

Frequently asked questions for area of practice endorsements

What is an 'endorsement'?

The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law), as in force in each state and territory, enables National Boards to 'endorse' the registration of suitably qualified practitioners. Endorsement of a psychologist's General registration is a legal mechanism under the National Law through which particular groups of registrants, who have an additional specialist qualification and advanced supervised practice recognised by the Board, can be identified to the public, employers and others through the National Register. An endorsement on General registration indicates that a health practitioner has qualifications and supervised experience in an advanced area of practice, in addition to the minimum level of training required for General registration. Psychologists who wish to consider applying for an endorsement should refer to the [Guidelines on area of practice endorsements](#) for more information.

How can I apply for an endorsement?

The application form for an area of practice endorsement is available on the Board's website. Completed applications are to be returned to the [AHPRA office in your state or territory](#) along with supporting documentation and the application fee.

What qualifications will I require for endorsement?

To be eligible for endorsement in one of the approved areas of practice you must have General registration and:

- a) an accredited doctorate in the approved area of practice that you are applying for, and a minimum one year of approved supervised full-time equivalent practice with a Board approved supervisor in a Board approved registrar program, or
- b) an accredited Masters in the approved area of practice that you are applying for, and a minimum of two years of approved supervised full-time equivalent practice with a Board approved supervisor in a Board approved registrar program, or
- c) another qualification that, in the Board's opinion, is substantially equivalent to (a) or (b).*

* Option (c) refers to equivalent overseas qualifications as assessed by a recognised accreditation authority. The Board does not offer bridging programs but will consider accredited postgraduate bridging programs, as they become available in future, under these equivalence guidelines, and will consult with the accreditation council in relation to the status and likely approval of such programs.

Individuals who were enrolled in an accredited higher degree before the commencement of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme may qualify for endorsement under approved transition provisions. Full details of this and other transitional arrangements for area of practice endorsement are set out in the fact sheet [Transition arrangements for area of practice endorsements](#) which is published on the Board's website.

What is the difference between the Board's requirements for endorsement and the APS requirements for College membership?

The Board's requirements for endorsement are explained in the [Area of practice endorsements registration standard](#) and the [Guidelines on area of practice endorsements](#) which are available on the website. Information about the APS requirements for College membership is available from the APS (www.psychology.org.au).

I am registered in New Zealand in a vocational scope of practice. Can I be registered with an area of practice endorsement in Australia?

Yes. If you hold a current practising certificate for New Zealand you can apply for registration under Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition (TTMR) and your registration type in Australia will be the equivalent type to your registration in New Zealand:

- The scope of practice for a counselling psychologist in New Zealand is equivalent to General registration with a counselling psychology area of practice endorsement in Australia.
- The scope of practice for a clinical psychologist in New Zealand is equivalent to General registration with a clinical psychology area of practice endorsement in Australia.
- The scope of practice for an educational psychologist in New Zealand is equivalent to General registration with an educational and developmental psychology area of practice endorsement in Australia.

If you wish to apply for an area of practice endorsement in Australia that does not have an equivalent vocational scope of practice registration in New Zealand, you can apply for General registration under TTMR and apply for the endorsement separately. Refer to the website for more information about [overseas applicants](#).

Can I be endorsed in two areas of practice without doing another Masters degree?

If you already qualify for more than one endorsement under the transitional arrangements then you can be endorsed in two areas of practice. However the Board's view is that endorsement of registration should communicate to the public about the qualifications and supervised practice of the psychologist in an area of practice. If you do not come under the transition arrangements, to be endorsed in more than one area of practice you must have completed an accredited qualification and a period of approved supervised practice for each area of practice.

If you complete a degree program associated with two areas of practice or a dual-degree program you will be able to apply for an endorsement in both areas of practice following completion of a registrar program. You may undertake the registrar program in both areas of practice simultaneously and will only be required to undertake 75% of the training usually required for each area. Therefore if you have, for example, a Doctor of Psychology in Clinical and Clinical Neuropsychology you must undertake nine months in each area instead of 1 year in each area (i.e. total of 1.5 years).

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) may grant you membership of two specialist Colleges without you doing another Masters degree. However an area of practice endorsement and membership of an APS College are two separate things. The APS has permitted Individual Bridging Plans (IBP) and membership of a College through the non-standard route but this is not the case with area of practice endorsements.

If you are in the middle of a non-standard route to APS College membership or have an approved IBP with the APS Medicare Assessment Team, then you will be eligible for endorsement under the transition provisions if the plan was already in place on 30 September 2010 and you registered the plan with the Board before 30 December 2010. You have until 30 June 2013 to complete IBP and apply to the Board for the endorsement. Progress reports for these pathways should not be sent to the Board.

I am completing a registrar program in Western Australia that was approved by the previous board before 18 October 2010. Will I be recognised for endorsement?

Yes - a registered General psychologist who, on 17 October 2010, already had an approved supervision plan for the purposes of gaining specialist title in an approved area of practice in Western Australia and registered the details of the plan with the Board of Australia 30 December 2010 has until 30 June 2013 to complete the supervision plan under the terms and conditions approved by the Western Australian Board and apply for an endorsement. Endorsement is not automatic when you complete your supervision plan. You must submit an application for endorsement and it must be approved by the Psychology Board of Australia.

If you will be unable to complete your registrar program and apply for the endorsement before 30 June 2013 you may be eligible to apply for an extension – refer to the [Policy on Applications for an Extension to complete the Requirements for Area of Practice Endorsement under Transition Provisions](#) for more information.

I have an endorsement. What title should I use?

Only a psychologist with General registration and an approved area of practice endorsement may use a title that indicates that he or she holds an endorsement. For example, a psychologist who has been endorsed to practise in the area of clinical psychology may refer to himself or herself as a 'Clinical Psychologist'. A person who does not have an endorsement for clinical psychology must not use the title 'clinical psychologist' or any other title that may mislead the public into a belief that the person holds such an endorsement when he or she does not. This applies to each of the nine areas of practice approved for endorsement.

The approved titles are:

- Clinical Neuropsychologist
- Clinical Psychologist
- Community Psychologist
- Counselling Psychologist
- Educational and Developmental Psychologist
- Forensic Psychologist
- Health Psychologist
- Organisational Psychologist
- Sport and Exercise Psychologist.

A psychologist should avoid using the word endorsed in his or her title i.e. should not use a title such as 'endorsed clinical psychologist'.

I am undertaking a registrar program leading to an area of practice endorsement. What title should I use?

The title 'registrar' is not a protected title under the National Law, but titles associated with an endorsement are protected. The title may only be used by psychologists who have completed an accredited Masters or Doctorate in an endorsed area, and are currently undertaking Board approved supervised practice ('the registrar program') for the purpose of gaining an endorsement. You must ensure you do not use the title in such a way that it may lead a person to believe that you already have an endorsement. Examples of acceptable titles are 'Registrar - Clinical Psychology' or 'Clinical Psychology Registrar'.

I don't have an endorsement but I have a title conferred under an industrial award. What title should I use?

The Board recognises that in some states and territories public sector industrial awards enable the employment of a psychologist in a position that has a title approved under an industrial award – i.e. clinical psychologist - despite the psychologist not meeting the requirements of the Board's Area of practice endorsements registration standard.

In such cases, the psychologist must not use the title in a way that may induce a belief that the psychologist holds an endorsement in that approved area of practice. It must be clear to the public that the title relates specifically to the position being held, and the psychologist must not use this title outside the context of their employment e.g. in private practice. Psychologists are encouraged to apply for an area of practice endorsement to overcome this difficulty.

I don't have an endorsement. Can I still refer to myself as a 'clinical psychologist'?

No (unless the title is conferred under an industrial award – see above). Where an area of practice endorsement exists, practitioners will need to take care to avoid using a professional title that is in any way misleading and could cause others to believe they hold an endorsement when they do not. For example, there is an area of practice endorsement for clinical psychology. Therefore psychologists whose registration is not endorsed in this area of practice will be at risk of breach of the National Law if they use that specific title.

Can I use a descriptive title that isn't associated with specific area of practice endorsement?

The National Law protects the use of the title 'psychologist' and the various titles used in approved areas of practice. However, it is silent on the use of titles that are not related to endorsement, such as 'consultant psychologist' by registered general psychologists.

A registered psychologist may use descriptors in combination with the title 'psychologist' as long as:

- 1) the title does not knowingly or recklessly claim or induce a belief that the psychologist has an endorsement in an approved area of practice that the psychologist does not hold
- 2) the title does not knowingly or recklessly claim that the psychologist is a specialist health practitioner, e.g. 'specialist clinical psychologist', 'specialist psychologist'
- 3) the title does not mislead the public, that is, makes claim to knowledge, skill or qualifications that the psychologist does not hold

For example, Specialist School Psychologist would not be an acceptable title as section 118(1)(a) of the National Law states that 'a person who is not a specialist health practitioner must not knowingly or recklessly take or use the title of 'specialist health practitioner' whether with or without any other words'. However, school psychologist, consultant psychologist, consumer psychologist, cross-cultural psychologist or other titles that meet the above requirements are acceptable provided that the psychologist does not over-represent their area of expertise or practise outside their scope of competence which would be in breach of the APS Code of Ethics. This Code has been adopted by the Board for the profession.

I want to undertake a registrar program - does my supervisor have to be approved by the Board?

Yes, your principal supervisor for a registrar program must be Board-approved and must have an endorsement in the same area of practice as the registrar program. If you have secondary supervisors in the registrar program they must also be Board-approved but do not necessarily need to be endorsed in the same area of practice.

I have completed the coursework and placements for my post-graduate degree, but my thesis has not yet been accepted. Can I commence the registrar program in the meantime?

In order to commence a registrar program, you must:

- a. Have general registration, AND
- b. If you are a Masters candidate, you must have completed the degree which means the thesis must have been marked and passed and you must be on the graduation list (but you do not have to have formally graduated), OR
- c. If you are a Doctoral candidate (i.e. DPsych or combined Masters/PhD), you must have completed the equivalent of a Masters degree which may be prior to completion of the doctoral thesis. [Form PDEC-76](#) must accompany your application for general registration.

Therefore if you are a Doctoral candidate you may be able to commence the registrar program before you have passed the thesis component of your degree, but Masters candidates cannot. More information about the requirements is included in the [Guidelines on area of practice endorsements](#).

Do you have a question that's not in these FAQs? More psychology FAQs are available on the website at www.psychologyboard.gov.au.

You can also send in your question using the online enquiry form:
<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/about-ahpra/contact-us/make-an-enquiry.aspx>