

28/09/2015

Psychology Board of Australia
Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
Consultation Paper 25

RE: Consultation on ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Examination

This submission relates to consultation paper 25 regarding ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Examination.

As students currently enrolled in a Master of Psychology program we strongly disagree with the Board's proposal to end the higher degree exemption. We are of the opinion that option one, status quo, is the most reasonable and equitable option proposed. Our concerns underpinning this opinion are outlined as follows.

First, students in the Masters stream will have completed at least 6 years of formal education in the field of psychology prior to applying for full registration. This involves extensive assessment and examination of both theoretical knowledge and applied psychological skills. Subjecting students to a further examination seems not only redundant, but may influence Universities to teach to the test at the expense of valuable specialist subjects. Moreover changing the benchmarks for students already on the path to registration through the Masters stream is in our opinion both unfair and demotivating.

Second, the Board has suggested that ending the exemption is a necessary step towards addressing the widening gap between university courses, however it seems realistic to suggest that focusing on more stringent accreditation process would be a more reasonable and effective course of action. By focusing on the National Psychology Exam, rather than accreditation, the gap between psychology programs may widen further. There is a potential risk that students may invest a significant amount of time and money into these programs only to realise that their education has been inadequate at the time of the exam. This further presents a risk that these students will simply study to pass the exam without having a foundation of quality education.

The Board has made reference to the number of mandatory notifications made against registered psychologist, with the inference being that the National Psychology Exam is a necessary step towards keeping the public safe. However the Board has provided no evidence to demonstrate that the National Psychology Exam has reduced the number of notifications made against those who have sat the exam.

The exam curriculum appears to be weighted heavily towards clinical psychology at the expense of other programs such as organisational psychology or sport psychology. It seems illogical to allow Universities to offer specialised Masters programs such as these, but to then mandate a generic exam; especially given that the exam is reportedly intended to only examine content from the 5th and 6th years. Furthermore the inclusion of specific psychometrics seems to provide an unfair competitive advantage to the organisations whose measures have been included.

We strongly reject the Board's assertion that the cost of the exam is reasonable. In our opinion the cost of the exam is expensive, especially given that Masters students are already required to front the costs of university fees and provisional registration. Many students are restricted in the number of hours they can work outside of placement and study. At a time when many students are attempting to find their feet financially, the added cost of the exam is unreasonable and is an unfair disadvantage.

Last, this exam and the associated costs associated may make full registration less appealing and more prohibitive to many students, especially those such as ourselves who are pursuing careers in the area of Organisational Psychology. The additional hurdle may discourage more people from pursuing endorsement, hence reducing the number of qualified supervisors. This is especially of concern to us given the difficulty already associated with finding suitable supervisors in the area of Organisational Psychology.

Kind Regards

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