

Consultation report: Guideline for transitional programs

10 April 2017

1. Introduction

The National Law¹ allows National Boards to develop and approve guidelines to provide guidance to the practitioners it registers and other matters relevant to the exercise of its functions. If a National Board develops a guideline it must ensure there is wide-ranging consultation about its content.

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) decided to develop a new guideline to provide guidance following retirement of its policy for overseas qualified in response to feedback from the profession.

2. Consultation

To ensure wide-ranging consultation and public exposure to the proposed guideline the Board first undertook preliminary consultation process with key regulatory stakeholders during March and April 2016. The Commonwealth Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) was consulted during preliminary consultation in order to assess the potential for any significant regulatory impacts. The OBPR determined that a regulation impact statement was not required.

The Board then undertook an eight-week public consultation process between 13 July and 7 September 2016. Nine submissions were received in response to the published consultation. The public consultation paper and submissions (except those made in confidence) are published on the Board's website under *News > Public consultation*.

The proposal for the new guideline was broadly supported by respondents and the submissions made some useful suggestions that have been incorporated into the final version of the new guideline.

3. Issues

There were very few issues with the proposed guideline. The new guideline does not introduce new requirements – only clarifies existing requirements – and it was developed in response to previous feedback from key stakeholders.

Some of the consultation feedback suggested that the requirements of the transitional program are not well understood by employers and supervisors which leads to reluctance to take on overseas qualified psychologists. This may lead to issues with workforce and continuity of care. The new guideline is expected to be helpful in addressing this issue. The Board has also looked at other ways of improving communications about the program such as revising information provided on the website as well as options for direct communication with supervisors and employers.

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

There were some issues raised about matters outside the scope of the consultation but still relevant to the work of the Board and AHPRA. This included feedback on operational processes, including the assessment of overseas qualifications by the Psychology Assessment Unit, the requirements of the general registration standard, and support and education for supervisors about the transitional program. This feedback has been passed on as appropriate or logged for consideration in review of other standards and guidelines as relevant.

Several respondents made comments on related issues that are outside the Board's scope, such as immigration requirements and costs, and lack of mutual recognition arrangements with the UK (formal mutual recognition exists with New Zealand only).

Conclusion

The Board considers that the new guideline provides a well balanced approach to addressing the majority of the issues raised during the public consultation. The new guideline provides guidance on the requirements of the transitional program, while ensuring the key National Law objective – to provide for the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained health practitioners – continues to be achieved.