

## Webinar Q &A

17 May 2018

### Proposal to retire the 4+2 internship pathway to general registration

The Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) held a National webinar on the proposal to retire the 4+2 internship pathway to general registration on 17 May 2018. There were over 470 psychologists in attendance at the webinar, and over 150 questions were raised during the presentation. The most frequently asked questions, including those discussed by the Chair and Deputy Chair during the webinar are answered below. These are sorted by topic.

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## General questions about the proposal

### 1 What is the Board's proposal?

The Board's proposal is to reduce regulatory burden of psychology training by retiring the 4+2 internship program as a pathway to registration in favour of the 5+1 internship program.

Stakeholders have communicated to the Board that the 4+2 internship pathway is:

- no longer fit-for-purpose as a pathway to registration going forward
- unsustainable as it carries a high regulatory and administrative burden for employers, supervisors, interns, and the regulator, and
- is not comparable to international benchmarks for training and registration, and there are significant risks associated with the two-year unaccredited internship.

In comparison, the 5+1 internship has the advantage of an additional year of accreditation that provides interns with a better model of training and learning. In addition, there is an administrative and regulatory advantage of the 5+1 through reduced regulatory costs and costs to employers.

Further information about the Board's proposal is outlined in the public consultation paper, available under [Current consultations](#) on the Board's website.

## Psychology students and interns

### 2 I am currently undertaking my fourth year of psychology studies, what if I want to study part-time, or want to take a leave of absence for a year?

Depending on overall stakeholder preference on the proposed transition timeframes during the consultation period, the last enrolment *to begin* a 4+2 internship program will either be 30 June 2019, 30 June 2020 or 30 June 2021.

With the 2020 and 2021 options, you will be able to study your fourth year part-time or take a leave of absence for one or two semesters and make the last cohort of interns.

### 3 Why did the Board recently update the Guidelines for the 4+2 internship if retirement of the 4+2 was being planned?

The Board's proposal to retire the 4+2 internship pathway to general registration means that the [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship](#) will be in place for at least seven more years.

As a matter of course, the Board reviews all its standards, guidelines and policies every three to five years. Previous consultations on the 4+2 internship were held in 2009 and 2014. Implementing updated 4+2 guidelines were timely and necessary, regardless of any work on the proposal to retire the 4+2 internship pathway.

The Board published a new [Provisional registration standard](#) and [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship](#) effective 1 June 2017. The updated 4+2 internship is outcome-focused and competency based. A range of new flexibilities were introduced in the 4+2 internship guideline, including

- more flexible supervision arrangements
- promotion of simulated learning activities

- increased supervisor responsibilities
- retirement of the limited work role policy, and
- more flexibility to demonstrate achievement of the core competencies in different ways.

These flexibilities will assist interns complete their internship more easily, and will support the transition to retirement of the 4+2 internship. If the Board's proposal to retire the 4+2 internship is supported, it is recommended that there are no further changes to the 4+2 internship program while the last cohort of interns complete the pathway.

### Psychologists with general registration who trained via the 4+2 pathway

#### 4 I have general registration and came through the 4+2 internship pathway. What happens if I go non-practicing in the future, or let my registration lapse?

The proposal to retire the 4+2 internship **will not affect** your general registration as a psychologist.

The aim of the Board's proposal is to retire the 4+2 internship as a pathway for **future** registration for **new** general psychologists only.

If the 4+2 internship pathway was recognised as a pathway to registration at the time you were first registered, you will not be affected by retirement of the 4+2, even if you have a period of non-practicing registration in the future or you let your registration lapse for a period of time (e.g. you don't renew your registration on time).

Even those who were first registered in the 1950s and 1960s with three years of training, or a 4+1 will not have their registration status affected by the Board's proposal.

Section 53(d) of the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#), as in force in each state and territory, allows for this.

#### 5 Has the Board considered the impact of retirement on 4+2 psychologist's reputation and worth among our peers? Will retirement result in a risk that 4+2 psychologists have reduced employment opportunities?

Psychologists who are ethical, do good work and get results, get respect among peers, regardless of their training.

Prior to 2009 the data shows that most psychologists trained via the 4+2 internship pathway. A large number of 4+2 psychologists will remain in the workforce for many years to come.

While the Board has no jurisdiction over industrial relations and the employment of psychologists, there is every indication that 4+2 psychologists will continue to be employed. The need for psychological services in our community continues to grow. For those psychologists who work in the public sector or not-for-profit/community agencies, it is expected that merit-based promotions and salary increases will not be affected by the retirement of one of the pathways to general registration. The majority of psychologists now work primarily in private practice.

The Board considered that the risks (if any) of retiring the 4+2 is offset against the risks of retaining an old training pathway that is no longer fit-for-purpose.

There are always opportunities for psychologists to engage in continuing education, including Masters or doctorate programs. The new Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) standards also allow for one-year standalone programs that lead to an area of practice endorsement. In addition, there is

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opportunity to undertake the required continual professional development (CPD) in a psychologist's specific areas of interest and work.

### The 5+1 internship pathway

#### **6 Will there be enough 5+1 courses?**

Yes. There are enough courses currently to meet minimum demand. We currently have 17 approved courses in Australia.

The 5+1 was first offered as a pathway in 2010, and the growth in 5+1 courses over the last eight years has been 300 per cent. Continued course development is expected, including courses that promote alternative delivery (weekend classes, distance learning and residential schools), and opportunities to engage in placement and internships in your local area.

The Board continues to encourage the development of additional fifth-year courses, particularly in those jurisdictions that do not have any programs (NT, SA, and ACT) and those that have high numbers of interns (e.g. NSW). The Board will continue to monitor the number of fifth-year courses in conversations with APAC and the Heads of Departments of Schools of Psychology Australia (HODSPA).

Should the Board decide to retire the 4+2 internship as a result of this consultation, there will be a program of communication to announce the decision. The Board expects that more fifth-year courses will be offered once there is certainty of the retirement of the 4+2, and the commercial viability of fifth year programs for higher education providers becomes evident.

There is no current workforce shortage for psychology.

#### **7 The 5+1 model keeps training in metropolitan and regional areas; doesn't this reduce the likelihood that internships will be located in rural or remote areas?**

No. Most (85 per cent) 4+2 interns (and 5+1 interns) already work in metropolitan or regional cities. Only 12 per cent of 4+2 interns work in outer regional areas. Retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway is not expected to dramatically change the practice location of psychologists.

The Board looks favourably on rural internships, and the development of fifth-year programs that are located in regional areas, or allow for distance learning.

There are several training providers located outside major metro areas who are already offering fifth year courses. Several of these already offer alternative delivery modes or distance mode. (e.g. Charles Sturt University; University of New England; University of the Sunshine Coast).

#### **8 Why didn't you make it a six-year Masters requirement instead of a 5+1?**

The Board believes that the 5+1 internship pathway combines the best features of both the 4+2 and the Masters' degree pathway. To ensure the sustainability of the psychology workforce, the Board decided to focus on the 5+1 as a replacement for the 4+2 internship program. The rapid growth of the fifth-year program and availability of fifth-year courses across Australia makes this a viable alternative. In comparison there are inconsistent offerings of the two-year Masters places across all jurisdictions with competitive entry into some programs.

The Board proposal allows registrants who may have previously chosen to undertake the 4+2 to choose either the 5+1 or a higher degree pathway (where available).

**9 Universities often have difficulty finding enough placements for students in the two-year Masters. Don't you think that having more fifth-year students because of the retirement of the 4+2 internship will encroach on agencies previously used by the Master of Psychology (MPsych) programs?**

No. The 5+1 placements are expected to replace those in the 4+2 internship not the MPsych placements. MPsych placements are in areas of practice endorsement, not general psychology, such as in both the 5+1 and 4+2 internships.

**10 Has the Board considered the financial cost to interns in completing the 5+1 internship verses a 4+2 internship pathway?**

Yes. The Board is very mindful of the cost of psychology training through all the pathways. The [Consultation paper](#) deals specifically with this issue (see section 'Burden on interns' pp 21-23).

It is expected that the cost of completing the 5+1 pathway will be equal to or less than completing a 4+2 internship.

Many 4+2 interns are required to pay for supervision and continuing professional development (CPD) costs over the two years of the internship. Interns undertaking a one-year internship (the 5+1) will have these costs halved.

Due to the complexity of the two-year internship, many 4+2 interns have moved towards enrolling in two-year 'internship registration courses'. These courses charge a fee. For 5+1 interns who choose to enrol in the internship registration courses, this cost is again halved (one year not two years).

In addition, HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP, and commonwealth supported places are available for students undertaking training in the higher education sector, while it is not available for two-year internships.

## Training

**11 Can I/am I required to undertake a 4+2 internship and a 5+1 internship at the same time?**

No. Provisional registrants must choose a pathway to general registration when they apply for registration or renewal. It is not possible to complete two pathways simultaneously.

It is also not necessary. The [General registration standard](#) requires completion of one qualification only. There is no need to complete two.

To obtain general registration as a psychologist you must successfully complete **one** of the following pathways to general registration:

- a 4+2 internship pathway
- a 5+1 internship pathway
- a Masters of Psychology
- a Doctorate of Psychology (PhD)
- or a combined Masters/PhD, or
- a substantially equivalent qualification obtained from overseas.

If you are currently undertaking the 4+2 internship pathway you will have time to complete your requirements and apply for general registration before the transition period ends. There is no requirement for you to swap pathways.

It is possible (if you really want) to change pathways part way through (e.g. start a 4+2 internship and change to doing a Masters of Professional Psychology). However, you must complete all the requirements of the pathway that you use towards gaining general registration in sequence. The internship must always occur after completing all the components of the formal qualification. This means that swapping pathways can result in longer training timeframes before being eligible to apply for general registration, and anyone contemplating swapping pathways needs to consider this carefully.

## **12 Why should training pathways be accredited?**

Accreditation is the key mechanism in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) to ensure that practitioners have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes for independent safe practice in their profession.

The Board has assigned the accreditation function to the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC).

Accreditation provides:

- clear and rigorous standards for the education and training of psychologists
- independent and regular review to ensure compliance with the standards, including the quality of programs and governance processes, and
- accountability and protection of the public.

Training at an APAC-accredited program provider provides:

- a variety of staff and supervisors with experience in overseeing a number of provisional psychologists, within a teaching and learning model
- supervised placements to ensure the intern is more work-ready at the beginning of the internship year, and
- processes, policies and systems in place to measure and monitor competency development as a matter of core business.

There are over 500 individual employers offering 4+2 internships each with a unique training experience. These are un-accredited and offer variable training experiences and quality. The risks of running multiple un-accredited and lengthy (a minimum of two years) internships are high. Retiring the 4+2 internship would minimise these risks.

## **13 I am currently doing the 4+2 combined with a PhD. Why does my PhD in psychology hold no merit towards my registration?**

The [General registration standard](#) requires completion of an approved qualification. The Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) accredits: the four-year sequence in psychology, the fifth year (Master of Professional Psychology), Masters in Psychology (MPsych), and Doctorate in Psychology (DPsych), but does not accredit PhDs. Therefore, a PhD is not an approved qualification for registration.

A PhD is a research degree that does not include training across all subject/content areas but by definition focuses on a specific area in detail. It does not include sufficient scope or breadth to be an approved qualification. In addition a PhD does not include placements, unlike the internships or APAC-accredited higher degree qualifications.

## 14 What are the international benchmarks and why is this important?

The 5+1 internship pathway is comparable to international benchmarks. The 4+2 internship pathway does not meet international benchmarks.

Just as the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (National Scheme) has enabled greater workforce mobility across Australia to meet community needs, having comparable standards of training enables the transfer of knowledge, experience and skills internationally.

Increasingly, psychologists study, practise, consult, collaborate, and communicate across international boundaries. When the expected competencies for psychologists that are required by different countries vary, mobility and recognition of qualifications are compromised.

The International Project on Competence in Psychology – IPCP published the [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#) (International Declaration) in 2016 to promote the development of, 'a global agreement on identifying the benchmark competences that define professional psychology' (IPCP Final report p. 1).

The Board adopted the International Declaration in 2017, as it corresponds with the objectives and guiding principles of the National Scheme (section 3 of the National Law), including:

- i. to provide for the protection of public by ensuring that only health practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise in a competent and ethical manner are registered
- ii. to facilitate workforce mobility
- iii. to facilitate the provision of high quality education and training
- iv. to facilitate the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained health practitioners, and
- v. to enable the continuous development of a flexible, responsive and sustainable Australian health workforce.

The core competencies presented in the International Declaration are those expected of all psychologists providing services to clients at the time of entry to the profession. The Board is committed to ensuring that all Australian-trained psychologists meet these competencies.

## 15 What is the difference between the 4+2 and 5+1?

Both the 4+2 and the 5+1 are internship pathways to general registration as a psychologist in Australia. Their similarities and differences are highlighted in the table below.

	4+2 internship pathway	5+1 internship pathway
<b>First availability of pathway</b>	1950s – 1960s (depending on the jurisdiction)	2010
<b>Four-year psychology sequence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Accredited by APAC</li> <li>• No placements</li> <li>• Registration not required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Accredited by APAC</li> <li>• No placements</li> <li>• Registration not required</li> </ul>
<b>Fifth year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First year of two-year internship</li> <li>• Not accredited</li> <li>• Provisional registration required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master of Professional Psychology</li> <li>• One or two practicum placements</li> <li>• Accredited by APAC</li> <li>• Provisional registration required</li> </ul>

<b>Sixth year</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second year of two-year internship</li> <li>• Not accredited</li> <li>• Provisional registration required</li> <li>• Must pass national psychology exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First year of one-year internship</li> <li>• Not accredited</li> <li>• Provisional registration required</li> <li>• Must pass national psychology exam</li> </ul>
<b>Does 10 year rule apply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes.</li> <li>• Must begin internship within 10 years of completing 4<sup>th</sup> year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes.</li> <li>• Must begin internship within 10 years of completing Masters</li> </ul>
<b>Does pathway meet international benchmarks?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>
<b>Endorsement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From 1 January 2019 APAC allows stand-alone area of practice endorsement courses for psychologists with general registration</li> <li>• Board requires completion of registrar program before application for area of practice endorsement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From 1 January 2019 APAC allows stand-alone area of practice endorsement courses for psychologists with general registration</li> <li>• Board requires completion of registrar program before application for area of practice endorsement</li> </ul>
<b>Number undertaking pathway in 2018</b>	29% of provisional psychologists	16% of provisional psychologists

## Transition

### 16 Will there be a transition period if the 4+2 internship pathway to general registration is retired?

Yes. The Board is aware that stakeholders would need time to prepare for any retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway.

The Board has outlined three options for transition in the public consultation paper. Depending on overall stakeholder preference during the consultation period, the last enrolment *to begin* a 4+2 internship program will either be 30 June 2019, 30 June 2020 or 30 June 2021.

Regardless of which of the three transition deadlines are preferred by stakeholders, all of them include a future date for retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway. This means that current 4+2 interns will not be affected by the Board's proposal to retire the 4+2 internship pathway because they *have already commenced* the internship. Students who are currently undertaking a fourth-year program will have time to complete their studies and enrol in the internship before the deadline.

The proposed transition timeframes also allows for the maximum time permitted in the [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program](#) (five years) for the internship to be completed. The Board is committed to ensuring equity for those students who need to study or work part-time or take a leave of absence due to family, medical, or maternity reasons. By allowing the maximum timeframe for completion of the internship, the Board is able to promote equity within reasonable retirement timeframes.

**17 Has the Board considered a transition option where students in their undergraduate training (years 1-3) can still complete their four years of training and enrol in the two-year internship? These students may have entered psychology training in good faith that the 4+2 internship pathway is open to them.**

Most undergraduate psychology students do not actually become psychologists. The Board can only be certain that students in their fourth year of study actually intend to become a psychologist.

The Board considered this transition option but decided not to include it because this would mean adding another three years (or longer to account for part-time enrolment or leave of absence) to the retirement timeframe. Having the 4+2 internship pathway open for possibly another 10 – 12 years is considered too long when weighed up against the risks and burden of the pathway.

The Board is committed to ensure equity for those students who postpone their studies due to family, medical, or maternity reasons. By basing the proposal on the transition from the fourth year of study, and allowing the maximum timeframe for completion of the internship (five years), the Board is able to promote equity within reasonable retirement timeframes.

### Workforce

**18 How do we know workforce supply won't be affected?**

There is no current workforce shortage for psychology.

Retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway is not expected to alter the overall number of provisional psychologists. The Board's [registration data](#) on its website shows that psychology is the third largest health profession (after nursing and medicine), and that 700 – 1000 new psychologists enter the workforce each year. The number of people entering psychology (3 – 6 per cent increase each year) is higher than the growth of the Australian population (1.5 per cent).

There is a viable alternative program of education in the 5+1 internship pathway. The number of fifth-year programs has increased over 300 per cent since 2010. In addition, the number of places the higher degree pathway has increased over the last several years, with new programs opening recently (e.g. UTS and ACAP).

Most psychologists are no longer trained via the 4+2 internship (29 per cent) but rather via the higher degree pathway (53 per cent). The transition away from the 4+2 has already begun.

### Regional and rural workforce

**19 Will retirement of the 4+2 affect the regional and rural workforce?**

No. Most (85 per cent) 4+2 interns (and 5+1 interns) already work in metropolitan or regional cities. Only 12 per cent of 4+2 interns work in outer regional areas. Retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway is not expected to dramatically change the practice location of psychologists.

The Board looks favourably on rural internships, and expects that these will continue in the one-year internship as part of the 5+1 pathway.

In addition, the Board supports the development of fifth-year programs that are located in regional areas, or allow for distance learning, and those that allow for regional/rural placements during the fifth year.

## Supervisors

### 20 Will supervisors who supervise 4+2 interns automatically be able to supervise 5+1 interns?

Yes. A Board-approved supervisor (BAS) who is approved to supervise 4+2 interns can automatically supervise 5+1 interns.

The Board **does not** require additional training for supervisors to supervise 5+1 interns.

Supervisors who are not familiar with the [Guidelines for the 5+1 internship program](#) are encouraged to become familiar with the Boards requirements before supervising a 5+1 intern.

Retirement of the 4+2 internship pathway would require supervisors to encourage their current 4+2 interns to finish their requirements in a timely manner (i.e. within the five year maximum timeframe).

## National psychology exam

### 21 If someone passed the national psychology exam as part of the 4+2 internship pathway, will they have to do the exam a second time if they go back to complete a Masters degree in psychology or an area of practice endorsement?

No. The exam is a requirement to gain general registration and must be passed once.

## Endorsement

### 22 Can 5+1 trained psychologists get an area of practice endorsement?

Yes, after some additional training specific to the area of practice endorsement.

You must complete:

- the 5+1 internship pathway and successfully apply for general registration
- a minimum of 12 months' practice as a registered psychologist (general registration) with no conditions on your registration
- a stand-alone area of practice endorsement program allowed by the new Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC) [Accreditation Standards for Psychology Programs](#) effective 1 January 2019, and
- the relevant registrar program and apply to the Board for an area of practice endorsement.

## Medicare

### 23 Will retiring the 4+2 internship pathway have any effect on Medicare?

No. The proposal to retire the 4+2 internship has nothing to do with Medicare. There are five pathways to gain general registration as a psychologist, retiring the 4+2 pathway, has no effect on any of the other pathways, or on the provision of Medicare services. The Board is not involved with the provision of Medicare services or Medicare provider numbers. This is done through the [Australian Government Department of Human Services](#).