of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories of personality development • Theories of lifespan development and their contextual relevance in psychotherapy & counselling • Diagnostic classification systems including eg. DSM & ICD, and indigenous psychologies
2. Assessment	<p>Demonstrated advanced knowledge in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formulation and diagnosis of client stressors, mental health disorders and psychological distress • collaborating with clients in case formulation of mental health problems, <p>Demonstrated competence in specific areas of psychological assessment including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychopathology • bio-psychosocial status • cognitive functioning and impairment • personality • vocational psychology • health and well-being and tests of specific functioning
3. Interventions and implementation	<p>Demonstrated advanced competence in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • empirically supported therapies which facilitate change for individuals, couples, families and groups from a diverse range of backgrounds • Psychotherapeutic interventions • Integration of psychotherapy strategies from a diverse range of counselling theories • Taking account of contextual factors in designing and delivering psychotherapy interventions • Developing and delivering collaborative therapeutic interventions

4. Research and evaluation	<p>Demonstrated competence in measuring and evaluating psychotherapeutic outcomes including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptom reduction • Well being • Case formulations and reformulations • Psycho-educational outcomes • Resource provision and use <p>Demonstrated competence in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting psychotherapy outcome research in either quantitative, qualitative, or mixed mode forms. • performing programme evaluations • ongoing reflective practice • routine inclusion of research in practice activities
5. Professional practice	<p>Demonstrated ability to practice within an ethical framework in a variety of professional therapeutic and counselling settings.</p> <p>Demonstrated competence in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with clients collaboratively to achieve therapeutic outcomes. • Recognition of the primacy of the Therapeutic Alliance in working with clients. • Demonstrated competence in working with other professionals. <p>Demonstrated capacity to learn from, contribute to, and develop supervision in the context of professional practice.</p>
6. Non-psychological components	<p>Demonstrated competence in collaborating with allied professionals and other stakeholders in the mental health field</p> <p>Well developed competence in developing alliances with consumer groups in the mental health field.</p>

Attachment 2

**AUSTRALIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL
SOCIETY**

**COLLEGE OF
COUNSELLING
PSYCHOLOGISTS**

COURSE APPROVAL GUIDELINES

REVISED February 2010

1 General Introduction and Principles

These Guidelines have been developed for use by tertiary institutions when preparing post-graduate courses in Counselling Psychology. They are also intended for use by the College of Counselling Psychologists when evaluating course submissions from tertiary institutions for approval for membership of the College. Applicants for College membership will be expected to have completed an Approved course and to have undertaken additional supervised professional experience.

These Guidelines must be read in conjunction with the APAC Accreditation Standards, especially Section 5.

Members of the College of Counselling Psychologists occupy a special position in the array of professional orientations and areas in which psychologists work. They are concerned not only with the treatment of distress but also with the development of effective preventative procedures for both normally functioning and at-risk populations. Counselling psychologists are specialists in the provision of psychological therapy. They provide psychological assessment and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, families and groups, and treat a wide range of psychological problems and mental health disorders. Counselling psychologists use a variety of evidence-based therapeutic strategies and have particular expertise in tailoring these to meet the specific and varying needs of clients. They pay particular attention to the meanings, beliefs, contexts and processes that affect psychological health. This enables them to create collaborative, therapist-client relationships where the focus is on building psychological strengths and wellbeing as well as resolution of difficulties and disorders. Clients are assisted to assume control of their lives by developing new perspectives and understanding. As a result they learn to think in new ways, manage difficult emotional experiences more effectively, and practise different ways of behaving. Counselling psychologists work in a range of settings including private practice, government and non-government organisations, hospitals and educational institutions.

Consideration of skill development, effectiveness of intervention, reliability of assessment and ethical issues are of prime importance in the training of counselling psychologists. These topics must be presented in both theoretical and practical modalities and thus supervised practical experience during training is essential. Because they are scientists as well as practitioners, counselling psychologists must be trained in research procedures so as to be more effective in evaluating the effectiveness of programmes and interventions and thus adding to the sum of systematic knowledge within the discipline.

2 General Program Requirements

The following principles should be followed in the formulation and delivery of courses in Counselling Psychology.

- 2.1** Students, staff and supervisors should be provided with a Counselling Psychology Handbook which outlines at least the following:

- (i) these 'Course Approval Guidelines' for membership of the College of Counselling Psychologists;
- (ii) the reciprocal responsibilities and obligations of academic staff, supervisors and students;
- (iii) the compulsory and optional components of the course(s) and the part-time or full-time nature of the course(s).
- (iv) subject descriptions with minimum standards and requirements for each subject including methods and details of assessment.
- (v) The practical requirements of the course(s)
- (vi) The responsibilities of supervisors and students in relation to the practical placements.

- 2.2** The course(s) must be general in character and provide broad based knowledge in the compulsory course content subjects (as mentioned Section 4 below) and the application of counselling psychology practices to a range of client groups and settings.
- 2.3** The course(s) must develop an integrated sense of theory, research, specialist psychological skills and professional expertise and responsibility.
- 2.4** The course(s) should emphasise the importance of assessment, diagnosis, case formulation and development by the professional psychologist.
- 2.5** The delivery of course materials should reflect the post-graduate nature of training and encourage critical evaluation of the relevant theory and research.
- 2.6** Procedures, interventions and research taught and undertaken in the course(s) must proceed from sound theory and empirical research.
- 2.7** Programs should utilise evidence based teaching methods that promote integration of theory and practice through methods such as structured role plays, group exercises, problem based teaching, case formulations and other experiential methods.
- 2.8** Ethical and professional conduct should be addressed formally through a subject devoted to the topic, and informally where issues arise from other coursework and practical placements. Placement supervisors should evaluate this aspect of the students' work and encourage the development of ethical and professional practice.
- 2.9** Knowledge of and sensitivity to the needs of cultural and minority groups, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, should be developed within the course(s).
- 2.10** The course(s) should incorporate ongoing evaluation and review to ensure that quality teaching and practical experiences are provided to students. Course reviews by independent experts such as Course Advisory Committees and staff planning days are encouraged.

3 Resourcing the Program

3.1 Staffing

- 3.1.1 Appropriate staffing should be seen as the pre-eminent factor in resourcing professional programs in Counselling Psychology. The Course coordinator must be a member of the College of Counselling Psychologists and it is desirable that other staff members teaching the courses are also members of the College or eligible for such membership. Placement supervisors should also meet this criterion. It is expected that some staff teaching specialist topics, e.g. research statistics, might not meet this requirement.
- 3.1.2 It is essential that staffing of the course(s) is adequate and meets the APAC standards 2.4.3 – 2.4.11 and 5.1.1 – 5.1.3
- 3.1.3 Staff-student ratios should also be adequate and specifically meet the APAC standards 2.4.3 and 5.1.2.
- 3.1.4 The courses should have adequate administrative and clerical support, i.e. it must be demonstrated that there are sufficient staff to manage all the administrative tasks associated with coordinating and monitoring placements, supervision, and teaching and research activities.
- 3.1.5 Staff involved in teaching professional counselling psychology should be involved in regular professional practice which has relevance to the course(s) and there should be evidence that this work is recognised and supported by the University.
- 3.1.6 It is also desirable that all staff members who teach counselling psychology research skills continue to participate in relevant research projects.
- 3.1.7 The majority of coursework should be taught by academic staff and where student presentations occur they should constitute no more than 15% of the overall teaching program.

3.2 University Clinic

- 3.2.1 It is highly desirable that a University Clinic should be provided as a separate purpose-built facility. It may provide for the initial training of students from multiple courses, in which case appropriate triage arrangements should be established. (See also #6.3 below).
- 3.2.2 These clinics should not be expected to be financially self-supporting and should be supported by the University departments/programs which they serve. Clinics should focus on the provision both of optimal training of students and the offering of competent psychological services to clients.
- 3.2.3 The Clinic infrastructure should include at least the following:

- (i) A Director, responsible for the proper operation of the Clinic, including standards of teaching, training and service provision. The work of the Director should be taken into account in any calculation of staff workloads.
- (ii) Administrative staff to effectively manage the day to day arrangements of student training.
- (iii) Adequate work space and equipment for all students when not consulting clients. This should include desks, computers, test library, reference books and therapeutic materials.
- (iv) Sufficient consulting suites to manage the client load, equipped with video recording and playback facilities.
- (v) The usual facilities of a professional clinic: kitchenette, toilets, disabled access, secure and confidential telephone systems, acoustically insulated walls, storage space, one way screen(s) with communication system(s), private waiting rooms, training and meeting rooms for group activities.

3.2.4 Clinics should ideally be operational for the full year in order to provide continuity of client care and to ensure the viability of the Clinic's role in the community.

3.2.5 Documentation of the Clinic should be designed to meet the highest professional standards and include instructions for emergencies and for contact with supervisors.

3.2.6 As clinics frequently deal with vulnerable clients, all staff should obtain a clear search of their criminal records (Police Check) and a 'Working with Children Check' (or equivalent) if made available by State Governments.

3.3 Library and Tests

3.3.1 The Courses should be supported by a library collection of monographs, journals, audio and video recordings and on-line materials sufficient to provide for the needs of students at this graduate level. While it is not expected that all of the reference requirements for the literature reviews of theses will be able to be met, it is an expectation that reference materials sufficient to support at least the course work component of the programs should be available.

3.3.2 A test library containing the major psychological tests necessary for therapeutic work should be established. Examples of tests expected to be available include: WAIS-IV; WISC-IV; WPPSI-III; WMS-IV; MMPI-2; MMPI-A; PAI; NEO; BDI-2; BAI; WIAT; SCL-90; Vineland; Children's Behaviour Checklist; STAI; STAXI; IPIP; WHO QoL; K10 and others. Sufficient multiple copies will be required for teaching purposes.

3.3.3 The test library will be used both for teaching of Psychological Assessment and for resourcing students' and staff needs in conducting research.

4 Content of Coursework

Approved courses will comprise formal psychological knowledge, research and practical experience in counselling psychology. There is no requirement for an exact number of subjects stipulated for courses nor is the number of hours set for any subject with the exception of the placement hours. Formal knowledge subjects should comprise 50% of the entire course. Tertiary institutions are invited to address the content areas by way of larger single units or a combination of smaller units of study which may be grouped under the headings below. The underlying emphasis of all courses will be a balance of knowledge and skills acquisition, and development of practical experience. In all courses the guiding orientation will be on assessment, diagnosis, prevention and treatment of psychological difficulties. In addition there needs to be considerable emphasis on how to engage collaboratively with clients in order to achieve their goals. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with Sections 5.1.12 and 5.3.9 – 5.3.11 of the APAC Standards.

4.1 Essential Areas to be covered:

- (i) Psychological counselling skills, including theories and practice of counselling psychology from a wide and representative range of therapeutic approaches suitable for the diverse groups of clients who present for psychotherapy. Evaluation of therapies and outcomes of therapy, awareness of the research literature in counselling psychology and an ability to critically evaluate this literature is essential.
- (ii) Programs should include a focus on at least one of the following systemic modalities: couple therapy; family therapy or group therapy.
- (iii) Psychopathology. This should be a semester unit and include the teaching of treatment options for the main groups of mental health problems. These will include at least the disorders of: stress, anxiety and depression; psychosis; suicidality and problems of self-harm; eating disorders; substance-related disorders, trauma especially sexual trauma; developmental psychopathology; gerontology and dementia; psychopharmacology; amnesia and other cognitive disorders; dissociative disorders and somatisation disorders.

It is also expected that students will be able to utilise the major classificatory systems of mental illness, including the most recent versions of both the DSM and ICD and to appreciate how these systems have been used to understand the range of psychological disorders and psychopathology. It is expected that this should equip graduates to work with psychological

problems from the mild to the more serious mental health disorders and difficulties. Graduates should be able to provide both short and longer term interventions and treatments.

- (iv) Psychological assessment, including assessment of intelligence, memory, social, emotional and cognitive skills, personality, anxiety, depression, stress, educational abilities and vocational aptitudes. Also, the psychometric basis of tests, including reliability and validity must be taught.
- (v) Ethical issues including familiarity with professional guidelines and codes (e.g. APS; APA) for the provision of psychological services. Legal responsibilities of counselling psychologists, discussion of case material from ethical viewpoints, accountability, interaction with allied health professionals and the need for on-going professional development. National practice standards for the Mental Health workforce should also be taught.
- (vi) Research and data analysis skills necessary for the completion of an independent research project or thesis.
- (vii) In accordance with Section 5.4.4 of the APAC Standards, doctoral courses must include greater depth and/or breadth of coursework than is required for Masters' programs.

It is expected that items 4.1.(i) to 4.1.(iv) above will be taught in at least one formal subject each within the overall course.

4.2 Other highly desirable topic areas. A selection of the following should also be taught as formal units or as electives:

- Applied research and analysis
- Social behaviour
- Behavioural medicine and health psychology
- School counselling
- Stress, anxiety and depression
- Loss and grief
- Drug and alcohol counselling
- Educational and vocational issues

5 Research

The requirements for the research component of courses must be consistent with Sections 5.3.12 – 5.3.14 (Masters) and 5.4.6 – 5.4.11 (Doctoral) of the APAC Standards. Each student will submit an individual report of a research project on a

topic related to counselling psychology. This project may be in the form of a traditional thesis or in an alternative form such as indicated in the APAC Standards 5.3.14.

[A program evaluation study

A study based on experimental single case design

A critical review, pilot study and full grant application

A critical review and meta-analysis

A critical review and secondary data analyses

A literature review and an article suitable for submission to a peer-reviewed international scientific journal]

6 Practical Placements

Practical placements (practicums, work placements) in counselling psychology are most important components of the training and preparation of students for their professional practice. The purpose of these placements is to allow students to apply the skills and knowledge they have acquired in their coursework and other components of their courses.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the APAC Accreditation Standards, especially Sections 5.1.18 – 5.1.25; 5.3.18 – 5.3.30 (Masters); 5.1.18 - 5.1.25; 5.3.18 – 5.3.30; 5.4.4 and 5.4.12 (Doctoral)

The College does not require a specific model of training to be applied except that it should be consistent with the scientist-practitioner approach. There should be emphasis on evidence based practice, including a significant focus on the evidence regarding the establishment of a strong therapeutic alliance and client needs and choice, in addition to the evidence regarding empirically supported therapies.

One of the identifying characteristics of Counselling Psychology practice is the ability of the practitioner to utilise a range of evidence-based therapeutic interventions to work effectively and collaboratively with a diverse range of clients.

- 6.1** The requirements for all placement training should be provided in the Course Handbook and made available to all students.
- 6.2** The initial placement should take place in the University Clinic or Counselling Centre. (This should not be confused with student counselling services offered to the University's own students.) Such a clinic will provide the circumstances for the start of the students' professionalisation and as such should be a place which emulates the best of private practice. If the University is offering more than one Graduate program in specialities of professional psychology, the Clinic should be developed such that all first placements can be undertaken there.
- 6.3** In the event that no such Clinic is available, and until such a facility has been established, first placements may be arranged at external psychological services but care should be taken to ensure that supervision levels are high

and appropriate for students engaging with their first clients. As a guide this level should be one hour of individual supervision for every two hours of client contact.

- 6.4** This first placement should involve close links between the knowledge base of the course and counselling psychology practice. This first placement should only occur after students have completed basic training and skill development and therefore should typically occur in the second half of the first year of the course.
- 6.5** Supervision of students in this and other placements should be by qualified counselling psychologists who can provide the constructive guidance necessary for students in the process of developing their knowledge and skills.
- 6.6** In planning courses of practical training the requirements of State and Territory Psychologists' Registration Boards should be kept in mind. This is especially important in relation to the requirements for achieving competence in psychological assessment and the use of psychological tests.
- 6.7** For Masters' courses there must be a minimum requirement of 1000 Total Placement hours which should include at least 300 hours of client contact. For Doctoral courses there must be a minimum requirement of 1500 Total Placement hours with at least 450 hours of client contact. APAC standards must also be met.
- 6.8** The program of professional supervision must be designed to fulfil the student's changing developmental needs and meet standards for good client care. Over the duration of a course supervision should typically be one hour for each placement day and total supervision time should be at least 125 hours. Doctoral students should complete at least 188 hours of supervision.
- 6.9** After the initial placement in the University clinic, further supervised placements should occur in 2 settings, or 3 settings for doctoral students.
- 6.10** Placements should provide students with a wide range of experience with clients presenting with different problems, of varying ages and needing a variety of interventions.
- 6.11** In accordance with APAC standards 5.1.18 – 5.1.30 for practical placements, the reciprocal responsibilities of the field supervisor, the student and the University supervisor should be agreed formally in writing. All parties should agree on the type of student experience to be provided, the methods of monitoring student progress and reporting and final assessment procedures.
- 6.12** Collaborative strategies should be in place to ensure maintenance of standards in field placements and mechanisms should also be provided to assess the contribution placements make to students' professional development.

- 6.13** Students should keep a log of all professional activities, including client contact, supervision, case management and other psychological work. This will demonstrate that College and Registration Board requirements have been met.
- 6.14** Site visits by the placement coordinator(s) should occur at least once for each placement and ideally there should also be a mid-placement visit. Teleconferencing may be used for remote placements.
- 6.15** Supervisors and students should both provide reports at the conclusion of each placement.
- 6.16** The placement program should also include workshops/seminars open to all students and supervisors and continuing education should also be provided for all.
- 6.17** Remote placements may be undertaken after the first placement and these can be in rural and regional areas. They should not involve greater than 300 hours of placement time and generally should be when the distance between the placement and the supervisor is more than one hour of travelling time. Carefully selected, experienced distance education students enrolled in approved off-campus degrees may undertake approved remote placements.
- 6.18** A personal meeting between the student and the supervisor should occur before the remote placement begins in order to ensure placement readiness.
- 6.19** Distance supervision must be at least one hour per week by telephone or video computer link. Before each supervision contact, the student must provide written reports of each client to the supervisor by e-mail, facsimile or post.
- 6.20** Students in remote placements must provide audio or video recordings of each client at some stage during the placement. The timing of this will be at the discretion of the supervisor.
- 6.21** The usual signed agreement should be completed for each remote placement (See #6.11 above) with attention being paid to: therapeutic materials and tests available at the site; agency guidelines for emergencies; contact details for senior staff available for consultation, whether or not they are psychologists.
- 6.22** University resources may be used by student in a remote placement if such materials are not available on site.
- 6.23** All other and usual requirements of non-remote placement completion should be followed. (See #6 above.)

7 Assessment

Assessment should be varied and appropriate for the particular task: coursework, research or placement.

- 7.1** Assessment processes should reflect appropriate and on-going processes which assess the student in developing skill acquisition and knowledge.
- 7.2** For Masters students a minimum of four case reports should be required as part of placements (six for Doctoral students)
- 7.3** Criteria for minimum standards of performance should be available to the student in written form and evaluation of the student should refer to these criteria.
- 7.4** When a student does not meet minimum standards, mechanisms should be in place so that the student does not obtain a formal qualification in Counselling Psychology.
- 7.5** Where a student fails to meet placement standards, procedures should permit a limited number of repeat placements so that the student may be given opportunities to demonstrate that the necessary skills are present. If this can not be demonstrated then procedures should be available to not award the student a qualification in Counselling Psychology.
- 7.6** University grievance procedures should also be available to all students.