

2 October 2015

Dear Sir or Madam,

We, a group of Industrial and Organisational Psychology Masters students from The University of Western Australia, would like to express our opinions on the proposal to end the exemption for higher degree students from sitting the National Psychology Exam.

We doubt that the National Psychology Examination's objective of testing applied knowledge obtained in the fifth and, in particular, the sixth year of psychology training can be achieved by the current exam. Upon observation of the proposed structure and content of the exam, it is obvious that the majority of the assessment has little to no relevance to the content students are taught in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> year of accredited Industrial and Organisational Psychology Masters programs. As such it does not assess material we could reasonably be expected to have learnt throughout our course. Consequently, if we would like to pass the exam and apply for general registration as psychologists, we have to spend a large amount time on self-study in order to learn the examination content, as we have not learnt the majority of it in our postgraduate studies. This additional study would not be a problem were it at all relevant to our profession; however, as it stands, we would be dedicating significant time learning topics of little utility to an Organisational Psychologist. As the APS Code of Ethics prohibits health practitioners from practicing outside their area of expertise, we will be providing neither assessment nor intervention for mental disorders. Our role will be in using psychological theory and principles to improve organisational productivity and staff wellbeing. Therefore, ensuring that we have been suitably trained to provide clinical diagnoses and treatments will not benefit our clients.

Requiring Organisational Psychology students to sit this exam is equivalent to requiring chemical engineering students to pass exams intended for electrical engineers: while both professions draw from the same foundation, the context in which they practice and the consequent knowledge required of them is significantly different. Perhaps we can better illustrate our objection to the exam if we were to propose the opposite situation, such that Clinical Psychology students would be required to sit for an exam focused entirely around content relevant to Organisational Psychology. It would be immediately apparent that the Clinical Psychology students have little to no reason to learn about organisational development, psychometric assessments used to predict job performance, training and workplace safety.

Also, making the examination compulsory for higher degree students who have completed accredited programs implies that despite all the assessments, research and placements completed within them, accredited higher degree programs do not adequately prepare students to be psychologists.

We would also like to convey our growing dissatisfaction with the manner in which the Psychology Board of Australia is treating current and aspiring psychologists in the field of Organisational Psychology. If the examination (in its current state) is made compulsory for graduates of Organisational Psychology higher degree programs, this would display a lack of empathy and understanding on the board's part. It is likely that the due to its strong clinical focus, the examination would be a stumbling block which will prevent many graduates of Organisational Psychology higher degree programs from obtaining general registration. Consequently, the already

relatively small number of registered psychologists in the Organisational domain will rapidly decline. As there is growing demand for the services that Organisational Psychologists are able to provide, this is likely to lead to an unprecedented number of Organisational Psychology graduates working in the field unregulated and not bound by any ethical codes. This could lead to many unforeseen negative consequences in workplaces and communities. If AHPRA and the Psychology Board of Australia genuinely care about protecting the community and ensuring consistent standards amongst psychologists, then they would do well to revise the exam content, or abandon the concept of applying the exam to higher degree students, in order to stop driving Organisational Psychologists from abandoning them as their professional and regulatory association.

In conclusion, with so many unresolved problems, we believe it is currently inappropriate to discontinue the exemption for graduates of higher degree programs. It would also be illogical to require students who are currently enrolled in such programs to pass the exam in order to apply for general registration. Given the current structure of many Organisational Psychology Masters programs, these students will not have learned content that would adequately prepare them to pass the exam. If the exam is to be implemented, the coursework component of many Organisational Psychology higher degree programs may have to be drastically restructured to include content that will prepare students to pass the exam. This will take time, we believe that June 2016 would far too soon to end the exemption.

Yours faithfully,

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