



Edward Helmes, PhD, ABAP, FAPS
Professor & Director, Professional Programs

20 November 2009

Chair, Psychology Board of Australia

Re: Consultation Paper on Registration Standards and Related Matters

My thanks for the opportunity to respond to this consultation paper. My comments represent my personal opinions and not those of the University, but are framed in terms of my experience as director of a professional training program in psychology.

I strongly support the mandatory registration requirement in 2.1 Criminal History. While our domestic program benefits from the mandatory checks required by the Queensland Psychologists Board, our program in Singapore did not do so. This oversight resulted in the acceptance of a student with a criminal history of sexual offences that were later repeated during his period as a student.

I am also in favour of mandatory standard 2.24 English Language Skills. The introduction of the same level of English fluency requirements in Queensland has meant substantially more confidence in the ability of international students to communicate effectively as clinicians with the higher fluency requirement of IELTS 7.0 in all four areas assessed.

I remain to be convinced of the value of 10 hours of individual supervision for general registration and the requirement for even more supervision for specialist registration and for endorsement for supervision. As the bulk of this will be pure supervision, the evidence for the effectiveness of such practices seems to be quite limited. In addition, our experience in the north of Queensland is that it's extremely difficult to attain both good continuing professional development programs and effective qualified supervisors for our students. To add the requirement that practitioners must also obtain supervision would place an unsustainable burden upon certain practitioners, if sufficient numbers of qualified supervisors were available. I cannot see how this could be implemented in our region effectively.

3-Proposed Qualification Requirements for General Registration

I strongly support the move to a six-year requirement for general registration. The document is not clear on what the Board might approve in the form of either the one-year internship for graduates of a five-year APAC-accredited program and for the two-year internship for graduates of four-year programs. The limited information available to date suggests that approved internships may be few and far between, which will not provide the same number of graduates as from the current 4+2 programs. The financial pressures active in this University are such that it is highly likely that any funding increases targeted towards clinical psychology will simply be absorbed by administration for other purposes unless very firm guidelines accompany any funding increase

4-Proposal for Specialist Registration

Of the three options presented, Option 3 has advantages in my eyes. It is relatively simple and inexpensive to implement, but may become more expensive to operate once established, particularly if appeals of decisions become common.

5-Proposal for Supervisor Training

This proposal deserves widespread support and it certainly has mine. The Queensland supervisor training program has had an impact in providing more uniform practices and, one hopes, better supervision that also leads to better psychological practice.

In all, these proposals provide an encouraging background for national registration. It is also nice to see that many proposals have periods established for their review and the other reviews are set for renewal or amendment six years in the future.

My thanks again for the opportunity to provide comments on these proposals

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Edward Helms", is enclosed in a light blue rectangular box.