

September 28th, 2015

To whom it may concern,

Re: Consultation on the National Psychology Examination and Higher Degree exemption.

As current postgraduate students in the Masters of Clinical Psychology teaching program at James Cook University, we wish to advocate for the continued higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Exam –

Option one (Status Quo): Within the submission, the issue of accreditation is raised arguing that the Board is constrained in its ability to regulate and oversee at the individual level. However, this overlooks the expanse of academic and practical assessment submitted by post graduate students, all of which are individually assessed and graded. Individuals are not assessed by a sole examination. Throughout the Masters and Doctoral programs, we are assessed by multiple academics and clinicians who are specialists in their area. This process provides multiple checks on our competence across the postgraduate curriculum. This is further reinforced by the minimum 200 hours of supervision by board approved supervisors across placements. Feedback from assessments further refines skills and is reinforced throughout clinical placements. We repeatedly must prove competence at the theoretical, ethical, and practical clinical level and attain clinical practice standards, as assessed by a range of accredited clinical Psychologists to pass the course. Competence, therefore, at the postgraduate level is by far more in-depth, broader and thoroughly scrutinised, given full the requirements of the university accredited courses. The above extensive process alone should preclude us from having to sit an exam that in light of the above would be not only onerous and but highly superfluous given the rigor of assessment already undertaken.

Further, the introduction of the national examination for post graduate studies would place further and unnecessary strain on students studying from rural and remote areas. For Example, many students studying at James Cook University are located in rural and remote locations 5+ hours' drive from campus and first clinical placements. There is considerable cost involved to attend course-work intensives and placements over the duration of the course e.g. airfare, road travel and accommodation costs. The loss of income for many students studying fulltime places significant fiscal strain on individuals and families. Clinical placements often require cessation of paid employment to complete unpaid placements in 16 week blocks (X 3) over two year period. To complete these courses under such condition, requires a high degree of perseverance and dedication to the profession and professional standards required in such a course.

To add yet another assessment, having attended to such rigor over the course is not only unnecessary, put places even greater financial stress and burden on students – most of which have dedicated 6-8 years to complete the Masters of Clinical Psychology. For rural and remote students this includes: additional costs for flights, accommodation, and exam fees: an exam that is totally unnecessary for us, given the inordinate length of time and extraordinary effort we have already put in to gaining accreditation.

If Option Two is decided, the deadline of Option (c) [enrol in any higher degree program after 1 July 2016] is supported given it presents the most equitable solutions for students.

Kind regards,

Jane Bolton-Bound

Masters Clinical Psychology

James Cook University