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Many organisations have rules about health records that psychologists must adhere to, including the requirement to make and keep notes in the organisation's medical file. You need to think carefully about what to put in your notes. It is important to assess who the audience is likely to be – and it may not just be fellow psychologists. Remember that psychometric test forms (such as IQ tests) may need to be shielded, as exposure of these test items to others may make them invalid, which might not be in the public interest.

Notes should communicate clearly what you did and why, giving clear reasons for various decisions and recommendations. What is written should be able to be justified on professional terms and give the reader a clear understanding of the rationale for what was done at that time. 'Skeleton notes', which only record the date and that a session occurred, are likely to be severely criticised by peers as not giving a satisfactory account of the service. 'Process notes' that reveal deeply intimate but irrelevant information about a clients' personal circumstances are also likely to be severely criticised for potentially harming the client by breaching their confidentiality, privacy and dignity. What you write is a visible record of your professional work, and therefore reflects your competency. It is easy for people to see poorly kept notes as a reflection on other aspects of your practice. Poorly kept notes will also not assist you if you have to recall your work to others – including in court.

Getting psychological notes to be 'not too heavy and not too light, but just right' is a skill that takes training and practice. Notes should ultimately benefit clients and the community; therefore consider carefully what you want to communicate with this principle foremost in mind.

**Professor Brin Grenyer**  
 Chair, Psychology Board of Australia

## From the Chair

### Getting what you write down right

Psychologists are experts at communication – they can listen deeply, reflect, and enter into the experiences of others to generate understanding, compassion and healing. They can also use structured approaches to generate objective data to assess functioning, in order to inform diagnosis. Each of these two different modes of communication relies upon specific intentional techniques that have an evidence base.

A third communication skill is being able to write good psychological notes. Psychological notes are a communication tool that provides a contemporaneous account of the psychological service provided. Remember we do not have any professional legal privilege; therefore notes may be 'discoverable' by various means such as subpoena, freedom of information request or search warrant. Notes may also be required to be produced on request – for example by clients, a psychologist's employer, Department of Health (Medicare), the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) or the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), a coroner or courts, where you may not be able to refuse.



## Past consultations update

### Consultation 25: Consultation on ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Exam

The Board recently invited comments on the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Exam from all stakeholders. Submissions were accepted from 7 August 2015 until Friday 2 October 2015.

A large number of submissions were received, with many supporting extending the higher exemption from sitting the exam beyond the current June 2016 extension, although views were mixed on future options. The public submissions are published on the [Past Consultation](#) section of the Board's website. Some submissions were private and are not published.

The Board is carefully and systematically reviewing these submissions and will announce a decision in due course. The Board, as always, appreciates stakeholder feedback, and the time and thought taken to provide information and opinion to the Board.

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## Renew registration online now

The Board has launched its 2015 renewal of registration campaign for psychologists and AHPRA has sent email reminders to psychologists who have provided an email address.

You should act now if your contact information has changed, to not miss future reminders to renew. To update your contact details visit the Board's website and use the appropriate link under 'Online services for practitioners'. A user ID and secure password is needed. If you have forgotten your user ID you can complete a web enquiry form. Select 'Online Services - Practitioner' as the category type.

The registration renewal date for psychologists with general or non-practising registration is 30 November 2015. The quickest and easiest way to renew registration is [online](#).

Renewal applications received during December will incur a late payment fee.

Under the National Law<sup>1</sup>, practitioners who do not renew their registration within one month of their registration expiry date must be removed from the Register of Psychologists. Their registration will lapse and they will not be able to practise psychology in Australia. A fast-track application can be made, but only during January. The practitioner cannot practise until the application is processed and the national register is updated.

You should read the Board's [registration standards](#) carefully before applying to renew, as information in support of declarations made in an application could be requested.

A [renewal FAQ](#) is available on the Board's website.

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## National Psychology Exam

The Board will shortly publish the *Policy and procedure for candidates who fail the exam three times*, and an associated statement and plan for professional development form (the SPPD-76 form).

The *Guidelines for the national psychology examination* (the guidelines) were published in October 2013 and outline:

- the eligibility requirements for sitting the exam
- information on the content of the exam
- details on how to go about registering to sit the exam, and
- what happens if a registrant fails the exam.

The guidelines state that candidates who fail the examination are permitted to re-sit the examination after completing a further three months of supervised practice as a registered

psychologist or provisional psychologist. If a registrant fails three times, they will not be able to sit another examination until their registration renewal or a new application for registration is approved by the Board.

The purpose of this new policy is to provide further detail on the procedures to follow in the event that a registrant fails the exam three times.

This policy will assist the small number of registrants who fail the exam three times to understand in more detail what options are available to them, the steps they should take, and the evidence required by the Board to progress their plan to successfully re-sit the exam beyond three attempts.

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## Call for applications for appointment to the NT/SA/WA Regional Board of the Psychology Board of Australia

The Board invites applications from psychologists who reside and practise in the Northern Territory to fill vacancies on the NT/SA/WA Regional Board of the Psychology Board of Australia.

The closing date is Monday 7 December 2015.

More information can be found on the [Board's website](#) or email [statutoryappointments@ahpra.gov.au](mailto:statutoryappointments@ahpra.gov.au).

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## Registration standards update

### Continuing professional development (CPD) and Recency of practice (RoP)

The registration standards have been revised following consultation and have now been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council).

The Board will release the revised standards on its website in the coming months, well before the start date, to help practitioners become familiar with the revised standards. The start dates for each standard will be different, and will generally align with the registration renewal period.

#### CPD registration standard

The revised [CPD registration standard](#) was published on the Board's website on 30 October 2015 and will start on 1 December 2015 (the start of the next registration period). Practitioners will need to declare that they have met the standard at the end of the next registration period, giving practitioners one year to do CPD that meets the revised standard.

The revised CPD standard will introduce fairer provisions for pro-rata CPD requirements and CPD exemptions. It will also introduce a new requirement to maintain the CPD portfolio for five years in case of audit. The revised standard also clarifies the current requirements and improves the wording and structure of the document to make it easier to understand.

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<sup>1</sup> Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory

### RoP registration standard

Early next year the Board will publish a revised [RoP registration standard](#). The revised standard will take effect on 1 December 2016 to allow psychologists time to become familiar with the requirements.

For more information, please read the [news item](#) on the Board's website.

### General registration standard

The Board undertook public consultation on the proposed revised *General registration standard* in 2014 and has recommended a revised standard to the Ministerial Council for approval, as required by section 12 of the National Law.

For more information about the review of the *General registration standard* please see the public consultation paper under [Past consultations](#) on the Board's website.

### Provisional registration standard and Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program

As advised in the last issue of *Connections*, the Board is working through issues raised by government in relation to a proposed revised *Provisional registration standard and Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program*. This work is progressing well and the Board hopes to be able to recommend a revised Provisional registration standard to the Ministerial Council for approval soon.

The Board will continue to publish updates as they become available. If a proposed revised standard is approved by ministers, the Board will publish transition arrangements and other information before a new standard and guidelines come into effect.

For more information about the review of the *Provisional registration standard* and 4+2 internship program please see the public consultation paper under [Past consultations](#) on the Board's website.

### Area of practice endorsements

The Board is carrying out a scheduled review of the requirements for area of practice endorsements. Preliminary consultation on review of the *Area of practice endorsements registration standard* and the *Guidelines on area of practice endorsements* has recently been completed.

Preliminary consultation involves providing preliminary drafts and explanatory material to those with legal and regulatory expertise and to decision-makers. This process aims to identify the regulatory, operational, financial and legal impact of any proposed amendments, and allow any refinements to be made before releasing the documents for public consultation. This stage also aims to identify any transitional issues or potential barriers that would need to be addressed by the Board before public consultation. These may include:

- costs and impacts of compliance with any new proposals
- administrative, resourcing, training and development, and infrastructure requirements to support any new proposals
- transition provisions for practitioners or other groups that may be required

- consistency with the National Law and regulatory principles of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme)
- compatibility with decision-making frameworks for delegated decision-makers
- impacts on other regulators and identification of opportunities for collaboration with other National Boards
- the likelihood of impacts on the labour market, competition and consumer choice, and
- whether the proposals are supported by governments.

The Board is assessing preliminary consultation input and preparing for public consultation. When public consultation begins a consultation paper will be published on the Board's [Current consultations](#) web page.

For more information about the consultation process of National Boards please see the [Procedures](#) page on the AHPRA website.

## Policy update

### Working in addition to university placements

The Board published an updated version of its *Policy on working in addition to placements* on 1 September 2015.

The policy allows registered provisional psychologists who are enrolled in an accredited postgraduate degree to apply for Board approval to:

- undertake psychological practice, and
- use the title 'Provisional Psychologist' in positions that do not contribute to the requirements of their accredited degree.

The changes from the previous version of the policy include:

- positions with remote client contact (e.g. videoconference and telephone) may now be approved under the policy
- there is more flexibility for supervision delivery including that the frequency of supervision may be varied as appropriate, and
- the content and language have been simplified to make the policy easier to understand.

The revised policy is available on the [Codes, guidelines and policies](#) page of the Board's website.

The application form for approval to work in addition to placements is available on the [Forms](#) page of our website.

## Information for supervisors

### Applying to maintain your Board-approved supervisor status

Board-approved supervisors of provisional psychologists and registrars are required to complete an approved supervisor training program at least every five years in order to maintain their approval. All supervisors will be required to complete an

approved training program and apply to extend their approval before their supervisor approval expiry date.

Your supervisor approval expiry date is five years from the date you last completed an approved supervisor training program, or 30 June 2018. If you transitioned to the National Scheme as an approved supervisor in 2010 and you have not completed a supervisor training program and provided the certificate of completion to AHRPA, your expiry date is 30 June 2018.

The earliest expiry date is 30 June 2018 and AHPRA will send you a reminder when your supervisor approval expiry date is approaching.

If you have already completed an approved training program since 1 July 2013 you should notify AHPRA and apply to maintain your approval for another five years. Please note that the training provider does not notify AHPRA for you – they provide information about how many psychologists have completed training for annual and outcome reports, but not your individual details and certificate of completion.

The Board has published a new form to make providing your certificate of completion and applying to extend your approval quicker and easier. The application to maintain Board-approved supervisor status – MBAS-76 is available on the [Forms](#) page of the website. There is no fee for this application. Once the application is approved your Board-approved supervisor expiry date will be extended for another five years from the date you completed your training program.

More information about supervisor training requirements is available on the Board's website under [Requirements for supervisors](#) and on the [supervisor training](#) webpage, which includes links to approved training providers' websites.

## IT upgrades for supervisors

AHPRA has implemented a number of system upgrades over the past few months to provide improved services for Psychology Board-approved supervisors and individuals seeking a supervisor.

### Database enhancements

There have been a number of recent improvements to the way that supervisor information, including details of supervisors training programs, is recorded in the AHPRA database.

One of the main advantages to practitioners is that the system will now be able to identify when a supervisor's approval is due to expire and send out a reminder email. The first expiry date is 30 June 2018, so the first reminders will be sent in early 2018.

The database improvements have allowed implementation of improved online services that use database information, including the online search for a supervisor. They will also allow development of an online supervisor portal so supervisors will be able to check their details and update their availability status and nominated supervisor email address via the [health practitioner login](#). This new feature is expected to be released in late 2015 or early 2016.

### Search for a supervisor improvements

All psychologists who are approved by the Board to provide supervision to psychologists and provisional psychologists appear in an online searchable list – [search for a supervisor](#).

### Improvements to the search criteria

Users of 'search for a supervisor' can search for individual supervisors by name or registration number; or for lists of supervisors by the type of supervision they can provide and geographic location. This makes the search a useful tool for a wider range of users.

The upgrades now prevent searches for invalid combinations, for example 'area of practice' can only be selected for training programs that focus on a particular area of practice, i.e. all registrar programs and most higher degree programs (excludes generalist fifth year courses for the 5+1 pathway). In 'search for a supervisor' the 'area of practice' field means the area of practice of the training program – not whether the supervisor has an area of practice endorsement.

### Improvements to the search results

Limits on the number of matches that could be displayed in 'search for a supervisor' results have been removed. Previously, for searches with a high number of matches, (such as 4+2 supervisors in NSW), some approved supervisors were not appearing in the results – this has been fixed and now every match is displayed every time.

Multiple supervisor approvals for individual practitioners have been combined into one record, making the search results much more user-friendly.

Search results now display the country for supervisors who are currently practising overseas.

Direct links from supervisor search results to the National Register allow users of the search to click through to an individual supervisor's details on the National Register. This enables them to find out more information – such as the supervisor's qualifications, whether they have an endorsement and when they first became registered as a psychologist in Australia.

The results now include whether a supervisor is available to be contacted for supervision and 'available' supervisors are displayed first in the results, making it easier for potential supervisees to identify possible supervisors.

### Improved messaging system

The upgrades have implemented a new secure messaging system helps to protect supervisors' privacy by removing email addresses from the website. Extra security measures also ensure that supervisors receive only genuine enquiries from real people.

## National Scheme news

### 2014/15 National Scheme annual report

AHPRA and the National Boards have released their [2014/15 annual report](#) on the National Scheme, providing a comprehensive record of the operations of the National Scheme for the 12 months ending 30 June 2015.

The annual report provides a national snapshot of the work and finances of the National Scheme and is tabled in the parliaments of each state and territory and the Commonwealth.

AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, and profession-specific profiles.

For more information, please read the [news item](#) on AHPRA's website.

### Psychology profession profile

Later this year, the Board will publish a report of its work regulating the psychology profession in the National Scheme during 2014/15.

The report provides a profession-specific view of the Board's work to manage risk to the public and regulate the profession in the public interest. It is a profile of regulation at work in Australia for the 12 months ending 30 June 2015. It is notable that notifications against psychologists increased by 21% (adjusting for Qld), meaning 1.3% of registrants received a notification, (outside of NSW), during this year, (Qld and NSW have different reporting conventions).

The data in this report are drawn from data published in the [2014/15 annual report](#) of AHPRA and the National Boards, reporting on the National Scheme.

### Health profession agreement

The Board and AHPRA have published the [2015/16 health profession agreement](#) (HPA) that outlines the partnership between the Board and AHPRA, and the services AHPRA will provide to the Board in 2015/16. The HPA also provides information about the Board's financial operations and fees.

### AHPRA joins Facebook

Earlier this year AHPRA joined Facebook as another means by which we can engage with the public and practitioners. AHPRA will be sharing similar content on Facebook that we do on Twitter: news from AHPRA and the National Boards, along with photos from events and forums.

Visit our [Facebook](#) page.

## Keep in touch with the Board

- Visit our website at [www.psychologyboard.gov.au](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au) for information on the National Scheme and for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines, policies and fact sheets.
- Lodge an enquiry form via the website by following the [Enquiries](#) link on the bottom of every page.
- For registration enquiries call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 8708 9001 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to: Prof. Brin Grenyer, Chair, Psychology Board of Australia, GPO Box 9958 Melbourne VIC 3001.