



Communiqué

18 December 2015

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) is established under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law). At each meeting, the Board considers a wide range of issues, many of which are routine and are not included in this communiqué.

This communiqué highlights key issues from the 70th meeting of the Board on 18 December 2015.

Psychology education and training – working collaboratively to achieve reform

The Board considers education and training reform an important next step in the development of the regulatory environment for the psychology profession.

The Board believes that a considered response to the structural issues that currently exist in psychology training, is best placed in a collaborative program of work with national education and training stakeholders including government.

This education and training reform initiative is a Board priority for the next three years. The program of work will also align with new accreditation standards which are likely to be developed by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council over the coming year.

National psychology education forum – starting point for reform agenda

Earlier this month, the Board along with the Australian Psychological Society, Australian Psychology Accreditation Council and heads of departments and schools of the Psychology Association hosted a national psychology education forum.

This brought together leaders across government, education, workforce, regulation and the profession to consider the future of psychology education and training and to discuss the challenges with existing arrangements.

The Communiqué from the national forum is at [Attachment A](#).

There were a number of outcomes from the forum, including that the current 4+2 internship program is recommended for retirement as a pathway to registration.

The Board often receives feedback that psychology training is unnecessarily complex, fragmented and lengthy. In Australia, we have three training pathways for practitioners to become licensed to practice independently as psychologists. A fourth pathway applies to overseas trained psychologists.

Increasingly, the pathway favoured by 'psychologists in training' is the accredited higher degree pathway. The alternative has traditionally been the 4+2 internship program – a two-year supervised practice program after the completion of a four-year bachelor degree. This pathway has a long history of serving the profession and employers well. The pathway has many positive features and has produced high quality psychologists.

However, more questions are being asked about its value and this was echoed by national forum participants.

The Board confirms that the proposal to retire the 4+2 internship program, as a pathway to registration, is a recommendation from the national forum and there is no change to current training pathways.

Ministers have recently approved the Board's revised general registration standard, which maintains the current arrangements, and Ministers have asked the Board to work over the next three years on options for further reform.

Next steps

As the national forum Communiqué indicates, outcomes will now be analysed by a collaborative working party to refine the options for future reform.

This commitment to further work helps the Board build a clear picture of the implications and ensure these can be reconciled with the National Law and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme).

If further regulatory action is identified and supported by the evidence, the Board will consult with stakeholders to develop an enhanced regulatory framework, including any proposals for new or revised registration standards, guidelines and corresponding transition arrangements. This would be in accordance with its obligations under the National Law.

Higher degree exemption from sitting National Psychology Exam – extended for three years

The Board recently invited comments on *Consultation paper 25: Consultation on ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Exam*. Submissions were accepted from 7 August 2015 to Friday 2 October 2015.

The Board received an excellent response to the consultation paper and would like to thank those who took the time to write submissions and provide information to the Board. Submissions which the Board received permission to be made public are available on the [Past Consultations](#) page of the Board's website.

The Board has reviewed the submissions, which were overwhelmingly in support of extending the higher degree exemption from sitting the exam beyond the current June 2016 extension.

The Board has agreed to keep the exemption in place for another three years – until 30 June 2019. This means that applicants for registration who have completed an APAC accredited higher degree program will not be required to pass the national psychology exam for general registration over the next three years.

For the same period, the Board has agreed to undertake a program of work to monitor harms and risks more closely, and to collect more information on the efficacy of the national psychology exam. The Board noted many stakeholders had requested more detail on a cost-benefit analysis of the exam, and a stronger risk-based regulatory argument to support ending the higher degree exemption.

In addition, some stakeholders noted that ending the exemption at this time is not well-timed due to the current review of the APAC standards; the work being done on the development of APAC standards for area of practice endorsement; and the program of work being undertaken on training, education and workforce reform in psychology.

The three year extension of the exemption will allow for progress to be made in all three areas, and for any developments to be considered as part of a future consultation process.

New national psychology exam video released

The Board has released a video providing information about the national psychology exam and what exam preparation registrants need to do.

The three minute video, recently launched by the Board, provides important information about:

- who needs to sit the exam
- what they need to do in order to prepare for the exam

- how frequently exams are held, and
- where to go for more information.

This video and other information is available on our [national psychology exam](#) page.

General registration standard update

The revised general registration standard has now been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council).

The Board will release the revised standard on its website in the coming months, in advance of the start date, to help practitioners become familiar with the revised standard.

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.

Board planning for 2016-17

The Board held its annual planning day in December in conjunction with the December board meeting. The Board has identified a number of priorities, and over the coming months will develop a work plan for 2016-17. The work plan will be published on the Board's website as part of the next Health Profession Agreement (HPA) between AHPRA and the National Board.

Approved programs of study

Under section 49 of the National Law¹, the National Board requires accreditation reports from the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) before approving the accredited programs of study as providing a qualification that will lead to registration.

At its December meeting the Board approved APAC-accredited courses at: Australian Institute of Psychology, Central Queensland University, Edith Cowan University, La Trobe University, Swinburne University, University of Melbourne, University of Newcastle, University of South Australia, University of Wollongong, University of the Sunshine Coast and James Cook University (Singapore).

The Board also approved the discontinuation of a number of courses across the country in accordance with section 51(2) of the National Law, including courses at: Edith Cowan University, Deakin University, James Cook University, Macquarie University, Swinburne University, University of New England, University of Adelaide and University of Melbourne.

An updated list of Board-approved qualifications will soon be published under *Accreditation* on the Board's website at www.psychologyboard.gov.au.

Psychology Board of Australia profession profile

The Board will publish a report in the new year of its work with psychology practitioners 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. It is a profile of regulation at work for psychology professionals in Australia for the 12 months ending 30 June 2015.

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 and will be available soon on the [AHPRA website](#).

Registration renewal now in late period

Psychologists who were due to renew registration by 30 November 2015 and did not do so are now in the late period. If you didn't renew your registration on time, you can still renew until 31 December 2015, but a late payment fee will apply.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory

The quickest and easiest way to renew your registration is [online](#). You can keep practising during the late period but must apply for renewal of registration by 31 December.

Under the National Law², if you haven't renewed by the end of the one month late period (31 December) your registration will lapse. Your name will be removed from the [national register of practitioners](#) and you must cease to practise psychology immediately.

If you wish to keep practising you must make a new application for registration. Fast track application forms will be available on the Board website under *Forms* during January. If submitting a fast track application in January, you cannot practise until your application is processed and your registration details are updated on the national register.

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

Professor Brin Grenyer
Chair
Psychology Board of Australia

23 December 2015

² The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Attachment A

National Forum

Reviewing the psychology education and training model

Preparing psychologists for practice and sustaining a skilled psychologist workforce for the future needs of the public

Communiqué

This communiqué is a joint statement of outcomes and future priorities from a National Forum focused on the future of the psychology education and training model. The National Forum was held on Friday 4 December 2015 from 10:00am to 4:00pm at the Hyatt Hotel, Canberra Room in Canberra, ACT.

The context for the Forum was recognition that whilst the psychology workforce continues to grow strongly and to make a very positive contribution to the health and welfare of the community across multiple sectors, it was timely to examine the current training model.

The host organisations of the forum were the Australian Psychological Society (APS), Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC), Heads of Departments and Schools of Psychology Association (HODSPA) and the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA). Professor Mel Miller facilitated the Forum. Participants included Accreditation council and committee members; Professional association representatives; Members of the Psychology Board; Health education providers; Employers of psychologists; Universities including Heads of Departments and Schools of Psychology; Commonwealth and State and Territory health departments; State and Territory education departments; Health service executives; Academics in the field of psychology education, training and workforce; and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency.

There were a number of outcomes from the Forum, including:

- There was a strong recognition that change to the training model is welcomed
- The current 4+2 program be recommended for retirement as a pathway to registration
- Models need to be developed that ensure a sustained workforce that is ready for practice
- Masters level training is the preferred model for professional training
- Delegates expressed an interest in exploring pathways for specialised areas of practice, as well as integrated PhD programs
- There is a need for stronger understanding of funding models
- Acknowledgement that accreditation is important to public protection across the whole training pathway
- That internships and other supervised practice and placement programs in the field need strong oversight and there are opportunities to improve how these operate
- Delegates supported retention of an independent research thesis overseen in any area of academic psychology

- There are opportunities to explore innovation in the selection of candidates for professional training

Detailed proposals and options discussed at the forum are now being analysed by a collaborative working party to refine the options for reform.

Professor Mike Kyrios

President, Australian Psychological Society (APS)

Professor Kim Cornish

Chair, Heads of Departments and Schools of Psychology Association (HODSPA)

Professor John Dunn

Chair, Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC)

Professor Brin Grenyer

Chair, Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA)