

Psychology Board of Australia  
AHPRA  
GPO Box 9958  
Canberra  
ACT 2601

25<sup>th</sup> September 2015

To whom it may concern,

As a student currently completing the Master of Psychology (Clinical) program at the University of New England, I recently received the consultation paper in regards to ending the higher degree exemption from sitting the National Psychology Examination.

After reviewing the purpose of the proposal, I have made the following comments on each point:

1. An external examination should not be an important contributing factor in ensuring professional standards, instead this should be ensured by the Psychology Board of Australia through consultation with the universities that offer higher degree programs in Psychology.
2. Apparently recent reforms in the higher education sector are leading to greater differentiation in psychology programs; this should be under the control of the Board. If there is too much differentiation between courses, than the Board should consult with the universities rather than putting another examination burden on higher degree students. On that point, if this diversity is an additional risk then the textbooks examinable by the National Psychology Examination should be prescribed across the universities in order to ensure uniformity and acquirement of knowledge.
3. At the current time, all psychology programs are under strict rules in order to ensure accreditation. Specific rules, regulations and standards are in place in each higher degree program in order to ensure graduates meet the national standard. Therefore, imposing an external exam is not necessary.
4. Quality control mechanisms to assess competence are already in place and cannot be substituted by sitting a multiple choice exam. The Higher Degree programs in psychology are directive programs involving intensive training and teaching of a wide range of knowledge. Examinations are undertaken in Higher Degree Programs in order to ensure that this wide range of knowledge is consolidated.
5. There is also a reason why previously only those registrants who have completed undergraduate degrees and undertaking the internship have had to sit the examination. The Higher Degree programs in psychology are directive programs involving intensive training, practical experience and teaching of a wide range of knowledge. The undergraduate programs do not meet the same standards and requirements and that is therefore the reasoning behind having to sit the examination.
6. With acknowledgment of the preference for the examination to be introduced in July 2017, perhaps consideration should be given to those students already in a Higher Degree program who are transitioning into the PhD and won't be completing their registration until after July 2017. Also, I was under the impression I would not have to sit the examination when I first

enrolled in my Master program. I may have reconsidered my acceptance into the course if I was aware I would have to sit another examination when I was finished 6 years of study.

7. Despite the fact that the examination only costs \$450, this is still a large amount of money for students that already have extremely large higher education debts. It may seem a trivial amount to the Board, but after having been a student for the past 6 years, every dollar counts.

In addition, undertaking the 150 multiple choice exam will not make us better clinicians. Speaking from experience, there are some individuals who perform poorly on tests and that are excellent clinicians, and on the other hand, individuals whom perform in the top percentiles of tests, but however lack the interpersonal skills that are required for a good clinician.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Butcher

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