

Comments by Daphne Hewson on
Consultation Paper 18 on
Guidelines for the National Psychology Examination

1. I query the exemption of Masters/D.Psych graduates from the National Examination. The endorsement system disadvantages 4+2 and 5+1 psychologists. This exemption decision further discriminates against them. I know that the universities and the break-away group that promotes the superiority of clinical psychologists have squawked loudly that 6 year graduates should be exempt, supposedly because of the high level of training and examination processes in those programmes. I disagree. Having directed both clinical psychology and 4+2 university programs and having talked to hundreds of field supervisors (when they attended Board-approved supervision workshops), I can see no grounds for assuming superiority of 6 year graduates. The programs do not appear to cover all the Board's 4-2 content requirements and much of the assessment is done by seminar presentation or essay. Some programs appear to have little or no live observation of student's intervention and assessment skills. Instead of responding to claims from either side of the debate (although 4+2 provisional psychologists don't have a power group to speak for them, so it's a rather one-sided debate), I propose that the Board takes an evidence-based approach to decision making. Where is the evidence that 6 year graduates could pass with the required standard of 70% on the Board's exam. I assume that most of them could if they studied for it, but the point of an exemption is that they supposedly know it already and don't need to study. But do they? Who would do this research? Universities have a vested interest in not having to prepare their students for the exam. 4+2 provisional psychologists don't have resources to conduct such research. It will only be conducted if the Board conducts the research via researchers who have no vested interest. (That excludes me – I support the case for equality of 4+2 provisional psychologists).

2. I query the correct answer on this sample question on Interventions (client with social anxiety and insomnia). Motivational Interviewing is an excellent approach for working with any form of ambivalence. It is not limited to working on specific goals. Both A and E could be counted as correct answers to this item. If only one answer can be correct, then it should be A, because Motivational Interviewing has an evidence-based method for responding to ambivalence (change talk), whereas item E does not specify how to "explore the reasons" for ambivalence.