

September 28th, 2015

Dear AHPRA,

Re: Consultation paper 25: Consultation on ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Examination

As current postgraduate students in the clinical teaching program at James Cook University, we would like to indicate our support 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 it is constrained in its ability to regulate and oversee at the individual level. However, this overlooks the breadth of assessment, and academics that mark the individual at the postgraduate level. Individuals are not assessed by a sole academic throughout the Masters and Doctoral programs; we are assessed by multiple academics and clinicians who are specialists in their area. This provides multiple checks on our competence across the postgraduate curriculum, reinforced by the minimum 200 hours of supervision across placements. Feedback from assessments further refines skills and is reinforced throughout clinical placements; competence at the postgraduate level is broader given the requirements of the accredited course. It is no longer purely examinable skills, we have repeatedly had to prove competence at the theoretical, ethical, and clinical level. We also must attain minimum clinical practice standards, as assessed by a range of accredited clinical Psychologists. This extensive process alone should preclude us from having to sit an exam that is "not designed to be tricky or onerous to prepare for".

The introduction of the national examination will also place a disparate strain on students studying from rural and remote areas. Many students studying at James Cook University are located in the tropics, or already pay considerable money to travel for intensives and placements. Higher degree pathway students are also already paying significant fees for participation in our courses. The loss of possible income for many students studying fulltime often places significant fiscal strain on individuals and families. Clinical placements also often necessitate the ceasing of paid employment to complete unpaid placements, often spanning months and for some, necessitating moving to a new city, incurring further cost. Many of us struggle to complete our degrees with the support of scholarships, let alone be required to pay for flights, accommodation, and exam fees for an exam that is unnecessary for us given the length of time and extraordinary effort we have already put into 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,

Suzannah

Suzannah Jackson