



Professor Brin Grenyer
Chair
Psychology Board of Australia
PO Box 16085 Collins Street West
Melbourne Vic 8007

25 January 2011

Dear Professor Grenyer,

Re: Consultation on Guideline 12: Guideline for Supervisors and Supervisor Training Providers

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above guideline. As the Chair for the Post-graduate Coursework committee (Field Placement sub-committee) at Macquarie University, my comments will reflect the possible impact and role of the supervision training program on Universities. This submission includes input from staff involved in the Clinical, Clinical Neuropsychology and Organisational Psychology post-graduate programs and therefore reflects the view of all Board approved and APAC accredited higher degree programs of the Department. The Board's outlined competencies and a desire for proven proficiency is admirable. The recognition of the specific skill of Supervision is overdue and the separation of the Tertiary sector from the other pathways is also appreciated. The transition to the new standards however will pose certain challenges as well as opportunities for the University sector.

As Macquarie University is in NSW, many of our supervisors for Masters/Doctorate practical placements will have completed the NSW Registration Board training prior to June 2010 and will simply have to apply for Board-approved supervisor status before 30 June 2013, however many will nonetheless find this process onerous. It must be remembered that Field Supervisors for Universities are usually not remunerated and are given limited resources within their employment to complete the role. If the University sector can provide some support, for example, administrative assistance with applications, this would improve compliance from busy field supervisors. Further, if potential supervisors are able to act in the capacity of a supervisor while their application is being reviewed, it will facilitate placement organisation. Although this will potentially add administrative costs to the University, it will aid retention of placements.

For those potential Board-approved Supervisors who will need to complete the supervision training, the proposed model poses significant challenges. As mentioned, supervisors are time-poor and it is a common complaint that there are not enough field placements to meet the University sector's needs, as evidenced by a national conference being held in Melbourne in March 2012 on "Innovations in Clinical Placements" which in part will address the supply-demand difficulties across Health placements. Anything that reduces the appeal of undertaking student placements will provide difficulties for the Psychology workforce. Therefore, while educationally valuable, the requirements of 7 hours pre-reading, 2 days course attendance and submission of video recorded supervision sessions for competency assessment will be a significant disincentive to both potential supervisors and organisations, particularly given that no previous training requirement existed. With the added difficulty of supervision training needing to be completed before any placements can occur, it is expected that significant placements will be lost from the system. As some suggestions to manage the difficult transition, it is recommended that:

- Supervisors for the tertiary sector be given generous transition grace periods, rather than “limited” (as per 1.2) and further that they be allowed to complete the training within a year of commencing as a Supervisor for the institution, rather than prior.
- Given the numbers of potential supervisors involved, that there be some mechanism to establish competency of those who have been working as supervisors in the field for a significant period, for example five years, such that they don’t need to undergo the full training. The NSW registration Board used to have shortened training for experienced supervisors in recognition of these established experts. The Board could consider some peer based endorsement for these Psychologists.
- One partial solution for some of the difficulties would be for the Board to consider developing a series of online units, with included readings and test, to address the listed competencies rather than requiring attendance at a two day course. This would also benefit rural Universities in particular.
- That if the training is to be run by external providers, that the University sector be able to purchase a (or develop their own) training program from the Board at a reduced cost to allow their own training of supervisors.
- Finally, that consideration be given, in the first cycle, for the removal of the requirement for video recorded session submission. The latter requirement has inherent high costs to trainee and trainers, as well as adding potentially lengthy delays until supervision training (and therefore approval) can be completed. In the long term, developing a peer based format, perhaps within peer PD, for proving competency would be more cost effective.

An additional comment is that while that Board states that Supervisors will only need to complete one course to be approved as a Supervisor for all four pathways (2.2), the following paragraph suggests that additional specific modules for each pathway should be available. Some additional details on the specific differences that should be included from APAC would be helpful. Further, on the Board’s “Approved Supervisor” website, Supervisors do have the different pathways for which they are approved listed, raising the question as to the process by which one is approved for multiple pathways.

In conclusion, the Psychology Board of Australia is seeking to improve standards within the Profession and is to be commended. However, the risk to the University sector of making the process too demanding, and therefore at significant cost (time/money to both Supervisors and Universities) in the first five year cycle will potentially lead to a reduction in available placements unless significant grace periods and flexibility are inherent.

Regards,



ROS KNIGHT, Clinic Director

Regards,



Executive Dean

Faculty of Human Sciences