



School of Psychology and Psychiatry  
Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences

19<sup>th</sup> December 2011

Psychology Board of Australia  
Level 8, 111 Bourke Street,  
Melbourne VIC 3000

Dear Chair, Psychology Board of Australia

## **Re: Proposed Guidelines for Supervisors and Supervisor Training Providers**

This letter expresses the significant concerns of the staff of Monash University's School of Psychology and Psychiatry regarding the Board's proposed guidelines for supervisors and supervisor training to be implemented in mid 2013. Whilst we fully support the need for adequate training of supervisors and improved regulation of supervisory standards via supervisor accreditation, we fear that the proposed requirements set out in the guidelines will dissuade many psychologists from supervising students and therefore compromise the future of our Doctor of Psychology programs. We have outlined below our main concerns, as well as a number of ways of retaining (and potentially increasing the number of) our supervisors.

1. Monash University arranges in excess of 100 placements each year for Doctor of Psychology students across the Clinical Psychology and Clinical Neuropsychology programs. As the number of postgraduate psychology training programs has increased over the past 5 years the demand for placements from the universities has also increased and we are now at a point where demand is exceeding supply. We strongly believe in achieving high quality supervision for our students but assert that the proposed changes to the guidelines are excessive (for supervisors of students enrolled in a higher degree program) and so will increase the difficulty in maintaining current placements and result in a "drop-off" of supervisors. Feedback from psychologists at our recent workshop for supervisors confirmed our concern that many would be unable to complete this training due to institutional limitations on time and monetary resources, particularly given that student supervision is rarely considered core business of organisations providing placement.
2. The requirement of 7 hours preparation, 14 hours of direct training, and the completion of assessment represents a very significant resource commitment for a stressed and time poor health system. Many agencies do not make this

amount of continuing education training available to their staff. We have found in the past that many of our clinical supervisors have often been unable to attend free 4-hour workshops due to workplace restrictions. It therefore seems highly unlikely that they will be able to take in excess of 2 days to attend supervisor training. Additionally, we expect that few, if any, supervisors would be willing to pay for the cost of the supervisor training. We also think it is extremely unlikely that workplaces (e.g., hospitals) themselves would pay the cost of the training that is limited to facilitating student supervision and provisional psychologists. Essentially, this would result in a significant reduction in supervisor numbers.

3. As a result of points 1 and 2 above, there is a valid concern that institutions that have employees undertake this training will use such supervisory resources to supervise provisional psychologists employed (often finalising theses and awaiting the outcome of theses examination). Therefore, as a University it is feared that the course will be unable to honour its undertakings with currently enrolled students and would enact necessarily drastic reductions in student intake in response to a lack of qualified clinical supervisors under the new system. This reduction in student intake would contradict the Council of Australian Government's mission to increase the number of psychologist that universities are producing and to expand the workforce.
4. A review of the proposed guidelines does not indicate any funding provision for training. Given financial limitations of supervisors and their workplaces, it is likely the cost of the supervisor training would be prohibitive in training a sufficient number of supervisors to provide supervision to students at the current level. Therefore, the cost would fall upon the University and we request that a funding plan be in place to help fund this new responsibility.
5. Further, the proposed guidelines appear to disregard the significant experience and training of many currently recognised supervisors, thereby making the amount of proposed supervisor training excessive. Many of our supervisors (and University staff) have already attended multiple days of supervisor training and have years of experience in clinical supervision. The mandate of so many hours of extra training at significant cost seems excessive.
6. To help ease what we view as prohibitive and often unnecessary training demands on our supervisors, we propose:
  - A reduction of supervisor training requirements overall,
  - A stepped training model, whereby supervisors already approved by the Board be granted retrospective credit and be required to complete only a fraction of the supervisor training for new supervisors (e.g., half the hours),

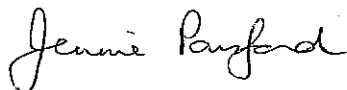
- More flexibility in the delivery of training including utilisation of a range of modalities, including completion of training online, and
- That the Board recognises the supervision of higher degree students as active CPD hours which could be capped at a maximum number of hours.

In summary, the Board's proposed changes are significant. We view our supervisors as worthy and deserving of incentives to continue investing in the training of future psychologists, rather than to have to struggle over barriers that can be viewed as disincentives to supervision provision. We appreciate the opportunity to express the views of ourselves and our colleagues at Monash University. We hope that the points above enhance the consideration of issues relevant in finalising the requirements for supervisor training.

Yours Sincerely,



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