

A reply to the Psychology Board National Psychology Exam - end of Higher Degree Exemption, by Isabelle Tombleson, Western Sydney University Clinical Masters Student and APS Student Member since 2012.

September 14, 2015.

General questions for consideration

1. The Board invites feedback on the following questions:

1. *From your perspective, are you in support of the Board ending the exemption for provisional psychologists undertaking the higher degree pathway (i.e. Masters/DPsych) from sitting the National Psychology Examination?*

From my perspective, as a fifth-year Clinical Psychology Masters student, I am not in support of the Board ending the exemption for provisional psychologists undertaking the higher degree pathway from sitting the National Psychology Examination.

The Board has put forward three very good reasons for supporting Option two: Quality control, minimum standards, and strengthening public protection. However, students undertaking university based programs such as myself at Western Sydney University are investing a significant amount of time in gaining our postgraduate qualification.

The issue of quality control discussed by the Board suggests the examinations, assessments and case reports we complete as part of our University based training are not sufficient to demonstrate a reasonable level of knowledge and training. However, the assessments, case studies and examinations we undertake are already designed to meet standards of the Board. Does one additional exam provide more evidence of competence when all our previous study is designed to meet the skill, competencies and standards required by the Board?

Ensuring the minimum standard is met by all is, I feel, a position aiming to limit discrimination between postgraduate students and other provisional registrars. I do not believe in unfairly discriminating against those who undertake the 4+2 or 5+1 programs, or those applying for registration from overseas. However, I believe the reasons for university based postgraduate master of psychology students to be exempt still stands, for the aforementioned reason of the high standard of training provided by the two year postgraduate programs offered through Universities.

Public protection is an important issue. The current levels of mandatory reporting and/or complaints for psychologists are not acceptable. However, the completion of one additional exam at the end of training, whether it be for 4+2, 5+1 or 6 year postgraduates, I do not believe, is a reasonable effort by the Board to protect the public from possible harm by practising psychologists. To address the issue of public protection in new graduates we need to look more closely at the risk factors associated with such unethical behaviour (burnout, boundary violation, unethical treatment) and instead better address those risk factors as part of all fifth and sixth year psychology training programs.

Please provide a rationale for your support of option one or option two as described above.

2. If option two is supported, do you have a preference regarding transition requirements (option a, b or c) for registrants via the higher degree pathway? Please provide a rationale for your support of your preferred option.
3. Is there any content that needs to be changed or deleted in the revised draft guidelines (see Appendix A) in relation to the proposal to end the higher degree exemption? (Please note that to show the text changes to the revised draft guidelines, the **new text is highlighted in yellow** and a **red line** has been put through the deleted text).
4. Do you have any other comments on the proposal?

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on these proposed changes. If Option two goes through, I would like to ask the Board to set another review date to evaluate whether

the exam is providing any evidentiary support for the above reasons, especially quality control and public protection.