



# Guidelines for the national psychology exam

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**Month 2019**

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## 1. Overview of the exam

The national psychology exam (the exam) has been developed by the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) in accordance with section 52 (1) (b) of the [Health Practitioner Regulation National Law](#) (the National Law).

The exam supports the Board's [General registration standard](#).<sup>1</sup> In order to be eligible to apply for general registration, applicants must complete a six-year sequence of education and training, and provide evidence of having passed the national psychology exam (unless exempt).<sup>2</sup>

The exam has been in place since 1 July 2010, with overseas applicants for general registration required to provide evidence of passing the exam from 1 July 2013, and all other applicants (unless exempt) from 1 July 2014.<sup>3</sup>

The Board has developed these guidelines along with the National psychology exam candidate manual to provide guidance to candidates preparing for the exam.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Purpose of the exam

The purpose of the exam is to protect the public by ensuring that only those practitioners who are suitably trained and qualified to practise psychology in a competent and ethical manner are registered.<sup>5</sup>

The exam is one regulatory tool that the Board may use to ensure that all applicants for general registration have obtained a minimum level of applied professional knowledge of psychology.

### For registration

The purpose of the exam for registration is to assist the Board to determine whether an individual who has lodged an application for general registration under Part 7 of the National Law should be granted general registration.

The exam ensures that practitioners with training in non-accredited pathways, overseas qualifications or people who are intending to return to practise as a psychologist can demonstrate their achievement of a similar level of competence to a Board-approved six-year sequence of study.

### For notifications

The purpose of the exam in notifications is to assist the Board, a panel or tribunal to be assured about a practitioner's health, performance or conduct under Part 8 of the National Law.

The exam can assist to determine whether an individual is suitably trained and qualified to practise psychology when the competency of the practitioner is called into question by the notification. Successful completion of the exam may be required for candidates to demonstrate they have the required knowledge and core competencies to practice psychology safely.

Completion of the exam is one tool the Board may use when a practitioner has a notification, other regulatory tools include for example: conducting a health assessment, undertaking a criminal history check, ensuring the candidate meets the registration standards (e.g. Recency of practice registration

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<sup>1</sup> The General registration standard is published on the Board's website at [www.psychologyboard.gov.au](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au). Registration standards are approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council pursuant to the National Law.

<sup>2</sup> Applicants for general registration who are exempt from passing the exam are outlined in the section entitled "exemptions" in this document.

<sup>3</sup> The Board approved several transition provisions for implementing the exam allowing a stepped roll-out.

<sup>4</sup> See section 39 of the National Law.

<sup>5</sup> See section 3(2) of the National Law.

standard, Continuing professional development registration standard), and assessment of behaviour against the Code of Ethics.

### 3. Who is required to sit the exam?

The following groups must pass the exam before applying for general registration as a psychologist:

1. provisionally registered psychologists undertaking a four-year accredited sequence of study followed by a two-year Board-approved internship (4+2 internship program)
2. provisionally registered psychologists undertaking a five-year accredited sequence of study followed by a one-year Board-approved internship (5+1 internship pathway)
3. overseas-trained psychologists seeking general registration in Australia
4. individuals intending to return to practice as psychologist who have not practised for more than 10 years (individuals returning to practice after five years *may be* required to pass the exam<sup>6</sup>), and
5. individuals who are directed to sit the exam by the Board, or by a panel or tribunal, relating to an application for registration under Part 7 of the National Law, or a notification about their health, performance or conduct under Part 8 of the National Law<sup>7</sup>.

#### Why is the exam required for these groups?

##### Non-accredited pathways

The exam is required for practitioners with training in non-accredited pathways to ensure they can demonstrate their achievement of a similar level of competence to a Board-approved six-year sequence of study.

There are several pathways to general registration as a psychologist in Australia.<sup>8</sup> The higher degree pathways include programs of study that meet approved accreditation standards. The accreditation authority for the psychology profession is the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC).

The 4+2 and 5+1 internship pathways are considered to be non-accredited pathways, as they include one (+1) or two (+2) years of internship (supervised practice) that do not fall under the accreditation standards. Internships are conducted within the industry sector and not the education sector, and are approved by the Board.

##### Overseas qualifications

The exam is required for applicants for general registration with overseas qualifications to ensure they have the requisite knowledge and skills to practise psychology competently and safely in the Australian context.

Qualifications obtained overseas are not approved qualifications for the purpose of registration as a psychologist in Australia. The exam aims to assist the rigorous and responsive assessment of overseas-trained psychologists<sup>9</sup>.

Overseas qualified practitioners are required to sit the exam under Part 7 of the National Law to demonstrate that a similar level of competence to a Board-approved six-year sequence of study has been achieved.

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<sup>6</sup> For more information see the [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#) or [Policy for recency of practice requirements](#).

<sup>7</sup> This includes individuals directed to sit the exam by a Board, panel, tribunal or Health Complaint Organisation under Part 8 of the National Law. See the [AHPRA website](#) for more information at: [www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications/Further-information/Health-complaints-organisations.aspx](http://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications/Further-information/Health-complaints-organisations.aspx).

<sup>8</sup> The training pathways include: the 4+2 internship, the 5+1 internship, the higher degree pathway (Masters and doctoral degree), and the overseas pathway.

<sup>9</sup> See section 3(a) and (d) of the National Law.

## Return to practice

The exam is required for applicants intending to return to practice as a psychologist who have not practised for more than 10 years to ensure they can demonstrate the appropriate level of applied professional knowledge and competence to ensure effective protection of the public.

Applicants returning to practice as a psychologist who have not practised for more than five years *may be* required to pass the exam. This includes people who have let their registration lapse for more than five years, and practitioners who have held non-practicing registration for more than five years and who are applying to for general registration. These applicants can use their passing grade on the exam to demonstrate a similar level of competence to a Board-approved six-year sequence of study.

For more information on use of the exam to demonstrate recency of practice, see the [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#) and [Policy for recency of practice requirements](#).

## 4. Exemptions

Not all applicants for general registration are required to pass the national psychology exam. There are two exemptions:

- New Zealand psychologists applying for general registration in Australia under the [Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition arrangements](#) are exempt from sitting the exam.
- Applicants for general registration who have completed the higher degree pathway and apply for general registration are exempt from sitting the exam. The higher degree pathway refers to a Board-approved postgraduate qualification accredited as a fifth and sixth year of study in psychology.<sup>10</sup> This includes:
  - an accredited six-year professional Masters qualification, or
  - an accredited doctorate, or
  - a combined Masters/PhD qualification.

## 5. Competency standards

The Board has adopted competency-based standards as a framework for the exam.

The exam is designed to test the core competencies for general registration as a psychologist in Australia. The core competencies for the exam are benchmarked at the sixth-year of psychology training. All applicants for general registration, regardless of training pathway, will have six years of psychology training comprising of an approved qualification and supervised practice.

In this context, core competency refers to the practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behaviour and values used to perform a specific behaviour or set of behaviours to an acceptable professional standard for safe practice in the profession.<sup>11</sup>

The exam is designed to test the application of psychological knowledge to safe practice. To achieve this, the exam is based on actual case studies and professional issues.

### Core competencies assessed by the exam

The eight core competencies assessed by the exam are:

- knowledge of the discipline
- ethical, legal and professional matters
- psychological assessment and measurement
- intervention strategies
- research and evaluation
- communication and interpersonal relationships

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<sup>10</sup> Note: Doctoral students who wish to apply for early general registration under provisions included in *the Statement of assessment for provisional psychologists* (PDEC-76 form) fall within this exemption.

<sup>11</sup> The Board has adopted the definition of core competencies from the [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#) (the Declaration).

- working with people from diverse groups and
- practice across the life-span.

The core competencies assessed by the exam align with the:

- [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#) (the Declaration). The International Project on Competence in Psychology (IPCP)<sup>12</sup> published the Declaration in July 2016. The Declaration outlines international benchmarks for general competence for all psychologists providing services to clients at the time of entry into the profession. The Board is a signatory to the Declaration, and has aligned the exam with core competencies outlined in the Declaration.
- [APAC accreditation standards for psychology programs](#). The exam aligns with the APAC professional competencies expected to be demonstrated by graduates from an accredited six-year program of psychology training.<sup>13</sup>
- Eight core competencies required to be demonstrated by the [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program](#) and [Guidelines for the 5+1 internship program](#).<sup>14</sup>

### Core competencies *not* assessed by the exam

The exam is one regulatory tool used by the Board and is not designed to be the sole test of a practitioner's competence to practise psychology.

Some core competencies are evaluated using other assessment methods, such as:

- direct observation
- case studies/case reports, and
- assessment by a Board-approved supervisor while engaged in professional practice.

The exam is not designed to assess:

- The competencies for provisional registration. The foundational knowledge of the discipline obtained during the first four years of psychology training required for provisional registration is assessed through demonstration of pre-professional competencies by graduation from an approved qualification, not through the Board's exam.<sup>15</sup>
- Specific competencies for area of practice endorsement. An endorsement is a notation on the [National register of practitioners](#) and indicates when a psychologist has additional qualifications and advanced supervised practice recognised by the Board. General registration is required before a psychologist can apply for admission to a registrar program leading to an area of practice endorsement. The exam assesses the core competencies for general registration (only) as a psychologist and not for any additional competencies that may be required by endorsement. The additional competencies for area of practice endorsement are demonstrated by completion of an approved qualification<sup>16</sup>, and through successful completion of the Board's registrar program.<sup>17</sup>

### Curriculum

The exam curriculum outlines the core competencies that are assessed by the exam and expected to be demonstrated by an applicant for general registration.

The eight competencies are assessed through four exam curriculum domains:

- ethics
- assessment

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the IPCP see: [www.psykologforeningen.no/foreningen/english/ipcp](http://www.psykologforeningen.no/foreningen/english/ipcp)

<sup>13</sup> For more information see: [www.psychologycouncil.org.au](http://www.psychologycouncil.org.au)

<sup>14</sup> For detail on the eight competencies see: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Codes-Guidelines-Policies.aspx)

<sup>15</sup> For more details see the [APAC accreditation standards for psychology programs](#).

<sup>16</sup> For more information see the [APAC accreditation standards for psychology programs](#) section on 'professional competencies for specialised area of practice'.

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the Registrar program see: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Endorsement/Registrar-program.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Endorsement/Registrar-program.aspx).

- intervention, and
- communication.

The Board developed and periodically reviews the curriculum. The curriculum and several supporting resources are published on the [Board's website](#).

## 6. Sitting the exam

### Eligibility

Table 1 outlines the groups required to pass the exam before applying for general registration as a psychologist, and when they are eligible to sit the exam.

Table 1: Who needs to sit the exam and when

Applicant	When you are eligible to sit exam
Provisional psychologist in 4+2 internship	During the sixth year (after 1,500 hours of supervised practice internship)
Provisional psychologist in 5+1 internship	During the sixth year (within approved supervised practice internship)
Person returning to psychology practice after five (or 10) years	As directed by the Psychology Board of Australia in response to application
Person with overseas qualifications in psychology who meet other requirements	During approved supervised practice internship (usually this is a three-month transitional program)
Person required to do so by a board, panel or tribunal	As directed by authority

### Eligibility for overseas-trained practitioners

Applicants from overseas need to ensure they meet the [mandatory registration standards](#),<sup>18</sup> including the [English language skills registration standard](#). The Board may apply additional conditions to an overseas-trained practitioner's registration to ensure they meet all registration standards.

Generally, the Board will require overseas-trained practitioners to be registered as a provisional psychologist and complete a minimum three-month [transitional program](#) in Australia before applying for general registration.<sup>19</sup> This allows an applicant to satisfy all competencies for general registration including knowledge of Australian ethical and legal requirements, and to ground their skills in an Australian socio-cultural context. Once an overseas applicant has been registered as a provisional psychologist, they become eligible to sit the exam.

The exam is only available for applicants to sit in Australia.

### Pass grade

The Board has applied a scaled passing score for the exam of 70 per cent. The scaled passing score is the Board's view of the minimum level of applied knowledge required for independent psychology practice.

<sup>18</sup> Mandatory registration standards can be found at: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Standards-and-Guidelines/Registration-Standards.aspx)

<sup>19</sup> Information on the transitional program is at: [www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Overseas-Applicants/Transitional-program.aspx](http://www.psychologyboard.gov.au/Registration/Overseas-Applicants/Transitional-program.aspx)

The exam and pass rates are moderated by the Board. The pass rate only applies to the total exam score. Candidates are not required to pass all four curriculum components in addition to achieving a passing score on the overall exam.

### **Exam fee**

Registrants are required to pay an exam fee for each sitting, payable online at the time an applicant registers for the exam. The Board has set the fee as low as possible to ensure the fee is not a barrier to sitting the exam. The fee is published on the Board's [schedule of fees](#) on the website.

### **Test administrator and test centres**

To ensure independence from the Board, the exam is not delivered or proctored by the Board.

The Board has contracted with an external test administrator to provide professional proctoring and a consistent and structured test-taker experience. The test administrator offers exam security, suitable technology for a computer-based exam, flexibility in exam delivery, as well as a controlled testing environment. Test centres are available across Australia. The exam is not delivered by test centres outside of Australia.

### **Exam failure**

Registrants who fail the exam on their first or second attempt can re-sit the exam after completing a further three-month period of supervised practice as a psychologist or provisional psychologist.

If a registrant fails three times, they will not be able to sit another exam until their registration renewal or a new application for registration is approved by the Board. At this point the Board may:

1. grant renewal or registration and allow the person to re-sit the exam up to three additional times
2. grant renewal or registration with conditions and on those conditions being met, allowing the person to re-sit the exam, or
3. propose to refuse the person's application or renewal.

The policy and procedures that are followed when a candidate sitting the national psychology exam fails the exam three times, including the available options and the steps to take are outlined in the [Policy and procedure for candidates who fail the exam three times](#) (see Attachment A).

The evidence required by the Board to progress a candidate's plan to successfully re-sit the exam beyond three attempts can be found in the [Statement and plan for professional development](#) form (the [SPPD-76 form](#)) available on the Board's website.

### **Further information for candidates**

The Board has developed the National psychology exam candidate manual to provide guidance to candidates preparing for the exam, including information on the:

- content of the exam
- exam format and structure
- exam resources
- how to prepare for the exam
- requirements and approval processes for special accommodation and special consideration
- what to expect on the day of the exam
- receiving results, and
- reviews.

Candidates are strongly recommended to review this document.

## **7. Review**

These guidelines will be reviewed as required, generally every five years.

## 8. Definitions

**AHPRA** means the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency established under section 23 of the National Law.

**APAC** is the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council. APAC is the accreditation authority for the psychology profession.

**Approved program (or sequence) of study** refers to a program of study accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council and then approved by the Board under section 49 (1) of the National Law.

**Approved qualification** refers to a course or approved program of study that qualifies a graduate for registration as a psychologist.

**Area of practice endorsement** is a means provided for by section 98 of the National Law through which additional qualifications and supervised practice recognised by the Board can be identified to the public, employers, and other users of the public online register of practitioners. Practitioners with an area of practice endorsement have the specific area of practice notated on the public register and can use the title associated with that area of practice.

**Board** means the Psychology Board of Australia established under section 31 of the National Law. The Board delegates some decision-making powers to committees, state and territory or regional boards, or AHPRA.

**Candidate** means any person approved by the Board as eligible to sit the national psychology exam.

**Competence** refers to a combination of practical and theoretical knowledge, cognitive skills, behaviour, and values used to perform a specific behaviour or set of behaviours to a standard, in professional practice settings associated with a professional role<sup>20</sup>

**Core (competence)** is a competence, the possession of which is critical to the overall ability of a person to practise to an acceptable professional standard. Core competences are expected to be possessed by all those who claim competence in professional practice. It should be noted that additional competences may also be required, depending upon areas of specialism and socio-cultural settings, to ensure overall competence as a practitioner.<sup>21</sup>

**Exam** means the national psychology exam.

**National Law** refers to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law.

**Practice** means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a registered psychologist in the profession. Practice in this context is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct non-clinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on the safe, effective delivery of services in the profession.

**Provisional psychologist** means a person registered as a provisional psychologist under section 62 of the National Law to enable that individual to complete a mandatory period of supervised practice to become eligible for general registration as a psychologist.

**Psychologist** means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist under section 52 of the National Law.

**Recency of practice** means that a practitioner has maintained an adequate connection with, and recent practice in, the profession since qualifying or obtaining registration.

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<sup>20</sup> Definition taken from the [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#), p.4

<sup>21</sup> Definition taken from the [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#), p.5

**Registered psychologist** in this document includes a psychologist or a provisional psychologist.

**Scaled passing score** means passing the national psychology exam at a score of 70 per cent or higher. Raw scores (the total number of answers that were correct) are arithmetically converted to a scale that ranges from 0 to 100 and takes into consideration differences in difficulty among different versions of the exam. Adjusting scores will ensure that the passing score will remain the same, even if different versions of the exam vary in difficulty. This ensures that candidates will not be penalised if an exam is harder, or given an unfair advantage if an exam is easier.

**Supervisor** or **board approved supervisor** means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist and who has been approved by the Board to supervise provisional psychologists or psychologists.

## Policy and procedure for candidates who fail the national psychology exam three times

This document sets out the policy and procedures to follow when a candidate sitting the national psychology exam fails the exam three times.

### Background

The Psychology Board of Australia's (the Board) [General registration standard](#) was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 31 March 2010, pursuant to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), with the registration standard taking effect from 1 July 2010. The national psychology exam (the exam) supports the Board's [General registration standard](#).

The [Guidelines for the national psychology exam](#) (the guidelines) state that candidates who fail the exam can re-sit the exam after completing three months of further supervised practice as a registered psychologist. The guidelines also state that candidates who fail the exam three times will not be able to sit another exam until their registration renewal or a new application for registration is approved by the Board.

### Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to any candidate for the exam who has failed the exam three times.

This policy does not apply to candidates sitting the exam who pass the exam on their first or second attempt. It also does not apply to candidates who have applied to sit the exam and fail the practice exam.

### Definition of exam pass and failure

The Board has applied a scaled passing score of 70 per cent or higher to the exam.

The exam and pass rates are moderated by the Board. The pass rate only applies to the total score. Each candidate must obtain a scaled score of 70 per cent or higher to pass the exam. Candidates are not required to pass all four individual curriculum components.<sup>22</sup>

Any candidate who sits the exam and gets a scaled score of 69 per cent or lower is considered to have failed the exam, regardless of whether the candidate:

- completed all of the exam or only part of the exam, and/or
- had been granted special accommodation prior to the exam (providing the accommodations were sufficiently met).

In addition, any candidate who does not attend an exam sitting that they have registered to sit, and are not granted special consideration for their non-attendance, is considered to have failed that sitting of the exam.

Candidates do not receive their scaled scores as part of the reporting process, only whether they have passed or failed.

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<sup>22</sup> The four curriculum components of the exam are outlined in the guidelines and include ethics, assessment, intervention and communication.

## Definition of three exam failures

Any candidate who sits the exam and gets a scaled score of 69 per cent or lower on three separate occasions is considered to have failed the exam three times.

If a candidate is granted special consideration<sup>23</sup> due to adverse circumstances on the day of the exam that are outside of their control, then this sitting of the exam is considered null and void, and any failure of the exam on this day is not counted towards the three failures.

## General principles for applying this policy

The Board believes that protection of the public is paramount, and that its role is to ensure the safety and competence of practitioners to meet a minimum professional standard. The exam assesses applied psychological knowledge, which forms a significant basis of competence in the psychology profession. The exam helps demonstrate that training has produced a practitioner with an appropriate level of applied professional knowledge and competence, which will more effectively protect the public.

The exam should never be used as the sole test of a practitioner's competence to practise psychology. Passing the exam is not a substitute for a period of registration under supervision. This policy should be implemented in the broader context of a candidate's practice.

All decisions made after a candidate fails the exam for the third time will be made as soon as practicable after their third failure. A timely resolution and providing direction to the candidate is preferred.

Renewing provisional registration has time limitations under section 64 of the National Law.<sup>24</sup> Provisional psychologists will need to get permission from the Board to continue their training if they go beyond these limits. This policy should be implemented within the context of these time limitations.

It is expected that all candidates for the exam undertake supervision of their work, including exam preparation, regardless of whether they are registered as a provisional or general psychologist.

## Procedure for applying this policy

### Step one: Exam outcome

AHPRA will notify registrants who have failed the exam for the third time.

### Step two: Registrant understands the options available and communicates chosen preference

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

For provisional psychologists, renewal of registration occurs once a year on the anniversary of the initial application for registration. For psychologists, renewal of registration occurs once a year on 30 November.

There are three options for registrants who fail the exam three times:

1. During the renewal/registration period – if the renewal/registration period is open, the registrant can choose to submit an application for renewal of registration or a new application (under section 62 or 64 if relevant).
2. Outside of the renewal/registration period – if the registrant fails the exam for the third time outside of the renewal/registration period, there are three options depending on the timing of the failure in relationship to the renewal period.

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<sup>23</sup> The National Psychology Exam Candidate Manual states that candidates who complete the exam are usually not eligible for special consideration unless there are adverse circumstances beyond their control, such as acute illness, hospitalisation, or loss of a family member. Special consideration is granted by the National Exam Coordinator.

<sup>24</sup> Provisional registration may not be renewed more than twice. If a registrant is unable to complete the supervised practice during the initial period of registration and two renewals of that registration, the individual would need to make a new application for provisional registration.

- a. If the date for renewal/registration is close (i.e. within three months), the registrant can choose to wait until the renewal/registration period is open and submit an application. The Guidelines explain that a registrant must wait a minimum of three months before sitting the exam again.
  - b. If the renewal date is several months away, the registrant can choose to apply to the Board for early permission to sit an additional exam/s before the renewal date by submitting a statement and plan. If the Board approves, the registrant may apply to re-sit the national psychology exam. The statement and plan will be re-confirmed when an application for renewal or registration (under section 62 or 64 if relevant) is submitted during the renewal/registration period.
  - c. If the renewal date is several months away, the registrant can choose to wait until the renewal/registration period is open. The registrant should continue supervised practice during this time. However, the registrant will be unable take another exam until the Board approves the statement and plan.
3. Discontinue registration – registrants may choose not to submit another application for renewal or a new application for registration.

Registrants will need to inform AHPRA of which option they prefer.

### **Step three: Evidence required and registration status**

The following information must be submitted for each of the three options:

1. During the renewal/registration period

Evidence required: When a registrant has failed the exam three times, and submits an application for renewal of registration or a new application for registration (under section 64 if relevant), the Board will request a statement and plan ([form SPPD-76](#)) from the registrant and their supervisor under section 80 of the National Law.

This statement and plan will explain the reason/s for not yet passing the exam and outline the proposed steps to gain the knowledge and skills of professional practice expected to be demonstrated by a general psychologist. This statement allows the registrant to put their case to the Board for consideration. The exam results will be reviewed, along with the statements and the application for renewal/re-registration.

Registrant status: Registrants who choose this option can continue to work as a provisional psychologist or psychologist while remaining registered but will not be able to re-sit the exam until the Board has received the registrant's application for renewal/re-registration and have given permission to do so.

2. Outside of the renewal/registration period

Evidence required: When a registrant has failed the exam three times and the renewal or re-registration period is several months away, the Board aims to minimise delay before the registrant can re-sit the exam. As a result, the Board allows early submission of the statement and plan (as per option one above) from the registrant and their supervisor.

This statement and plan ([form SPPD-76](#)) explains the reason/s for not yet passing the exam and outlines the proposed steps to gain the knowledge and skills of professional practice expected to be demonstrated by a general psychologist. This statement and plan allows the registrant to put their case to the Board for consideration.

When the registrant reaches the renewal or registration period, the Board will ask for a confirmation of the plan (under section 80) and for an update on progress.

Registrant status: Registrants who choose this option will be able to continue to work as a provisional psychologist or psychologist while remaining registered and the Board is reviewing their statement. If the Board approves the registrant to sit additional exams, they will be able to register for an exam, even if it is scheduled before the annual renewal or registration deadline.

### 3. Discontinue registration

**Evidence required:** A registrant can choose to discontinue their registration at any time by writing to AHPRA or by indicating their intent to relinquish registration at renewal.

**Registrant status:** Registrants will be removed from the register when registration lapses (or if registration is surrendered, suspended or cancelled). Registrants will no longer be able to use the title 'provisional psychologist' or 'psychologist'.

#### **Step four: The Board makes a determination**

The Board reviews exam results, the statements from the registrant and their supervisor, and the application for renewal/registration. When the Board is satisfied that the statement and plan from the registrant (and their supervisor) is reasonable, the Board will approve the plan.

All registrants who fail the exam three times will have conditions placed on their registration at the time of their next renewal of registration. This condition will include adhering to the elements and timeframes outlined in the agreed plan.

At this time, registrants are strongly encouraged to put into place effective supervision, study, continuing professional development (CPD) and other strategies that will assist them to pass the exam in the future.

Registrants who fail the exam are permitted to re-sit the exam after completing a further three-month period of supervised practice as a provisional psychologist or psychologist. This is a minimum (not maximum) timeframe, and registrants are encouraged to be fully-prepared before sitting the exam.

Passing the exam is important and is one of the necessary components to gain general registration. Should the registrant fail the exam another three times, the Board will propose to refuse the application for renewal or registration.

#### **Step five: Proposal to refuse an application for renewal or registration**

When a registrant has failed the exam six times, the Board will propose to refuse the registrant's application for renewal or registration.

In exceptional circumstances, the Board can propose to refuse a registrant's application for renewal of registration before the sixth exam sitting if there is reasonable evidence that the registrant is not adhering to their agreed plan, is not progressing in their performance on the exam, or there is evidence that the registrant's work does not meet standard.

In exceptional circumstances, the Board can agree to allow a registrant to sit the exam one additional time if there is clear documented evidence of mediating factors that have adversely affected the registrant's ability to pass the exam despite adhering to the agreed plan. Should the registrant fail this seventh exam sitting, the Board will propose to refuse the registrant's application for renewal or registration. No additional exam sittings are permitted.

#### **Definitions**

In this policy:

**AHPRA** means the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency established under section 23 of the National Law.

**Board** means the Psychology Board of Australia established under section 31 of the National Law. The Board delegates some decision-making powers to committees, state and territory or regional boards, or AHPRA.

**Candidate** means any person approved by the Board as eligible to sit the national psychology exam.

**Exam** means the national psychology exam.

**Guidelines** means the [Guidelines for the national psychology exam](#) as published on the Board's website.

**National Law** means the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law.

**Provisional psychologist** means a person registered as a provisional psychologist under section 62 of the National Law to enable that individual to complete a mandatory period of supervised practice to become eligible for general registration as a psychologist.

**Psychologist** means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist under section 52 of the National Law.

**Scaled passing score** means passing the national psychology exam at a score of 70 per cent or higher. Raw scores (the total number of answers that were correct) are arithmetically converted to a scale that ranges from 0 to 100 and takes into consideration differences in difficulty among different versions of the exam. Adjusting scores will ensure that the passing score will remain the same, even if different versions of the test vary in difficulty. This ensures that candidates will not be penalised if a test is harder, or given an unfair advantage if a test is easier.

**Supervisor** or **Board approved supervisor** means a person who holds general registration as a psychologist and who has been approved by the Board to supervise provisional psychologists or psychologists.

### Responsibilities

The Board is responsible for formulating and approving this policy. The Board is responsible for making individual decisions about the registration (and notification) of psychologists. AHPRA is responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and effectively managed.

### Authorisation

Psychology Board of Australia

### Review

This policy takes effect from **month 2019**. The Board will review this policy at least every five years.

This policy replaces the previously published policy from 16 February 2016.