

Fact sheet

January 2020

Extended leave provisions for provisional psychologists

Introduction

This fact sheet has been developed by the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) and provides information for provisional psychologists who are taking extended leave from their accredited degree or internship but who intend to return to complete their training in the future. The most common type of extended leave is parental leave including:

- maternity leave
- paternity leave
- adoption leave, and
- grandparenting leave.

This information may also be applied to other types of extended leave including:

- carer's leave which may include carer's responsibilities for a child, grandchild, parent or other person dependent on your care
- health reasons/sick leave which may include extended illness, injury, stress, or other reasons that impact your ability to work or study at the current time, such as bereavement, and
- lifestyle leave which may be taken to travel or pursue other work or interests but with the intention of returning to psychology practice in the future.

The information in this fact sheet is intended to ensure that provisional psychologists taking extended leave are fully informed of their options and obligations, and to make the transition from work and study, to maternity or other leave, and then back again, as easy as possible.

Supporting the work life balance

Ensuring fair and equitable policies and processes for provisional psychologists taking parental leave, carer's leave or lifestyle leave is important to the Board.

The Board's policies allow for breaks to be taken during the training pathway to become a psychologist, including:

- Up to 10 years can be taken off between completion of undergraduate education and commencement of an internship or postgraduate degree, and longer breaks may be permitted, if a university accepts your enrolment in a postgraduate degree or refresher training is completed prior to starting an internship. Applicants are advised to seek advice and approval to enrol from the tertiary institution to which they 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. Refresher training requirements for entry into an internship will be decided by the Board on a case-by-case basis. Information on refresher training can be found in Appendix C of the [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program](#).
- The 4+2 and 5+1 training pathway can be done part-time over up to five years, instead of two years full-time.
- Up to five years can be taken off between completion of a 5+1 internship or postgraduate degree and application for general registration.

Additionally, higher degree students usually have flexibility to defer their degree or undertake part-time study if required – this is at the discretion of the individual university or college.

Options for registration when you take extended leave

Higher degree provisional psychologists

- Any leave that you take in normal university holidays, including the summer holidays does not need to be notified to the Board.
- If you have university approval to defer your degree while on leave and will not be enrolled in any courses for one or more study periods you must advise the Board in writing.
- If you withdraw from your degree to go on leave you must notify the Board and surrender your provisional registration. You will need to reapply for provisional registration when you re-enrol, and the university provides evidence of your re-enrolment.
- If you have been approved to work in a provisional psychology position in addition to your degree, this approval requires continued enrolment in the degree, so if you defer or withdraw from your higher degree you cannot continue working as a provisional psychologist in the external role (refer to *Policy on working in addition to placements* for more information).

Internship provisional psychologists – 5+1 pathway

- Annual or personal leave up to eight weeks per year can be taken at any time and the Board does not need to be notified. Any proposed leave periods that are longer than eight weeks or any proposal for more than eight weeks of leave to be taken in one year is considered extended leave and must be approved in advance by the Board.
- Extended leave from an internship can be granted by the Board for a period of up to 12 months (with the possibility of extension) for parenting leave or other special circumstances. You must obtain approval from the Board in writing and in advance. If approval is granted for up to 12 months you will be able to recommence the current internship after the period of leave.
- Extended leave longer than 12 months usually requires that you discontinue the internship and then reapply to start the internship when you are ready to return to practice. You will usually be eligible to apply for recognition of the previous internship hours towards the new internship (refer to the relevant internship guidelines for more information).
- When taking extended leave, you should ensure your supervisor provides the Board with a progress report for the period since your last progress report until your leave commences.

Internship provisional psychologists – 4+2 pathway

The 4+2 internship pathway is being retired on 1 January 2029. The extended leave provisions for interns in the 4+2 pathway will be affected by the hard deadlines associated with the retirement of this pathway.

If you are enrolled in a 4+2 Internship and are considering taking extended leave, please familiarise yourself with the key dates for retirement and make sure you have completed all the internship requirements (including passing the National Psychology Exam) and lodged your application for general registration by 30 December 2028. Applications for general registration via the 4+2 internship pathway cannot be received after 1 January 2029. If you miss this deadline you will need to apply to undertake an alternative pathway to general registration.

For information on the retirement of the 4+2 pathway see

www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Provisional/Retirement-of-4-2-internship.aspx.

- Annual or personal leave up to eight weeks per year can be taken at any time and the Board does not need to be notified. Any proposed leave periods that are longer than eight weeks or any proposal for more than eight weeks of leave to be taken in one year is considered extended leave and must be approved in advance by the Board.
- All applications for extended leave provisions for 4+2 interns must be approved before 30 June 2027. It is paramount that applications for extended leave are submitted well in advance of this deadline.
- Extended leave can only be granted for a maximum of twelve months from the date of approval of the leave. You must obtain approval from the Board in writing and in advance. If approval is granted for up to 12 months you will be able to recommence the current internship after the period of leave.
- Extended leave longer than 12 months usually requires that you discontinue the internship and then reapply to start the internship when you are ready to return to practice. You will usually be eligible to apply for recognition of the previous internship hours towards the new internship (refer to the relevant internship guidelines for more information).
- When taking extended leave, you should ensure your supervisor provides the Board with a progress report for the period since your last progress report until your leave commences.

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When renewal of registration is due while you are on leave

If your renewal (or re-registration after three years of provisional registration under section 64(3) of the National Law¹) falls due while you are on Board-approved extended leave of less than 12 months you can still choose to renew your provisional registration.

Alternatively, you can advise the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) that you wish to let your registration lapse and then reapply for registration when you are ready to return to practice. The most suitable option will depend on your individual circumstances.

You will need to weigh up the cost of maintaining registration that you are not using, against the benefit of being able to go straight back to your degree or internship after your leave without reapplying for registration.

What to do when you return from leave

If you let your provisional registration lapse while on leave

If you let your registration lapse you do not have to pay an application fee when you reapply for provisional registration, but you do need to lodge your application with Ahpra at least six weeks before you are due to recommence your degree or internship.

Also remember that you need to allow time before you lodge your application to get your application together which may include getting your university to send an up-to-date transcript or updating your internship plan.

If you have extended your leave to over 12 months and are not intending to return to practice in the next 12-month registration period, then you will not be able to renew provisional registration for that period. You will need to reapply for provisional registration when you are ready to return to practice.

If you maintained your provisional registration while on leave

If you have maintained your provisional registration while you have been on leave and are restarting the same degree or internship plan you should advise the Board *within 28 days* of the date of restarting.

If you are restarting an internship in a new work role you will need to submit a new internship plan and position description to Ahpra for approval. Practice under a plan that is not approved will not be recognised.

If you have maintained your provisional registration and have changed your degree, you will need to provide the Board with evidence of enrolment in your new program.

Frequently asked questions

What if my baby arrives early?

If your maternity/paternity leave starts earlier than the date you have advised to the Board, you don't usually need to notify the Board of the change. However, if Ahpra was expecting you to submit a progress report before your leave started it is appreciated if you can notify Ahpra.

What if I return to work or study earlier than expected?

You must make sure that you have provisional registration in place and your professional indemnity insurance (PII) is up to date before restarting your internship or degree. Holding out as a provisional psychologist while unregistered, and practising without appropriate PII in place, are serious matters and may lead to disciplinary action.

If you have maintained provisional registration and are restarting the same degree or internship plan you should advise the Board within 28 days of the date of starting.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.
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If you are restarting an internship in a new work role you will need to submit a new internship plan and position description to Ahpra for approval.

How long will it take to process my application for provisional registration?

If you are reapplying for provisional registration you should allow at least six weeks for the application to be finalised.

If you have forgotten to lodge your application on time or your employer has asked you to return to work earlier than expected you should lodge your application immediately. You then need to contact your university or employer to see if you can negotiate a later start date and/or contact Ahpra to see if there is any capacity to escalate the assessment of your application.

Notifying the Board

To notify the Board of leave, submit an [online enquiry](#).

You can also phone Ahpra on **1300 419 495**, drop into your [local office of Ahpra](#) in person, or contact the Board via writing to your local office of Ahpra:

Psychology Board of Australia
c/- Ahpra
GPO Box 9958
In your capital city
(ACT 2601, NT 0801, NSW 2001, QLD 4001, SA 5001, TAS 7001, VIC 3001, WA 6001)

Links to related information:

- The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law: www.Ahpra.gov.au/About-AHPRA/What-We-Do/Legislation.aspx
- Registration standards: www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx
- Guidelines and policies: www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx