



Introducing the new national psychology examination

January 2018

The new national psychology examination curriculum

Scope of the review

In 2015, the Psychology Board of Australia (the Board) began a review of the national psychology examination curriculum. The review was in line with a three year review cycle of the curriculum, which was first released by the Board in March 2012.

As part of the review, the Board released the *Public consultation paper 28: National psychology examination curriculum review* (CP28) for public consultation between 7 July and 1 September 2017. You can read the submissions to the public consultation on the [past consultations](#) section of the Board's website.

The following documents were reviewed:

- the *National psychology examination curriculum*
- *A brief orientation to the national psychology examination*
- the *Assessment domain additional resources* document
- the *National psychology examination recommended reading list*, and
- the section of the guidelines (p. 4-5) that relates to the examination curriculum.

National psychology examination curriculum

The [National psychology examination curriculum](#) document (the curriculum) was first published in March 2012 after three public consultations. The curriculum has not been reviewed since its publication.

Candidates sitting the examination are required to be familiar with the curriculum. The curriculum outlines the eight competencies expected to be demonstrated by an applicant for general registration¹. The eight competencies are assessed through four curriculum domains (ethics, assessment, intervention and communication).

The rationale for the review of the curriculum was to ensure:

¹ For detail on the eight competencies please review the [Guidelines for the 4+2 internship program](#) and the [Guidelines for the 5+1 internship program](#).

- the curriculum aligns with changes in the profession since 2012, including the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council ([APAC](#)) review of standards and the [International declaration of core competencies in professional psychology](#)
- the curriculum design adequately covers the scope of the competencies required for general registration as a psychologist
- the examination assesses the right domains and competencies, and
- the curriculum remains fit-for-purpose within the regulatory context.

The changes to the national psychology examination are listed in the table below.

Domain	Changes
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. inclusion of an ethical understanding of disability services and compensation b. inclusion of an understanding of the importance of supervision c. broadening the scope of the curriculum on professional issues to strengthen the importance of an understanding of a psychologists' psychological and physical wellbeing, limits of competence, and need to monitor their practice and to make continuous improvements to practice d. replacing the term 'medico-legal' with the term 'psycho-legal' to be consistent with current usages of the two terms e. replacing the term 'working cross-culturally' with 'working with diverse groups' to be more inclusive of areas of diversity other than culture, and f. replacing the term 'cultural competency' with 'cultural responsiveness' to be in line with current the Australian Indigenous Psychology Education Project (AIPEP) recommendations.
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. removal of the version number of psychological tests. Since tests are being continuously revised, removal of the version number will allow for the curriculum to remain current without the need for revision b. addition of instructions about which version of a test should be used (currently this information is in a FAQ on the Board's website). c. inclusion of four new assessment tools in the list of 20/more tests that psychologists should be familiar with. These tests have been recommended for inclusion by stakeholders and are used by many psychologists across practice contexts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. WHO-DAS and WHO-QOL Rationale: both tests are now included in the DSM ii. Structured Clinical Interview for DSM (SCID) Rationale: standard assessment procedure that operationalises diagnosis iii. Ravens Standard Progressive Matrices <i>Rationale:</i> the current curriculum does not include a non-verbal test of IQ that is culturally fair. The Ravens is considered to be more sensitive to test-takers with varying knowledge of a language, speaking skills, and is more sensitive to cultural and social characteristics d. removal of the Kaufman Adolescent and Adult Intelligence Test (KAIT)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. <i>Rationale:</i> while an excellent assessment tool, this test becoming increasingly difficult to access e. an update of the categories of mental health disorders to align with the DSM-5 f. inclusion of the curriculum relating to psychopharmacology (currently this information is in a FAQ on the Board's website) g. replacing the term 'working cross-culturally' with 'working with diverse groups' to be more inclusive of areas of diversity other than culture, and h. replacing the term 'cultural competency' with 'cultural responsiveness' to be in line with current the AIPEP recommendations.
Intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. including an explicit (rather than implicit) emphasis on evidence-based practice, and b. replacing the term 'working cross-culturally' with 'working with diverse groups' to be more inclusive of areas of diversity other than culture.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. an increased emphasis on the skills of professional communication in line with the emphasis placed on skills in the Declaration b. replacing the term 'working cross-culturally' with 'working with diverse groups' to be more inclusive of areas of diversity other than culture, and c. replacing the term 'cultural competency' with 'cultural responsiveness' to be in line with current the AIPEP recommendations.

Outcome of curriculum review: The Board has determined to publish an advanced copy of the new curriculum six-months before it comes into effect to allow interns and supervisors adequate time to transition to the new curriculum. The first examination that will include questions on the new curriculum will be the August 2018 exam.

A brief orientation to the national psychology examination

The document entitled [A brief orientation to the national psychology examination](#) (the guide) was first published in September 2016. It is the newest resource in the Board's suite of documents that sit behind the guidelines to support candidates who are preparing to sit the national psychology examination.

The guide has been designed to be read alongside the examination curriculum and the reading list. This document provides more detail about the competencies that the examination assesses. It provides detailed questions and examples to guide candidates in preparing for each of the four curriculum domains of the examination. The guide includes study tips that are linked to various specific extracts of the curriculum. The guide covers study tips for the entire curriculum.

The rationale for the review of the guide was to align the guide with the proposed revised curriculum and with the new international competencies for psychologists.

The changes to the guide include updating the curriculum outline (i.e. the text in the boxes) that is referenced in the guide.

Outcome of curriculum review: The Board has determined to publish an advanced copy of the updated guide six months before it comes into effect to allow interns and supervisor adequate time to transition to the new curriculum. The first examination that will include questions on the new curriculum will be the August 2018 exam.

Assessment domain additional resources document

The [Assessment domain additional resources](#) document (the assessment domain document) was published in May 2014. This document had not been reviewed since its publication.

The assessment domain document was developed in response to requests for guidance and clarification from candidates who were preparing for the examination. One of the curriculum domains, the assessment domain, (currently) specifies six psychological tests that require candidates to have detailed knowledge, and 20 tests with which candidates need to be familiar. The assessment domain document provides further background information relevant to these 26 tests in addition to that provided in the curriculum document.

In the public consultation, the Board proposed to retire the assessment domain document for the following reasons:

- the psychological assessment tools outlined in the assessment domain document publish new editions periodically and these updates do not coincide with the Board's five year review timeframes for its policies and documents
- the assessment domain document is potentially misleading to candidates as not all information is examinable (such as reliability statistics)
- the aim of the publication of the assessment domain document in 2014 was to assist candidates in the transition to the first three years of the examination
- the assessment domain document is considered to be educational material, and providing educational material is not the core function of the Board or its National Psychology Examination Committee
- the burden of updating the assessment domain document to keep up with the changes in testing is not justified, and
- there are additional resources now available to candidates in preparation for their examination such as the document entitled *A brief orientation to the examination*, and additional resources on the reading list that focus on the principles and practices of psychological assessment.

Outcome of curriculum review: The Board has determined to retire the assessment domain document. In line with the timeframes for implementation of the new curriculum (August 2018), the Board will remove the assessment domain document from the Board's website in August 2018.

National psychology examination recommended reading list

The [National psychology examination recommended reading list](#) (the reading list) was first published in January 2012. The reading list is recommended for candidates to read in preparation for the examination, but it is not mandatory reading. It is provided only as a guide to assist candidates preparing for the examination.

The reading list is carefully reviewed and updated every six months by the National Psychology Examination Committee. Typically these reviews include updating web links, updating to a newest edition of a book, and adding the occasional new reference. It is planned that this six-month review cycle will continue.

The rationale for the review of the reading list was to:

- ensure that the reading list was aligned with the new curriculum (necessitating a broader and more detailed review than the regular scheduled reviews), and

- consider whether the reading list incorporated seminal texts at the right level of training for the competencies relevant to general registration.

The changes to the reading list included:

- the addition of a rationale for the reasons that the Board updates and retires resources on the reading list, and
- updating some resources to the latest versions/publications (business as usual).

Outcome of curriculum review: Since all texts on the current reading list were determined to be at the right level of training, and were already aligned with the new curriculum, no major changes to the reading list was recommended. The Board has determined to continue publishing an updated reading list every six months as per usual.

Guidelines

The aim of the curriculum consultation was to review the examination curriculum. Only one section of the [Guidelines for the national psychology examination](#) (the guidelines) relates specifically to the curriculum and is relevant to this review (p. 4-5). Much of the information provided in the guidelines is therefore out of scope of the curriculum consultation.

The changes to the curriculum section of the guidelines included:

- a full English language edit and re-write for clarity and readability, and
- addition of a list of all the additional resource documents (the curriculum, the reading list, orientation guide and practice exam).

A consultation is planned to be conducted on changes to the guidelines that focuses on broader issues and the guidelines document as a whole in the near future.

Outcome of curriculum review: Due to the minor changes for the Guidelines, the Board determined to publish the updated Guidelines in January 2018.