



Communiqué

29 June 2012

This communiqué highlights key issues from the 31st meeting of the Psychology Board of Australia (the National Board) on 29 June 2012. At each meeting, the National Board considers a wide range of issues, many of which are routine and are not included in this communiqué.

The Board in 2012

The Strategic Plan for 2012-13 was adopted by the Board at the February meeting. In addition to the regular forums, stakeholder meetings, and undertaking the functions of a National Board under the National Law, the Board has determined that there will be four priority projects in 2012:

- development of the Guidelines for supervisors and supervisor training providers and process
- development of the 5+1 Internship Program Guidelines
- development of the National Psychology Examination, and
- review of the Guidelines for 4+2 internship programs

The Board has developed committees, working parties and portfolios to support the progress of these important projects. The following information provides an update on the four priority projects.

Supervisor Training

The Supervisor Training Working Party has been meeting to analyse the submissions to consultation paper 12 on the *Guideline for supervisors and supervisor training providers* earlier in 2012 and has determined that the following are key themes for consideration:

- reviewing and improving the *Guidelines for supervisors and supervisor training providers*
- including provisions for recognition of prior learning and training and clarifying transition provisions in the Guideline
- expanding the tender/application guidelines for Board-approved supervisor training to differentiate and address the training needs of psychologists with different levels of experience and prior training in supervision
- ensuring that the structure of refresher (revision) training for supervisors be tailored to identify and address any identified gaps in supervisor skills and knowledge
- considering extending the timeframes for transition to undertake supervisor training
- finalising an application and approvals process for Board-approved supervisor training providers, including the finalisation of an Expression of Interest (EOI) process, and
- developing a policy concerning the revocation of supervisor status and refusal to approve or renew Board-approved supervisor status.

In the June board meeting, the National Board determined to release a fact sheet about transition to the new supervisor training guidelines (while the Board is finalising the Guidelines) and to update the current *Fact sheet for supervisors*. This information will be published on the website shortly and included in the next edition of *Connections*, the Board newsletter to all registrants and interested persons. The final version of the Guidelines will be published later in 2012.

Development of Guidelines for the 5+1 internship program

The Psychology Board of Australia has published its revised *Provisional registration standard*, which was recently approved by all Australian Health Ministers and came in to effect on 1 June 2012. The new *Provisional registration standard* can be found at: www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.

Now that the revised *Provisional Registration standard* has been approved, the Board will shortly be developing and consulting on guidelines for the 5+1 program, focusing on the 6th year internship. The specifications for the 5th year of this pathway are published in the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) standard. The requirements for the sixth year workplace internship are described in the new *Provisional registration standard* and include a minimum of 1540 hours of internship and achievement of the eight core capabilities of the internship program.

The Board proposes to develop a *Guideline for the 5+1 internship program* to provide additional information for registrants undertaking the 5+1 internship program, and this consultation is planned for 2012.

National Psychology Exam

The National Psychology Exam Committee has been meeting regularly to discuss the following:

- the curriculum and format for the exam
- required readings for the exam
- development of exam questions, and
- working with AHRPA to develop a project plan and business case for the national psychology exam.

At its March meeting the Board approved the final curriculum for the national psychology examination and an updated reading list, which will be published on the website shortly. At the June meeting the Board approved for AHPRA to instigate a tender process in the second half of 2012 for an external provider of a computer based testing platform for the examination delivery.

4+2 Internship Program Review

The National Board's Internship Review Working Party is working on reviewing and improving the 4+2 internship program. The task of this working party includes the following:

- review of feedback from registrants, regional boards, professional officers, AHPRA and key stakeholders about the 4+2 internship program
- review of the relevant registration standards
- review of the current Guidelines for 4+2 internship programs
- review of the policies that support the guidelines and *Provisional registration standard*
- development of a consultation paper for internal review (i.e. regional boards, professional officers, AHRPA staff), and
- development of a consultation paper for external/public review.

The aim of the review is to:

- review the 4+2 guidelines within the framework of the current *Provisional registration standard*
- ensure that the internship is able to be completed in 2 years
- reduce red-tape in the 4+2 pathway while maintaining the Board's obligations to protect the public
- reduce the complexities inherent in completing the internship based on the current guidelines, and
- increase the consistency in Board documents.

The Board has a review cycle for all of its registration standards, guidelines, and policies of three years (with the majority due in 2013). It is planned that the 4+2 Guidelines will be the first of these that will be reviewed with the external consultation in 2013.

Psychology Board of Australia sets 2013-2013 fees

In setting its budget for the 2012/13 financial year, the National Board reviewed all registration fees in consultation with its Finance and Management Committee and Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency. The National Board has set its registration fee for 2012-2013 at \$409 (with a rebate for practitioners whose principal place of practice is NSW). This limits the fee increase to less than the national CPI of 1.6%. The annual renewal fee will apply from 1 July 2012 and cover the 30 November 2012 to 30 November 2013 registration period for most practitioners.

The National Board previously waived the application fee for psychology provisional registration in all states and territories until 30 June 2012. The National Board has confirmed the decision to set the provisional registration application fee at \$0 for 2012-2013, to reduce the burden of fees on provisional psychologists.

In addition, the National Board has determined to waive the application fee for practitioners who are changing registration type from general registration to non-practising registration.

There is no application fee for psychologists holding non-practising registration to convert to general registration and concurrently apply for an area of practice endorsement. This will encourage a seamless process for psychologists to return to work after a period of absence (such as maternity leave).

The 2013 fee schedule will be published shortly on the Boards website at:
www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Fees.aspx

Under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law), the Board sets its fees which are then agreed by the AHPRA Agency Management Committee through a formal health professions agreement.

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is entirely funded by registration fees and there is no cross subsidisation between professions.

The Psychology Board of Australia welcomes the four new health professions

On 1 July 2012, practitioners in the following health professions joined Australia's National Registration and Accreditation Scheme:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice
- Chinese medicine
- medical radiation practice, and
- occupational therapy.

Under the National Scheme, established by the Council of Australian Governments in 2010, there is a National Board for each profession, which is supported by AHPRA. These boards set the professional standards that each practitioner must meet to be registered.

The four new professions join the original ten professions of: chiropractic, dental, medical, nursing and midwifery, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry, and psychology in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

The purpose of health practitioner regulation is to protect the public by ensuring that only health practitioners who have the skills, qualifications and knowledge to provide safe care are registered.

National Boards consult on international criminal history checks

All of the 14 National Boards, including the Psychology Board of Australia, are currently consulting on options for refining international criminal history checks used to assess applications for registration as a health practitioner in Australia.

Under the National Scheme, National Boards set registration standards that every registered practitioner must meet. One of these standards relates to criminal history. The National Boards are working with AHPRA to refine the requirements for criminal history checks from jurisdictions outside Australia.

The current approach involves checking Australian criminal history through CrimTrac and requiring applicants to sign a declaration disclosing any criminal history outside Australia. When a criminal history is disclosed, further investigations are made and the criminal history is assessed according to the relevant Board's *Criminal History Registration Standard*.

The National Boards must decide whether this is adequate or if they should increase the scrutiny of applicants' international criminal history. In effect, the Boards must balance their responsibility under the National Law to protect the public, with the need to ensure there is no unnecessary red tape in assessing and managing applications for registration as a health practitioner in Australia.

The National Boards are open to feedback and seeking input on this complex issue. The details of the options under consideration as well as background information in relation to international criminal history checks are published in the consultation paper at: www.psychologyboard.gov.au/News/Current-Consultations.aspx.

Please provide feedback by email to criminalhistoryconsult@ahpra.gov.au by close of business on 17 August 2012.

Psychology Board of Australia website

The Board continues to publish important information on its website. Psychologists are encouraged to access the website regularly to keep up to date with guidelines, policies, frequently asked questions (FAQs), fact sheets and registration standards at: www.psychologyboard.gov.au.

Psychologists are encouraged to regularly review the Board's website for news and updates on policies and guidelines affecting psychologists.

Accreditation matters

Under section 49 of the National Law, the National Board requires accreditation reports from the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) before it can approve the accredited programs of study as providing a qualification for the purposes of registration. The Board approved the accreditation of courses at the Australian College of Applied Psychology.

These courses will be added to the list of Board-approved courses that is published on the Board's website.

Newsletter

The Psychology Board of Australia's Newsletters, *Connections*, have been published on the Board's website since December 2010. During 2011, the newsletter was circulated as an e-newsletter to all registrants for whom the Board had email addresses in addition to being published on the website.

Issue 5 of *Connections* is currently under development and will be circulated to all registrants for whom the Board has email addresses shortly. The Board will also publish the newsletter on its website.

The Board encourages all registrants to read this newsletter, and familiarise themselves with the work of the Board.

Stakeholder meetings

Members of the National Board continue to be very active in meeting with local registrants and stakeholders and presenting at public meetings and universities. The Board has recently been discussing with stakeholders trends in the training and registration across the country of psychologists with an area of practice endorsement. Representatives of the Board have had ongoing conversations with various universities and students, health and education departments, and at psychology professional society meetings.

Professor Brin Grenyer
Chair
Psychology Board of Australia
4 July 2012