

Frequently asked questions for higher degree provisional psychologists

I finished my four year psychology sequence of study more than 10 years ago; can I enrol in a postgraduate program?

Current accreditation standards for higher degrees do not allow individuals to enrol in the Masters or Doctorate programs if there has been a gap of more than 10 years between the 4th and 5th year.

Therefore you should seek advice and approval to enrol from the tertiary institution to which you are applying. It is the responsibility of the accredited tertiary institution to advise you about any particular conditions or refresher training that is required to be accepted into a postgraduate program.

I already have substantial academic training, including in psychology. Can the Board advise what credit I should receive against coursework requirements in a postgraduate psychology course?

No, the Board cannot provide advice on this issue. This is a matter for the university offering the particular course. Please contact the university directly.

I gained my undergraduate psychology qualifications outside Australia. Can I enrol in a postgraduate program in Australia?

You should seek advice and approval to enrol from the tertiary institution to which you are interested in applying.

If you are accepted into an accredited postgraduate psychology program in Australia you will need to obtain provisional registration in order to undertake the degree. The minimum educational requirement for provisional registration in Australia is an accredited four year sequence of study. Therefore you need to have your undergraduate qualifications assessed to determine whether they are equivalent to Australian qualifications that are accepted by the Board for registration. The Australian Psychological Society (APS) currently assesses overseas academic qualifications. To find out about the assessment visit their website - www.psychology.org.au/membership/qualifications. The outcome of this assessment will be considered by the Board in determining whether you are eligible for provisional registration in Australia.

Overseas applicants may also need to provide proof of English language proficiency. For more information please refer to the Board's [English language skills registration standard](#).

More information about registration requirements, including educational requirements for General and Provisional registration, is set out in the [registration standards](#) available on the website.

I am completing an APAC accredited postgraduate degree at an overseas campus – do I need to be registered?

No. The Board and the legislative framework upon which registration is framed stops at the borders of Australia. Therefore, the Board has no jurisdiction over practice as part of a postgraduate degree that is performed outside Australia. You should check if you are required to be registered or licensed to practice psychology in the country where you are undertaking your degree.

Is the APAC accredited tertiary course of study I am enrolled in recognised by the Psychology Board of Australia?

If the tertiary course of study in which you are enrolled was APAC accredited at the time you complete the course it will be recognised by the National Board. A list of currently approved programs of study is available on the website at www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Accreditation.aspx. Previously accredited courses that are no longer offered are not on this list but may still be recognised. You can submit a [request for historical course information](#) on the APAC website - www.psychologycouncil.org.au/ - if you need to verify the accreditation status of a course that is no longer offered.

I can't find myself/my supervisor/my colleague on the public register – what should I do?

Registration numbers changed with the introduction of the national scheme in 2010 so make sure you are not searching for an old registration number. Enter your last name and profession and search for that initially.

My provisional registration has expired - what should I do?

If it is within one month of the expiry date, you can still renew your registration. Under the National Law you **must** renew your registration within one month of the expiry date or your registration will lapse. This means that you have one month after your expiry date to renew. You can still work in this period because you will still be registered. Your employer, supervisor, or education provider can review your registration status online. If you have not renewed within one month after the expiry date and you wish to continue your internship, you will need to make a new application for registration.

Why can't I renew my registration online?

Provisional psychologists cannot renew online as details of ongoing university enrolment must be provided with the renewal. Therefore provisional renewal forms need to be posted to a local AHPRA office. It is intended that in the future system upgrades will make online renewal available for provisional psychologists.

Why can't I renew my provisional registration more than twice?

Section 64(3) of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) specifically states – 'Provisional registration may not be renewed more than twice.' Therefore there cannot be any exemptions to this requirement. Higher degree provisional psychologists who do not complete their qualification within three years must reapply for provisional registration. Given that provisional registration is required right from the start of enrolment and for the duration of the higher degree, including the thesis, Doctoral candidates and part-time candidates will often require registration for more than three years. Therefore AHPRA is looking at ways of streamlining this process to ensure your study is not disrupted.

The application for provisional registration fee is \$0 therefore applicants who must submit a new application for provisional registration only need to pay the annual registration fee so the cost to the applicant is the same as renewal of registration.

If you have already renewed twice under the National Scheme and are nearing the end of your registration you should contact AHPRA to find out about submitting a new application.

Why is there no student registration for psychologists?

The category of provisional registration better represents the training pathways of psychologists than the category of student registration. Student registration is typically applied to registrants in undergraduate programs, or in programs where students are closely supervised in group placements and do not work independently in a practical environment. This does not apply to trainees in 5th and 6th year programs which require trainees to operate autonomously under supervision when practising, usually in one-on-one consultations. Although trainees have a choice of three routes to complete the 5th and 6th years - either through workplace internships (4+2 program) or postgraduate professional Masters, or a combination (5+1 program) all have substantial periods of training in supervised workplace placements and are therefore deemed fall into the provisional registration provisions of the National Law rather than the student registration provisions. Provisional registration for 5th and 6th year trainees is also consistent with accepted standard practice in Australia given that 6 of 8 jurisdictions before the national scheme registered 5th and 6th year trainees as provisional (or equivalent) registrants.

In addition, it is not unusual for trainees to obtain paid workplace training positions, or further obtain paid work performing duties as a provisional psychologist under supervision on Board approval. These paid positions are important for growing and maintaining the psychology workforce. Student registration at the 5th and 6th year for postgraduate students would prevent them obtaining such paid places as these are outside their work as a student. The Board would anticipate considerable discontent from provisionally registered psychologists should it seek to introduce student registration at the 5th and 6th year as it might inadvertently limit an intern's ability to obtain paid supervised training positions which require provisional registration status.

Although other health professions (medicine, pharmacy, medical radiation practice) that have provisional registration for graduates undertaking supervised practice also have student registration for individuals enrolled in undergraduate programs, the Psychology Board has determined that the first four years of psychology training do not require registration as a student as there are no internship placements, making the risks to the public of these students very low. This decision follows the precedent that there has never been psychology student registration in any jurisdiction of Australia.

Under the national scheme, all individuals working towards general registration as a psychologist will have a consistent title in every state and territory of Australia. This is important in helping the public understand more about the registration status of psychologists.

Can I use the title 'psychologist'?

Provisional Psychologists undertaking an accredited higher degree are entitled to use the title 'Provisional Psychologist' while engaged in approved supervised practice. You should not use the title 'Psychologist' by itself until you have General registration.

Under the National Law the word 'provisional' is not protected but when paired with the word 'psychologist' it would constitute a breach of the Act if used by any person who is not registered as a Provisional Psychologist.

If your registration expires but you are still within the one month late period you can continue to use the title 'Provisional Psychologist', however if your registration lapses you may not continue to use the title Provisional Psychologist or any derivative of that title. There are penalties and other consequences for false use of titles.

Is my registration affected if I transfer to a different degree?

No, changing to a different accredited degree doesn't affect your registration. However you must advise your local AHPRA office of the change in writing and provide evidence of enrolment in the new degree.

Can I undertake psychological practice in roles that are in addition to my university placements?

Yes, but you must obtain approval from the Board first. For more information refer to the Board's [Policy on working in addition to placements](#) and the [Application for working in addition to approved placement for higher degree pathway provisional psychologists \(Form AWOP-76\)](#)

What is the minimum amount for professional indemnity insurance (PII) for provisional psychologists?

All practising psychologists - including provisional psychologists - must have a minimum level of \$2 million for any one claim. It is the responsibility of the individual psychologist to determine whether the minimum level is sufficient for their practice and to ensure that they take out PII cover that is appropriate to the level of risk. For more information on PII refer to the [Professional indemnity insurance arrangements registration standard](#) and the [Guideline on professional indemnity insurance for psychologists](#).

I am working in addition to university placements. Do I need to take out my own professional indemnity insurance?

Provided that your practice as a provisional psychologist is covered by your employer's professional indemnity insurance and this complies with all the Board's requirements, you don't need to take out extra cover. It is important that you discuss PII arrangements with your supervisor and ensure appropriate cover for your practice is in place before you commence practice.

Does my placement supervisor have to be approved by the Board?

There are some new requirements for supervisors under the National Registration scheme and there is a transition period until 2013 to allow everyone time to meet the new requirements. Therefore supervisors for placements that are part of a higher degree program do not need to be approved by the Board until after 30 June 2013. However if you wish to undertake work as a provisional psychologist that is not part of your degree then the work role/placement and your supervisor must be Board-approved. You can apply for approval using the [Application for working in addition to approved placement for higher degree pathway provisional psychologists \(Form AWOP-76\)](#)

I have completed my post-graduate degree, and my thesis has been submitted but not yet accepted. Can I apply for General registration?

Masters candidates cannot apply for General registration until they have completed the degree which means the thesis must have been marked and passed. However once the degree is completed an application for General registration may be made prior to formally graduating (i.e. attending the graduation ceremony).

Doctoral and combined degree candidates may apply for General registration once they have completed the equivalent of a Masters degree which may be prior to completion of the doctoral thesis. Full details of the requirements are set out in the [Policy for higher degree students applying for General registration](#). Applicants for General registration prior to completion of the thesis must submit a form – [PDEC-76](#) - signed by their Head of School verifying progress with the thesis.

What is an 'endorsement'?

The National Law enables National Boards to 'endorse' the registration of suitably qualified practitioners. Endorsement of a psychologist's General registration is a legal mechanism under the National Law through which particular groups of registrants, who have an additional specialist qualification and advanced supervised practice recognised by the Board, can be identified to the public, employers and others through the National Register. An endorsement on General registration indicates that a health practitioner has qualifications and supervised experience in an advanced area of practice, in addition to the minimum level of training required for General registration. Provisional psychologist undertaking an accredited higher degree associated with a particular area of practice may wish to consider applying for an endorsement in the future and should refer to the [Guidelines on area of practice endorsements](#) for more information.

What qualifications will I require for endorsement?

To be eligible for endorsement in one of the approved areas of practice you must have General registration and:

- a) an accredited doctorate in the approved area of practice that you are applying for, and a minimum one year of approved supervised full-time equivalent practice with a Board approved supervisor in a Board approved registrar program; or
- b) an accredited Masters in the approved area of practice that you are applying for, and a minimum of two years of approved supervised full-time equivalent practice with a Board approved supervisor in a Board approved registrar program; or
- c) another qualification that, in the Board's opinion, is substantially equivalent to (a) or (b).*

* Option (c) generally refers to equivalent overseas qualifications as assessed by a recognised accreditation authority. The Board does not offer bridging programs but will consider accredited postgraduate bridging programs, as they become available in future, under these equivalence guidelines, and will consult with the accreditation council in relation to the status and likely approval of such programs.

Individuals who were enrolled in an accredited higher degree before the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme may qualify for endorsement under approved transition provisions – for details refer to the [Transition and grandparenting arrangements for area of practice endorsements](#).

Do you have a question that's not in these FAQs? More psychology FAQs and fact sheets are available at <http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/FAQ.aspx>

You can also send your question using the online enquiry form:
<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/about-ahpra/contact-us/make-an-enquiry.aspx>