

Consultation – National psychology examination curriculum review

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

03/04/2018

Dear Sir or Madame,

I wish to extend my full support for the proposal to retire the 4+2 registration pathway. I am a Clinical Psychologist of many years practice and am currently the Director of Specialist Services for the Mental Health and Addictions Service for Queensland Health on the Sunshine Coast. In this role I am responsible for the recruitment, training, supervision and development of many psychologists.

I have a personal insight into the 4+2 training pathway, as it was how I initially gained registration. At the time I was aware that the training was somewhat narrow to qualify me as a practicing psychologist. A particularity of our four year degree is that it is highly academic and does little to prepare you for the practical training requirements of a practising psychologist. In this way it does not compare with the practical training of similar health professions like: Occupational Therapy, Social work, Nursing, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy where the undergraduate degree has significant practical training and placements. My +2 years was helpful – but again not rigorous or broad in nature, did not allow diverse placements and the quality of training can be highly dependent on your place of work.

After several years of practice, frustrations around my preparedness and knowledge base, worry that I was not adequately trained and an understanding of my limited preparedness for psychology practice; led to me return to study and complete a clinical master's degree. I was amazed at how well the intensive practical training developed my skills, along with the excellent placements that allowed me to develop a broad understanding of psychology in various work settings.

I feel for young psychologists who enter the 4+2 pathway and have little exposure to a higher level of formal postgraduate training that exposes you to practical psychology practice with the support and quality assurance of both university and supervising placement clinicians. I am also very aware that increasingly the employment opportunities are becoming limited for the 4+2 trained as a much more significant number of post-graduate trained psychologists out compete for even junior positions.

I believe our discipline would be well served by this move towards a more rigorous postgraduate base level of training. I also believe that the public would benefit from an increase in the training baseline of psychologists.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this review.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Spence-Thomas
Clinical Psychologist